

The Dublin Journal,

Being the Freshest Advices both Foreign and Domestic

A full-length one-act gambol through Dublin's past and present

by Timothy X. Troy

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(DRAFT – 11 July 2011)

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Setting: Dublin at the height of the “Celtic Tiger” – Autumn 2005.
Open staging sound cues and light props to set time and place.

Characters (2M,1F):

John Driscoll: - American, Midwest. 35 - 45. Semi-successful short-story writer.

Female Actor:, all the female roles in the play, including:

Jackie - John’s wife.
Alice - American arts grant officer.
Shana, Erica, and Lucy - American and Irish waitresses.
Carol - North Dublin real estate broker.
May O’Shea – an older woman from Proleek
Marian - Librarian at Trinity College.
Sweet Katie-Lis from Kerry.
Grace – a pub patron.
Claire O’Neill - Older woman from Cork.
Aoife – a young mom.
Lizzy - English economist.
Maeve - Church Secretary.
Various characters from the 18th Century Dublin Journal.

Male Actor: all the male roles in the play, other than Driscoll, including:

Grant - American arts grant officer.
William - John’s father.
Jay O’Shea – and elderly man from Proleek
Donal – Immigration officer.
Niall - Irish-American electrician.
Patrick O’Neill - RAF veteran pilot from Cork.
Jonah - Street beggar.
Peter - Derry man.
Darragh - Wexford Taxi driver.
Willy - Cabby/tour guide from Belfast.
Bertie - Dublin man in spiritual crisis.
Ahmed - Middle Eastern immigrant.
Various characters from the 18th Century Dublin Journal.

Both actors should be versatile and have an excellent ear for dialects.
Entrances should be well prepped and assertively move the action forward.
The audience should enjoy the virtuosity of their multiple roles as much as they enjoy John’s Dublin adventure.

The action should be presented without breaks or an intermission. Running time is c. 1:15. Scene numbers are included for rehearsal convenience only.

The play takes place during the autumn of 2005. 18th and early 19th Century material quoted is from *Faulkner's Dublin Journal* from c. 1725 – 1805. All quotes are verbatim with internal edits indicated by ellipses. I have retained the original capitalization and punctuation. The author would like to thank the librarians at Trinity College Dublin, The National Library of Ireland, and the Marsh Library for their generous and patient assistance.

Note on text: the use of / in a speech means the next actor should take her or his next line there. Same for * , +. @. A line-break means to begin, as usual, at the end of the previous speech. The use of [] indicates that Driscoll addresses the audience directly, typically he's talking to his wife). The convention is not used in longer speeches when John is alone on stage.

Scene One

(Sound of a phone ringing 2-3 times. Lights up on John. One more ring. Answering machine picks up.)

Jackie

Hi, honey. It's John ... uhm ... I thought you'd be home. Maybe you're checking in on Dad. Thanks. I'm here on time and about to go in. And ... I'm nervous ... and I'm about to shit a brick. I'll ... uhm ... call on my way home. Love you.

(John walks to interview area and sits.)

Begin in silence reflecting the mundane, often awkward proceedings of such meetings. Driscoll faces DS from UC. Grant and Alice each face Driscoll, in ¾ open profile. They are state public arts grants administrators. They are reading from prepared questions on clipboards.

ALICE

We've read your grant application carefully and we'd like to congratulate you on making it as far as the interview.

GRANT

It's great. Congrat's.

ALICE

It was very competitive this year.

GRANT

As you know this interview is being recorded so that a panel of reviewers can ... ah ... review ... your responses as part of the selection process.

ALICE

The tape will be considered under the open records law and will be available to anyone, by appointment, through our web page at ArtsSupport.org

GRANT

Each candidate is considered based on the merits of the application and the panel's assessment of his/ ... or her potential to complete the project described in the grant proposal.

ALICE

Or her ...
Every effort is made to convene a panel that represents appropriate diversity in the areas of age, race, sex,/ ... yes, and educational background.

GRANT

Sexual orientation.

ALICE

Mr. Driscoll, do you understand the procedures we've outlined for you? And might you have any questions we should address before we begin?

DRISCOLL

No ... uh ... yes. I mean, yes, then, no. (pause) Yes, I understand, no I don't have any questions. Thanks. I'm ready to start.

GRANT

We're here to answer questions if you have them. We don't want another go-around like we had with that tree bark poet, American Indian/, with that installation.

ALICE

First Nations ...

GRANT

Sorry, right. It turned into a 'he said, she said' type of deal. The past Director of Grants lost his job and now he works for the state highway/ commission ... what a waste!

ALICE

Utility services.
Which is, to be candid, why we record these ... opportunities ... to learn/ about your ...

GRANT

About your work and ambitions.

DRISCOLL

That's very clear. Thanks.

GRANT

So, you understand why you're being recorded then?

DRISCOLL

Yes. Sure, I get it. No law suits.. There was a waiver paragraph at the end of the application ...

ALICE

State that, please, for the record.

DRISCOLL

Yes.

GRANT

Yes, what? Mr. Driscoll.

DRISCOLL

(Leans toward the microphone.)Yes, I understand that this ...ah ...interview ...is being...recorded. Thank you.

ALICE

Let's begin, Don't be nervous. We're just having a little chat. You'll be fine.

GRANT

It's 'all good,' man.

(Polite laughter all around.)

ALICE

We have a series of standardized questions we use to ensure fairness. Our job is to read your proposal and choose questions the panel will find useful, enlightening.

DRISCOLL

I understand ... the process ... thanks ... the website is very clear, by the way. My compliments, and I spoke with the grants officer on the phone.

ALICE

Excellent. Really good.

GRANT

La'Shanda is a wonderful administrator. Very helpful./ Great at her job.

ALICE

An assest, really.

Mr. Driscoll, please discuss how this grant will allow you to change the direction of your work, *and* your candid self-assessment of your competency regarding the grant objective.

DRISCOLL

My work to this point, ah, is, as you know, ah, well so far, the work that has been published, the 'voice', uh, the 'voice', the idiom, I've used to, ah, ah, articulate my experience, my point of view. Ah... it's like... ah...my idiom [Help me, Jackie, I'm going down in flames, here!] Since my early 20's I have been primarily inspired by the Romantic poets and popular music.

GRANT

A unique mix, yes.

ALICE

(referring to dossier) Yeats and Bruce Springsteen ...

DRISCOLL

Though, I feel I resist post-modern structuralism, my more recent work has, to my mind, when I'm more honest with myself than other people are ... than the critics, that small devoted cadre that actually read contemporary poetry ... [I don't think this is going very well.]

GRANT

You're doing fine. Can I get you a bottled water?

ALICE

Remember you're the expert. This is an opportunity.

GRANT

We just want you to thrive...for the review panel. Shall we return to the question?

DRISCOLL

[What was the question?]

ALICE

There's no problem moving on to another.

DRISCOLL

Thanks. You're very kind. I'm not an idiot, really. It's important to me that I expand not just the topic of my work, but its idiom. I'm interested in travel writing...for its potential to reflect my own culture, for its ability to use the narrative journey as the outflow of an actual journey. [Did that sound better?] It struck me as a flash of light one day, for no particular reason, that in their way, the great Epics are a kind of fantastic travelogue. [Refer to the ancient Greeks in these situations. You can't go wrong.] Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, was for its audience, an evocation of tales from the new world – the Carribean -- where strange animals and strange people, where spirits lived. It was exotic, even though, of course, the core story of new love, loss and redemption, was familiar, but encased in the new.

GRANT

(quickly) Thanks. So, why Ireland? In your case? Dublin.

DRISCOLL

[I don't think Shakespeare's working for me here.]

ALICE

Has your other work explored Irish themes?

DRISCOLL

There have been, as I'm sure you know, an extraordinary number and quality of Irish writers. The standard for good writing in Irish culture is very high. There's a deep and complex history in Dublin, and Ireland in general. [Can you tell I don't have an especially good reason to go to Dublin?]

ALICE

Can you elaborate on that theme, please?

GRANT

It is a real strength of your proposal. So we'd like to hear it, thanks.

DRISCOLL

Literary culture "literally" helped shape the modern Irish nation. Now the country is going through great change with its steady stream of European Union immigrants entering the country. A recent reversal in its population growth, the Celtic Tiger, as it were, has continued the ongoing dialogue of whether to model social policy after 'Boston or Berlin,' as they frequently characterize the tendency. [I hope they can't tell I'm pulling this out of my ass!] They're at a hinge, a sea-change, to return to an allusion in *The Tempest*, and well ... [Here we go. I'm just gonna say it.] I'm being drawn there/ ... [Hell with it, I'll just say this, too.] My father's side of the family is Irish-American, and well, the history of Ireland is very closely linked with the American experience. So, it's a roots thing. I'm looking for, not so much a change, as an addition to my life* ... and this is what I feel I need to add.

ALICE

I see.

GRANT

*A new vocabulary...

How well do you know the destination, in this case Dublin, where you hope to go, with this fellowship?

DRISCOLL

[Get a load of this answer.] I was in Dublin for three days last year. [I'm dead in the water.] But I have colleagues there and contacts through a publisher, and I'm confident that with their generous help, I'll be able to hit the ground running...as it were.

ALICE

And which resources, that are unique to your destination, will you explore?

DRISCOLL

[They probably mean a resource other than some old sod in a pub whom, I hope, will tell me good story.] The National Library has, of course, material on the social and political history of Ireland. And I expect to comb the archives at Trinity College to examine periodicals, newspapers, and diaries of Dublin through the 18th and 19th Centuries. To travel through time in a place...as it were. To provide a point of departure...for my...travel writing...new...idiom...to explore. [Oh, sweet Jesus, save me from myself!]

ALICE

And if awarded, the grant money will be used for what purpose?

DRISCOLL

For housing and general support. Unfortunately, Dublin is a very expensive place to live...and this grant will be the piece of the puzzle that allows me to go...to explore...to, to, to enrich my work, my writing...and I hope...will be of interest...on both sides of the pond...as it were. [I'm so fucked.] I need to find respite from the toxic public dialogue that characterizes the present political landscape in these United States ... of America.

ALICE

We understand.

GRANT

I think we're done here. It's nice to meet you. Best of luck to you.

ALICE

Official notification will be made by certified letter, by the end of next month. Good luck.

GRANT

And when you go...have a pint of Guinness for me! (they laugh)

ALICE

And a harp for me.

DRISCOLL

[If I have a pint for everyone who asked me to have a pint, I won't see a sober day for four months.] Thanks. Thanks very much. Is the tape still running? Ha-ha.

(He turns to get his papers, etc. When he turns back, FEMALE ACTOR helps MALE ACTOR on with a lap blanket. MALE ACTOR is DRISCOLL's father, William, his occasional vocal gestures are barely audible. He's very ill, blankly staring forward with a TV remote control in his hand. DRISCOLL kneels next to him. FEMALE ACTOR changes to JACKIE for the next scene.)

DRISCOLL

Dad. Dad... it's Johnny. Yesterday, right, good. I won't know for several days. (He listens.) These things go in phases. Last grant cycle it was all about women's social history in industrial cities. Women, Dad. How they made money, when, you know, men worked in factories for 16 hours a day. (He listens.) No matter what, I'll go. (He listens.) That won't be necessary. (He listens.) They were sheep farmers. [Weren't all the Irish in the early 19th Century.] I'll go there. (He listens.) Ringville. [My ancestors are from a different part of Ireland every few years.] (He listens.) Thanks, Pops. It means a lot. I'll go. It'll be fine. You need anything? OK. I'll check back in a few of hours. Yes, she is. She's here. You'll be fine.

(JACKIE and DRISCOLL walk away as MALE ACTOR exits.)

Mother Nature does not use a clock or a calendar. So the vigil continues, and with his blessing, the plan moves forward ... such as it is.

JACKIE

Are you sure you need to do this trip?

JOHN

When am I sure about anything?

JACKIE

Is this what you really want?

JOHN

I know what I want.

JACKIE

I've seen you in the grocery store spend 30 minutes deciding what cereal to buy.

JOHN

Cereal is a substantial decision. Takes weeks to finish a box of cereal. However, with big decisions: I never waiver.

JACKIE

Then you get all fixated, stuck, and never stop to eat or sleep.

JOHN

It's a flaw of my character. Another is that I mythologize my family history. I come from a long line of mythologizers.

JACKIE

No getting stuck across the ocean. No secret girlfriends in Dublin.

JOHN

I got to get there first.

JACKIE

I'll eagerly await the news. And your return. (a congratulatory kiss on the cheek. JACKIE hands him a letter and exits.)

DRISCOLL

Dear, Mr Driscoll. Congratulations, we're very pleased to inform you that you've been awarded the ArtSupport grant for 2005. Exclamation point! Upon your return, please provide documentation for the amount of the grant and a short narrative that will be included in the annual report, open to public review, explaining how the grant helped you to further your long term artistic activities. With best regards. David Malachy O'Boyle, Director of Grants. God, I forgot. That's the only reason I got the damn thing – he's an old Mick himself. P.S. in longhand – have a Guinness for me.

Scene Two

(FEMALE ACTOR is a real estate broker, CAROL, who sits at a small table, with piles of papers, a computer, a land line, and a mobile phone. Throughout the conversation she's shuffling, mobile phone texting, writing emails, etc. They're talking on the land-line. North Dublin dialect.)

DRISCOLL

(As he grabs the phone) [Be polite. They told you that business transactions are looser than you expect. Get the answer.] Hi, Carol, a pleasure to talk to you. This is John Driscoll from the US, the writer, coming to live in Dublin for 4 months.

CAROL

This autumn, right?

DRISCOLL

That's right, September through December. Right

CAROL

Lovely, yes. Very nice. / (to someone else) Get the bally currier out the eff-in' door!

DRISCOLL

I appreciate your quick response to my emails. I was calling/ ah...to ...confirm, if I may, that everything is in order for my arrival next month.

CAROL

(to someone in the room) Jaysus, tell him no, for fucksakes— jaysus ... Ah, Sure. You'll be grand.

DRISCOLL

That's just great. Can I get an address, so you know, so I'll know where I'll be.

CAROL

Dublin 2. Des-res. Very desirable address. Very convenient. You won't need a car./ (again to someone else) No, the flats on Adelaide Road, two one-bedrooms.

DRISCOLL

Great.

I appreciate your efforts. Can I have that address and a confirmation of the cost. So, I can plan accordingly, of course.

CAROL

Sure, you'll be in Dub 2, and the cost is in the email my associate sent to you. You'll be grand.

DRISCOLL

I saw that email, yes, the email from 'Aemonn', is it? Gave me a cost range, but not a price, so that's why I've called, just to ... /get everything ... set-up before I arrive.

CAROL

We won't pay more than one million on that street! Never. No. 875, not a euro more.

DRISCOLL

An email with the price and the address, thanks.

CAROL

We'll take care of you, don't you worry. Dublin is lovely throughout the whole of autumn. You'll be grand.

DRISCOLL

And would you be so kind to send an email with, as I said, the address and actual cost? I can pay by bank draught, or a wire transfer. Whatever the usual lease requirements are, I'll, of course, be happy to take care of ahead of time.

CAROL

You just bring some money with you when you come. We know who you are. You'll be grand. And thanks for calling. Be sure I have the exact date and time you arrive. Bye, bye, bye, Grand, very nice, OK then, bye, bye/bye bye bye, perfect, bye bye.

DRISCOLL

Bye, ah thanks. [Bring money with you when you come?! What!? I wish I had you on the other line. No lease, no deposit? Picture this – I'm off the plane; I'm carrying a bunch of shit; I got, what? 2000! euro in my pocket, and I'm supposed to go, where? And pay what, to whom? Maybe it's a cultural difference, thing, but, uh, "You'll be grand" is not much to go on.]

(DRISCOLL crosses to small table, chair. Sees FEMALE ACTOR, as SHANA, a Midwestern (US) 'alternative' server at a trendy indy coffee shop. Sassy and friendly. She brings a mug of coffee and an ashtray.)

SHANA

Sorry, I couldn't get to you sooner. We were making falafel. It's very fresh. You use cream, right? Here's an ashtray. Did Dan tell me you're going soon?

DRISCOLL

I'm in Dublin 'til Christmastime.

SHANA

Cool. I'll – we'll – miss you.

DRISCOLL

I've been there enough to know you can't smoke anywhere, and you can't find a good cup of coffee.

SHANA

Sounds like hell. We'll ground up a fresh pound for you before you leave.

DRISCOLL

Thanks.

SHANA

Hey. Have a Guinness for me. I had one the other night at *Palomino's*. It's like cold soup with a kick. (she exits.)

DRISCOLL

Fresh notebook. New fountain pen. Travel writing – Gotta take field notes of my travel. Right? I don't actually read much travel literature, but how hard can it be? So, I begin. I think I'll call it: -- what? -- The Dublin Journal. (He writes. FEMALE ACTOR and MALE ACTOR interject with his hopeful image of a warm welcome to Ireland – a /a tourist board ads.) Leaving my wife, whom I adore. Leaving my house where I'm comfortable and at peace. / Leaving my friends. Putting a pause in my career. To, to, for, I don't know, - - what?, -- to see if I can taste a different life. * It's risky. With Dad... could be two months; could be six, nine. + He wants to hear about the 'homeland' before he goes. Wants me to find stories that will confirm every myth and stereotype about the magic qualities of Ireland. @ Why in God's name would you leave your precious wife? You're insane. Admit it.

FEMALE ACTOR

/ Welcome to Ireland!

MALE ACTOR

* Dublin Pubs, the best pubs in the world!

FEMALE ACTOR

+ The beaches, the sand. The green, like you've never seen.

MALE ACTOR

@ Explore the enchanted isle. Ireland: your other home.

Scene Three

(Sound: Airplane landing/taking off. Airport announcements. FEMALE ACTOR, as JACKIE, faces US and recedes slowly through this speech after clinging to him and weeping.)

DRISCOLL

I am so sorry I'm doing this. It may be a terrible mistake. I'll be fine, sweetheart. It's a civilized country – they have doctors, emergency rooms (*she weeps loudly.*) [Wrong thing to say.] And the leaves changing, I'll miss that. Sweetheart, I'm really sorry I'm doing this to you. I had no idea you'd be so ... Remember, I bought good insurance – It'll take care of my mortal remains in case something happens. (*She hits him.*) Sorry, sorry. Just making a joke. I gotta get out of this toxic soup of a country for a while. I need to prove I can start something new ... to own a piece of another city ... to learn ... I don't know what ... Why am I doing this? Everything I need is at home. It'll go fast, I know it. A year from now it'll be a hiccup in our lives- (*She's now some distance from him.*) Tell me the truth about Dad. No one else will. Please God, I pray she dies before I do. Sometime far into the future if you're willing, but *her* first. I could not possibly die in peace knowing I would leave her like this. Can we make that bargain? Oh, and it would be really convenient if Dad could hold out 'til I get back. I started making bargains with God. How cliché.

(He looks up to a clock and rushes to another part of the stage where he sees an elderly Irish couple, Jay and May O'Shea who are negotiating with INS officers. DRISCOLL watches for a moment.)

MAY O'SHEA

I don't know what they need it for. (A bright flash of light.) It's new. It's because of 9/11 I'm sure. Just put your finger into the box. Go ahead, you'll be fine.

JAY O'SHEA

How come you don't have to put your in finger into the machine?

MAY O'SHEA

I was here just 6 months ago, and I did it then.

JAY O'SHEA

But how do they know that?

MAY O'SHEA

(Alarmed) I don't know.

JAY O'SHEA

(To the INS officer) Just holiday, that's right. And thanks. (to his wife) I suppose it makes us all more secure.

MAY O'SHEA

Yes it does. (Catches DRISCOLL's eye.) It's all so new. We've been coming since the 1960's.

DRISCOLL

They ... uh ... I read where they started doing that recently ... for everyone, I guess.

JAY O'SHEA

But not for you!

DRISCOLL

Ya know, these TSA people – these new security officers – they don't ... ah, don't ... inspire my confidence very much.

MAY O'SHEA

But it makes us safer.

DRISCOLL

And when you're about to get on a plane, that's a good thing.

JAY O'SHEA

Are you on holiday?

DRISCOLL

Sort of. I'm on a fellowship ... in Dublin ... for 4 months.

MAY O'SHEA

Are you a student, then?

DRISCOLL

Past that. Thanks. You charmer.

JAY O'SHEA

Then you're very welcome to Ireland.

MAY O'SHEA

Plenty of fun for young people in Dublin. Have you been before?

DRISCOLL

Just once for a few days.

(Plane take-off sound cross fade to Airport announcement of Dublin airport. Driscoll sleepily crosses to MALE ACTOR as Donal, an Immigration Officer.)

DONAL

You're writing? Right. On a fellowship – hope they're paying your housing. Good. 'Study.' And when are you leaving?

DRISCOLL

[Sweetheart, this is the moment I most feared. Irish visas are for 90 days. I'm here for just about 100 days. Do I tell him? The Irish consulate office gave me a whole song and dance about why those extra ten days were a significant obstacle. Until, it came out that I was born not far from where the Irish consulate officer was currently living in Chicago. Then it turned into, 'I suppose you'll be fine. Sure, you're well suited for Ireland, etc.' And she left it as vague as it was before I made the call. Other Irish friends said, "Ah, you'll be grand." OK. Tell the truth. It's easier to remember.] 'til ... ah ...

DONAL

How long are you staying?

DRISCOLL

'Til December 15th.

DONAL

Right. Study visa until Decmeber 30th. (As he signs the passport.) Next, please.

DRISCOLL

That was as easy, as it was arbitrary. Here we go.

(DRISCOLL picks up a load of luggage. Crosses and sees a Dublin Bus information person.)

FEMALE ACTOR

Right. You get that bus there. (DRISCOLL crosses to MALE ACTOR.)

MALE ACTOR

That one there will get you closer and it's less expensive. Right. Welcome to Dublin. Here long?

DRISCOLL

100 days.

MALE ACTOR

That's a good long visit.

DRISCOLL

Picked up the key to my apartment at the address I received – yesterday.

(FEMALE ACTOR hands DRISCOLL a key.)

Scene Four

DRISCOLL

This was too easy. Very nice taxi driver. This was just so easy. What was I worried about? Find some lunch. Have a nap. Have a pint. Sleep for ten hours. I'm good to go.

(He walks forward. The lights drop out. We hear the click of light switches. He wanders. His eyes adjust a little. More clicks.)

Is everything out? The foyer light still on. A master switch, maybe. What the fuck!

(He feels around for a bathroom. We hear him urinate. Reaches forward.)

The toilet does not flush. (He wanders some more.) No phone. No fridge. No power. No phone. No toilet. No electricity. For the US equivalent of \$1500 per month! Welcome to Ireland. (Yelling across the ocean) Jackie! I need to talk to you right now!

(Quick music bridge. He moves to a table and chair with an archival foam sponge on it. He slips on an ID tag.)

DRISCOLL

Trinity College. This is what I'm here for. Oh, yes. I managed to take a dump in the neighbour's house. "Hi I'm John Driscoll, just arrived from America. We're neighbours. Can I leave a much needed poop in your toilet" Thank you very much!

(FEMALE ACTOR, as Marian. approaches. She's a librarian.)

MARIAN

So what exactly are you looking for?

DRISCOLL

I'm not so sure myself. Newspapers from Dublin ... 1780's to ... ah, say ... 1820-ish ... I'll need to see a few, frankly, before I'll know for certain.

MARIAN

Just starting is it?

DRISCOLL

Right ... ah ... I'm a travel writer ... I guess ... and I've arranged for my reader's card and I'm going to explore. It's all a little vague to me, actually. But I'll know what I'm looking for when I see it.

MARIAN

Ok, sure. I understand. Let's start with the index of our holdings in this area -- no sense searching for material we don't have.

DRISCOLL

Thanks. I appreciate your help. [Starting is always the hard part. So, the landlord, not the agent whom I we paid mind you, comes to find me in the dark crying – well, not actually crying. He's clearly hung-over – totally shitfaced. He didn't know when I was coming, so he says. I reached for copies of emails I sent, but I figured it wasn't worth winning a fight at this moment. He says 'his man' is coming and I'll be fine by the end of the day. No nap. No phone. No toilet.]

MARIAN

Here we are then. So, where are you from?

DRISCOLL

Chicago area ... north of Chicago.

MARIAN

I know Chicago. My sister lives in Evanston. Visit often. Seemed like the best way to get the children an American experience and keep them connected with that part of my family. Lovely city, Chicago. Really grand.

DRISCOLL

I was born in Evanston, didn't grow-up there, but I know it very well.

MARIAN

Sure, we're all related aren't we! My name is Marian. (pause) I know ... All I can say is that my name was Marian before I became a librarian. Take a look at the index. I'll show you how to fill out a docket, and we'll get you started.

(He begins to look through the index as he speaks and listens in the next section.)

DRISCOLL

So the hung-over landlord, who's charging me mid-town Manhattan rent for a place that is nicely located with a good view, but not habitable, calls 'his man' and the games begin. I've been awake for over 30 hours now and I miss you, already.

NIALL

(enters with a toolbox) What the fuck am I doing here? (He has an odd half Irish – half American dialect.)

DRISCOLL

[I got the number on this guy instantly. I cannot let him leave 'til everything is fixed, 'cause it'll never happen once the power and toilet crisis passes.]

NIALL

The thing is, the arse-hole who lived here before broke the feckin' toilet -- the plastic part that works the valve -- see, and now it's fucked. I don't have this part. I need a 'coat hanger' for fuck-sake. And the security system is bollixed-up with your main power and that's your problem, so I disconnected that, 'cause, well the Garda is down the street and if you have a problem you can yell out the feckin' window --piece of shite these alarms that ring to no feckin' place. What's the reason for that: to sell the damn thing to some hapless landlord so he can charge you more for the security system. I should be home right now, on a Saturday. He says it's the power, now it's the toilet and the power, *and* the room light doesn't work -- and it hasn't since 1985.

DRISCOLL

And the cabinet door is now on the kitchen floor.

NIALL

And I'm supposed to have hinges with me when he says the electricity is gone? This situation is crap! Really, it's fucked. You're twisting me bollix, man. Do you know that? This not my problem.

DRISCOLL

Let's start with the toilet.

NIALL

Now, that's fucked, I told you about the arse-hole ... jaysus ... now I have to go to my car. (He exits for a moment.)

DRISCOLL

Welcome to Ireland. (Back to the archive table.) The index is overwhelming. This library is a scholar's wettest dream. Too bad I'm not one. Newspapers: *Post-boy. Hibernian Journal. Post-Gazette. Gazetteer and Advertiser.* Oh my God, I can't believe what I'm looking at/ it's right here.

NIALL

I need you to hold this piece of cardboard in place so I can glue this piece of wire to it to fix the toilet.

DRISCOLL

Sounds complicated. (He helps.)

NIALL

I work all week,/ you know. And the all-Ireland Hurling Final this weekend. You know what that is? It's like the 'Super Bowl,' but better. Hurling is the greatest sport in the world. You know why? 'Cause the range of skill they use surpasses any other modern sport. Do you hear what I'm saying, man.

DRISCOLL

[That's not uncommon.]

Sure. Cool. Sorry, if I may ask ... I've not been in Dublin long, but your accent. I can't quite place it.

MALE ACTOR

Ha! Place it! (In a Cheech and Chong accent) "I'm American, dude."

DRISCOLL

Come again.

NIALL

I moved to Philadelphia when I was 14. Went from high school to the USA Navy 'cause they put me through my apprenticeship – as an electrician – which is why I'm fixing toilets today. And in return for my education, I did a tour of Vietnam.

DRISCOLL

Wow. When were you in 'Nam?

NIALL

I was in "Nam, man" during Tet, man.

DRISCOLL

[Now I know why he swears like a sailor. He was one.]

NIALL

It was fucked. I came back in '71 and have never returned to your gracious shore. Because America is feckin' ridiculous, man. Unbelievable. Especially now! Reagan was an idiot, but a likable one. And Clinton, now there's your man. But Baby Bush? I don't understand you people. An idiot. What were you thinking? I hope you'll get your economy straightened out and stop spending your money on bollixed wars in the Middle East, because I expect to collect my Social Security payments as soon as possible, man.

DRISCOLL

Right. Well. I can assure you that 8% of my paycheck each month will ensure a just and comfortable retirement for you here in Ireland.

NIALL

I'm happy to hear it. And you'll be happy to hear the flushing sound of the toilet when I rig this (wire and cardboard) to the valve. (he leaves)

DRISCOLL

I love this country. (back to the table.) I can't believe what I found. A newspaper called *The Dublin Journal*. It's just crazy enough to work. (FEMALE ACTOR, as Marian, enters.) I'd like to start looking at *The Dublin Journal*.

MARIAN

Grand. You'll notice that the holdings are quite scattered. If you want more coverage of that period/ ... I might suggest ... Hibernian Chronicle.

DRISCOLL

Dublin Journal will be perfect.

MARIAN

Right. Let's start with two volumes at a time. That'll get you going. Good. Great. OK. Fill that out and they'll retrieve them by tomorrow at half ten. It's a lovely library and you're very welcome.

DRISCOLL

Needless to say, I did my best to find a new apartment as quickly as I could. Luckily, my publisher's contact had pity on me and she helped me get a good, generic, clean, functioning short term let. What a difference! This woman is all that is good about Ireland. Sweet Katie-Lis.

Scene Five

(FEMALE ACTOR as Katie-Lis with the lilty-est, sweetest Kerry dialect possible.)

KATIE-LIS

You can't not have a toilet. I mean really, this isn't an underdeveloped country you've come to. You need to write and learn about Ireland and not even think about your flat. In fact, I tell you what I'll do – you'll take my apartment.

DRISCOLL

Good God, no.

KATIE-LIS

Yes, indeed. I was going to move next month anyway. So, I'll just move this weekend and stay with my friends 'til I find a place.

DRISCOLL

You can't be serious. I had no intention of inconveniencing you.

KATIE-LIS

I will not allow your short time in Ireland to be miserable. That's it. No more discussion. It's done and dusted. You can have the place ... well ... I'll have it cleaned on Friday morning. Let's say Friday evening. OK. Good. You'll be grand.

DRISCOLL

Jack, I only regret that you'll never see the busted toilet place. I'm re-settled. Across from some Council Flats which would prove to provide endless pyrotechnic entertainment throughout the months of September and October. One evening the fireworks weren't shooting straight up, but were *from* their balcony *to* the opposing side, mine. An unintended parody of class warfare. The Gardai, snug in their station only a stone's throw away, paid a visit about 45 minutes into the spontaneous ordnance assault. And the name of the building -- the Irish have perfected the euphemism. The Council Flats across from me are called 'Charlemont Gardens.' Gardens. Where are the gardens? There's an vacant lot next door -- paved, filled with litter and the flotsam and jetsam of construction materials. It's fenced off so kids can't play in there -- but no garden.

(DRISCOLL returns to the archive table and carefully opens a large bound volume.)

I love old things and that's something of a curse when you live in a country where 100 years passes for old, and 200 years is ancient. But this ... this is the real thing here: a newspaper. A publication intended to be read and passed-on for maybe a day or two, then used to wrap fish. Ephemera. And someone had the sense to put it in an attic so we could read it 200 and (he looks carefully) sixty years later. I'm very nervous as I turn each page. I don't want to be the one, in its 260 year history, to tear it. It starts with news from abroad. Interesting. The rest of the paper is notices of every kind of pressing need that goes on in a growing, thriving city. And each need reveals a story. Appeals to charity. Notices of sermons given for the benefit of a women's asylum. Lost or stolen property with rewards for return 'no questions asked.' Theft of 32 sheep and 9 bullocks! Notice of plays by Dublin writers who have since become famous and were at the time hoping that at least three performances would be given, 'cause the playwright didn't make a ha'penny until after the theatre and the actors were properly paid: Farquhar, Sheridan, Goldsmith.

DRISCOLL (cont.)

Here we go. The Dublin Journal, April 1793, **The School for Scandal** at the Theatre Royal. And the comedy **Rule a Wife and Have a Wife**. How do you like that title! Old things make me feel the chain of being. When I was about 22 years old, I was living in Mexico. I had a wrinkly, dried-up, beautiful, old crone read my palm. She stared at it and fussed with it silently for about two or three minutes. Seemed like forever. And she looked up and said, "you're the oldest person I've ever met. I have nothing to say to you." I'm still not sure what that means.

Here's a classic. September 1754.

MALE ACTOR

(Puts on an old hat or other signifier for a period character – sort of like an 18th Century radio ad.)

Fresh from London a fresh Quantity of the famous Cephalick and Ophalmick Tobacco, which by Smoking a pipe of it is good for the Head, eyes, Stomach, lungs, Rheumatism and Gout, Thinness of Hearing, Head ache tooth ache or Vapors. And to give free breath to a Person in wheezing. Which makes this a most Excellent Tobacco to smoke for Dizziness of the Head, and sore and weak eyes. A pipe in the evening gives a good night's rest.

DRISCOLL

And you people banned smoking in pubs! You built this modern state, in no small part, on the strength of your literary tradition. Now, do you think any members of the Dial stopped for a moment to consider how many of your great writers were smokers? And how many of them did their great writing in pubs and coffee shops while they were smoking? Historians of the next century will see a decline in Irish culture and letters, and pin-point the moment of retrograde to March of 2004. Mark my words. It'll be a miracle if I finish this book, because I'll have spent 4 months in clean pubs and boring cafés, smoking on the sidewalk -- in the rain. Or in these porches with portable heaters. Honey, here's how it works in the pubs, since the smoking ban. Just about every pub has an attached patio with a space heater so you can drink and smoke and still be 'outside.'

(FEMALE ACTOR , as Grace, is 50-ish, tipsy and wearing an oversized men's argyle sweater. DRISCOLL has a pint. They're having a smoke.)

DRISCOLL

For four months, yes.

GRACE

Good long visit, so.

The Dublin Journal / Troy / 11/13/14

DRISCOLL

It's a delight to be here. / That's a very handsome sweater.

GRACE

Here?
What's that?

DRISCOLL

I like your sweater. Looks like an old friend.

GRACE

This old thing?

DRISCOLL

The color ... it looks good on you.

GRACE

It's warm enough, sure. I like it ... sure ... it's ... well ...this old thing.

DRISCOLL

Kind of a classic look. [I'm just trying to have a chat, and this is getting complicated.]

GRACE

(She starts to pull her arm up one sleeve.) Would you like it? / You can have it, so.

DRISCOLL

What?
That's really very kind, but no thanks/ it suits you perfectly.

GRACE

Take it. I'm sure.
If you like it.

DRISCOLL

[This is taking Irish generosity, too far.]

GRACE

I've had with it now. It's warm, but just an old thing.

DRISCOLL

Thanks, really. [I'm not sure how to get out of this situation gracefully.] Nice to meet you.

GRACE

See you here again. And good luck.

DRISCOLL

(As he crosses back to the table. Pages through a newspaper.)

You'll get a kick out of this. From Georgian equivalent of the Entertainment Pages.

Dublin Journal. January 1769.

FEMALE ACTOR

*Will be presented a Comic Opera called **Love in the Village** ... with Several new and astonishing Performances on the Tight Rope ... Signor La Nomora will dance on the tight rope, two Naked Swords fastened to his Legs. He will also Dance on the tight rope with a Boy on his shoulders and 2 Boys fastened to his Legs as the same Time; he will also Dance with two large Men fastened to his Feet ... Sra. Rofolia will also Stand on her Head on Top of a Candlestick, and turn her Body around Several Times.*

DRISCOLL

I'm not making this up. This is so fun!

Dublin Journal. May 1769

Headline: For the reception of Lunatics. A commodious house is now fitted-up and ready to receive Patients, at Portobello, near Kevin's Port, being a convenient situation for the Purpose ...

That's just along the Canal from my flat! This is what was going on in this city 250 years ago.

Dublin Journal. September, 1754.

MALE ACTOR

Stolen or Strayed. From the Coach and Horses in York-street, near Stephen's Green, on Friday last, the 6th Instant, September 1754, a large bright yellow COW, and another black COW, the property of Matthew Maxwell. Whoever brings them, or send word to the owner, shall have half a guinea Reward, no Questions ask'd. Note, Both Cows are giving Milk.

DRISCOLL

Dublin wasn't very big in 1754 to hide a bright yellow, lactating cow. Follow the milk trail.

(He leaves the desk for a walk in City Centre.)

I invested the first couple of weeks here exploring the City Centre on foot. Let myself get lost a few times, asked lots of questions. Then suddenly, without even noticing, I must have carried an air of ease of some kind, because people started asking me for directions! It felt great when I could answer, and I was charmed when I'd explain that you'll find that Leeson Street is just the opposite end of the Stephen's Green, and they'd be surprised to get directions from an American. I subsequently learned that even though I now knew the urban topography of Dublin, I still gave directions like a Yankee.

(To an imaginary fellow pedestrian.) OK. You're a few blocks from Wexford Road. Charlemont runs parallel with Camden, and perpendicular with the Canal. Go north, towards the Liffey, to your next left. Right at the next intersection, and continue north again for, say 6 blocks. The road you're on will be called Wexford at about the time you're even with Stephen's Green at Cuffe Street. Here's how a Dubliner would give those same directions. (In a passable Irish dialect.) Turn right at the Bleeding Horse. Go past Cassidy's. Wexford is George's street, but closer to you.

Scene Six

(He meets a handsome couple from Cork, Claire and Patrick O'Neill. All three are waiting for tickets for a sold-out show at The Gate.)

DRISCOLL

[Plenty of charms remain in Dublin, and sometimes they come to find you.]
(to the couple) When they say the play is sold out, it's really sold out. I'm used to pushing and prodding and getting those last house-seats before they close the doors.

PATRICK

Then you must hurry down to The Abbey. Whatever is there, is good. As a young man, my good friend was an Abbey actor. We were very proud.

CLAIRE

Those were heady days. Are you getting used to the city?

DRISCOLL

I'm living near the Canal and enjoy the swans and ducks, and those little black pigeons.

CLAIRE

We live in New Jersey. (pause) You weren't expecting that were you?

PATRICK

I started working for Aeir Lingus in 1967. They sent me to America for two years and I stayed.

CLAIRE

We love America.

DRISCOLL

[They love New Jersey! Never heard an American say *that*.]

PATRICK

And Ireland. We're back two or three times each year.

CLAIRE

Except when/ ... well ... you remember.

PATRICK

I know. I know. We met just here. (She points.)

DRISCOLL

In the Penny's?

CLAIRE

It was a movie house then and I was only 16! (She giggles.)

PATRICK

And I was on holiday from training for the Royal Air Force. Battle of Britain. Took you Yanks long enough to join up.

CLAIRE

He's a child; he doesn't even know what you're talking about.

PATRICK

You're here long enough to be sure to eat at the Brasserie.

CLAIRE

Our oldest friends from Cork, they own it.

PATRICK

You tell them Claire and Patrick O'Neill from Cork sent you.

CLAIRE

But it's so expensive there.

PATRICK

Claire and Patrick from Cork. (They're about to cross the street.)

CLAIRE

Here, dear. (to grab his arm.) O'Connell Street is a mess. People get killed crossing here you know. /You be careful – because you don't know which way to look before you cross.

PATRICK

Only old ladies gets killed here.

CLAIRE

And what do you think I am?

PATRICK

But you'll get the hang of it. You're very welcome to Ireland. I'm a Cork man meself. But Dublin is a wonderful city.

DRISCOLL

You fell in love here.

CLAIRE

Sixty years ago!

PATRICK

Go to the Abbey.

CLAIRE

And good luck.

Scene Seven

DRISCOLL

Some things only happen when you're travelling. People open up. They see themselves with fresh eyes. Sixty Years. I met you, my dear Jackie, too late. I'm won't be able to say 'sixty years' 'til I'm 85 – If I live that long. But blessings overflow, and in the desert of affection I find a brief oasis, because I finally get to show you my new city.

(John and FEMALE ACTOR as Jackie, embrace, then sit side-by-side facing forward holding hands to a montage of street sounds: Grafton Street, and buses, The LUAS bell, concerts, pedestrians, buskers, and recognizable lines from Hamlet delivered in a Belfast dialect. They smile and occasionally glance at each other. Simply happy to be together. Silence. She weeps as she goes away.)

DRISCOLL

Why in God's name, would I voluntarily spend a single day away from you?!

(As if he's walking along the Grand Canal.)

Dear Dad – A lovely visit with my lovely wife, I can't believe a month has passed already. We discovered ever more charms of the Fair City together. There's a wonderful statue of Oscar Wilde / across from his boyhood home.

FEMALE ACTOR

18th of April 1795

The Charity of the Humane and Benevolent is dearfully Solicited for the Mother of a wretched Family, ... who lost five Sons in his Majesty's Service, is now, and have been for many Years, languishing on the Bed of Sickness / without means of procuring common Sustenance ...

DRISCOLL

There is a species of bird, some kind of hen, lives along the Canal – black, very round – a dollop of chocolate mousse, really, with a red beak, - that I noticed them within hours of moving here. No one seems to know it's proper name, and I've asked about a dozen people. Wood hen, thrush pigeon, back bird, (FEMALE ACTOR 's voice Dub 6: Sure, it's a black bird.) Wood Chick. I asked a man who turned out to be French and had almost no English, and he stammered a few times and finally said, " It is ... ah ... poultry.' I call them the 'Grand Canal hen-quail-duck.'

FEMALE ACTOR

She and her Family (the Occupants of a Cellar) are in momentary expectation of being turned out to the Street by the Landlord ... for a few shillings Rent. / Benefactions will be received by the Printer.

(As DRISCOLL passes by)

JONAH

(MALE ACTOR as Jonah, is crouching low, jingling change in a paper cup in the universal attitude of alms-begging. In a mechanical, soft, high-pitches, even polite tone.) Spare some change for a hostel, sir. Spare some change for a hostel. Thank you very much / and have a good evening. God Bless.

DRISCOLL

I wish I was a painter, Dad, because my words cannot do justice to this sight. I'm next the statue of Patrick Kavanaugh, looking westward. The leaves are turning and I see the reflection of them on the water.

DRISCOLL (cont.)

Some of the leaves have fallen, and they gently flow toward me, and some have sunk to the bottom and I see them muted, but still present, through the cold, clear water. Four versions of color in one scene. Kavanaugh recovered here, and I understand the sense of nature coupled with the wonders/ of human endeavour he must of felt.

JONAH

Spare some change for a hostel, sir. Spare some change for a hostel. Thank you very much and have a good evening. God Bless.

DRISCOLL

The Irish have such an easy, unselfconscious way of saying 'God Bless.' We can't do that in the States any more. It's not PC. You might offend an athiest. Or worse, you might inadvertently invite a right-wing, born-again, Neo-Con, evangelists-type to try and save you from Satan's cunning while he tells you that Bush is being treated unfairly by the "liberal" media. It's too bad though, because even if you're not a believer, it's a nice sentiment.

FEMALE ACTOR

August 1740. Dropped on Monday, June 30th, between Globe coffee house on Essex Street, and Castle Street, a bank note of 20 pounds of Mssr. LaTouche and Kane, Payable to Bearer no. 761/ Who ever bring it to Ms. Anthony More's house on Clarendon Street shall receive a reward of half a guinea.

DRISCOLL

/ (To Jonah.) Did you catch that notice. It's worth 20 quid. You got the note *and* the account number, have at it.

(Jonah leaves. Driscoll returns to the archive table.)

People were losing things constantly in Dublin two hundred years ago. Cows, as you've heard. Bank notes. Letters. Houses. Army units lost scores of soldiers.

MALE ACTOR

15th July, 1740. Deserted from the regiment of the Hon. Col. Pansonby, A certain John Mitchell, Age 32. Fresh Complexion. Red hair. 5 foot seven and 1/2 inches in his shoes. Who ever returns said deserter shall have 40 shillings reward.

DRISCOLL

Pets.

FEMALE ACTOR

Dublin Journal. 6th of August, 1736. *Strayed or Left in the City of Dublin on Tuesday the 2nd of this instant August. A young grey-hound, of yellow Braided color well Shaped. Who ever secures this said Greyhound, and brings him to the Custom-House Coffee Shop, Sussex Street, shall receive 2 crowne's reward; without an examination.*

DRISCOLL

Children.

FEMALE ACTOR

April 4th. 1741. *Last Saturday two Children well dressed were found on Essex-Bridge: one Girl of Five Years old; and the other a Boy of three who were taken Care of by the Generous Charity of the Gentlemen of the Custom-house: They say they come from England, and their Mother died on the Road. Their Sirname is Tate, but know not from whence they came; It is believed they are of a Good Family, and have been tenderly bred, for they can eat nothing best and cleanest of food.*

DRISCOLL

Kidney stones!

MALE ACTOR

July, 1726. *About 10 days ago a man was Cut for the Stone, the Old Way, by Mr. Dobyms, St. Bartholomews Hospital; from whom were taken 6 stones, one as big as a Turkey's Egg; two as a Pigeons, the others as a Nutmeg, and is likely to recover.*

DRISCOLL

And then there's just some things, I don't understand. Like:
7th of June, 1726. *A man appeared here at our races in a chaise drawn by 4 dogs. A young Nobleman offered him a handsome Sum for the dogs which he refused.*

Or:

The Wild Youth, lately brought from Hanover, being, pretty much forward in his speech, is (we hear) to be Baptized this Evening at Dr. Arbuthnot's House near Burlington Gardens.

Scene Eight

DRISCOLL

Saturdays seem to be the loneliest day of the week without you. But it's a warm, sunny autumn afternoon. Seize the day. Sit outside my favorite coffee shop, write, and watch the afternoon traffic. I notice that one strategy Dubliners use when they want to park in a no-parking zone, is to simply drive up on the sidewalk.

(He starts to write. Traffic noise, and the voices of the Algerian men who seem to be there all the time. FEMALE ACTOR, as Erica, brings coffee and a pastry, while DRISCOLL continues to write. Erica lingers for a moment. Smiles. Exits. Returns with Cream. The smile. She exits. Returns with sugar.)

DRISCOLL

You're really very sweet. Erica. (She lingers. Looks about.) Thanks. (She touches his shoulder as she leaves. He looks back toward her. He begins to write furiously.)

(MALE ACTOR enters as Peter, the Derry man. His speech is laden with alcohol and tries to roll a cigarette with a tin devise.)

DRISCOLL

[Next door a couple of Poles or Latvians are lewdly calling to selected women who pass by, exchanging back athletic bags and illegally parked cars.]

(DRISCOLL looks back again toward Erica. He shivers.)

PETER

You're very lucky ... at the minute. I'm sad. Very sad. You're very lucky to have your peace, because I'm upset today . . . here writing your letter. I'm very upset. Upset, really.

DRISCOLL

(Looks up, not sure whether to make eye contact or not.) Hi.

PETER

Because Saddam Hussein is my hero. He knew how to hide. And educated his people. And he stands trial. It's a sad day. And that Little Hitler and Tony Blair are ruining the world. The Americans think they can own it all. For eight years Saddam fought against the (terribly mispronounced) Oy-tulla Ko-man-eye. And all the while Saddam was the best friend of the Americans.. Why did Al Gore pretend he didn't know Clinton?/ Clinton was the best thing that ever happened. But the Americans... ya know?

DRISCOLL

[I nod. I grunt empathetically. I keep writing.]

PETER

I have no brains. I don't. I have no brains .. ya know. And it's good to have no brains. Especially with the women. If they think you're smarter than them, you'll get nothin'. I drive a tour bus/ ... yes ... that's what I do, while an operator points which way to go.

DRISCOLL

[I hope in a more sober condition than this.]

PETER

Everywhere I go, people resent Americans and hate the Little Hitler, George (struggles) W. Bush. Black propaganda is what he gives. Now there's a young filly. I need a ride. Do you know where I can get a ride?

DRISCOLL

(He looks up and down the street.) A cab, uh ... a taxi?

PETER

No (he laughs) I need to get fucked! Ride, (moves his hips) fuck, ya know!

DRISCOLL

Ahh! ... I get it.

PETER

But you can write, because your life is very relaxing. (Through gesture he asks if he can sit, and he does.) What do you do? I mean to say, what kind of occupation, what benefit do you bring to the world.

DRISCOLL

I'm writing...

PETER

Well, there you are, sitting peaceful, 'til this old gob-shite comes up and disturbs you. Now, I have no brains, but I follow international news, because I drive coach in Belgium and Germany and France ...

DRISCOLL

Where they don't like Americans . . .

PETER

And Ronald Reagan, I remember him, Irish, my arse, he just left his first wife so he could bugger Nancy right in the ... Let's talk about Kennedy, now there was a Bill Clinton. Dick Chaney, he's running everything.

PETER (cont.)

War criminal, shite-bag, piece of fuck that one. Making a mess in Iraq, it's criminal how these gentlemen have given black propaganda, and the American people are so ignorant, so stupid . . . they eat the shite on a plate. Saddam Hussien, let's forget about the Kurks in the north, / ... But Daddy Bush, he couldn't finish the job.

DRISCOLL

Uh, hmnn . . .

PETER

Here you are sitting peaceful, and this old gob-shite tells you the way of the world. I'm Peter.

DRISCOLL

I'm John. [Taylor? – I'm only catching every fifth word here.]

PETER

Are you from here?

DRISCOLL

I'm living in this neighborhood, right now.

PETER

So. No, ah, where are you from?

DRISCOLL

Well, I from the US, actually. (Derry man doesn't register.)

PETER

I'm from Londonderry / Derry it is. There's a nice one in there. Are you from here? I'm from the North. I'm IRA. I'm proud to say so. A revolutionary. A Guinness revolutionary./ The *in-DIG-in-us* people of Ireland! Do you think? We could ...could we ... Just a spot of whiskey. Can I buy you drink? We're having a talk here and it's very nice. I would like to buy you a drink.

DRISCOLL

[The more Guinness, the more revolutionary.]
Got my coffee. I'm good. Thanks.

PETER

So, where did you say you're from?

DRISCOLL

I'm an American. Black Propaganda.

PETER

No, you're not. Can't be. (waves his hands around DRISCOLL as if he's tracing an aura.) No.

DRISCOLL

Let's say I'm Canadian. [Sometimes, it's easier that way.]

PETER

That fits. OK, then.

DRISCOLL

And I'm a writer.

PETER

Well, that do you think of Conaleeka Rice. She's there, just so someone can wipe George Bush's arsehole. She fixes his nappy, is what she does. All these people walking to Landsdowne Road. / I wouldn't go there ...

DRISCOLL

I think it's rugby tonight. / I saw lots of shirts.

PETER

Wouldn't see that Gaelic shit.
Soccer. Now Tina Turner, that's what I would see. Tina Turner, you know what I'm talking about. Ah, that one in there, she'll have a turn, I'm sure.

(He leaves for a moment. DRISCOLL begins to write furiously.)

DRISCOLL

[It's taking candy from a baby.]

(DRISCOLL writes some more. Peter returns quickly and sits.)

PETER

A man can't ask a mot for a turn, anymore. I told her 'I had no brains.' That usually works. But no. The women are all becoming Americans – self-righteous cunt, she is. (DRISCOLL continues to write.) Now, don't let there be a Peter in there! (DRISCOLL smiles, continues writing. Peter let's out a hardy laugh.)

PETER

So, John. If I may address you as such. What is it you do? What do you have? What have you done? What's on your CV? Credentials, man! What is it you bring to the world?

DRISCOLL

I'm a writer.

PETER

I see that, sure. Who cares? What I mean is, what do you bring to the *world*, your education. How do you feed yourself, man?

DRISCOLL

[I think this the most embarrassing question I've ever faced in my life. I'm Rodolfo in *La Boheme*.] I write. I do a little teaching, too.

PETER

That's what I can't figure out. That you and I are having this nice little banter. You're takin' the craic! It's very impressive. We're very class conscious in Ireland, this rotting hole. I can't imagine an Irish, writer, a teacher to be sure, sitting down with an old gob-shite and listening to him spew. Someone of your distinction!

DRISCOLL

Well, ah, Americans deny class entirely, which brings its own set of problems. So, I'm told.

PETER

But you're Canadian.

DRISCOLL

Right. So, then. Peter. (Get's up, gathers his things.) It's been a pleasure/ to meet you. Thanks. Really. I have a date with a blank page.

PETER

Sure, I need a turn with that old mare.
You've had enough of this old bastard. I need a ride and a kip. All the best.

Scene Nine

(As DRISCOLL crosses toward the archive table, he notices a young mom, Aiofe, with a stroller. She's feeding the Canal birds.)

AOIFE

Here they come. (Eating sounds.) yum, yum, yum. It's a white one, sure. How big they are! Little boy duck. Little girl ducky.

DRISCOLL

Hi. We're having a break from the rain.

AOIFE

Yes, indeed, t'ank God.

DRISCOLL

The leaves are starting to turn.

AOIFE

Sure they are.

DRISCOLL

Do you by, by any chance, know what these black birds are called? They're my favorite ones, and I don't know what they are. I wish I knew my birds better.

AIOFE

No, I'm sure I don't.

DRISCOLL

I had someone tell me they were Wood Hens. Does that sound familiar?

AIOFE

Sure. It does. I don't, truly, know. Back birds. I think: eh, they're wood pigeons.

DRISCOLL

Certainly some kind of fowl. They're very funny when they run.

AIOFE

Yes, yes they are.

DRISCOLL

Not built for speed. Or grace.

AIOFE

No indeed.

DRISCOLL

Maybe the little one knows what to call them.

AIOFE

Does she now? What are they called, Lizzy? The swans frighten her a little. But, they're so grand.

DRISCOLL

They look like old men when they walk.

AIOFE

And stop all the traffic, too! They're called wood hens. Wood hens. I don't know. You'll have to ask someone else. Sorry. Or find it in a book.

DRISCOLL

I'll do that. Have a good day. Cheers.

AIOFE

See ya, then. God bless.

(DRISCOLL continues to the archive table. He turns a page and scribbles a note. Notices something interesting. Checks the date.)

Scene Ten

DRISCOLL

Here's a bit of sobering prophesy. (As he writes it down.) 13th Novemeber, 1756.

MALE ACTOR

Mr. Faulkner. Sir. At this Time that I observe several Powers in Europe prohibiting the Export of Grain of any Kind out of their Domains, I think it out to put those whom it may concern on their Guard, to prevent the Direful and Fatal Consequences that may result from the export of Oats, and Oaten meal out of this Kingdom ...

DRISCOLL

My ancestors left Ireland some hundred years after that warning. The peak of the Great Hunger had past, but recovery was slow. They were from the southeast. I don't know enough of them to understand what they suffered, or exactly why they left County Waterford, near Dungarvin. So, tell Dad when you talk to him that I'm taking that day-trip Ringville, or An Rinn and I'm going to breathe some sea air and see the hillside his people left a century and a half ago.

(He looks out over the Irish Sea – sound of gulls and surf.)

Dear Dad. It's green with warm salty spray. Tiny farms. Cottonball sheep, and friendly people. The breeze is constant, and air is fresh. It's a beautiful, if lonely spot. Just off the main road to Cork. And half a world away from you. I miss you. See you soon.

DRISCOLL (cont.)

Later on this excursion, in Wexford, the topic of conversation I hear most often in Dublin, finds me in a taxi.

(MALE ACTOR as Darragh, is a taxi driver in Wexford. Dublin dialect.)

DARRAGH

The opera keeps us busy for a month, but otherwise it's a quite town. Believe it or not, it's considered the sunny coast of Ireland.

DRISCOLL

I like it.

DARRAGH

I'm not native to Wexford.

DRISCOLL

Sounds like you're from Dublin.

DARRAGH

Very good!

DRISCOLL

I'm living there now, for a few months.

DARRAGH

Great City. But it's getting too hectic there and too many foreigners. You go to a pub, and you can't find any Irish anymore. Expensive.

DRISCOLL

Housing's tight.

DARRAGH

That's why I'm here.

DRISCOLL

So, do you trust the housing market in Dublin. I'm not buying houses, but from what I read and what people say, I'm afraid it's a housing bubble – over valued.

DARRAGH

It will hold up. I'm certain of it.

DRISCOLL

[In my mind's ear I start hearing those ads for buying foreign properties.]

FEMALE ACTOR

Welcome to the wonderful world of overseas properties. You can buy a one bedroom home on Corsa Schlocky for only 100,000 euro. A two bedrooms for only 125,000 euro. Corsa Schlocky, the new Riviera off the Canary Islands. The next popular vacation destination.

DARRAGH

They're taking jobs the Irish don't want any more, and they'll keep those jobs to pay the rents. It's all they know. They don't know any different. They're used to it. It's what you pay when you come here.

DRISCOLL

[I think Bernard Shaw wrote a play about this.]

FEMALE ACTOR

(Radio Ad voice.) Guaranteed rental income for 3 years at 6% APR. Don't let the Celtic Tiger pass you by. The next booming capital in Europe will be beautiful Budapest. Have a vacation home and rental income in this thriving business capital.

DARRAGH

I have a three bedrooms home in Dublin. I make enough money renting that house to pay for my house here and I don't have to work. I drive taxi just to help cash flow. Love Dublin. I still go for sport. To see friends, of course.

FEMALE ACTOR

You've heard the latest news. Turkish properties. You can own a home in Turkey for only 50,000 euro. You know what happened here. Think of your retirement plans today.

DARRAGH

I'm trained as an electrician. But I'm here. It doesn't pay to work./ The Dublin house means that I don't have to save for retirement.

DRISCOLL

[Honey, did you hear that?! It can't be good for democracy.]
It frightens me. [Just beware of John Larkin.]

DARRAGH

What's that?

DRISCOLL

Nothing. Sorry.

DARRAGH

Welcome to Ireland. Enjoy the rest of your stay.

DRISCOLL

Sweetheart, it's true. I shall not pontificate. This country really is mad with property speculation and get rich quick schemes. It's like the Wild West. I keep coming back to this one little item from Dublin Journal that amused me when I first read it, but somehow continues to haunt me.

(from his notebook.) June 6-9 1741. *Stolen out of the house of Mr. Joseph Fay ... on Tuesday the 28th of April, a Cash Book, wrapped in parchment ... who ever brings said book to Mr. Fay ... shall have a modest reward, no Questions ask'd, or 5 pounds if they secure the Thief.*

And Mr Fay desires that all his customers to settle his Accounts with him forthwith, and not to John Larkin, who may pretend to be at this present concerned for the said Fay in collecting debts for his costumers ... Said Larkin never having Power to receive such Money, or to give any Receipt in behalf of Said Fay.

It's the perfect 18th Century internet scam. So, whenever you hear this:

FEMALE ACTOR

(In dreamy, perhaps reverbed voice) Overseas Properties.

DRISCOLL

Remember John Larkin. When you hear this:

MALE ACTOR

Decommissioning.

DRISCOLL

Remember John Larkin. When you read this:

FEMALE ACTOR

(In an RTE news-presenters voice) Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern says nothing more can be done to prevent redundancies on Irish Ferries.

DRISCOLL

Remember John Larkin. 'Cause I'm after thinkin' that Said John Larkin has been reincarnated many times over the last 265 years and he's fresh from selling swampland in Florida in the 1970's.

DRISCOLL (cont.)

If the Dail wants to pass a law to really protect the Irish people, they should make it required viewing to watch *Glengarry Glen Ross* before anyone is allowed to attend one of these seminars at the Burlington Hotel, or the Red Cow Conference Centre on buying overseas properties.

Scene Eleven

(More 'get rich quick' radio ads play as DRISCOLL looks across the stage. He sees a well-dressed woman of 40-ish, Lizzy, eating a sandwich and feeding the birds on the Canal. She's from England.)

DRISCOLL

Lovely day.

LIZZY

Sparkling. I adore this view. Just through those trees there, look under the bridge, and you can see the water flow over the lock like a waterfall.

DRISCOLL

I live near here and have enjoyed watching the season change. Do you, by any chance, know what these darling little black birds are?

LIZZY

It's two species you see commonly here. The smaller ones with the red beak is a Moorhen. / The larger ones, with a white spot is a Coot.

DRISCOLL

Moor – hen.

Thanks. I've been asking people for over two months, and no one seems to know. I've heard Wood Hen, blackbird / wood pigeon.

LIZZY

It's certainly not a blackbird.

I'm from England, as you may have guessed/ And we have them, too. They're part of the rail family. Certainly you have them in America. Have to look for them now. Lovely birds.

DRISCOLL

I did.

I feel really lucky to live near the Canal.

LIZZY

It's brilliant. I went to school here in Dublin. Was away for 15 years or so, and we've been back for 3 years. Still a wonderful city. I love it.

DRISCOLL

I'm here for a few months on a fellowship. Writing.

LIZZY

My husband and I are moving back next April.

DRISCOLL

What brought you here?

LIZZY

I work for a solicitor's firm, just here. I'm an economist, actually. We're just in Ranelagh. We're going back so we can buy a house, settle-in. Nest!

DRISCOLL

Real estate is very expensive here.

LIZZY

Too much. It's not rational. I think you're crazy to buy in this market. I suspect it's 20 –25 % over-valued. Really. We won't play the game. It's too bad. Dublin is such a jewel. The best city of its size in the UK, ...I mean, well ... you know ... We wanted to raise our boys here. 'Course, I could be mistaken. I wouldn't be first Englishperson got the Irish wrong. Trust me, when you leave, you'll long for Dublin. You'll be desperate for it.

DRISCOLL

I'm sure I will. Thanks for the bird ID. I'm going to write that down. (He does.) Moor-Hen. Coot. Bye.

LIZZY

Cheerio. Enjoy.

(DRISCOLL goes back to the café table and looks up his notes. Coffee is already there. He leafs through his journal.)

DRISCOLL

Here's a property tip from my homeland. It will appreciate considerably in value.

MALE ACTOR

Dublin Journal, 1783. *Headline: To be sold in North America! This beautiful farm, King's Bridge, 15 Miles from New York, the town close by, about 1000 acres, have excellent house and offices upon it, and is Joining the Great Pass between New York Island and the Jersey's.*

DRISCOLL

Not far from where Tony Soprano lives now.

The Dublin Journal / Troy / 11/13/14

MALE ACTOR

Application to Lord Viscount Ranelagh in Dublin.

DRISCOLL

(As he continues to leaf through his journal, Eric enters and sits next to him.)
You paid for my coffee yesterday before you left. That was very sneaky.
Thanks. What's with your new hair? It's cute.

ERICA

It's nothing. You'll be writer here. Yes? You have to go back to America?
Why? It's wonderful here. Stay here. Right here.

DRISCOLL

I'd like to, but ... I don't live here ... I don't have a job here.

ERICA

You can get a job here. Stay. Why can't have job here?

DRISCOLL

Erica, ... at this moment, I would marry if I could.

ERICA

(A deep sigh, before ...) Why can't you?

DRISCOLL

I'm too old.

ERICA

No, is good! Older husband is best. I' am Romanian. Older husband is very
... special. Older man is ... not ... stupid any more."

DRISCOLL

I'm already married.

ERICA

(She turns away. Resigned) I know. (She hugs him, kisses his cheek, and
leaves.)

DRISCOLL

(Back to his journal.)Here's a sad and mysterious one. Christmas. 1783.

MALE ACTOR

A Gentleman who has lately returned from a long and Painful Captivity in America, who in a Consequence of the Peace in which he was so situated as to be Unavoidably subject to peculiar Misfortune ... is now in the City, a wife ready to lay in, our Two Children in such a Situation as Humanity cannot but feel for a lament, Accident discovered the facts which are now offered to the Public: if the Relation of them should incline any person to assist in the Rescuing of the Gentleman from Extreme and unmerited Distress. Benefactions to the Printer.

(He takes a break from writing in his the Journal and looks through tourist brochures. VOICE OVER of FEMALE ACTOR, as Katie-Lis, enters.)

KATIE-LIS

Then Dingle is the place to take her. No question. That's settled. The signs there will say *An Daingean*, so watch out for that. Grand countryside. You need to take your wife away from the city and experience some real Ireland. Now the weather can be quite very changeable. But that's good, too. We'll find you a nice B&B. And you can keep warm. There's nothing better than when the weather is really rough, do you know what I mean?. Makes you want to be together with your wife. It'll be a different state of mind./ OK. Then here it is: You take the train to Killarney. You rent a car – you're not afraid to drive on the 'wrong' side of the road are you? -- 'cause you must see Inch Beach, and the beehives, and Sleah Head, Conor Pass, and you can't see them by public transportation. The West of Ireland is very special no matter where you go, but you won't find a more beautiful spot than Dingle. I know where you're from, and you've never seen the likes of this. And your wife, will be very happy there. I'm sure of it. Now go.

DRISCOLL

/[Is she saying that Dingle ~~makes you~~ will make us horny?]

(During the next selection DRISCOLL crosses to another part of the stage, joyously greets his wife. They place a bench DS. It will be the car.)

MALE ACTOR

Dublin Journal, November 1793. Headline: *A Caution to the Public. Who are requested not to employ Dennis Mitchell, who was my servant at Landskip in the County of Dublin as he Behaved in a very improper manner and has not Discharged from me. Daniel Standford.*

Scene Twelve

DRISCOLL and FEMALE ACTOR, as Jackie, take a trip to Dingle. (Underscore: “Do You Know the Way to San Jose”, a /a the Guinness Quality Team ads. John and Jackie are very excited, playful. Lot’s of call and response.)

- They sit on the bench then realize they’re on the wrong side, so they switch. They reach the wrong direction for seat belts.
- They start to drive and are paranoid about driving on the wrong side of the road. She coaches him. “Stay left. Your other left!” He changes lanes.
- They come to a round-about and don’t know what to do. “Look to your right first.” Knuckles are white from gripping the wheel.
- She covers her eyes. “You’re too close to the edge.” He protests. She says, “I’m on a really scary roller-coaster and it won’t stop!”
- They stop to admire a sight. Ooohs and Aahs!
- It rains suddenly. They return to the car. Continue the drive.
- “Have you ever sees anything so beautiful?” They each repeat it.
- She says, “Keep driving and don’t look, but to your right is a waterfall with sheep that just dot the hillside.”
- He says, “My God, it’s soooo verdant!”
- He says: “Is the road supposed to be this narrow? Are we on a highway?”
- She says: “You are not driving 100kmh. The cars behind you can wait.”
- They stop. She says, “I’ve never seen surf like this.” A puppy adopts them as they walk the strand.
- The drive again: It’s hail! I think it’s hail! (pause) She puts on her sunglasses. They laugh. Quickly: Honey, stop for the sheep!
- More: Look at that. Cows! A Donkey! I’ve never actually seen a donkey! Sheep! Sheep in the Cemetary!
- They stop. It’s Sleá Head. Gorgeous. They quite down. Point to share views. It begins to get dark. They embrace against a gale force wind as the sun sets.

(“San Jose” cross-fades to airport sounds. Morning light. A sad, resigned good-bye, but not desperate this time.)

Scene Thirteen

DRISCOLL

A leisurely walk home from the bus at O'Connell Street, through Temple Bar to buy a few groceries at the Saturday farmers' market. (He picks up a Waterstone's bag and puts bread and olives and some vegetables in it.) Up George's street on the way home I discover the Carmelite Church. My God, it's the Grand Central Station of Dublin Catholicism! Statues of Mary. Statues of Calvary. Relics of St. Valentine. Masses five or six times a day. Our Lady of Dublin. Bookstore. Coffee shop. Wow. I light a candle for my mother and visit the parish office that holds a shop where they sell books and religious objects. Old people everywhere. Rosaries serving every price range. Prayer cards. Catholic Tchotchke like I've never seen. (He watches the next scene and pretends he's shopping for rosaries. FEMALE ACTOR, as Maeve, and MALE ACTOR, as Bertie.)

MAEVE

(On the phone.) Mass is held six times per day. 12 mid-day and 1:30. Yes. You're very welcome. (She rings-up some merchandise.) Isn't that lovely. Two of these, right? (Holding a small frame with writing on it.) The Novena of Grace for St. Francis Xavier is wonderful gift before his leaving exam. You're perfect.

BERTIE

(Enters in a hurry. Interrupts the sale.) I need priest. (pause) I need a priest. Is a priest here I can talk to?

MAEVE

Excuse me, one minute. Just let me finish this.

BERTIE

I need a priest.

MAEVE

Do you need confession? (to the retail costumer) Thanks, and God Bless. Now what is it you need?

BERTIE

I need a priest? Now. I need one.

MAEVE

Well, the priests aren't just wandering around. Can you make an appointment. (He stares desperately.) Do you need confession?

BERTIE

Y ... Ye ... Yes. I need a confession. I need a priest.

MAEVE

Now, you've missed today's confessions ... OK ... So. (She looks at a clock.) The priest will let out the mass any time now. Maybe you can catch him as he comes out of mass. (The man starts to turn away.) Please wait for him to finish mass. There are people hearing mass in there now.

BERTIE

(he starts to cry) I need a priest.

MAEVE

I know. Sure. We'll just wait in the hallway there, and I'll take you to the priest.

(DRISCOLL crosses toward the archive table as Marian replaces a new volume of newspapers on the desk. She opens the preservation box and exits. We hear a mobile phone ring. FEMALE ACTOR is Jackie's voice from off stage.)

DRISCOLL

(Nervous) Hi. What's up? Are you OK?

JACKIE

Come home.

DRISCOLL

I miss you, too, sweetheart, it was great having you here and it won't be long/ now I promise.

JACKIE

Come home.
You need to come home. Really.

DRISCOLL

We've done this four times already.

JACKIE

If you could see him. He asked for you.

DRISCOLL

Really. Now? I just found a new source of vintage Dublin Journals, very complete collection,/ at the Marsh Library, 1780's ...

JACKIE

I know you're not done. It doesn't matter.

DROSCOLL

Not done! I haven't done/ a fucking thing, yet.

JACKIE

Come home.

He's yellow. His skin is like ... parchment ...

DRISCOLL

I get it. Of course. Are the doctors there? Are they pulling him off everything?

JACKIE

Only morphine and benydril.

DRISCOLL

OK. I'll leave in ... leave in two days. / I need to deal with the apartment and gather what I have, change my ticket. I haven't done anything, just random notes, I'm just getting the grove here.

JACKIE

Soon.

I know. Come home. Hold my hand. See your father.

DRISCOLL

Thanks. I know. I love you. Can you start by calling the airlines? AA. I was leaving on December 15. Thanks. I know it is. Thanks for seeing him. Call me tonight. Love you. (He arrives at the archive table and meets Marian.)

Scene Fourteen

MARIAN

And how was your trip to Dingle.

DRISCOLL

Aren't you sweet to ask. We loved it.

MARIAN

Did you have good weather?

DRISCOLL

Terrible. But that was part of the fun.

MARIAN

Sure. Rough weather makes you thankful to be alive.

DRISCOLL

That's well said. Listen, we'll return all my dockets today. I ... uh ... need to ... go back sooner than I expected. So, I'll finish up this afternoon.

MARIAN

Nothing to fear, I hope.

DRISCOLL

You've been very helpful. I really appreciate it. You made me feel very welcome.

MARIAN

Well, good luck. All the best. I'm just leaving my shift now, so. You send me a copy of that book you're writing. See us again.

Scene Fifteen

DRISCOLL

(He leafs through a few pages. Something catches his eye.)
Faulkner's Dublin Journal, being the Freshest Advices, Foreign and Domestic. Number, 825. Saturday August 18 to Tuesday August 21, 1733.
This is weird.

The packets still being detained by Contrary Winds, so no Foreign Occurances can come to our hands. We hope inserting the Following Dream, as it contains something in it Curious and Instructing, will prove acceptable to our Readers. To the Author of Dublin Journal. Sir:

Ruminating on the great Progress of the Modern Infidelity, with the Fatal Consequences thereof, it had taken such a hold of my imagination, that ... I have Ventured to send to You.

(DRISCOLL crosses to a table and is served by his favorite coffee shop owner, Lucy. They share a warm greeting. She's brings coffee. The following scenes slightly overlap the front and back of each 'dream' selection.)

MALE ACTOR

... I have Ventured to send to you. I though, I found myself engaged with a mixed Multitude ... in climbing a large Hill. The Assent was Troublesome on Account of the many Stones lying in the Way ... The Way not only craggy, but steep which made it irksome to those who had impaired their Natural Strength, or had any great matter of Burthen to carry with them. To direct our Journey there was a dubious Light ... but growing clearer, as we came near the Summit.

LUCY

Did she like the West?

DRISCOLL

It was grand!

LUCY

You said 'grand' and even sounded right. Congratulations! I'm sorry you have to leave. And we didn't have that pint at all. Where does time go? You just got here! Un-be-liev-able. (DRISCOLL tries to pay. She refuses.) Ah, you're grand.

DRISCOLL

I can do this, Lucy.

LUCY

I know you can, but that's not the point now is it?

DRISCOLL

You're very generous.

LUCY

I had you wrong. I was sure you'd become like us in no time, 't all. Complainin' about Dublin and the prices and the people.

DRISCOLL

Try this one. Yesterday I saw a Dublin Bus driver, with a fully loaded double-deck bus, driving southbound on Rathmine's steering the bus with his elbows, 'cause he's sending a text message on his mobile phone!

LUCY

Oh, for fuck, sake. Un-bel-iev-able. That's just typical in this country.

DRISCOLL

Public safety hazard ... but what do I know.

LUCY

But that's just what I'm saying. You know this city already./ Every week you're bringing me a new story about some place you discovered -- a new library, a new museum. I hardly know my own city.

DRISCOLL

Just this little corner.
I've had the luxury of time.

LUCY

Shouldn't we all?

DRISCOLL

And they open-up to foreigners/ to learn about themselves, I suppose.

LUCY

They open-up to you.
Would you move here? Would you? Be here like the rest of us? Would you?
It's not a bad place is it?

(They laugh, hug, say good-bye. ~~She watches him leave and removes in the coffee service.~~ He returns to his journal.)

MALE ACTOR

... the kind Offices of Several Persons, {who} went up and down, encouraging the Weary, reducing the Devious, confronting the weak, Pointing out the Paths, throwing light on the dark Parts, and reaching out their hands to all that would accept Assistance. The Brow of the Hill was terminated by a Partition, like that which divides the Globe into dark and light Hemispheres.....

(DRISCOLL gets up. Looks down the street. Starts collect his things. Looks again decide not to go.)

DRISCOLL

Leave her alone. Thanks for this, Erica. (Looks up from his journal and delivers this straight out.)

Brunette. Olive skin. Dark
eyes.
Firm Stance. She Floats.

Usually filled with her own
Thought. She dreams of home,
Negotiating a new home.
Her native home
Ravished before she
was born.

Her gaze
Melts a man approaching twice
her age
And he smiles.

He peels back the years to see
If a space still exists
That she can fill.

And he looks back ... from his
page,
Pushes back to imagine
The younger man.

Could he really be brave
enough
to take that on?
Might he try to live the script
his mother lived?
Might he try to recapture his
Mother, in this one's form?

He can't see the younger man
any more.

He breaks the bounds of
imagination.
And finds that the dream only
Exists in that space
Between he and her
In this moment.

Her sparkling eyes only see
forward.
His wrinkling eyes
Piercing back again through
time, as
Years, indeed two decades,
Pass by.

And as they do,
To his surprise
She's not there any more.
And cannot be.
Nor he.

But for a space, a crevice
That opened
in the heart
That caused her to dream
For a moment: A happy life
With a guide
Offering nothing more than a
fresh view
Of a life well-lived, privileged
really.

The gravity of time,
The pressure of new love,
And that particular future
Within reach of the possible -
That will surely never happen.

But for her, on this page
Sculpted with words
Graced in suspended moment
Free from the tests of time
Amid the Babel of six tongues
On a mild November night
Alive only in a writer's journal
At a thriving café
In Dublin.

FEMALE ACTOR

(He goes back to his notebook) *like that which divides the Globe into dark and light Hemispheres, impenetrable, except at one Opening Whether it was owing to my Littleness of Stature, or a self-indulgence often experienced in Dreams, I thought I found no Difficulty in Admission ...*

DRISCOLL

(takes over reading from his journal) ...*then I saw, Seated on a Table raised Alter-wise by two steps, a female Personage, whose countenance was a happy Mixture of Majesty and Sweetness: her Eye was discerning, her tongue was persuasive, and her Head encircled in Glory:*

(MALE ACTOR enters pushing a stroller. He looks about. FEMALE ACTOR enters. The exchange a warm greeting. She fusses with the baby. They pause to look at the people strolling in Stephen's Green, it's a simple moment of contentedness. She hears the baby fuss and tends to it. They kiss goodbye. FEMALE ACTOR pushes the stroller off. MALE ACTOR remains, eats an apple. MALE ACTOR lingers for a moment, until he takes over the 'dream.')

DRISCOLL

In her Right hand she held the Sun ... in the strongest Point of Light, stood a Naked Figure, whom, from the Description I had often read, I knew to be Truth: In her left-hand was a Book with Portraiture of a Lamb bearing a Cross upon it: a rich Vestment flowed down from her Feet. On the first of the Steps, leading to the Alter, stood together two Figures, one with piercing undazzled Eyes, looking steadfastly upwards: the other with a modest but cheerful Aspect: on the Step above stood a third Figure, whose heart seemed to be on Fire, and her Look the most affectionate and charming I have ever seen.

Pointing my Eye upward the same Way the Figure on the first step looked, I was lost in the immeasurable Height. Casting my Eye downwards, I saw on each Side, wide as the Sun Beams ...

MALE ACTOR

... I saw on each Side, wide as the Sun Beams I saw in the hand on the seated Figure extended, the most beautiful Views that ever Eye beheld, of Lands, Rivers, Seas, Ships; well-built Cities, adorn'd with Temples and stately Edifices: Potent Kingdoms and flourishing Commonwealths; Arts and Science, Peace, Order. Plenty Everywhere.

(DRISCOLL starts to pack things in a suitcase: clothes, books, remembrances. He doesn't shut it 'cause he's not quite done. He takes a camera and a note pad from his day bag and walks, with a sense of purpose, through the space occasionally taking a photo. FEMALE ACTOR crosses and she takes a picture of him as he poses.)

MALE ACTOR

Then ... an irresistible Curiosity push'd me {after them} to a Plain at the Foot of a Hill: In the Middle of it a large Bladder, folded into the Form of a cushion, sat an ugly Phantom, which I took to the Diety or Idol of the Place, because every Company, as they arrived Stopp'd and Bowed: upon a near Approach and inspection, I found ... it was exactly the same Figure, which when Awake I Sketch'd out for an Emblem of and Representation of the Modern Infidelity.

(DRISCOLL puts the camera away and makes quick entrances and exits. Each time he enters he has a new, small bag from another tourist stop: Guinness Storehouse. Jameson's. Dublin Writers Museum. Trinity Crafts, etc.)

FEMALE ACTOR

Her Retinue was numerous:

Banter in many colored garb, and

Laughter holding both his Sides;

Prejudice clapping both his Hands before his Eyes,

And Ignorance without any.

Discord with 1000 Heads,

Clamour with an hundred Tongues, and

Curiosity with many Ears:

Before her stood Pride, a tiptoe dress'd in all the gay plumage of America.

FEMALE ACTOR (cont.)

At her feet sat Flattery, holding a mirror which magnified everything that look'd upon it. ...I saw the head of the monstrous Image Swell'd, her stomach projected, her seat blew up into a Throne, lifting the Idol up to view all her Votaries.

(if needed to cover the shopping excursion)

Grown weary of viewing these Scenes of Horror, by some peculiar Felicity I recovered the Plain where the Author of all Mischief sat, just at the Instant when a sword of Fire issued from the Mouth of the Matron seated on the Summit of the Adjoining Hill, and proceeded lengthening toward the Place I was.

(Now the collection of little bags are inside a large Pennys bag. He meets MALE ACTOR as Ahmed, a newly arrived immigrant. Middle Eastern. He's carrying a small scrap of paper in one hand, a leather folder tucked under his arm, and a small piece of luggage in this other hand. He's trying to find his orientation. Sees DRISCOLL and approaches him. They're on Butt Bridge.)

AHMED

Do you know where Immigration Office is? (Holds up the scrap of paper.)

DRISCOLL

Sorry. I don't. I haven't needed to go there. (Looks around quickly.) I don't recall noticing it nearby. I ... uh ... sorry.

AHMED

That's OK. Fine. Thanks.

DRISCOLL

Sorry, I couldn't help.

AHMED

I arrive in Ireland this day. Beautiful. (He starts to leave.)

DRISCOLL

Wait. Do you have an address there?

AMED

No. Just name. (Shows it to DRISCOLL)

DRISCOLL

Oh, you do, actually. Burgh Quay. That's as much address as you're likely to get in Ireland. I have a map with me. (As he digs it out of his day bag and consults it..) The 'Quay' part means you're probably close, 'cause the quays always run along a river or shore-line. But streets change names constantly, so... Ah, there we are. Just to the right at the end of the Bridge. Should be very near.

AHMED

Oh, thank you so much. Wonderful. So many wonderful people in Ireland. I'm so happy to be here. You're all so very friendly, so helpful. Thank you. Thank you. (As he goes.)

DRISCOLL

Welcome to Ireland. [God bless him. He thinks I'm Irish.]

(Underscore of densely orchestrated strings accompany the following Voice Over of the FEMALE ACTOR's voice: reverb, lot's of bass. The sounds of a catastrophe fade to airport sounds toward the end. DRISCOLL packs the things he just bought. Puts a few more clothes in. Struggles to zip the over-stuffed case. He carefully puts his journal in his day bag, and slowly crosses dragging the weight of his bags DS toward FEMALE ACTOR as Jackie. She welcomes him as the airplane sounds recede.)

... a sword of Fire issued from the Mouth of the Matron seated on the Summit of the Adjoining Hill, and proceeded lengthening toward the Place I was. As it came near the Idol, the Taper in her hand grew dim and scarce visible, because many of the strongest Rays flew off, and incorporated with the approaching Flame, to which they seemed to be converged. The radiant Weapon in its Progress prick'd the Monster's Seat, which gave a loud Crack, and sunk down to the Earth with it's Burthen: whose womb bursting with the Violence of the Fall, the Bowels gush'd out, and with a vast Quantity of black, spotted, loathsome dissonant Animrals, which it cast a good deal of Time and Pains of stifle and extinguish. The Bustle and Hurry of the odious Vermin occasion'd, together with the Explosion of the Bladder, waked me.

Yours, etc.

(MALE ACTOR as William, is covered with a blanket, and reclined on a Hospital bed. A morphine drip disappears under the blanket. Jackie takes DRISCOLL's hand and leads him to William.)

DRISCOLL

(to Jackie) God, I love ya!

DRISCOLL takes a deep breath and enters. Jackie enters behind him.)

DRISCOLL

Pops. I'm here. It's Johnny. I'm back.

(William has a fixed stare directly out the audience. DRISCOLL kisses him and straightens his hair. Sits next to him or leans on the bed. Pause. He digs out his journal. Puts his pen aside. And begins to read bits and pieces.)

DRISCOLL

- Right before I left I had a dream that I was showing you around Dublin. I did my best with the letters.
- A beautiful Septemeber evening in Stephen's Green. It's so GREEN. Old people walking arm-in-arm. Young lovers dry humping in the bushes. Ducks. Amber sunset.
- Did you know that the Carnegie Foundation built libraries in Ireland? There's one just down the street from me.
- I saw the All-Ireland Hurling final. What a great game to watch. You'd enjoy it. Those guys are all a little bit insane.
- I went to mass at John Cardinal Newman's Church – lovely, strange Byzantine decor.
- I really read a lot of Irish Literature; I started with Kinsella's version of the Tain. I think I wrote to you about Patrick Kavanaugh, lot's of poetry, really.
- Sunday evening is a good time to catch a session O'Donohue's.
- I saw the cricket pitch where Samuel Beckett played while he was a student at Trinity.
- They let me use the reading room at the National Library – a wonderful Victorian room.
- You know how the Inuits have a hundred words for snow? Well, the Irish have the same thing with rain. My favorite was overhearing a lady talk about the 'wetting rain.' I was trying to imagine the rain that made you feel dry.
- I got to the point when I heard a certain Midwestern American accent, it bugged the shit out of me.

(William mimes opening a program. Turns pages. Looks up to the same spot. Puts the program down. Claps silently. DRISCOLL sees him. Looks forward in the same direction trying to see what he sees. Jackie comes up behind them and looks the same direction. She hands DRISCOLL his pen and gestures for him to start writing. He writes, as she goes back to comfort William. Slow fade to the sound of a LUAS tram passing by with its squeaky wheels and the ringing of its bell. *Ding-Ding, Ding-Ding.*)

End of play.

Note on the author:

Timothy Troy is a professor of theatre arts and director of plays, operas, musicals, and radio dramas in the Milwaukee / Chicago areas. His play, *Nobility Hill*, a World War II era family drama, was produced at the Cornerstone Theatre, Milwaukee, in 2003. He spent a sabbatical term in Dublin during the fall of 2005, as a visiting professor at Trinity College, and he co-taught a contemporary Irish drama course for the IES-Dublin program. He drafted two plays during this period, *The Dublin Journal* and *The Life of Me*, a two-act drama for 4 women and 1 man. The author collected wonderful feedback on this play from a variety of literary managers and dramaturgs. This version was rewritten in 2011. In 2011, *Radio & Juliet* recently featured in the First Stages reading series at The Playwrights' Center in Minneapolis.

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