

Run with the Hare (... and hunt with the hound), by Timothy X. Troy

Daniel John Stapleton (1886-1968) and the battle for Kilkenny.



“If ever you go to Kilkenny
Look for the hole in the wall
It’s there you’ll get bread for a penny
And butter for nothing at all.”

Contact Information:
Timothy X. Troy
32 Elgin Road / Flat 14
Ballsbridge
Dublin D04 H5N0
Ireland
+353 87 427 0995
timothy.x.troy@lawrence.edu

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Music Director: Lucy Stapleton (music sections, performance, and arrangements)

Time: December 1918 – July 1921

Place: Kennelly's Medical Hall, High Street, Kilkenny; an outbuilding of Tullamaine House, Callan.

Synopsis:

Balms by day; bombs by night. Dan Stapleton, three-time All-Ireland hurling champion, Kilkenny High Street pharmacist, and happily married father of two, awakens his commitment to Irish Nationalism as the First Dáil and the Irish Volunteers begin the process of establishing the new Irish State in 1918. From that moment until the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty in 1921, Stapleton manufactures and distributes war materiel and gathers important intelligence, all while winning golf tournaments, nurturing a growing family, attending to the ailments of his community, decoding messages disguised as folklore, and gathering allies among those who appear to support British occupation. Based on Stapleton's 1953 Bureau of Military History - Witness Statement, *Run with the Hare (... and hunt with the hound)*, uncovers the hidden history of Stapleton's vital contribution to the remarkably successful outcome of the Battle of Kilkenny.

Characters:

Daniel John Stapleton (1886-1968) – Pharmaceutical chemist. Three-time All-Ireland hurling champion. IRB member. Blissfully married father of two daughters.

Frank Stapleton (1892-1963) – Dan's younger brother. Mechanically gifted. Helps run the family grazier farm and creamery at the Stapleton family home, Tullamaine House.

Peggy Cahill – Native of Killarney. Distant relative of the Stapleton's. On the run from British Forces. 21 years old.

Mrs. Abigail Wakefield – Originally from Monaghan. Married into a landowner family in Kilkenny (500 acres). Grieving mother of her son, Martin. Martin was the first resident of Kilkenny to die as a British soldier during WWI. 45 years old.

Mr. J. Miles – London-based sales representative for a wholesale chemical/pharmaceutical firm. 37 years old.

Sgt. Arnold Westrim –Native of Devon, England. Veteran British Forces deployments on The Western Front and later in India. 21 years old.

Lt. Christopher Barton— Sandhurst graduate. 23 years old.

Thomas Treacy (1885-1975) –Kilkenny native. Served as Commandant for the Irish Volunteers. Lost his British civil service position after the Easter Rising. Together with his wife, he owns a drapery shop on Parliament Street, Kilkenny.

Harry Boland (1887-1922) –Dublin native. Veteran of the Easter Rising. GAA executive. President of IRB. Later TD for Second Dáil.

Staging:

The stage is framed SL and SR with two features of High Street, Kilkenny: a corner of The Tholsel SR with colonnade and the Kilkenny Coat of Arms; SL features the narrow archway entrance of the Butter Slip with its attendant sign. All other locations are indicated simply with two tables on casters (a counter height table and a workbench table), a couple of chairs, a stool, a display for patent medicines. Sound cues can help establish each setting for instance, a bell rings as people enter the Pharmacy, etc. The center playing area maintains a light scenic footprint to allow the action to flow, especially in the underscore sequence in Act Two. Inter-scene music should accompany the action around the scene changes. Characters enter and exit with quiet activity as they carry-out the day-to-day tasks of a busy city center shop, a vital medical hall, and the clandestine counter-state activity of the workshop at Tullamaine House.

US cyclorama with projection, ground row, or drops, an image of County Kilkenny. Imagine if Thomas Hart Benton painted the Irish countryside instead of rural Missouri. Images include gentle rolling hills and dales, long-abandon Norman structures in grazier fields, Erin's Own GAA pitch on the ridge of a valley between Kilkenny and Castlecomer, the river Nore with its distinctive bridge at Inistioge, and narrow walled lanes near Tullamaine.

Mobile scenic units include: a worktable used at the pharmacy and at Tulamaine House, a service counter at the medical hall; a display unit with period patent medications; a high stool and a chair or two.

Stapleton's direct Witness Statement testimony (1953) should be simple and direct to the audience.

Act 1: Run with the hare ...

Act 1, scene 1.

December 1918 through July 1919.

(As the opening music, Down By the Glenside continues, Dan enters from UL and considers the scenic image that depicts County Kilkenny. He crosses DS as Frank enters setting the scenic unit of the formulary worktable. Facing DS Frank calls out.)

FRANK

How's our new lad?

DANIEL

Almost slept through the night.

FRANK

There's a blessing.

(Frank exits to set the counter scenic unit. Daniel addresses the audience.)

DANIEL (1953)

It would be difficult for me, after all these years, to definitely indicate when work on munitions began. My brother, Frank Stapleton, and myself, had established a reputation, through the medium of a well-equipped workshop, for repairs to shotguns, rifles, etc. which there were a few in every farmhouse in the country.

(As Frank sets the counter unit.)

DANIEL

The girls had a sweet disposition, but we hardly a sleep a night. Lily would sing a soft air to lull us back to sleep.

FRANK

Domestic bliss.

DANIEL

Her music soothes the savage breast of the whole town.

(Frank exits and re-enters to set the display unit, then starts his activity at the work table.)

DANIEL (1953)

The first contact for repairs came from the Column attached to Kilkenny Brigade, of which the C/O was Eamon Aylward. The Repairs were necessary to rifles and we reconditioned cartridges for both shotguns and rifles.

(Frank settles into his activity at the worktable. It doesn't have anything to do with medication, but he seems to be shaping a small cylindrical brass ring or gasket.)

FRANK

Hasn't a terrible peace descended on all of Kilkenny?

DANIEL (1953)

I qualified as a pharmaceutical chemist in 1912 and opened my own medical hall at 23 High Street, Kilkenny. It was here I was approached, shortly after the Sinn Féin election in 1918, by then Brigadier, George Dwyer, if I was in a position to secure supplies. Personally, I regarded this as something of a test and, if successful, further orders and instructions would follow.

(Daniel sets the display unit during his next line.)

FRANK

Soon, when people will ask for “Dan Stapleton”, we’ll have to say, “Do you mean the young, strapping lad, or the aul fella who uses his ancient hurly as a cane and knocks people asunder on his way to mass each morning.”

DANIEL

You’re clever for a quiet fella.

(Frank and Daniel are each working at the table. Dan is finishing preparation for a skin ointment. We’re not sure what Frank is working on.)

DANIEL

How’s the strike plate?

FRANK

That’s just it. We need to fashion a proper anvil with a flange to hold the casing while we work the plate.

DANIEL

A 12-bore cartridge mold, but shallower. Bring the lot back to the workshop. You’ll need the press. Look to the drying of the fresh flour. Dwyer wants a report by mid-week.

FRANK

Right, so.

(Bell rings as a British Forces non-commissioned officer, Sgt. Westrim enters. The bell cues Dan to gather his preparation to cross to the shop front. Frank conceals his project and waits and listens.)

Sgt. WESTRIM

(Devonshire accent.) This is Kennelly’s Medical Hall?

DANIEL

Yes, it is.

Sgt. WESTRIM

You’re Daniel Stapleton, right?

DANIEL

You should avail of yourself the barrack’s dispensary. Very qualified. We both did our certificate at Queen’s.

Sgt. WESTRIM

You're not a chemist then?

DANIEL

Pharmaceutical Chemist. College of Surgeons, Dublin.

Sgt. WESTRIM

Very qualified. Full faith and confidence. Same remedies I'd find at a Devonshire chemist. Same church up the road. Same banks. Same shops. You're also a mad golfer, I understand. (*As he looks out the window to make sure they're alone.*)

DANIEL

And how may I help you?

Sgt. WESTRIM

When we're talking amongst ourselves. Quiet. The ones who've been here tell the new soldiers the lay of the land. Why we're lucky to be in Kilkenny. Some of the lads tell me you're the man to see if we can't use the Army doctor. For treating, you know, a thing we don't want to tell the Lieutenant.

DANIEL

One moment. (*Crosses to the formulary, to Frank.*) Another case of the clap.

FRANK

Careful.

DANIEL

Are you close?

FRANK

Just there.

DANIEL

Softly. (*Dan returns to Sgt. Westrim and guides him around away from view of the window.*) Tell me your trouble, Sergeant.

Sgt. WESTRIM

Your brother served us in Flanders, so I hear. Chaplain.

DANIEL

Still serves.

Sgt. WESTRIM

Good man, he is then. A blessing to all. I'm not an RC myself. There are no Catholics and Protestants, or Mohammedans and Hindus in trenches.

DANIEL

Many paths to God. (*Frank peaks out to observe.*)

Sgt. WESTRIM

That's truth.

DANIEL

Are you having a discharge from your nethers, then? (*Westrim looks shocked.*) Did you have a leave in Paris?

Sgt. WESTRIM

'a mercy, Dr. Dan! No, no, no, no. Down there, in the Forest of Arden, the itch is unbearable. When I look, it's a village of tiny creatures moving about. I've tried to pluck them each one, but there's no stopping.

DANIEL

So, it's the crabs you're hosting. Didn't you have the acid bath before you redeployed?

Sgt. WESTRIM

Like a great sheep dipping! And sounded like a sheep dipping with all the hollering and groaning.

DANIEL

The critters you have there are a different species from the body lice. Maybe your man, at the barracks, missed that lesson in his English pharmacy course. Frank! What's your name, Sergeant.

Sgt. WESTRIM

Tommy. Westrim.

DANIEL

Frank will walk out ahead of you, Sergeant Westrim. I don't want you to be seen leaving with a treatment. So, you'll buy these lozenges here, for that tickle in your throat, which you won't put into your pockets, but carry in your hand.

Sgt. WESTRIM

I'll have a light cough as I walk, like this (he demonstrates). I'll take a lozenge for all to see.

DANIEL

That's the idea. Frank will walk you past a small door in the slip. Knock there in twenty minutes. Frank will give you powders for your little visitors. Work the powder into your Forest of Arden. In the morning, and especially before sleep. 3-5 days, you'll be grand.

Sgt. WESTRIM

3-5 times per day

DANIEL

Look at me. Twice per day. It's naphthalene, you'll chemical burn your bollocks if you're not careful.

Sgt. WESTRIM

'a Christ! Now it's a burn!

DANIEL

Twice. That'll be a ½ shilling for the powder and the lozenges. If you need a follow-up, and you don't find me here, Frank can help you. Or I have new assistant arriving soon, Peggy. Off you go now.

Sgt. WESTRIM

I can't tell a lass about my crabs!

DANIEL

She's a qualified chemist's assistant. (*Frank enters from behind the counter.*) My younger brother Frank. Sergeant Westrim.

Sgt. WESTRIM

Aren't the ladies voting now. The Suffragettes were not to be tamed.

FRANK

And didn't they prove themselves during the war?

Sgt. WESTRIM

My owns sisters among them.

DANIEL

You're a decent lad, Tommy. You're welcome any time. But I can't have you telling the whole of the barracks to stop seeing your regimental chemist. Who told you about me?

Sgt. WESTRIM

That was Colonel Fleury.

DANIEL

It wasn't "the lads", as you said earlier?

Sgt. WESTRIM

I didn't think I should say Sir's name, unless asked direct, as you did.

DANIEL

Fleury and I have played the links. He must trust you.

Sgt. WESTRIM

He must trust you, Dr. Dan.

DANIEL

Right. Out with you now. Frank will leave first. He'll show you the door in the slip.

(Frank precedes Sgt. Westrim toward the Butter Slip. Dan returns to his work area and begins to lay out what looks like cheddar wheels – they are cheddite fueled landmines.)

Sgt. WESTRIM

Frank! *(Catches up to him at the slip.)*

FRANK

Make like you're asking directions. *(Westrim exaggerates a gesture of confusion. Likewise Frank points forward and left and right.)*

Sgt. WESTRIM

From Ypres then I'm to India, Amritsar. I got the crabs in India. I got the nightmares, too.

FRANK

Fuck's sake.

Sgt. WESTRIM

I don't know what we're doing here. Is there a lake or a pond or hillside, anyplace where a fella can be alone with flowers and birdsong? Soon I'll struggle how to breathe without some Devonshire air.

FRANK

I'll sort you after you come back for your powders. *(Continues with directions, louder.)*
Right then, take the slip here. Then left and you'll find it just past McGinley's. Off we go.
(They exit out the slip.)

(As they exit, enter Peggy Cahill via the Tholsel with a case, and heavy package wrapped in burlap, and a nosegay of flowers. She takes-in the bustling scene and finds the pharmacy. Checks a note in her coat pocket to confirm the address. Enters the medical hall. Bell rings. Dan covers the cheddars with a drape. He sees Peggy from behind the counter.)

PEGGY

You look like a Cahill.

DANIEL

Daniel Stapleton. Pharmaceutical Chemist, College of Surgeons.

PEGGY

Three-time All-Ireland champion Hurler. Left half-back. Legend says, as a lad of ten with a stick and a stone, Stapleton could hit the hare at 50 paces.

DANIEL

The hare was not in full stride.

PEGGY

Didn't they find aul Mrs. Flaherty walk with a limp after Dan struck the hare.

DANIEL

I think you added that last piece of the legend.

PEGGY

Dublin pharmacy training. Married to the lovely Amelia. Proprietor of this Medical Hall at 23 High Street, Kilkenny Town. Father of two girls, and (*she presents the flowers*) a new son, named for the aul fella, Daniel.

DANIEL

You can take the mick.

PEGGY

Was I too bold?

DANIEL

Well played. You're Peggy Cahill. Uncle Tommy's people. How is it we're related, then? He only said, "Her people are our people, so they're your people because the Vikings and Normans ..." We had to get you out of Kerry was the only part I paid any mind to.

PEGGY

As far as I can tell, my father is the cousin of your uncle who is the sister of your mother.

DANIEL

The Cahills are everywhere.

PEGGY

The good Lord had to distribute us all over the island so there was always someone nearby to cure the St. Anthony's Fire.

DANIEL

We're a scientific medical hall here, miss. No folk remedies proceed out that door. No collecting the May Dew or walking through the town with a sprig of mint or lavender tied to your wrist.

PEGGY

I understand. Still, maybe you are the modern scientific version of how the Cahills have been healing since God was a boy.

DANIEL

Country lass. Remember you're in Leinster now.

PEGGY

What's my first assignment?

DANIEL

Your first assignment is to be quiet. Don't draw attention to yourself. Be my pharmacy clerk.

PEGGY

Like a woman, you mean.

DANIEL

Not like a woman. Like a person. Like an Irish-Irish woman who is hiding from the sappers. Like a pharmacy clerk.

PEGGY

You understand I know nothing about chemistry.

DANIEL

Uncle Tommy assures me you're as smart as anyone your age. (*Approaches the DS window and points to passersby on the street.*) They'll think a niece from Co. Kerry is here to learn a trade. A young man is approaching. Your training starts now. I'll be in the back. Give me your coat.

(Dan takes her coat and her case to the formulary. Leaves the burlap wrapped object, sets the flowers on the counter. Peggy pretends to restock patent medicines. Enter Frank, bell rings.)

PEGGY

Welcome to Kennelly's. Daniel Stapleton is the chemist - pharmacist.

FRANK

Is that, so? Can I help you? (*Calling for Dan.*) D.J.? I'm back, boy.

PEGGY

Have you returned? From where have you returned? I am here, too.

FRANK

I see you're here. Dan! I come in and you're asking me.

PEGGY

Will I be of assistance? Mr. Dan will return presently. (*Frank looks around confused. Moves toward the burlap package. Peggy runs interference. Dan steps in, enjoys the confusion.*) If you have a note from your doctor, I'll be sure the chemist sees it ... very soon.

FRANK

Are you daft?

PEGGY

I can see you're having nerves, sir.

FRANK

Did you wander in from the street? Are you from the home, and now you're lost?

PEGGY

Are you one of them desperate soldiers with the shell shock tramping aimlessly about the countryside?

FRANK

No.

PEGGY

Are you from Kilkenny?

FRANK

Yes.

PEGGY

Do your people know you need help?

FRANK

I'm Frank, so I am.

PEGGY

Now, there's a good start, you have your own name. Mr. Frank, I am Peggy.

DANIEL

(*Dan interrupts with a laugh.*) Enough! What a scene! Lily should put that to music, and we'll play it at the Theatre Royal.

FRANK

For the love of God, who are you?

DANIEL

Meet your second, or third, or somehow related to Uncle T.B., cousin, Peggy Cahill. Lately of Killarney. (*They take a moment to consider each other.*) This is my brother, Frank. She brought flowers for Lily and baby Dan.

PEGGY

(*To Dan.*) So, you were takin' the mick whole time?

FRANK

Now the golden light of understanding breaks through the broken clouds and alights upon the land.

DANIEL

Right, Frank. Peggy, you must give us a verse.

PEGGY

From the bible, kind of verse?

FRANK

A verse of poetry. Right now. What have you got?

PEGGY

Are you serious?

DANIEL

We're building a nation on a foundation of poetry. Poetry and field sports and dance and music --

FRANK

-- and our stories we're fighting for.

DANIEL

Long or short. Give us what you have.

PEGGY

Grand. I think I have this:

"I'll not leave thee, thy lone one
To pine upon the stem
Since the lonely are sleeping,
Go sleep now with them.
Thus, kindly I'll scatter
Thy leaves o'er the bed
Where thy mates of the Garden
Lie scentless and dead."

FRANK

Well done, you.

DANIEL

Thomas Moore. When I was a student of Thomas MacDonagh; he had us memorize Moore.

PEGGY

You were a student of an Easter Rising Martyr?

FRANK

He was that. Here at St. Kieran's

DANIEL

Here's a bit o' Thomas Moore in honor of Thomas MacDonagh:

“Those evening bells! Those evening bells!
How many a tale their music tells,
Of youth and home and that sweet time
When last I heard their soothing chime”

(Peggy and Frank ad lib applause, appreciation) My favorite sound in Kilkenny - the bells of St. Canice.

FRANK

They ring from a time when we were a nation. You're one of the famous Killarney girls, you know this.

PEGGY

Isn't St. Canice Protestant?

DANIEL

Here's your first lesson of Kilkenny, Kerry girl.

FRANK

Should she take notes, Dan?

DANIEL

The Protestant and Catholic differences - amongst ourselves, we pay very little attention. I was never so sure of this as in 1914, when at the top of this very street --

FRANK

-- at the bank building you see there --

DANIEL

-- Roger Casement and Thomas MacDonagh gave speeches.

I was there, too.

FRANK

And weren't we sure of ourselves.

DANIEL

I'm in the center of it all.

PEGGY

You're in Leinster now.

FRANK

So, I understand.

PEGGY

Religious designations are not meaningful here.

DANIEL

They are not shorthand for anything.

FRANK

Don't be lazy in your thinking. Religion, men and women, the rights of small nations.

DANIEL

Both peoples are working with us. Both peoples are working against us. We need to win both sides to our side.

FRANK

It will become clear that good relations with your neighbors are more important than loyalty to distant kindred.

DANIEL

The only enemy is the occupying force. Targeted disruption.

FRANK

Our active deployment versus their active deployment.

PEGGY

Let's get you sorted first. Too many Cahills from Callan. You need a new name.

DANIEL

Annabell. Victoria. Aisling. Violet.

FRANK

DANIEL

She can keep her first name, Frank. The new story has to run alongside the old truth aimed at the same goal.

PEGGY

Two hounds coursing a hare. Got it.

FRANK

How about. *(to Dan)* Peggy is not your scattered cousin, but Amelia's niece from ... can you sound a little less like Kerry?

PEGGY

Shall I try Cork?

DANIEL

Don't even try.

FRANK

You went to boarding school in Kerry, so that's why you sound *a little* like Kerry.

DANIEL

Find the name of a boarding school for Protestant girls in Kerry.

PEGGY

I'm a Protestant?

DANIEL

Right. Because now you are Amelia's niece, and your surname is Morrow.

PEGGY

I don't know how to be a Protestant Morrow. *(Dan and Frank look at each other knowingly.)* That's what you meant when you said ... oh, Amelia's a Protestant.

DANIEL

Was.

FRANK

Don't try to pretend you're not Peggy Cahill with family.

DANIEL

And that's where you'll be staying.

PEGGY

Uncle Thomas said above the shop. A box room is all I need.

DANIEL

There's Lily, myself, and three babies up there.

PEGGY

I can help. I love babies.

DANIEL

We need your help in other ways.

FRANK

Mam will be delighted to have another daughter at Tullamaine. And the workshop is there.

PEGGY

Workshop?

DANIEL

You can come and go with Frank. The neighbors and tenants will construct a story. There's an extra bicycle or two. It's much better if people see you out and about and running errands.

FRANK

I'll condition the Raleigh we picked up from Mrs. Wakefield.

DANIEL

Maybe we can find a way to bring Mrs. Wakefield's Brigid back to the land of the living. You can help with that, too.

PEGGY

Does she help with our thing?

FRANK

NO. No one knows. You'll meet Mrs. Wakefield soon enough. The girl, Brigid, has become a daughter to Mrs. Wakefield's. No children. He died in Flanders.

DANIEL

You're both blow-ins. Sweet girl. Raised in The Curragh.

FRANK

He was in the new 10th Regiment. They trained at The Curragh. He fancied the horses.

DANIEL

He fancied her.