

CHRISTY. Who was it then?

BRENDAN. I don't know, now. It wasn't Marx is all I'm saying.

CHRISTY. Oh, Brendan, you're always cutting people down and saying who didn't say things. A fool can say who didn't say things. It takes intelligence to put your neck on the line and say who did say things.

BRENDAN. I suppose it does, but it wasn't Marx, is all I'm saying.

CHRISTY. So who was it then?

BRENDAN. I don't know!

CHRISTY. It was some feck to do with Russia!

BRENDAN. It may have been, and it probably was. It sounds like something them fecks would say. What I'm saying, Christy, it wasn't fecking Marx, now!

CHRISTY. There's no talking to this fella.

BRENDAN. Not on the subject of quotes, no.

JOEY. *(Pause.)* Ye've changed the subject on me.

CHRISTY. What was the subject?

JOEY. Battering in the head of an innocent cat was the subject! I don't remember agreeing to batter cats when I joined the INLA.

BRENDAN. What cat did you batter? Me and Christy battered that cat without a lick o' help from you.

JOEY. Being *associated* with cat battering, I'm saying.

BRENDAN. Well, don't claim credit for battering a cat you never lifted a finger to batter.

JOEY. I won't claim credit for battering a cat, because there is no credit in battering a cat. Battering a cat is easy. There's no guts involved in cat battering. That sounds like something the fecking British'd do. Round up some poor Irish cats and give them a blast in the back as the poor devils were trying to get away, like on Bloody Sunday.

BRENDAN. They never shot cats on Bloody Sunday, did they, Christy?

JOEY. It's the same principle I'm saying, ya thick.

BRENDAN. Oh, the same principle.

JOEY. I'd've never joined the INLA in the first place if I'd known the battering of cats was to be on the agenda. The INLA has gone down in my estimation today. Same as when we blew up Airey Neave. You can't blow up a fella just because he has a funny name.

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It wasn't his fault.

CHRISTY. Why don't you form a splinter group, so, like out Mad Padraic?

BRENDAN. Aye. The Irish National Being Nice To Cats Army.

JOEY. I would. Only I know you two'd blow me away for it, after probably killing me goldfish first!

BRENDAN. Sure, you've no goldfish, Joey.

JOEY. I was making a fecking comparison!

CHRISTY. *(Pause.)* We none of us enjoyed killing that cat, Joey-o. I was near crying myself, even as I brought me gun swinging down the fourth and fifth times, and the blood spraying out of him. But hasn't it worked? Haven't we lured the Madman of Aran home to where never once will he be looking behind him for that bolt from the blue he knows is some day coming? It won't be so quick then he'll be to go forming splinter groups, and knocking down fellas like poor Skank Toby, fellas who only do the community a service, and do they force anybody to buy their drugs? No. And don't they pay us a pound on every bag they push to go freeing Ireland for them? Isn't it for everybody we're out freeing Ireland? That's what Padraic doesn't understand, is it isn't only for the school kids and the owl fellas and the babes unborn we're out freeing Ireland. No. It's for the junkies, the thieves and the drug pushers too!

JOEY. Aye. And for the cat batterers on top of it! *(Brendan and Christy stare hatefully at Joey a second, then slowly get up, spread out, take out their guns and point them at him. Joey, scared, stands and points his gun back at them.)*

CHRISTY. I was making a good speech there and you ruined it! BRENDAN. He did, Christy. He ruined your speech on you. Let's pepper him.

JOEY. Ah, let's not point our guns at each other. Sure, we're all friends here.

CHRISTY. I thought we were friends, aye, but then you keep dragging dead cats into the equation.

JOEY. I'm sorry, Christy. I have a fondness for cats is all. I'm sorry.

CHRISTY. You want to get your priorities right, boy. Is it happy cats or is it an Ireland free we're after?

JOEY. It's an Ireland free, Christy. Although I'd like a combination of the two. *(Christy cocks his gun.)* It's an Ireland free, Christy.

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(Pause. Christy lowers his gun and collects his belongings. After a second the other two put their guns away also.)

CHRISTY. Good. For wont the cats of Ireland be happier too when they won't have the English coming over bothering them no more?

JOEY. They will.

CHRISTY. Do you know how many cats Oliver Cromwell killed in his time?

BRENDAN. Lots of cats.

CHRISTY. Lots of cats. And burned them alive. We have a way to go before we're in that bastard's league. We'll have not another word on the cat matter. Collect up your gear. We'll lie low in a barn or somewhere tonight. Twelve noon the little fat lad said Padraic wouldn't be home till, and he had no need to lie. We'll arrive at ten past, and enter blasting. *(The others collect their gear and move off left.)* Did I tell you how I fecked up the fat fecker with his sister, saying it was him killed the cat? I said, "The Jesuits say you should never tell a lie, boy, so I'll have to tell the truth on that subject." Ha ha.

BRENDAN. Except it isn't the Jesuits who say that at all.

CHRISTY. Is it not? Who is it then?

BRENDAN. I don't know, but it isn't the Jesuits.

CHRISTY. Are you starting again?

BRENDAN. Starting what?

CHRISTY. Starting your saying who didn't say things.

BRENDAN. I'm not starting anything. I'm just saying it isn't the

Jesuits.

CHRISTY. So who is it?

BRENDAN. I don't know!

CHRISTY. I suppose it was fecking Marx!

BRENDAN. *(Exiting.)* It may have been fecking Marx. I do not know. What I'm saying for sure is it isn't the fecking Jesuits.

CHRISTY. *(Exiting.)* Get ahead on the fecking road, you! *(The voices of the three fade to mumbles offstage. Pause. Mairead talks on from stage right, having overheard their conversation. She starts off after the men a second, broods thoughtfully, then cocks her air rifle. Blackout.)*

END

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SCENE SIX

Another roadside. Night, moonlight. Mairead, on lipstick and a little make-up for once, leans against a wall, singing quietly "The Patriot Game," the air rifle on the wall beside her.

~~MAIREAD. *(Singing.)* "Come all ye young rebels and list while I sing. The love of one's land is a terrible thing. It banishes fear with the speed of a flame, and it makes us all part of the patriot game."~~

~~*(Padraic enters right and slowly moves along the road towards her. Though she's noticed him she continues singing. Singing.)* "Oh my name is O'Hanlon, and I've just gone sixteen. My home is in Monaghan, there I was weaned. I was taught all my life cruel England's to blame, and so I'm a part of the patriot game." *(Padraic steps in front of her, having joined in on her last line. They look at each other a while.)*~~

~~PADRAIC. It's a while since I heard that owl song. Wasn't it one of the Behans wrote that?~~

~~MAIREAD. It was, Dominic.~~

~~PADRAIC. *(About to make on.)* If they'd done a little more bombing and a little less writing I'd've had more respect for them.~~

~~MAIREAD. I still have respect for them. Lieutenant.~~

~~PADRAIC. *(Pause.)* You're not Seamus Claven's daughter?~~

~~MAIREAD. I am. You remembered me, so.~~

~~PADRAIC. I remember you phasing me begging to bring you when I left to fire the North, and that when you were ten.~~

~~MAIREAD. Haven't I grown up since? If you get me meaning.~~

~~PADRAIC. You have. Upwards if not outwards. From a distance I thought "What's a boy doing sitting there with lipstick on?," then as I got closer I realised it was a lass, just with shocking hair.~~

~~MAIREAD. *(Hiding hurt.)* Is that a nice thing to say to a girl comes to meet you off the boat the early morning?~~

~~PADRAIC. I suppose it's not, but that's the way I am.~~

~~MAIREAD. The girls must be falling over themselves to get to you~~

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be shooting a builder. Me whole world's gone, and he'll never be coming back to me. (Pause.) What I want ye to remember, as the bullets come out through yere foreheads, is that this is all a fella can be expecting for being so bad to an innocent Irish cat. Goodbye to ye, now. (Donny and Davey tense up.) Goodbye, I said. DAVEY. Goodbye ...

DONNY. Goodbye, Padraic ... (Donny and Davey tense up again. Pause: There is a loud knock at the front door. Padraic uncocks his guns.)

PADRAIC. (Sighing.) You could've told me you were expecting someone.

DONNY. I wasn't. (Padraic goes to the door.)

PADRAIC. Well, don't try anything or ye'll be getting it worse.

DAVEY. (Whispered to Donny.) Sure, how can we get it any worse, sure? (Padraic opens the front door wide. Standing there are Christy, Joey and Brendan, smiling, their hands behind their backs. Padraic laughs, happy to see them.)

CHRISTY. Howdo.

PADRAIC. Christy! What the feck are you fellas doing out this way? Come on in ahead for yourselves. I'm just in the middle of shooting me dad. (He turns his back on them, goes back to the two kneeling men and points his guns at their heads, at the same time as the three men at the door dash in, take the guns out from behind their backs and point them right up against Padraic's head — one on the left side, one on the right and one from behind, in something of a triangle. Pause.)

CHRISTY. What's all this about, now?

CHRISTY. Does the word "splinter group" mean anything to ya?

PADRAIC. "Splinter group"? Splinter group's two words.

CHRISTY. Mister Cocksure, uh-huh.

BRENDAN. Hah. He's not so cocksure now, is he, Christy?

CHRISTY. He's not.

JOEY. He is.

CHRISTY. Shush, now, Joey ...

JOEY. Well, he is. He's still cocksure. Look at him ...

CHRISTY. All right, Joey. For feck's sake, now. (Pause.) Throw your guns on the table there, Padraic, and easy. (Padraic pauses a moment, then does so.) Skank Toby was the last straw, Padraic. Messing around teasing your marijuana gobshites is fine. But when you drag one of the big-time boys into the equation, a fella

without whom there'd be no financing for your ferry crossings and your chip-shop manoeuvres, and not only to cut the nose off him, all well and good, a bit of micro-surgery may do the trick later, but to then feed it to his cocker spaniel, a dog never did no one harm, and choked himself to death on it ...

PADRAIC. I don't like dogs, I don't.

DONNY. He was frightened be a corgi as a little fella.

CHRISTY. And made Skank Toby watch that dog choke, and sticking your finger in where his nose was then if he tried to help it, and when then you talk of splinter groups, and splinter groups of two fellas, which isn't a splinter group at all, it's just two fellas.

BRENDAN. In a mood.

CHRISTY. In a mood. No, boy. That's the time we've got to take a long hard look at ourselves and say "All this has got to end, now. Uh-huh. All this has got to end."

PADRAIC. You've always had it in for me, Christy. And for no reason at all.

CHRISTY. No reason, no. Other than you shooting me fecking eye out, ya bastard

PADRAIC. I've apologised for that eye many's the day.

CHRISTY. Playing "murder in the dark" with a crossbow, like a schoolchild.

PADRAIC. You never let bygones be bygones, you. (Christy cocks his gun. Joey and Brendan do likewise.) Christy, now? You wouldn't be killing a fella in front of his dad, would ya?

BRENDAN. You're behind your dad.

PADRAIC. It's the principle I'm saying, ya thick, Brendan.

BRENDAN. Oh, the principle.

PADRAIC. Dad, you wouldn't want to see me killed in front of you, would ya? Wouldn't it be a trauma?

DONNY. I couldn't give a feck! Weren't you about to shoot me in the fecking head, sure?

PADRAIC. Ah, I was only tinkering with ya, Dad. Do you think I'd've done it?

DONNY. Aye!

DAVEY. Aye!

PADRAIC. Take me out on the road, Christy. No one ever comes down that lonely road. Not a struggle I'll give to ya. I knew this'd

Skank Toby