

SECRET

in Ulster so, if them's the kind of compliments you be paying them. PADRAIC. A few have fallen but I paid no mind. Not while there was work to be done ridding Erin of them jackboot hirelings of England's foul monarchy, and a lot of the girls up North are dogs

anyways, so it was no loss. MAIREAD. Do you prefer Inishmore girls, so?

PADRAIC. I don't.

MAIREAD. You don't prefer boys?

PADRAIC. I do not prefer boys! There's no boy-preferees involved in Irish terrorism, I'll tell you that! They stipulate when you join.

MAIREAD. Good, cos there's a dance at the church hall Friday would you take me to?

PADRAIC. Amn't I after telling you? I'm interested in no social activities that don't involve the freeing of Ulster.

MAIREAD. But that narrows it down terrible.

PADRAIC. So be it.

MAIREAD. (Pause.) There's a film on at the Omniplex about the Guildford Four next week. Isn't that close enough?

PADRAIC. Ah, feck the Guildford Four. Even if they didn't do it, they should've took the blame and been proud. But no, they did nothing but whine.

MAIREAD. We could go Dutch!

PADRAIC. (Gently.) No, Mairead. (Pause.) Why did you come to meet me this far out of your way?

MAIREAD. (Sulkily.) No reason.

PADRAIC. Just to ask me out, was it? Ah. (Ruffles her hair.) I see you still have your owl popgun there you wanted to give me that day. A lot of use that would've been to me up North.

MAIREAD. It does do the job for me OK.

PADRAIC. I suppose it does. There's not a heifer left with eye-sight on Aran, I'll bet.

MAIREAD. (Pacing angrily.) Everybody slings me cow blinding at me, no matter how many years go by! What nobody ever mentions is it was from sixty yards I hit them cows' eyes, which is bloody good shooting in anybody's books. If I'd walked bang up to them I could understand it, but I didn't, I gave them every chance.

PADRAIC. Ah, hold your horses, Mairead, I was only fooling with you. I meself once shot a fella in the eye with a crossbow, but

that was from right next to him. Sixty yards is marvellous going. MAIREAD. You can't be getting round me that easy ...

PADRAIC. Mairead, now ...

MAIREAD. And you can forget the message I had for you too!

PADRAIC. What message?

MAIREAD. No message.

PADRAIC. No, what message did you have for me? (Suddenly upset, suspicious.) It wasn't me cat the message was about?

MAIREAD. If it was or if it wasn't I don't know, I have forgot. (Padraic angrily pulls out both his guns and points them at Mairead's head.)

PADRAIC. Tell me the fecking message now, ya birchteen! Has me cat gone downhill or what the feck is it? Eh? (Poised, disgusted and superior, Mairead picks up her air rifle, cocks it, and, while Padraic still has his guns to her head, points the rifle towards one of his eyes, so that the barrel is almost resting against it. Pause.) Do you think I'm joking?

MAIREAD. Do you think I am?

PADRAIC. (Long pause.) You have some balls, anyways.

MAIREAD. I don't have.

PADRAIC. I'll take your word. (Padraic lowers his guns. Mairead pauses a moment or two, her rifle still up to his face, then she lowers it also.)

MAIREAD. Will you let me join up this time when you go back, so, if I'm such a tough owl feck with balls?

PADRAIC. We don't be letting girls in the INLA. No. Unless pretty girls. What was the message?

MAIREAD. (Almost tearful.) Unless pretty girls? Not even middling-looking girls who can put a cow's eye out from sixty yards?

PADRAIC. No. We have no call for girls with them attributes.

MAIREAD. Unfair to women that sounds.

PADRAIC. No, just fair to cows. (Pause.) What was the message, Mairead? Was it about my Wee Thomas, now?

MAIREAD. Your final word on the matter is you won't let me in the INLA, so? Not ever?

PADRAIC. Not as long as I have any say in the INLA. It's for your own good I'm saying this, Mairead. Be staying home, now, and marry some nice fella. Let your hair grow out a taddeen and some fella's

Mairead Sid #1 1082

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bound to be looking twice at you some day, and if you learn how to cook and sew too, sure, that'd double your chances. Maybe treble.

MAIREAD. *(Pause.)* The message was Wee Thomas is over the worst of it, but be hurrying home to him, just to be on the safe side, now.

PADRAIC. He's over the worst of it?

MAIREAD. He is.

PADRAIC. *(Ecstatic.)* Oh, God love you, Mairead, I could kiss you! *(Padraic grabs Mairead in his arms and kisses her, a kiss of thanks at first, which lengthens into something much more sensual. They break, both a little disturbed. Padraic smiles uncomfortably and hurries off stage left. Mairead stares at the ground a while, singing quietly to herself, but with a little more thought for the words than before.)*

MAIREAD. *(Singing.)* "And now as I lie with my body all holed ... I think of the traitors who bargained and sold ... And I'm sorry my rifle has not done the same ... for the Quislings who sold out the patriot game." *(Mairead looks off stage left after Padraic. Blackout.)*

SCENE SEVEN

Early blue dawn. Donny's house. Five o'clock. Donny and Davy still boozed, Donny in the armchair left, sleepy, Davy sitting on the floor right, holding a wooden cross he's made, its lower piece sharpened to a point, and along the crosspiece of which he finger-paints in shoe polish the words "Wee Thomas." The shoe-polished cat from earlier idles around where he pleases. Empty cat basket on table left.

DONNY. Remember now.

DAVEY. I'll remember. *(Pause.)* Remember what?

DONNY. To be waking me!

DAVEY. Aye.

DONNY. There's nothing more can be done till we're sober and it's light out, so we'll have a wee sleep and be up bright and early

to fix the final touches so not a thing will be suspect.

DAVEY. Aye.

DONNY. So be remembering to be waking me.

DAVEY. *(Yawning.)* I will.

DONNY. You're a light sleeper, so you say.

DAVEY. I'm an awful light sleeper. Not only that, I have a thing in me head I can force meself to wake up bang on any hour I've decided on the night before. And not only the hour. The minute! Y'know, like a ninja.

DONNY. How did you get that in your head?

DAVEY. It's a thing I've had since I was a child.

DONNY. Creepy, that sounds.

DAVEY. Aye, it is creepy.

DONNY. Set your head for nine in the morning, so.

DAVEY. Me head is set, you do not have to ask.

DONNY. *(Pause.)* What's that you're doing? *(Davy shows Donny the finished cross.)*

DAVEY. It's a cross for Wee Thomas. Look, it says "Wee Thomas."

DONNY. That's a well-made cross.

DAVEY. I think it is, but it has to be drying, now. *(Davy sets the cross face down on the floor, taps it for luck, puts the cat in the cat basket, giving him a pat, and goes and sits in the armchair right, huddling up in it for sleep.)*

DONNY. In the morning, too, we'll have to go over the place with a toothcomb to make sure we've left nothing to give the game away his cat's dead.

DAVEY. We will, aye, although I think we've covered everything.

DONNY. *(Pause.)* And you'll be remembering to wake me?

DAVEY. Me head is set for nine, Donny. I'm going to get angry soon.

DONNY. Nightry-night, so.

DAVEY. Nightry-night, aye.

DONNY. Don't let the bedbugs be biting.

DAVEY. I won't let them. *(The two men sit there, falling asleep. Slow fade to black.)*

DONNY. And you'll remember to be waking me? *(Davy looks across at Donny sternly. Donny sniggers. Davy laughs too. They settle down to sleep.)*

7042

Mairead #2

SCENE NINE

Donny's house, night. As the scene begins the blood-soaked living room is strewn with the body parts of Brendan and Joey, which Donny and Davey, blood-soaked also, hack away at to sizeable chunks. Padraic's two guns are lying on the table. In the adjacent bare room, Padraic is sitting on Christy's corpse, stroking Wee Thomas's headless, dirt-soiled body. Through Christy's mouth, with the pointed end sticking out of the back of his neck, has been shoved the cross with "Wee Thomas" on it. Padraic has a sad, faraway look about him. He cannot hear the quiet conversation Donny and Davey are having.

~~DONNY. Won't your man be upset, your Mairead joining the paramilitaries, Davey?~~

~~DAVEY. She knew it was to be coming some day. I think she'll have resigned herself to it, though I think she'd have preferred it to be the IRA if anybody. Y'know, they're more established.~~

~~DONNY. They aren't. And they do travel further afield than the INLA.~~

~~DAVEY. The IRA do get a good bit of travelling done, aye.~~

~~DONNY. They do. They go to Belgium sometimes.~~

~~DAVEY. You never see the INLA going to Belgium.~~

~~DONNY. You're lucky if they leave the Falls.~~

~~DAVEY. You never see the INLA shooting Australians.~~

~~DONNY. Still, I suppose it isn't the travel that attracts people to the IRA.~~

~~DAVEY. No. It's the principle of the thing. I'll tell ya, I'd shirk meself having to shoot fellas, but Mairead seems to have no qualms.~~

~~DONNY. I'll say this about Mairead. She's fucking accurate. Knock your eye out from a mile.~~

~~DAVEY. I always knew that cow practising would pay off some day.~~

46

1042

DONNY. Padraic has an entirely different style.

DAVEY. Padraic goes all the way up to ya.

DONNY. Padraic goes all the way up to ya, and then uses two guns from only an inch away.

DAVEY. Sure, there's no skill in that.

DONNY. I think the two guns is overdoing it. From that range, like. DAVEY. It's just showing off, really.

DONNY. Mairead sees none of the sport. *(Pause.)* Is he still sitting on the fella and stroking the dead cat?

DAVEY. *(Craning his neck.)* He is. Morbid, that was, digging up his dead cat. After all the trouble we went to burying it, and without a word of thanks.

DONNY. I suppose it does help the mourning process.

DAVEY. *(Pause.)* Digging up the corpse? *(Donny shows Mairead has entered through the front door, wearing a pretty dress and carrying a rucksack and air rifle.)*

MAIREAD. Less gabbing and more chopping would be more in ye's two's line.

DONNY. I don't see you or your boyfriend giving us a hand ...

DAVEY. What the hell's that you're wearing?

MAIREAD. A dress! I do have them!

DAVEY. Hrrm ...

MAIREAD. Why should we be giving ye a hand?

DONNY. It's yer mess, sure.

MAIREAD. Well, it's your house. And you don't be getting officers doing this sort of dirty work, anyways.

DAVEY. Oh, you're an officer now, are ya?

MAIREAD. I'm a second-lieutenant. Just awarded be Padraic. Padraic's just awarded himself a full-blown lieutenantship, and he deserves it.

DONNY. Ye're all going up in the world.

MAIREAD. Be knocking them teeth out them mouths, now. It does hamper the identification process.

DONNY. She's awful on the ball.

MAIREAD. I am.

DAVEY. What did Mam say to you when you left?

MAIREAD. She said good luck and try not to go blowing up kids.

DAVEY. And what did you say?

47

MAIREAD. I said I'd try but I'd be making no promises.
 DAVEY. And what did she say?
 MAIREAD. She said so long as you try is the main thing.
 DAVEY. I suppose it is.
 MAIREAD. Oh, it is, but I can't be bandying about pleasantries with the likes of ye. Be getting on with your work, now. Them corpses won't be chopping themselves up, or d'ye think they will? *(Mairead passes through to Padraic.)*
 DAVEY. She loves pegging orders, that one.
 DONNY. I can see. *(Donny and Davey continue with their hacking and bludgeoning. Mairead sits down beside Padraic on Christy's bloody corpse.)*
 MAIREAD. Howdo.
 PADRAIC. Howdo. *(Pause.)* There's no head at all on Wee Thomas now.
 MAIREAD. No. Does it make you think twice about the INLA, so, that they let fellas like Christy in, would do that to a cat?
 PADRAIC. Sure, you do get bad apples in every organisation. *(Pause.)* Are them wet fellas still chopping?
 MAIREAD. Aye.
 PADRAIC. Are they making a decent job of it?
 MAIREAD. Middling.
 PADRAIC. They've had no practice, sure, God bless them. *(Pause.)* What the hell's that you're wearing?
 MAIREAD. Isn't a girl allowed to wear dresses now and again?
 PADRAIC. Just that it comes as a shock is all.
 MAIREAD. Would you say I looked pretty in it, or just fair, now? *(Padraic kisses her at length, the cat awkward in one hand. They break after a few seconds.)*
 PADRAIC. When you get up close to you, you don't really look like a boy at all.
 MAIREAD. Thank you.
 PADRAIC. Just except for your hair.
 MAIREAD. From you that's some kind of compliment, I suppose?
 PADRAIC. Would you let your hair be growing out a tad, Mairead? Just to about here, now. Like Evie off *The House of Elliot*?
 MAIREAD. Would you like me to?
 PADRAIC. Aye.

MAIREAD. Well, me hair's staying the way it is and feck Evie off *The House of Elliot*.
 PADRAIC. Ah, Mairead ...
 MAIREAD. Could Evie blind three fellas from sixty yards?
 PADRAIC. No. But she probably wouldn't want to.
 MAIREAD. Just be content with what you've fecking got, so.
 PADRAIC. You're a tough owl get.
 MAIREAD. And fecking proud of it.
 PADRAIC. Kiss me again.
 MAIREAD. I will.
 PADRAIC. *(They kiss again. Pause.)* Will we leave the INLA altogether and be starting our own splinter group, just me and you?
 MAIREAD. Would you like to?
 PADRAIC. I would.
 MAIREAD. We will so. What will we call ourselves?
 PADRAIC. I was thinking "Wee Thomas's Army," unless you have an objection, now.
 MAIREAD. Sure, that sounds like a great name. "Wee Thomas's Army." Aye. What'll be our first plan of action?
 PADRAIC. Our first plan of action will be to find a fella I owe a torturing to. I had him in me clutches yesterday, but the cat distractions made me go easy on the feck, I hardly touched him, and he spun me a yarn about ringworm proved completely untrue too. "Wrapping pellets up in cheese." I bet he doesn't even have a cat.
 MAIREAD. He sounds like a valid target anyways.
 PADRAIC. He's the valideest of targets.
 MAIREAD. We should make a list of valid targets. From one to twenty. Like *Top of the Pops*.
 PADRAIC. I used to have a list of valid targets but I lost it on a bus. Who would be top of your list?
 MAIREAD. People who brain cats for no reason.
 PADRAIC. ~~As a good example of a brain cat, I call you this, Mairead! I did brain a cat this morning, but I did have a reason.~~
 MAIREAD. ~~What was the reason?~~
 PADRAIC. ~~It seemed terrible and unhygienic. Half covered in black muck.~~
 MAIREAD. Fair go, so. I don't like unhygienic cats. Braining nice clean cats, I'm saying. My cat I wanted to say goodbye to him, now

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2082