

SCENE THREE

A country lane. Davey has his bike propped upside down and is lovingly pumping up its tyres. Distinctive whizzing shots from an air rifle begin to sound, one of them hitting Davey in the cheek, making him dive down behind his bike, the others bouncing off the bike itself.

Start

DAVEY. Ar, ya fecker, Mairead! Ya big fecker, you! You got me in the cheek there! *(The shooting stops, Davey whimpering.)*

MAIREAD. *(Off)* In the cheek, is it?

DAVEY. You could've had me fecking eye out!

MAIREAD. *(Entering)* That was the object, to have your fecking eye out. I've failed now. *(Mairead is a girl of sixteen or so, slim, pretty, with close-cropped hair, army trousers, white T-shirt, sunglasses. She carries an air rifle and starts kicking Davey's bicycle into the ditch as he gets up, examining his bloody cheek.)*

DAVEY. Leave me fecking bike alone, now! Is it not enough you shoot me in the face, let alone battering me bicycle on top of it?

MAIREAD. No, it's not enough! It's not enough at all for your crimes!

DAVEY. What fecking crimes, ya lube?! Leave me fecking bike, now! *(He shows Mairead away from the bike. She falls to the ground, then slowly picks herself up, cocks her gun and aims it at Davey's face. Hands raised.)* I didn't mean to push you that hard, Mairead, I promise. *Don't, now!* I'll be telling Mam on ya!

MAIREAD. Go ahead and tell Mam, only you'll have to tell her with no eyes!

DAVEY. What's got into your mad head at all?

MAIREAD. The poor cat you rammed to skitter this morning is what's got into my mad head at all.

DAVEY. Ah, feck, I rammed no cat at all! How did you hear that story?

MAIREAD. The news it was on.

DAVEY. It was on no news, and when do you ever watch the news unless there's been a bomb in England gone off you can laugh o'er?

MAIREAD. A little bird did tell me, so.

DAVEY. Well, if he told you I did anything other than ride along slow and see a dead cat in the road and pick it up gentle and run it into Donny's then that little bird is a dirty fecking liar and I'll say it to that bird's fecking face. *(Pause)* That was the entire of it, Mairead. Sure, I have as much concern for the cats of this world as you do, only I don't go around saying it, because if I went around saying it they'd call me an outright gayboy, and they do enough of that with me hairstyle. *(Mairead lowers the gun and idles around.)* You'd have blinded your brother over a dead cat.

MAIREAD. I would. Without a question.

DAVEY. And then you say you're not mad.

MAIREAD. I'm not at all mad.

DAVEY. I could round up ten cows with only one eye would disagree.

MAIREAD. Don't keep bringing them cows' eyes up! Them cows' eyes was a political protest!

DAVEY. Against cows? Sure, what have cows done?

MAIREAD. Against the fecking meat trade, and you know well!

DAVEY. I can't see how shooting cows in the eyes is going to do any damage to the meat trade, now.

MAIREAD. Of course you can't, because you're a thick. Don't you know that if you take the profit out of the meat trade it'll collapse in on itself entirely, and there's no profit at all in taking ten blind cows to market, I'll tell ya. There's a loss. For who would want to buy a blind cow?

DAVEY. No one.

MAIREAD. No one is right. So in those circumstances I did see cows as valid targets, though my thinking has gone full tilt since then, and they are valid targets no longer.

DAVEY. Aye. It's only wee lads and their bicycles you see as valid targets nowadays.

MAIREAD. If they're suspected of doing damage to cats it is, aye.

DAVEY. Well, I was doing no damage to that cat. I was trying to help that cat, and help Donny too, and amn't I still trying to help Donny, running arse-faced errands I'm a dead man if I fail in.

MAIREAD. What errands?

DAVEY. He's got me roaming the country to find a black cat identical to his Wee Thomas, so that when Padraic roars home at high noon tomorrow it won't be a cat with a half a head we'll be placing in his arms.

MAIREAD. Sure, do you think Padraic's thick?

DAVEY. What we're banking on is that Padraic's as thick as a mongo fecking halfwit. *(Mairead pokes his bloody cheek.)*

MAIREAD. Don't be saying mongo halfwit about a brave son of Erin, now, David!

DAVEY. I won't be, Mairead.

MAIREAD. Padraic'll be able to tell the differ straight off between a cat that's his and a cat that isn't. Sure, isn't he a second-lieutenant at the age of twenty-one, sure?

DAVEY. He is, aye, a second-lieutenant. In his own brain if nowhere else.

MAIREAD. Sure, every cat has its own separate personality, sure, not to mention its eyes and its miaow. Look at my Sir Roger. Sir Roger has a different personality to any cat. Any cat I've ever known, anyways ...

DAVEY. Aye. He's a snooty little bitch.

MAIREAD. He's no snooty little bitch.

DAVEY. He's a snooty bitch and he tore two of me X-men comics the other day and on purpose ...

MAIREAD. Good on Sir Roger, so.

DAVEY. So don't be defending him.

MAIREAD. I will do what I wish.

DAVEY. Is me cheek still bleeding?

MAIREAD. It is.

DAVEY. *(Quietly.)* Ya feck! *(Davey sets up his bike again and starts pumping it as before. Mairead idles, swinging her gun around her fingers and singing "The Dying Rebel.")*

MAIREAD. *(Singing.)* "The last I met was a dying rebel ..."

DAVEY. Aye, don't be singing your fool fecking rebel songs again, now, Mairead!

MAIREAD. *(Singing.)* "Kneeling low I heard him say, God bless my home in dear Cork City, God bless the cause for which I die."

DAVEY. *(Singing over her last line — Monorhead.)* "The ace of

spades! The ace of spades!" *(Christy, Northern Irish, in a dark suit, sporting an eye-patch, enters right, walking along the road. He stops as he's about to pass the two.)*

CHRISTY. Howdo?

DAVEY. Howdo?

CHRISTY. That's a nice wee gun.

MAIREAD. It gets the job done.

CHRISTY. *(To Davey.)* I've seen you somewhere before, I'm thinking.

DAVEY. I don't know if you have or you haven't.

CHRISTY. Today, even, it may've been. I remember your girly hair. *(Davey tuts.)* Weren't you the fella I saw rode over the cat on the road this morning?

DAVEY. I rid over no cat! *(Mairead backs off, stern-faced, sits on a rock stage left and stares at Davey throughout. Davey is aware of this, nervous.)*

CHRISTY. Did you not, now? I must be mistaken, so.

DAVEY. I rode up to a cat, slow, and when I saw he was in a bad way I ran him into the fella he belongs to to try and save him, as fast as me legs could carry me.

CHRISTY. The fella whose he is must've been upset.

DAVEY. He was upset. And the cat isn't even his either. It's another fella's.

CHRISTY. Is that fella upset?

DAVEY. He will be tomorrow when he gets home. He thinks it's only poorly. It isn't poorly. It's buried in his potatoes.

CHRISTY. Uh-huh. What time will this other fella be home?

DAVEY. Uh ... twelve, I think. Aye, twelve. *(Christy nods and begins to walk off stage left.)*

CHRISTY. All the best to yous.

DAVEY. Fella? Will you tell me sister you were wrong when you said I rid over that cat? Isn't it right you only saw me ride up to it, slow, like, if anything at all you saw?

CHRISTY. *(Pause.)* I was brought up be Jesuits. And the thing the Jesuits tell you, "It's a terrible thing to go lying." Of course, a fella's eyes can often play tricks on him, especially when he only has one eye, but as sure as shite I'd swear you aimed for that cat's head full-pelt, then near enough reversed on the fecker. I'll be see-