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HAROLD
PINTER

The Birthday
Party



The Birthday Party Full Text - Document Transcript

The living-room of a house in a seaside town. A door leading to the hall down left. Back door and small window up left. Kitchen hatch, centre back. Kitchen door up right. Table and chairs, centre.

PETEY enters from the door on the left with a paper and sits at the table. He begins to read. MEG's voice comes through the kitchen hatch.

Meg. Is that you Petey?

Pause.

Petey, is that you?

Pause.

Petey?

Petey. What?

Meg. Is that you?

Petey. Yes, it's me.

Meg. What? (Her face appears at the hatch). Are you back?

Petey. Yes.

Meg. I've got your cornflakes ready. (She disappears and re-appears.) Here's your cornflakes.

He rises and takes the plate from her, sits at the table, props up the paper and begins to eat. MEG enters by the kitchen door.

Are they nice?

Petey. Very nice.

Meg. I thought they'd be nice. (She sits at the table.) You got your paper?

Petey. Yes.

Meg. Is it good?

Petey. Not bad.

Meg. What does it say?

Petey. Nothing much.

Meg. You read me out some nice bits yesterday.

Petey. Yes, well, I haven't finished this one yet.

Meg. Will you tell me when you come to something good?

Petey. Yes.

Pause.

Meg. have you been working hard this morning?

Petey. No. Just stacked a few of the old chairs. Cleaned up a bit.

Meg. Is it nice out?

Petey. Very nice.

Pause.

Meg. Is Stanley up yet?

Petey. I don't know. Is he?

Meg. I don't know. I haven't seen him down yet.

Petey. Well then, he can't be up.

Meg. Haven't you seen him down?

Petey . I've only just come in.

Meg. He must be still asleep.

She looks around the room, stands, goes to the sideboard and takes a pair of socks from a drawer, collects wool and a needle and goes back to the table.

What time did you go out this morning, Petey?

Petey. Same time as usual.

Meg. Was it dark?

Petey. No, it was light.

Meg. (beginning to darn.) But sometimes you go out in the morning and it's dark.

Petey. That's in the winter.

Meg. Oh, in winter.

Petey. Yes, it gets light later in winter.

Meg. Oh.

Pause.

What are you reading?

Petey. Someone's just had a baby.

Meg. Oh, they haven't! Who?

Petey. Some girl.

Meg. Who, Petey, who?

Petey. I don't think you'd know her.

Meg. What's her name?

Petey. Lady Mary Splatt.

Meg. I don't know her.

Petey. No.

Meg. What is it?

Petey. (studying the paper). Er-a girl.

Meg. Not a boy?

Petey. No.

Meg. Oh, What a shame. I'd be sorry. I'd much rather have a little boy.

Petey. A little girl's all right.

Meg. I'd much rather have a little boy.

Pause.

Petey. I've finished my cornflakes.

Meg. Were they nice?

Petey. Very nice.

Meg. I've got something else for you.

Petey. Good.

She rises, takes his plate and exits into the kitchen. She then appears at the hatch with two pieces of fried bread on a plate.

Meg. Here you are, Petey.

He rises, collects the plate, looks at it, sits at the table. MEG re-enters.

Is it nice?

Petey I haven't tasted it yet.

Meg I bet you don't know what it is.

Petey Yes, I do.

Meg What is it, then?

Petey Fried bread.

Meg That's right.

He begins to eat.

She watches him eat.

Petey Very nice.

Meg I knew it was.

Petey (turning to her). Oh, Meg, two men came up to me on the beach last night.

Meg Two men?

Petey Yes. They wanted to know if we could put them up for a couple of nights.

Meg Put them up? Here?

Petey Yes.

Meg How many men?

Petey Two.

Meg What did you say?

Petey Well, I said I didn't know. So they said they'd come round to find out.

Meg Are they coming?

Petey Well, they said they would.

Meg Had they heard about us, Petey?

Petey They must have done.

Meg Yes, they must have done. They must have heard this was a very good boarding house. It is. This house is on the list.

Petey It is.

Meg I know it is.

Petey They might turn up today. Can you do it?

Meg Oh, I've got that lovely room they can have.

Petey You've got a room ready?

Meg I've got the room with the armchair all ready for visitors.

Petey You're sure?

Meg Yes, that'll be all right then, if they come today.

Petey Good.

She takes the socks etc. back to the sideboard drawer.

Meg I'm going to wake that boy.

Petey There's a new show coming to the Palace.

Meg On the pier?

Petey No. The Palace, in the town.

Meg Stanley could have been in it, if it was on the pier.

Petey This is a straight show.

Meg What do you mean?

Petey No dancing or singing.

Meg What do they do then?

Petey They just talk.

Pause.

Meg Oh.

Petey You like a song eh, Meg?

Meg I like listening to the piano. I used to like watching Stanley play the piano. Of course, he didn't sing. (Looking at the door.) I'm going to call that boy.

Petey Didn't you take him up his cup of tea?

Meg I always take him up his cup of tea. But that was a long time ago.

Petey Did he drink it?

Meg I made him. I stood there till he did. I'm going to call

him. (She goes to the door.) Stan! Stanny! (She listens.)
Stan! I'm coming up to fetch you if you don't come down!
I'm coming up! I'm going to count three! One! Two!
Three! I'm coming to get you! (She exits and goes upstairs.
In a moment, shouts from STANLEY, wild laughter
from MEG. PETEY takes his plate to the hatch. Shouts. Laughter.
PETEY sits at the table. Silence. She returns.) He's coming
down. (She is panting and arranges her hair.) i told him if he
didn't hurry up he'd get no breakfast.
Petey That did it, eh?
Meg I'll get his cornflakes.
MEG exits to the kitchen. PETEY reads the paper. STANLEY
enters. he is unshaven, in his pyjama jacket and wears
glasses. he sits at the table.
Petey Morning, Stanley.
Stanley Morning.
Silence. MEG enters with the bowl of cornflakes, which she
sets on the table.
Meg So he's come down at last, has he? He's come down at
last for his breakfast. But he doesn't deserve any, does he,
Petey? (STANLEY stares at the cornflakes.) did you sleep
well?
Stanley I didn't sleep at all.
Meg You didn't sleep at all? Did you hear that, Petey? Too
tired to eat your breakfast, I suppose? Now you eat up those
cornflakes like a good boy. Go on.
He begins to eat.
Stanley What's it like out today?
Petey Very nice.
Stanley Warm?
Petey Well, there's a good breeze blowing.
Stanley Cold?
Petey No, no, I wouldn't say it was cold.
Meg What are the cornflakes like, stanley?
Stanley Horrible.
Meg Those flakes? Those lovely flakes? You're a liar, a little
liar. They're refreshing. It says so. For people when they get
up late.
Stanley The milk's off.
Meg It's not. Petey ate his, didn't you, Petey?

Petey That's right.

Meg There you are then.

Stanley All right, I'll go on to the second course.

Meg He hasn't finished the first course and he wants to go on to the second course!

Stanley I feel like something cooked.

Meg Well, I'm not going to give it to you.

Petey Give it to him.

Meg (sitting at the table, right.) I'm not going to.

Pause.

Stanley No breakfast.

Pause.

All night long I've been dreaming about this breakfast.

Meg I thought you said you didn't sleep.

Stanley Day-dreaming. All night long. And now she won't give me any. Not even a crust of bread on the table.

Pause.

Well, I can see I'll have to go down to one of those smart hotels on the front.

Meg (rising quickly.) You won't get a better breakfast there than here.

She exits to the kitchen. STANLEY yawns broadly. MEG appears at the hatch with a plate.

Here you are. You'll like this.

PETEY rises, collects the plate, brings it to the table, puts it in front of STANLEY, and sits.

Stanley What's this?

Petey Fried bread.

Meg (entering.) Well, I bet you don't know what it is.

Stanley Oh yes I do.

Meg What?

Stanley Fried bread.

Meg He knew.

Stanley What a wonderful surprise.

Meg You didn't expect that, did you?

Stanley I bloody well didn't.

Petey (rising) Well, I'm off.

Meg You going back to work?

Petey Yes.

Meg Your tea! You haven't had your tea!

Petey That's all right. No time now.
Meg I've got it made inside.
Petey No, never mind. See you later. Ta-ta, Stan.
Stanley Ta-ta.
PETEY exits, left.
tch, tch, tch, tch.
Meg (defensively.) What do you mean?
Stanley You're a bad wife.
Meg I'm not. Who said I am?
Stanley Not to make your husband a cup of tea. Terrible.
Meg He knows I'm not a bad wife.
Stanley Giving him sour milk instead.
Meg It wasn't sour.
Stanley Disgraceful.
Meg You mind your own business ,anyway. (STANLEY eats.)
You won't find many better wives than me, I can tell you. I
keep a very nice house and I keep it clean.
Stanley Whooo!
Meg Yes! And this house is very well known, for a very good
boarding house for visitors.
Stanley Visitors? Do you know how many visitors you've
had since I've been here?
ME How many?
Stanley One.
Meg Who?
Stanley Me! I'm your visitor.
Meg You're a liar. This house is on the list.
Stanley I bet it is.
Meg I know it is.
He pushes his plate away and picks up the paper.
Was it nice?
Stanley What?
Meg The fried bread.
Stanley Succulent.
Meg You shouldn't say that word.
Stanley What word?
Meg That word you said.
Stanley What, succulent -?
Meg Don't say it!
Stanley What's the matter with it?

Meg You shouldn't say that word to a married woman.
Stanley Is that a fact?
Meg Yes.
Stanley Well, I never knew that.
Meg Well, it's true.
Stanley Who told you that?
Meg Never you mind.
Stanley Well, if I can't say it to a married woman who can I say it to?
Meg You're bad.
Stanley What about some tea?
Meg Do you want some tea? (STANLEY reads the paper.) Say please.
Stanley Please.
Meg Say sorry first.
Stanley Sorry first.
Meg No. Just sorry.
Stanley Just sorry!
Meg You deserve the strap.
Stanley Don't do that.
She takes his plate and ruffles his hair as she passes.
STANLEY exclaims and throws her arm away. She goes into the kitchen. he rubs his eyes under his glasses and picks up the paper. She enters.
I brought the pot in.
Stanley (absently) I don't know what I'd do without you.
Meg You don't deserve it though.
Stanley Why not?
Meg (pouring the tea, coyly.) Go on. Caling me that.
Stanley How long has that tea been in the pot?
Meg It's good tea. Good strong tea.
Stanley This isn't tea. It's gravy!
Meg It's not.
Stanley Get out of it. You succulent old washing bag.
Meg I am not. And it isn't your place to tell me if I am!
Stanley And it isn't your place to come into a man's bedroom and - wake him up.
Meg Stanny! Don't you like your cup of tea of a morning - the one I bring you?
Stanley i can't drink this muck. Didn't anyone ever tell you

to warm the pot, at least?

Meg That's good strong tea, that's all.

Stanley (putting his head in his hands.) Oh God, I'm tired.

Silence. MEG goes to the sideboard, collects a duster, and vaguely dusts the room, watching him. She comes to the table and dusts it.

Not the bloody table!

Pause.

Meg Stan?

Stanley What?

Meg (shyly) Am I really succulent?

Stanley Oh, you are. I'd rather have you than a cold in the nose any day.

Meg You're just saying that.

Stanley (violently) Look, why don't you get this place cleared up! It's a pigsty. And another thing, What about my room? It needs sweeping. It needs papering. I need a new room!

Meg (sensual, stroking his arm.) Oh, Stan, that's a lovely room.

I've had some lovely afternoons in that room.

He recoils from her hand in disgust, stands and exits quickly by the door on the left. She collects his cup and the teapot and takes them to the hatch shelf. The street door slams.

STANLEY returns.

Meg Is the sun shining? (he crosses to the windows, takes a cigarette and matches from his pyjama jacket, and lights his cigarette.) What are you smoking?

Stanley A cigarette.

Meg Are you going to give me one?

Stanley No.

Meg I like cigarettes. (He stands at the window, smoking. She crosses behind him and tickles the back of his neck.) Tickle, tickle.

Stanley (pushing her.) Get away from me.

Meg Are you going out?

Stanley Not with you.

Meg You'll be lonely, all by yourself.

Stanley Will I?

Meg Without your old Meg. I've got to get things in for the two gentlemen.

A pause. STANLEY slowly raises his head. He speaks without turning.

Stanley What two gentlemen?

Meg I'm expecting visitors.

Stanley What?

Meg You didn't know that, did you?

Stanley What are you talking about?

Meg Two gentlemen asked Petey if they could come and stay for a couple of nights. I'm expecting them. (She picks up the duster and begins to wipe the cloth on the table.)

Stanley I don't believe it.

Meg It's true.

Stanley (moving to her.) You're saying it on purpose.

Meg Petey told me this morning.

Stanley (grinding his cigarette.) When was it? When did he see them?

Meg Last night.

Stanley Who are they?

Meg I don't know.

Stanley Didn't he tell you their names?

Meg No.

Stanley (pacing the room.) here? They wanted to come here?

Meg Yes, they did. (She takes the curlers out of her hair.)

Stanley Why?

Meg This house is on the list.

Stanley But who are they?

Meg You'll see when they come.

Stanley (decisevely.) They won't come.

Meg Why not.

Stanley (quickly.) I tell you they won't come. Why didn't they come last night, if they were coming?

Meg Perhaps they couldn't find the place in the dark. It's not easy to find in the dark.

Stanley They won't come. Someone's taking the Michael.

Forget all about it. it's a false alarm; a false alarm. (He sits at the table.) Where's my tea?

Meg I took it away. You didn't want it.

Stanley What do you mean, you took it away?

Meg I took it away.

Stanley What did you take it away for?

Meg You didn't want it!

Stanley Who said I didn't want it?

Meg You did!

Stanley Who gave you the right to take away my tea?

Meg You wouldn't drink it.

STANLEY stares at her;

Stanley (quietly.) Who do you think you're talking to?

Meg (uncertainly.) What?

Stanley Come here.

Meg What do you mean?

Stanley Come over here.

Meg No.

Stanley I want to ask you something. (MEG fidgets nervously. She does not go to him.) Come on. (Pause.) All right. I can ask it from here just as well. (Deliberately.) Tell me, Mrs Boles, when you address yourself to me, do you ever ask yourself who exactly you are talking to? Eh?
Silence. he groans, his trunk falls forward, his head falls into his hands.

Meg (in a small voice.) didn't you enjoy your breakfast, Stan? (She approaches the table.) Stan? When are you going to play the piano again? (STANLEY grunts.) Like you used to? (STANLEY grunts) I used to like watching you play the piano. When are you going to play it again?

Stanley I can't, can I?

Meg Why not?

Stanley I haven't got a piano, have I?

Meg No, I meant like when you were working. That piano.

Stanley Go and do your shopping.

Meg But you wouldn't have to go away if you got a job, would you? You could play the piano on the pier.

He looks at her, then speaks airily.

Stanley I've.. er... I've been offered a job, as a matter of fact.

Meg What?

Stanley Yes. I'm considring a job at the moment.

Meg You're not.

Stanley A good one too. A night club. In Berlin.

Meg Berlin?

Stanley Berlin. A night club. Playing the piano. A fabulous

salary. And all found.

Meg How long for?

Stanley We don't stay in Berlin. Then we go to Athens.

Meg How long for?

Stanley Yes. Then we pay a flying visit to ... er...

whatsisname?

Meg Where?

Stanley Constantinople. Zagreb. Vladivostok. It's a round the world tour.

Meg (sitting at the table.) Have you played the piano in those places before?

Stanley Played the piano? I've played the piano all over the world. All over the country. (Pause.) I once gave a concert.

Meg A concert?

Stanley (reflectively.) Yes. It was a good one, too. They were all there that night. Every single one of them. It was a great success. Yes. A concert. At Lower Edmonton.

Meg What did you wear?

Stanley (to himself.) I had a unique touch. Absolutely unique.

They came up to me. They came up to me and said they were grateful. Champagne we had that night, the lot. (Pause.)

My father nearly came down to hear me. Well, I dropped him a card anyway. But I don't think he could make it. No, I - I lost the address, that was it. (Pause.) Yes? Lower Edmonton.

Then, after that, you know what they did? They carved me up. Carved me up. It was all arranged, it was all worked out. My next concert. Somewhere else it was. In winter. i went down there to play. Then, when I got there, the hall was closed, the place was shuttered up, not even a caretaker. They'd locked it up. (Takes off his glasses and wipes them on his pyjama jacket.) A fast one. They pulled a fast one. I'd like to know who was responsible for that.

(Bitterly.) All right, Jack, i can take a tip. They want me to crawl down on my bended knees. Well, I can take a tip... any day of the week. (He replaces his glasses, then looks at MEG.) Look at her. You're just an old piece of rock cake, aren't you? (he rises and leans across the table to her.) That's what you are, aren't you?

Meg Don't you go away Stan. You stay here. You'll be better off. You stay with your old Meg. (He groans and

lies across the table.) Aren't you feeling well, this morning,
Stan. Did you pay a visit this morning?
He stiffens, then lifts himself slowly, turns to face her and
speaks lightly, casually.
Stanley Meg. Do you know what?
Meg What?
Stanley Have you heard the latest?
Meg No.
Stanley I'll bet you have.
Meg I haven't.
Stanley Shall I tell you?
Meg What latest?
Stanley You haven't heard it?
Meg No.
Stanley (advancing.) They're coming today.
Meg Who?
Stanley They're coming in a van.
Meg Who?
Stanley And do you know what they've got in that van?
Meg What?
Stanley They've got a wheelbarrow in that van.
Meg (breathlessly.) They haven't.
Stanley Oh yes they have.
Meg You're a liar.
Stanley (advancing upon her.) A big wheelbarrow. And when
the van stops they wheel it out, and they wheel it up the
garden path, and then they knock at the front door.
Meg They don't.
Stanley They're looking for someone.
Meg They're not.
Stanley They're looking for someone. a certain person.
Meg (hoarsely.) No, they're not!
Stanley Shall I tell you who they're looking for?
Meg No!
Stanley You don't want me to tell you?
Meg You're a liar.
A sudden knock at the door. LULU's voice: Ooh-ooh!
MEG edges past STANLEY and collects her shopping bag.
MEG goes out. STANLEY sidles to the door and listens.
Voice (through letter box.) Hullo, Mrs Boles..

Meg Oh, has it come?
Voice Yes, it's just come.
Meg What, is that it?
Voice Yes. I thought I 'd bring it round.
Meg Is it nice?
Voice Very nice. What shall I do with it?
Meg Well, I don't... (Whispers.)
Voice No, of course not... (Whispers.)
Meg All right, but... (Whispers.)
Voice I won't... (Whispers.) Ta-ta, Mrs Boles.
STANLEY quickly sits at the table. Enter LULU.
Lulu Oh, hullo.
Stanley Ay-ay.
Lulu I just want to leave this in here.
Stanley Do. (LULU crosses to the sideboard and puts a solid, round parcel upon it.) That's a bulky object.
Lulu You're not to touch it.
Stanley Why would I want to touch it?
Lulu Well, you're not to, anyway.
LULU walks upstage.
Lulu Why don't you open the door? It's all stuffy in here.
She opens the back door.
Stanley (rising.) Stuffy? I disinfected the place this morning.
Lulu (at the door.) Oh, that's better.
Stanley I think it's going to rain to-day. What do you think?
Lulu I hope so. You could do with it.
Stanley Me! I was in the sea at half past six.
Lulu Were you?
Stanley I went right out to the headland and back before breakfast. Don't you believe me!
She sits, takes out a compact and powders her nose.
Lulu (offering him the compact.) Do you want to have a look at your face? (STANLEY withdraws from the table.) You could do with a shave, do you know that? (STANLEY sits, right at the table.) Don't you ever go out? (He does not answer.) I mean, what do you do, just sit around the house like this all day long? (Pause.) Hasn't Mrs Boles got enough to do without having you under her feet all day long?
Stanley I always stand on the table when she sweeps the

floor.

Lulu Why don't you have a wash? you look terrible.

Stanley A wash wouldn't make any difference.

Lulu (rising) Come out and get a bit of air. You depress me, looking like that.

Stanley Air? Oh, I don't know about that.

Lulu It's lovely out. And I've got a few sandwiches.

Stanley What sort of sandwiches?

Lulu Cheese.

Stanley I'm a big eater, you know.

Lulu That's all right. I'm not hungry.

Stanley (abruptly.) How would you like to go away with me?

Lulu Where?

Stanley Nowhere. Still, we could go.

Lulu But where could we go?

Stanley Nowhere. There's nowhere to go. So we could just go. It wouldn't matter.

Lulu We might as well stay here.

Stanley No. It's no good here.

Lulu Well, where else is there?

Stanley Nowhere.

Lulu Well, that's a charming proposal. (He gets up.) Do you have to wear those glasses?

Stanley Yes.Lulu So you're not coming out for a walk?

Stanley I can't at the moment.

Lulu You're a bit of a washout, aren't you?

She exits, left. STANLEY stands. He then goes to the mirror and looks in it. He goes into the kitchen, takes off his glasses and begins to wash his face. A pause. Enter, by the back door, GOLDBERG and MCCANN. MCCANN carries two suitcases, GOLDBERG a briefcase. They halt inside the door, then walk downstage. STANLEY, wiping his face, glimpses thier backs through the hatch. GOLDBERG and MCCANN look round the room. STANLEY slips on his glasses, sidles through the kitchen door and out of the back door.

McCann Is this it?

Goldberg This is it.

McCann Are you sure?

Goldberg Sure I'm sure.

Pause.

McCann What now?

Goldberg Don't worry yourself, McCann. Take a seat.

McCann What about you?

Goldberg What about me?

McCann Are you going to take a seat?

Goldberg We'll both take a seat. (MCCANN puts down the suitcase and sits at the table, left.) Sit back, McCann. Relax. What's the matter with you? I bring you down for a few days to the seaside. Take a holiday. Do yourself a favour. Learn to relax, McCann, or you'll never get anywhere.

McCann Ah sure, I do try, Nat.

Goldberg (sitting at the table, right.) The secret is breathing. Take my tip. it's a well-known fact. Breath in, breath out, take a chance, let yourself go, what can you lose? Look at me. When I was an apprentice yet, McCann, every second Friday of the month my Uncle Barney used to take me to the seaside, regular as clockwork. Brighton, Canvey Island, Rottingdean - Uncle Barney wasn't particular. After lunch on Shabbuss we'd go and sit in a couple of deck chairs - you know, the ones with canopies - we'd have a little paddle, we'd watch the tide coming in, going out, the sun coming down - golden days, believe me, McCann. (reminiscent.) Uncle Barney. Of course, he was an impeccable dresser. One of the old school. He had a house just outside Basingstoke at the time. Respected by the whole community. Culture? Don't talk to me about culture. He was an all-round man, what do you mean? He was a cosmopolitan.

McCann Hey, Nat...

Goldberg (reflectively.) Yes. One of the old school.

McCann Nat. How do we know this is the right house?

Goldberg What?

McCann How do we know this is the right house?

Goldberg What makes you think this is the wrong house?

McCann I didn't see a number on the gate.

Goldberg I wasn't looking for a number.

McCann No?

Goldberg (settling in the armchair.) You know one thing Uncle Barney taught me? Uncle Barney taught me that the word of a gentleman is enough. That's why, when I had to

go away on business I never carried any money. One of my sons used to come with me. he used to carry a few coppers. For a paper, perhaps, to see how the M.C.C. was getting on overseas. Otherwise my name was good. Besides, I was a very busy man.

McCann I didn't know you had any sons.

Goldberg But of course. I've been a family man.

McCann How many did you have?

Goldberg I lost my last two – in an accident. But the first, the first grew up to be a fine boy.

McCann What's he doing now?

Goldberg I often wonder that myself. Yes. Emanuel. A quiet fellow. He never said much. Timmy I used to call him.

McCann Emanuel?

Goldberg That's right. Manny.

McCann Manny?

Goldberg Sure. It's short for Emanuel.

McCann I thought you called him Timmy.

Goldberg I did.

McCann What about this, Nat? Isn't it about time someone came in?

Goldberg McCann, what are you so nervous about? Pull yourself together. Everywhere you go these days it's like a funeral.

McCann That's true.

Goldberg True? Of course it's true. It's more than true. It's a fact.

McCann You may be right.

Goldberg What is it, McCann? You don't trust me like you did in the old days?

McCann Sure I trust you , Nat.

Goldberg But why is it that before you do a job you're all over the place, and when you're doing the job you're as cool as a whistle?

McCann I don't know, Nat. I'm just all right once I know what I'm doing. When I know what I'm doing, I'm all right.

Goldberg Well, you do it very well.

McCann Thank you, Nat.

Goldberg You know what I said When this job came up. I mean naturally they approached me to take care of it. And

you know who I asked for?

McCann Who?

Goldberg You.

McCann That was very good of you , Nat.

Goldberg No, it was nothing. You're a capable man,
McCann.

McCann That's a great compliment, Nat, coming from a
man in your position.

Goldberg Well, I've got a position, I won't deny it.

McCann You certainly have.

Goldberg I would never deny that I have a position.

McCann And what a position!

Goldberg It's not a thing I would deny.

McCann Yes, it's true, you've done a lot for me. I appreciate
it.

Goldberg Say no more.

McCann You've always been a true Christian.

Goldberg In a way.

McCann No, I just thought I'd tell you that I appreciate it.

Goldberg It's unnecessary to recapitulate.

McCann You're right there.

Goldberg Quite unnecessary.

Pause. MCCANN leans forward.

McCann Hey nat, just one thing...

Goldberg What now?

McCann This job - no, listen - this job, is it going to be like
anything we've ever done before?

Goldberg Tch, tch, tch.

McCann No, just tell me that. Just that, and I won't ask any
more.

GOLDBERG sighs, stands, goes behind the table, ponders,
looks at MCCANN, and then speaks in a quiet, fluent, official
tone.

Goldberg The main issue is a singular issue and quite
distinct from your previous work. Certain elements, however,
might well approximate in points of procedure to some of
your other activities. All is dependent on the attitude of our
subject. At all events, McCann, I can assure you that the
assignment will be carried out and the mission accomplished
with no excessive aggravation to you or myself. Satisfied?

McCann Sure. Thank you, Nat.

MEG enters, left.

Goldberg Ah, Mrs Boles?

Meg Yes?

Goldberg We spoke to your husband last night. Perhaps he mentioned us? We heard that you kindly let rooms for gentlemen. So I brought my friend along with me. We were after a nice place, you understand. So we came to you. I'm Mr Goldberg and this is Mr McCann.

Meg Very pleased to meet you.

They shake hands.

Goldberg We're pleased to meet you, too.

Meg That's very nice.

Goldberg You're right. How often do you meet someone it's a pleasure to meet?

McCann Never.

Goldberg But today it's different. How are you keeping, Mrs Boles?

Meg Oh, very well, thank you.

Goldberg Yes? Really?

Meg Oh yes, really.

Goldberg I'm glad.

GOLDBERG sits at the table, right.

Goldberg Well, so what do you say? You can manage to put us up, eh, Mrs Boles?

Meg Well, it would have been easier last week.

Goldberg Last week.

Meg Or next week.

Goldberg Next week.

Meg Yes.

Goldberg Why? How many have you got here at the moment?

Meg Just one at the moment.

Goldberg Just one?

Meg Yes. Just one. Until you came.

Goldberg And your husband, of course?

Meg Yes, but he sleeps with me.

Goldberg What does he do, your husband?

Meg He's a deck-chair attendant.

Goldberg Oh, very nice.

Meg Yes, he's out in all weathers.
She begins to take her purchases from her bag.
Goldberg Of course. And your guest? Is he a man?
Meg A man?
Goldberg Or a woman?
Meg No. A man.
Goldberg Been here long?
Meg He's been here about a year now.
Goldberg Oh yes. A resident. What's his name?
Meg Stanley Webber.
Goldberg Oh yes? Does he work here?
Meg He used to work. He used to be a pianist. In a concert party on the pier.
Goldberg Oh yes? On the pier, eh? Does he play a nice piano?
Meg Oh, lovely. (She sits at the table.) He once gave a concert.
Goldberg Oh? Where?
Meg (faltingly.) In...a big hall. His father gave him champagne. But then they locked the place up and he couldn't get out. The caretaker had gone home. So he had to wait until the morning before he could get out. (With confidence.) They were very grateful. (Pause.) And then they all wanted to give him a tip. And so he took the tip. And then he got a fast train and he came down here.
Goldberg Really?
Meg Oh yes. Straight down.
Pause.
Meg I wish he could have played tonight.
Goldberg Why tonight?
Meg It's his birthday today.
Goldberg His birthday?
Meg Yes. Today. But I'm not going to tell him until tonight.
Goldberg Doesn't he know it's his birthday?
Meg He hasn't mentioned it.
Goldberg (thoughtful.) Ah. Tell me. Are you going to have a party?
Meg A party?
Goldberg Weren't you going to have one?
Meg (her eyes wide.) No.
Goldberg Well, of course, you must have one. (He stands.)

We'll have a party, eh? What do you say?

Meg Oh yes!

Goldberg Sure. We'll give him a party. Leave it to me.

Meg Oh, that's wonderful, Mr Gold-
Goldberg Berg.

Meg Berg.

Goldberg You like the idea?

Meg Oh, I'm so glad you came today.

Goldberg If we hadn't come today we'd have come
tomorrow. Still, I'm glad we came today. just in time for his
birthday.

Meg I wanted to have a party. But you must have people for a
party.

Goldberg And now you've got McCann and me. McCann's
the life and soul of any party.

McCann What?

Goldberg What do you think of that, McCann? There's a
gentleman living here. He's got a birthday today, and he's
forgotten all about it. So we're going to remind him. We're
going to give him a party.

McCann Oh, is that a fact?

Meg Tonight.

Goldberg Tonight.

Meg I'll put on my party dress.

Goldberg And I'll get some bottles.

Meg And I'll invite Lulu this afternoon. Oh, this is going to
cheer Stanley up. It will. He's been down in the dumps lately.

Goldberg We'll bring him out of himself.

Meg I hope I look nice in my dress.

Goldberg Madam, you'll look like a tulip.

Meg What colour?

Goldberg Er- well, I'll have to see the dress first.

McCann Could I go up to my room?

Meg Oh, I've put you both together. Do you mind being both
together?

Goldberg I don't mind. Do you mind, McCann?

McCann No.

Meg What time shall we have the party?

Goldberg Nine o'clock.

McCann (at the door.) Is this the way?

Meg (rising.) I'll show you. If you don't mind coming upstairs.
Goldberg With a tulip? It's a pleasure.
MEG and GOLDBERG exit laughing, followed by MCCANN.
STANLEY appears at the window. He enters by the back door. He goes to the door on the left, opens it and listens. Silence. He walks to the table. he stands. He sits, as MEG enters. She crosses and hangs her shopping bag on a hook. He lights a match and watches it burn.
Stanley Who is it?
Meg The two gentlemen.
Stanley What two gentlemen?
Meg The ones that were coming. I just took them to their room. They were thrilled with their room.
Stanley They've come?
Meg They're very nice, Stan.
Stanley Why didn't they come last night?
Meg They said the beds were wonderful.
Stanley Who are they?
Meg (sitting.) They're very nice , Stanley.
Stanley I said, who are they?
Meg I've told you, the two gentlemen.
Stanley I didn't think they'd come.
He rises and walks to the window.
Meg They have. They were here when I came in.
Stanley What do they want here?
Meg They want to stay.
Stanley How long for?
Meg They didn't say.
Stanley (turning.) But why here? Why not somewhere else?
Meg This house is on the list.
Stanley (coming down.) What are they called? What are their names?
Meg Oh, Stanley, I can't remember.
Stanley They told you, didn't they? Come on. Try to remember.
Meg Why, Stan? Do you know them?
Stanley How do I know if I know them until I know their names?
Meg Well...he told me, I remember.
Stanley Well?
She thinks.

Meg Gold- something.
Stanley Goldsomething?
Meg Yes. Gold...
Stanley Yes?
Meg Goldberg.
Stanley Goldberg?
Meg That's right. That was one of them.
STANLEY slowly sits at the table, left.
Do you know them?
STANLEY does not answer.
Stan, they won't wake you up, I promise. I'll tell them they must be quiet.
STANLEY sits still.
They won't be here long, Stan. I'll still bring you up your early morning tea.
STANLEY sits still.
You mustn't be sad today. it's your birthday.
A pause.
Stanley (dumbly.) Uh?
Meg It's your birthday, Stan. I was going to keep it a secret until tonight.
Stanley No.
Meg It is. I've brought you a present. (She goes to the sideboard, picks up the parcel, and places it on the table in front of him.) here. Go on. Open it.
Stanley What's this?
Meg It's your present.
Stanley This isn't my birthday, Meg.
Meg Of course it is. Open your present.
He stares at the parcel, slowly stands, and opens it. He takes out a boy's drum.
Stanley (flatly) It's a drum. A boy's drum.
Meg (tenderl.) It's because you haven't got a piano. (He stares at her, then turns and walks towards the door, left.) Aren't you going to give me a kiss? (He turns sharply, and stops. He walks back towards her slowly. He stops at her chair, looking down upon her. Pause. His shoulders sag, he bends and kisses her on the cheek.) There are some sticks in there. (STANLEY looks into the parcel. He takes out two drumsticks. He taps them together. He looks at her.)
Stanley Shall I put it round my neck?

She watches him, uncertainly. He hangs the drum around his neck, taps it gently with the sticks, then marches round the table, beating it regularly. MEG, pleased, watches him. Still beating it regularly, he begins to go round the table a second time. Halfway round the beat becomes erratic, uncontrolled. MEG expresses dismay. He arrives at her chair, banging the drum, his face and the drumbeat now savage and possessed. Curtain.

[MCCANN is sitting at the table tearing a sheet of newspaper into five equal strips. It is evening. After a few moments STANLEY enters from the left. He stops upon seeing MCCANN, and watches him. He then walks towards the kitchen, stops, and speaks.]

Stanley Evening.

McCann Evening.

Chuckles are heard from outside the back door, which is open.

Stanley Very warm tonight. [He turns towards the back door, and back.] Someone out there?

[MCCANN tears another length of paper. STANLEY goes into the kitchen and pours a glass of water. He drinks it looking through the hatch. He puts the glass down, comes out of the kitchen and walks quickly towards the door, left. MCCANN rises and intercepts him.]

McCann I don't think we've met.

Stanley No, we haven't.

McCann My name's McCann.

Stanley Staying here long?

McCann Not long. What's your name?

Stanley Webber.

McCann I'm glad to meet you, sir. [He offers his hand. STANLEY takes it, and MCCANN holds the grip.] Many happy returns of the day. [STANLEY withdraws his hand. They face each other.] Were you going out?

Stanley Yes.

McCann On your birthday?

Stanley Yes. Why not?

McCann But they're holding a party here for you tonight.

Stanley Oh really? That's unfortunate.

McCann Ah no. It's very nice.

[Voices from outside the back door.]

Stanley I'm sorry. I'm not in the mood for a party tonight.

McCann Oh, is that so? I'm sorry.

Stanley Yes, I'm going out to celebrate quietly, on my own.

McCann That's a shame.

[They stand.]

Stanley Well, if you'd move out of my way-

McCann But everything's laid on. The guests are expected.

Stanley Guests? What guests?

McCann Myself for one. I had the honour of an invitation.

[MCCANN begins to whistle " The Mountains of Morne" .]

Stanley [moving away.] I wouldn't call it an honour, would you? It'll just be another booze-up.

[STANLEY joins MCCANN in whistling " The Mountains of Morne" . During the next five lines the whistling is continuous, one whistling while the other speaks, and both whistling together.]

McCann But it is an honour.

Stanley I'd say you were exaggerating.

McCann Oh no. I'd say it was an honour.

Stanley I'd say that was plain stupid.

McCann Ah no.

[They stare at each other.]

Stanley Who are the other guests?

McCann A young lady.

Stanley Oh yes? And...?

McCann My friend.

Stanley Your friend?

McCann That's right. It's all laid on.

[STANLEY walks round the table towards the door. MCCANN meets him.]

Stanley Excuse me.

McCann Where are you going?

Stanley I want to go out.

McCann Why don't you stay here?

[STANLEY moves away, to the right of the table.]

Stanley So you're down here on holiday?

McCann A short one. [STANLEY picks up a strip of paper. MCCANN moves in.]

Mind that.

Stanley What is it?

McCann Mind it. Leave it.

Stanley I've got a feeling we've met before.

McCann No we haven't.

Stanley Ever been anywhere near Maidenhead?

McCann No.

Stanley There's a Fuller's teashop. I used to have my tea there.

McCann I don't know it.

Stanley And a Boots Library. I seem to connect you with the High Street.

McCann Yes?

Stanley A charming town, don't you think?

McCann I don't know it.

Stanley Oh no. A quiet thriving community. I was born and brought up there. I lived well away from the main road.

McCann Yes?

[Pause.]

Stanley You're here on a short stay?

McCann That's right.

Stanley You'll find it very bracing.

McCann Do you find it bracing?

Stanley Me? No. But you will. [He sits at the table.] I like it here, but I'll be moving soon. Back home. I'll stay there too, this time. No place like home. [He laughs.] I wouldn't have left, but business calls. Business called, and I had to leave for a bit. You know how it is.

McCann [sitting at the table, left.] You in business?

Stanley No. I think I'll give it up. I've got a small private income, you see. I think I'll give it up. Don't like beeing away from home. I used to live very quietly- played records, that's about all. Everything delivered to the door. Then I started a little private business, in a small way, and it compelled me to come down here- kept me longer than I expected. You never get used to living in someone else's house. Don't you agree? I lived so quietly. You can only appreciate what you've had when things change. That's what they say, isn't it? Cigarette?

McCann I don't smoke.

[STANLEY lights a cigarette. Voices from the back.]

Stanley Who's out there?

McCann My friend and the man of the house.

Stanley You know what? To look at me, I bet you wouldn't think I'd led such a quiet life. The lines on my face, eh? It's the drink. Been drinking a bit down here. But what I mean is... you know how it is... away from your own... all wrong, of course... I'll be all right when I get back... but what I mean is, the way some people look at me you'd think I was a different person. I suppose I have changed, but I'm still the same man that I always was. I mean, you wouldn't think, to look at me, really... I mean, not really, that I was the sort of bloke to-to cause any trouble, would you? [MCCANN looks at him.] Do you know what I mean?

McCann No. [As STANLEY picks up a strip of paper.] Mind that.

Stanley [quickly.] Why are you down here?

SMC A short holiday.

Stanley This is a ridiculous house to pick on. [He rises.]

McCann Why?

Stanley Because it's not a boarding house. It never was.

McCann Sure it is.

Stanley Why did you choose this house?

McCann You know, sir, you're a bit depressed for a man on his birthday.

Stanley [sharply.] Why do you call me sir?

McCann You don't like it?

Stanley [to the table.] Listen. Don't call me sir.

McCann I won't if you don't like it.

Stanley [moving away.] No. Anyway this isn't my birthday.

McCann No?

Stanley No. It's not till next month.

McCann Not according to the lady.

Stanley Her? She's crazy. Round the bend.

McCann That's a terrible thing to say.

Stanley [to the table.] Haven't you found that out yet? there's a lot you don't know. I think someone's leading you up the garden path.

McCann Who would do that?

Stanley [leaning across the table.] That woman is mad.

McCann That's slander.

Stanley And you don't know what you're doing.

McCann Your cigarette is near the paper.

[Voices from the back.]

Stanley Where the hell are they? [Stubbing his cigarette.] Why don't they come in? What are they doing out there?

McCann You want to steady yourself.

[STANLEY crosses to him and grips his arm.]

Stanley [urgently.] Look-

McCann Don't touch me.

Stanley Look. Listen a minute.

McCann Let go my arm.

Stanley Look. Sit down a minute.

McCann [savagely, hitting his arm.] Don't do that!

[STANLEY backs across the stage, holding his arm.]

Stanley Listen. You knew what I was talking about before, didn't you?

McCann I don't know what you're at at all.

Stanley It's a mistake! Do you understand?

McCann You're in a bad state, man.

Stanley [whispering, advancing.] Has he told you anything? Do you know what you're here for? Tell me. You needn't be frightened of me. Or hasn't he told you?

McCann Told me what?

Stanley [hissing] I've explained to you, damn you, that all these years I lived in Basingstoke I never stepped outside the door.

McCann You know, I'm flabbergasted with you.

Stanley [reasonably.] Look. You look an honest man. You're being made a fool of, that's all. You understand? Where do you come from?

McCann Where do you think?

Stanley I know Ireland very well. I've many friends there. I love that country and I admire and trust its people. I trust them. They respect the truth and they have a sense of humour. I think their policemen are wonderful. I've been there. I've never seen such sunsets. What about coming out to have a drink with me? There's a pub down the road serves draught Guinness. Very difficult to get in these parts- [He breaks off. The voices draw nearer. GOLDBERG and PETEY enter from the back door.]

Goldberg [as he enters.] A mother in a million. [He sees STANLEY.] Ah.

Petey Oh hullo, Stan. You haven't met Stanley, have you, Mr Goldberg?

Goldberg I haven't had the pleasure.

Petey Ho well, this is Mr Goldberg, this is Mr Webber.

Goldberg Pleased to meet you.

Petey We were just getting a bit of air in the garden.

Goldberg I was telling Mr Boles about my old mum. What days. [He sits at the table, right.] Yes.

When I was a youngster, of a Friday, I used to go for a walk down the canal with a girl who lived down my road. A beautiful girl. What a voice that bird had! A nightingale, my word of honour.

Good? Pure? She wasn't a Sunday school teacher for nothing. Anyway, I'd leave her with a little kiss on the cheek-I never took liberties-we weren't like the young men these days in those days. We were the meaning of respect. So I'd give her a peck and I'd bowl back home. Humming away I'd be, past the children's playground. I'd tip my hat to the toddlers, I'd give a helping hand to a couple of stray dogs, everything came natural. I can see it like yesterday. The sun falling behind the dog stadium.

Ah! [He leans back contentedly.]

McCann Like behind the town hall.

Goldberg What town hall?

McCann In Carrikmacross.

Goldberg There's no comparison. Up the street, into my gate, inside the door, home. "Simey!" my old mum used to shout, "quick before it gets cold." And there on the table what would I see? The nicest piece of gefilte fish you could wish to find on a plate.

McCann I thought your name was Nat.

Goldberg She called me Simey.

Petey Yes, we all remember our childhood.

Goldberg Too true. Eh, Mr Webber, what do you say? Childhood. Hot water bottles. Hot milk. Pancakes. Soap suds. What a life.

[Pause.]

Petey [rising from the table.] Well, I'll have to be off.

Goldberg Off?

Petey It's my chess night.

Goldberg You're not staying for the party?

Petey No, I'm sorry, Stan. I didn't know about it till just now. And we've got a game on. I'll try and

get back early.

Goldberg We'll save some drink for you, all right? Oh, that reminds me. You'd better go and collect the bottles.

McCann Now?

Goldberg Of course, now. Time's getting on. Round the corner, remember? Mention my name.

Petey I'm coming your way.

Goldberg Beat him quick and come back, Mr Boles.

Petey Do my best. See you later, Stan.

[PETEY and MCCANN go out, left. STANLEY moves to the centre.]

Goldberg A warm night.

Stanley [turning.] Don't mess me about!

Goldberg I beg your pardon?

Stanley [moving down stage.] I'm afraid there's been a mistake. We're booked out. Your room is taken. Mrs Boles forgot to tell you. You'll have to find somewhere else.

Goldberg Are you the manager here?

Stanley That's right.

Goldberg Is it a good game?

Stanley I run the house. I'm afraid you and your friend will have to find other accommodation.

Goldberg [rising.] Oh, I forgot, I must congratulate you on your birthday. [Offering his hand.]

Congratulations.

Stanley [ignoring hand.] Perhaps you're deaf.

Goldberg No, what makes you think that? as a matter of fact, every single one of my senses is at its peak. Not bad going, eh? For a man past fifty. But a birthday, I always feel, is a great occasion, taken too much for granted these days. What a thing to celebrate-birth! Like getting up in the morning. I've heard them. getting up in the morning, they say, what is it? Your skin's crabby, you need a shave, your eyes are full of muck, your mouth us like a boghouse, the palms of your hands are full of sweat, your nose is clogged up, your feet stink, what are you but a corpse waiting to be washed? Whenever I hear that point of view I feel cheerful. Because I know what it is to wake up with the sun shining, to the sound of the lawnmower, all the little birds, the smell of the grass, church bells, tomato juice-

Stanley Get out.

[Enter MCCANN, with bottles.]

Get that drink out. These are unlicensed premises.

Goldberg You are in a terrible humour today, Mr Webber. And on your birthday too, with the good lady getting her strength up to give you a party.

[MCCANN puts the bottles on the sideboard.]

Stanley I told you to get those bottles out.

Goldberg Mr Webber, sit down a minute.

Stanley Let me- just make this clear. You don't bother me. To me you're nothing but a dirty joke. But I have a responsibility towards the people in this house. They've been down here too long. They've lost their sense of smell. I haven't. And nobody is going to get advantage of them while I'm here. [A

little less forceful.] Anyway, this house isn't your cup of tea. There's nothing here for you, from any angle, any angle. So why don't you just go, without any more fuss?

Goldberg Mr Webber, sit down.

Stanley It's no good starting any kind of trouble.

Goldberg Sit down.

Stanley Why should I?

Goldberg If you want to know the truth, Webber, you're beginning to get on my breasts.

Stanley Really? Well, that's-

Goldberg Sit down.

Stanley No.

[GOLDBERG sighs, and sits at the table right.]

Goldberg McCann.

McCann Nat?

Goldberg Ask him to sit down.

McCann Yes, Nat.[MCCANN moves to STANLEY.] Do you mind sitting down?

Stanley Yes, I do mind.

McCann Yes now, but-it'd be better if you did.

Stanley Why don't you sit down?

McCann No, not me- you.

Stanley No thanks.

[Pause.]

McCann Nat.

Goldberg What?

McCann He won't sit down.

Goldberg Well, ask him.

McCann I've asked him.

Goldberg Ask him again.

McCann [to STANLEY.] Sit down.

Stanley Why?

McCann You'd be more comfortable.

Stanley So would you.

[Pause.]

McCann All right. If you will I will.

Stanley You first.

[MCCANN slowly sits at the table, left.]

McCann Well?

Stanley Right. Now you've both had a rest you can get out!

McCann [rising.] That's a dirty trick! I'll kick the shite out of him!

Goldberg [rising.] No! I have stood up.

McCann Sit down again!

Goldberg Once I'm up I'm up.

Stanley Same here.

McCann [moving to STANLEY.] You've made Mr Goldberg stand up.

Stanley [his voice rising.] It'll do him good!

McCann Get in that seat!

Goldberg [crossing to him.] Webber. [Quietly.] SIT DOWN.

[Silence. STANLEY begins to whistle " The Mountains of Morne" . He scrolls casually to the chair at the table. They watch him. He stops whistling. Silence. He sits.]

Stanley You'd better be careful.

Goldberg Webber, what were you doing yesterday?

Stanley Yesterday?

Goldberg And the day before. What did you do the day before that?

Stanley What do you mean?

Goldberg Why are you wasting everybody's time, Webber? Why are you getting in everybody's way?

Stanley Me? What are you-

Goldberg I'm telling you, Webber. You're a washout. Why are you getting on everybody's wick?

Why are you driving that old lady off her conk?

McCann He likes to do it!

Goldberg Why do you behave so badly, Webber? Why do you force that old man out to play chess?

Stanley Me?

Goldberg Why do you treat that young lady like a leper? She's not the leper, Webber!

Stanley What the-

Goldberg What did you wear last week, Webber? Where do you keep your suits?

McCann Why did you leave the organization?

Goldberg What would your old mum say, Webber?

McCann Why did you betray us?

Goldberg You hurt me, Webber. You're playing a dirty game.

McCann That's a Black and Tan fact.

Goldberg Who does he think he is?

McCann Who do you think you are?

Stanley You're on the wrong horse.

Goldberg When did you come to this place?

Stanley Last year.

Goldberg Where did you come from?

Stanley Somewhere else.

Goldberg Why did you come here?

Stanley My feet hurt!

Goldberg Why did you stay?

Stanley I had a headache!

Goldberg did you take anything for it?

Stanley Yes.

Goldberg What?

Stanley Fruit salts!

Goldberg Enos or Andrews?

Stanley En- An-

Goldberg Did you stir properly? did they fizz?

Stanley Now, now, wait, you-

Goldberg Did they fizz? Did they fizz or didn't they fizz?

McCann He doesn't know!

Goldberg You don't know. When did you last have a bath?

Stanley I have one every-

Goldberg Don't lie.

McCann You betrayed the organization. I know him!

Stanley You don't!

Goldberg What can you see without your glasses?

Stanley Anything.

Goldberg Take off his glasses.

[MCCANN snatches his glasses and as STANLEY rises, reaching for them, takes his chair downstage centre, below the table, STANLEY stumbling as he follows. STANLEY clutches the chair and stays bent over it.]

Webber, you're a fake. [They stand on each side of the chair.] When did you last wash up a cup?

Stanley The Christmas before last.

Goldberg Where?

Stanley Lyons Corner House.

Goldberg Which one?

Stanley Marble Arch.

Goldberg Where was your wife?

Stanley In-

Goldberg Answer.

Stanley [turning, crouched.] What wife?

Goldberg What have you done with your wife?

McCann He's killed his wife!

Goldberg Why did you kill your wife?

Stanley [sitting, his back to the audience.] What wife?

McCann How did he kill her?

Goldberg How did you kill her?

McCann You throttled her.

Goldberg with arsenic.
McCann There's your man!
Goldberg Where's your old mum?
Stanley In the sanatorium.
McCann Yes!
Goldberg Why did you never get married?
McCann She was waiting at the porch.
Goldberg You skeddadled from the wedding.
McCann He left her in the lurch.
Goldberg You left her in the pudding club.
McCann She was waiting at the church.
Goldberg Webber! Why did you change your name?
Stanley I forgot the other one.
Goldberg What's your name now?
Stanley Joe Soap.
Goldberg You stink of sin.
McCann I can smell it.
Goldberg Do you recognise an external force?
Stanley What?
Goldberg Do you recognise an external force?
McCann That's the question!
Goldberg Do you recognise an external force, responsible for you, suffering for you?
Stanley It's late.
Goldberg Late! Late enough! When did you last pray?
McCann He's sweating!
Goldberg When did you last pray?
McCann He's sweating!
Goldberg Is the number possible or necessary?
Stanley Neither.
Goldberg Wrong! Is the number possible or necessary?
Stanley Both.
Goldberg Wrong! It's necessary but not possible.
Stanley Both.
Goldberg Wrong! Why do you think the number is necessarily possible?
Stanley Must be.
Goldberg Wrong! It's only necessarily necessary! We admit possibility only after we grant necessity. It is possible because necessary but by no means necessary through possibility. The possibility can only be assumed after the proof of necessity.
McCann Right!
Goldberg Right? Of course right! We're right and you're wrong, Webber, all along the line.

McCann All along the line!

Goldberg Where is your lechery leading you?

McCann Ypu'll pay for this.

Goldberg You stuff yourself with dry toast.

McCann You contaminate womankind.

Goldberg Why don't you pay the rent?

McCann Mother defiler!

Goldberg Why do you pick your nose?

McCann I demand justice!

Goldberg What's your trade?

McCann What about Ireland?

Goldberg What's your trade?

Stanley I play the piano.

Goldberg How many fingers do you use?

Stanley No hands!

Goldberg No society would touch you. Not even a building society.

McCann You're a traitor to the cloth.

Goldberg What do you use for pyjamas?

Stanley Nothing.

Goldberg You verminate the sheet of your birth.

McCann What about the Albigensenist heresy?

Goldberg Who watered the wicket in Melbourne?

McCann What about the blessed Oliver Plunkett?

Goldberg Speak up, Webber. Why did the chicken cross the road?

Stanley He wanted to-he wanted to-he wanted to....

McCann He doesn't know!

Goldberg Why did the chicken cross the road?

Stanley He wanted to-he wanted to....

Goldberg Why did the chicken cross the road?

Stanley He wanted....

McCann He doesn't know. He doesn't know which came first!

Goldberg Which came first?

McCann Chicken? Egg? Which came first?

Goldberg and MC Which came first? Which came first? Which came first?

[STANLEY screams.]

Goldberg He doesn't know. Do you know your own face?

McCann wake him up. Stick a needle in his eye.

Goldberg You're a plague, Webber. You're an overthrow.

McCann You're what's left!

Goldberg But we've got the answer to you. We can sterilise you.

McCann What about Drogheda?

Goldberg Your bite is dead. Only your pong is left.

McCann You betrayed our land.

Goldberg You betray our breed.

McCann Who are you, Webber?

Goldberg What makes you think you exist?

McCann You're dead.

Goldberg You're dead. You can't live, you can't think, you can't love. You're dead. You're a plague gone bad. There's no juice in you. You're nothing but an odour!

[Silence. They stand over him. He is crouched in the chair. He looks up slowly and kicks GOLDBERG in the stomach. GOLDBERG falls. STANLEY stands. MCCANN seizes a chair and lifts it above his head. STANLEY seizes a chair and covers his head with it. MCCANN and STANLEY circle.]

Goldberg Steady, McCann.

Stanley [circling.] Uuuuuhhhhh!

McCann Right, Judas.

Goldberg [rising.] Steady, McCann.

McCann Come on!

Stanley Uuuuuuuhhhhh!

McCann He's sweating.

Stanley Uuuuuhhhhh!

Goldberg Easy, McCann.

McCann The bastard sweatpig is sweating.

[A loud drumbeat off left, descending the stairs. GOLDBERG takes the chair from STANLEY. They put the chairs down. They stop still. Enter MEG, in evening dress, holding sticks and drum.]

Meg I brought the drum down. I'm dressed for the party.

Goldberg Wonderful.

Meg You like my dress?

Goldberg Wonderful. Out of this world.

Meg I know. My father gave it to me. [Placing drum on the table.] Doesn't it make a beautiful noise?

Goldberg It's a fine piece of work. Maybe Stan'll play us a little tune afterwards.

Meg Oh yes. Will you, Stan?

Stanley Could I have my glasses?

Goldberg Ah yes. [He holds his hand out to MCCANN. MCCANN passes him his glasses.] Here they are. [He holds them out for STANLEY, who reaches for them.]

Here they are. [STANLEY takes them.] Now. What have we got here? Enough to scuttle a liner. We've got four bottles of Scotch and one bottle of Irish.

Meg Oh, Mr Goldberg, what should I drink?

Goldberg Glasses, glasses first. Open the Scotch, McCann.

Meg [at the sideboard.] Here's my very best glasses in here.

McCann I don't drink Scotch.

Goldberg You've got the Irish.

Meg [bringing the glasses.] Here they are.

Goldberg Good. Mrs Boles, I think Stanley should pour the toast, don't you?

Meg Oh yes. Come on, Stanley. [STANLEY walks slowly to the table.] Do you like my dress, Mr Goldberg?

Goldberg It's out on its own. Turn yourself round a minute. I used to be in the business. Go on walk up there.

Meg Oh no.

Goldberg Don't be shy. [He slaps her bottom.]

Meg Oooh!

Goldberg Walk up the boulevard. Let's have a look at you. What a carriage. what's your opinion, McCann? Like a countess, nothing less. Madam, now turn about and promenade to the kitchen. What a deportment!

McCann [to STANLEY.] You can pour my Irish too.

Goldberg You look like a Gladiola.

Meg Stan, what about my dress?

Goldberg One for the lady, one for the lady. Now madam-your glass.

Meg Thank you.

Goldberg Lift your glasses, ladies and gentlemen. We'll drink a toast.

Meg Lulu isn't here.

Goldberg It's past the hour. Now-who's going to propose the toast? Mrs Boles, it can only be you.

Meg Me?

Goldberg Who else?

Meg But what do I say?

Goldberg Say what you feel. What you honestly feel. [MEG looks uncertain.] It's Stanley's birthday. Your Stanley. Look at him. Look at him and it'll come. Wait a minute, the light's too strong. Let's have proper lighting. McCann, have you got your torch?

McCann [bringing a small torch from his pocket.] Here.

Goldberg Switch out the light and put on your torch. [MCCANN Goes to the door, switches off the light, comes back, shines the torch on MEG. Outside the window there is still a faint light.] Not on the lady, on the gentleman! You must shine it on the birthday boy. [MCCANN shines the torch in STANLEY's face.] Now, Mrs Boles, it's all yours.

[Pause.]

Meg I don't know what to say.

Goldberg Look at him. Just look at him.

Meg Isn't the light in his eyes?

Goldberg No,no. Go on.

Meg Well-it's very, very nice to be here tonight, in my house, and I want to propose a toast to Stanley, because it's his birthday, and he's lived here for a long while now, and he's my Stanley now.

And I think he's a good boy, although sometimes he's bad. [An appreciative laugh from GOLDBERG.] And he's the only Stanley I know, and I know him better than all the world, although he doesn't think so. [" Hear-hear" from GOLDBERG.] Well, I could cry because I'm so happy, having him here and not gone away, on his birthday, and there isn't anything I wouldn't do for him, and all you good people here tonight....[She sobs.]

Goldberg Beautiful! A beautiful speech. Put the light on, McCann. [MCCANN goes to the door. STANLEY remains still.] That was a lovely toast.[The light goes on. LULU enters from the door, left. GOLDBERG comforts MEG.] Buck up now. Come on , smile at the birdy. That's better. Ah, look who's here.

Meg Lulu.

Goldberg How do you do, Lulu? I'm Nat Goldberg.

Lulu Hallo.

Goldberg Stanley, a drink for your guest. You just missed the toast, my dear, and what a toast.

Lulu Did I?

Goldberg Stanley, a drink for your guest. Stanley.[STANLEY hands a glass to LULU.] Right. Now raise your glasses. Everyone standing up? No, not you , Stanley. You must sit down.

McCann Yes, that's right. He must sit down.

Goldberg You don't mind sitting down a minute? We're going to drink to you.

Meg Come on!

Lulu Come on!

[STANLEY sits in a chair at the table.]

Goldberg Right. Now Stanley's sat down. [Taking the stage.] Well, I want to say first that I've never been so touched to the heart as by the toast you've just heard. How often, in this day and age, do you come across real, true warmth? Once in a lifetime. Until a few minutes ago, ladies and gentlemen, I, like all of you, was asking the same question. what's happened to the love, the bonhomie, the unashamed expression of affection of the day before yesterday, that our mums taught us in the nursery?

McCann Gone with the wind.

Goldberg That's what I thought, until today. I believe in a good laugh, a day's fishing, a bit of gardening. I was very proud of my old greenhouse, made out of my own spit and faith. That's the sort of man I am. Not size but quality. A little Austin, tea in Fullers, a library book from Boots, and I'm satisfied. But just now, I say just now, the lady of the house said her piece and I for one am knocked over by the sentiments she expressed. Lucky is the man who's at the receiving end, that's what I say. [Pause.] How can I put it to you? We all wander on our tod through this world. It's a lonely pillow to kip on. Right!

Lulu [admiringly.] Right!

Goldberg Agreed. But tonight, Lulu, McCann, we've known a great fortune. We've heard a lady extend the sum total of her devotion, in all its pride, plume and peacock, to a member of her own living race. Stanley, my heartfelt congratulations. I wish you, on behalf of us all, a happy birthday.

I'm sure you've never been a prouder man than you are today. Mazoltov! And may we only meet at Simchahs! [LULU and MEG applaud.] Turn out the light, McCann, while we drink the toast.

Lulu That was a wonderful speech.

[MCCANN switches out the light, comes back, and shines the torch in STANLEY's face. The light outside the window is fainter.]

Goldberg Lift your glasses. Stanley-happy birthday.

McCann Happy birthday.

Lulu Happy birthday.

Meg Many happy returns of the day, Stan.

Goldberg And well over the fast.

[They all drink.]

Meg [kissing him.] Oh, Stanny....

Goldberg Lights!

McCann Right! [He switches on the light.]

Meg Clink my glass, Stan.

Lulu Mr Goldberg-

Goldberg Call me Nat.

Meg [to MCCANN.] You clink my glass.

Lulu [to GOLDBERG.] You're empty. Let me fill you up.

Goldberg It's a pleasure.

Lulu You're a marvellous speaker, Nat, you know that? Where did you learn to speak like that?

Goldberg You liked it, eh?

Lulu Oh yes!

Goldberg Well, my first chance to stand up and give a lecture was at the Ethical Hall, Bayswater. A wonderful opportunity. I'll never forget it. They were all there that night. Charlotte Street was empty.

Of course that's a good while ago.

Lulu What did you speak about?

Goldberg The Necessary and the Possible. It went like a bomb. Since then I always speak at weddings.

[STANLEY is still. GOLDBERG sits left of the table. MEG joins MCCANN downstage, right, LULU is downstage, left. MCCANN pours more Irish from the bottle, which he carries, into his glass.]

Meg Let's have some of yours.

McCann In that?

Meg Yes.

McCann Are you used to mixing them?

Meg No.

McCann Give me your glass.

[MEG sits on a shoe-box, downstage, right. LULU, at the table, pours more drink for GOLDBERG and herself, and gives GOLDBERG his glass.]

Goldberg Thank you.

Meg [to MCCANN.] Do you think I should?

Goldberg Lulu, you're a big bouncy girl. Come and sit on my lap.

McCann Why not?

Lulu Do you think I should?

Goldberg Try it.

Meg [sipping.] Very nice.

Lulu I'll bounce up to the ceiling.

McCann I don't know how you can mix that stuff.

Goldberg Take a chance.

Meg [to MCCANN.] Sit down on this stool.

[LULU sits on GOLDBERG's lap.]

McCann This?

Goldberg Comfortable?

Lulu Yes thanks.

McCann [sitting.] It's comfortable.

Goldberg You know, there's a lot in your eyes.

Lulu And in yours, too.

Goldberg Do you think so?

Lulu [giggling.] Go on!

McCann [to MEG] Where'd you get it?

Meg My father gave it to me.

Lulu I didn't know I was going to meet you here tonight.

McCann [to MEG.] Ever been to Carrikmacross?

Meg [drinking.] I've been to King's Cross.

Lulu You came right out of the blue, you know that?

Goldberg [as she moves.] Mind how you go. You're cracking a rib.

Meg [standing.] I want to dance! [LULU and GOLDBERG look into each other's eyes. MCCANN drinks. MEG crosses to STANLEY.] Stanley. Dance. [STANLEY sits still. MEG dances round the room alone, then comes back to MCCANN, who fills her glass. she sits.]

Lulu [to GOLDBERG.] Shall I tell you something?

Goldberg What?

Lulu I trust you.

Goldberg [lifting his glass.] Gesundheit.

Lulu Have you got a wife?

Goldberg I had a wife. What a wife. Listen to this. Friday, of an afternoon, I'd take myself for a little constitutional, down over the park. Eh, do me a favour, just sit on the table a minute, will you?

[LULU sits on the table. He stretches and continues.] A little constitutional. I'd say hullo to the little boys, the little girls-I never made distinctions-and then back I'd go, back to my bungalow with the flat roof. " Simey," my wife used to shout, " quick, before it gets cold!" And there on the table what

would I see? The nicest piece of rollmop and pickled cucumber you could wish to find on a plate,

Lulu I thought your name was Nat.

Goldberg She called me Simey.

Lulu I bet you were a good husband.

Goldberg You should have seen her funeral.

Lulu Why?

Goldberg [draws in his breath and wags head.] What a funeral.

Meg [to MCCANN.] My father was going to take me to Ireland once. But then he went away by himself.

Lulu [to GOLDBERG.] Do you think you knew me when I was a little girl?

Goldberg Were you a nice little girl?

Lulu I was.

Meg I don't know if he went to Ireland.

Goldberg Maybe I played piggy-back with you.

Lulu Maybe you did.

Meg He didn't take me.

Goldberg Or pop goes to weasel.

Lulu Is that a game?

Goldberg Sure it's a game!

McCann Why didn't he take you to Ireland?

Lulu You're tickling me!

Goldberg You should worry.

Lulu I've always liked older men. They can soothe you.

[They embrace.]

McCann I know a place. Roscrea. Mother Nolan's.

Meg There was a night-light in my room, when I was a little girl.

McCann One time I stayed there all night with the boys. Singing and drinking all night.

Meg And my Nanny used to sit up with me, and sing songs to me.

McCann And a plate of fry in the morning. Now where am I?

Meg My little room was pink. I had a pink carpet and pink curtains, and I had musical boxes all over the room. And they played me to sleep. And my father was a very big doctor. That's why I never had any complaints. I was cared for, and I had little sisters and brothers in other rooms, all different colours.

McCann Tullamore, where are you?

Meg [to MCCANN.] Give us a drop more.

McCann [filling her glass and singing.] Glorio, Glorio, to the bold Fenian men!

Meg Oh, what a lovely voice.

Goldberg Give us a song, McCann.

Lulu A love song!

McCann [reciting.] The night that poor Paddy was stretched, the boys they all paid him a visit.

Goldberg A love song!
McCann [in a full voice, sings]
Oh, the Garden of Eden has vanished, they say,
But I know the lie of it still.
Just turn to the left at the foot of Ben Clay
And stop when halfway to Coote Hill.
It's there you will find it, I know sure enough,
And it's whispering over to me:
Come back, Paddy Reilly, to Bally-James-Duff,
Come home, Paddy Reilly, to me!
Lulu [to GOLDBERG.] You're the dead image of the first man I ever loved.
Goldberg It goes without saying.
Meg [rising.] I want to play a game!
Goldberg A game?
Lulu What game?
Meg Any game.
Lulu [jumping up.] Yes, let's play a game.
Goldberg What game?
McCann Hide and seek.
Lulu Blind man's buff.
Meg Yes!
Goldberg You want to play blind man's buff?
Lulu and MEG Yes!
Goldberg All right. Blind man's buff. Come on! Everyone up! [Rising.] McCann. Stanley-Stanley!
Meg Stanley. Up.
Goldberg What's the matter with him?
Meg [bending over him.] Stanley, we're going to play a game. Oh, come on, don't be sulky, Stan.
Lulu Come on.
[STANLEY rises. MCCANN rises.]
Goldberg Right! Now-who's going to be blind first?
Lulu Mrs Boles.
Meg Not me.
Goldberg Of course you.
Meg Who, me?
Lulu [taking her scarf from her neck.] Here you are.
McCann How do you play this game?
Lulu [tying her scarf round MEG's eyes.] Haven't you ever played blind man's buff? Keep still, Mrs Boles. You mustn't be touched. But you can't move after she's blind. You must stay where you are after she's blind. And if she touches you then you become blind. Turn round. How many fingers am I holding up?

Meg I can't see.

Lulu Right.

Goldberg Right! Everyone move about. McCann. Stanley. Now stop. Now still. Off you go!

[STANLEY is downstage, right, MEG moves about the room. GOLDBERG fondles LULU at arm's length. MEG touches MCCANN.]

Meg Caught you!

Lulu Take off your scarf.

Meg What lovely hair!

Lulu [untying the scarf.] There.

Meg It's you!

Goldberg Put it on, McCann.

Lulu [tying it on MCCANN.] There. Turn round. How many fingers am I holding up?

McCann I don't know.

Goldberg Right! Everyone move about. Right. Stop! Still!

[MCCANN begins to move.]

Meg Oh, this is lovely!

Goldberg Quiet! Tch, tch, tch. Now-all move again. Stop! Still!

[MCCANN moves about. GOLDBERG fondles LULU at arm's length. MCCANN draws near STANLEY. He stretches his arm and touches STANLEY's glasses.]

Meg It's Stanley!

Goldberg [to LULU.] Enjoying the game?

Meg It's your turn, Stan.

[MCCANN takes off the scarf.]

McCann [to STANLEY.] I'll take your glasses.

[MCCANN takes STANLEY's glasses.]

Meg Give me the scarf.

Goldberg [holding LULU.] Tie his scarf, Mrs Boles.

Lulu (to Goldberg) Kiss me. [They kiss]

Meg That's what I'm doing. [To STANLEY.] Can you see my nose?

Goldberg He can't. Ready? Right! Everyone move. Stop! And still!

[STANLEY stands blindfold. MCCANN backs slowly across the stage to the left. He breaks STANLEY's glasses, snapping the frames. MEG is downstage, left, LULU and GOLDBERG upstage center, close together. STANLEY begins to move, very slowly, across the stage to the left. MCCANN picks up the drum and places it sideways in STANLEY's path. STANLEY walks into the drum and falls over with his foot caught in it.

Meg Ooh!

Goldberg Sssh!

[STANLEY rises. He begins to move towards MEG, dragging the drum on his foot. He reaches her and stops. His hands move towards her and they reach her throat. He begins to strangle her. MCCANN

and GOLDBERG rush forward and throw him off.

BLACKOUT

There is now no light at all through the window. The stage is in darkness.]

Lulu The lights!

Goldberg What's happened?

Lulu The lights!

McCann Wait a minute.

Goldberg Where is he?

McCann Let go of me!

Goldberg Who's this?

Lulu Someone's touching me!

McCann Where is he?

Meg Why has the light gone out?

Goldberg Where's your torch? [MCCANN shines the torch in GOLDBERG's face.]

Not on me! [MCCANN shifts the torch. It is knocked from his hand and falls. It goes out.]

McCann My torch!

Lulu Oh God!

Goldberg Where's your torch? Pick up your torch!

McCann I can't find it.

Lulu Hold me. Hold me.

Goldberg Get down on your knees. Help him find the torch.

Lulu I can't.

McCann It's gone.

Meg Why has the light gone out?

Goldberg Everyone quiet! Help him find the torch.

[Silence. Grunts from MCCANN and GOLDBERG on their knees. Suddenly there is a sharp, sustained rat-a-tat with a stick on the side of the drum from the back of the room. Silence. Whimpers from LULU.]

Goldberg Over here. McCann!

McCann Here.

Goldberg Come to me, come to me. Easy. Over there.

[GOLDBERG and MCCANN move up left of the table. STANLEY moves down right of the table.

LULU suddenly perceives him moving towards her, screams and faints. GOLDBERG and MCCANN turn and stumble against each other.]

Goldberg What is it?

McCann Who's that?

Goldberg What is it?

[In the darkness STANLEY picks up LULU and places her on the table.]

Meg It's Lulu!

[GOLDBERG and MCCANN move downstage, right.]

Goldberg Where is she?

McCann She fell.

Goldberg Where?

McCann About here.

Goldberg Help me pick her up.

McCann [moving downstage, left.] She must be.

McCann She's gone.

[MCCANN finds the torch on the floor, shines it on the table and STANLEY. LULU is lying spread-eagled on the table, STANLEY bent over her. STANLEY, as soon as the torch light hits him, begins to giggle. GOLDBERG and MCCANN move towards him. He backs, giggling, the torch on his face. They follow him upstage, left. He backs against the hatch, giggling. The torch draws closer. His giggle rises and grows as he flattens himself against the wall. Their figures converge upon him.]

Curtain

C

[The next morning. PETEY enters, left, with a newspaper and sits at the table.

He begins to read. MEG's voice comes through the kitchen hatch.]

Meg Is that you, Stan? [Pause.] Stanny?

Petey Yes?

Meg Is that you?

Petey It's me.

Meg [appearing at the hatch.] Oh, it's you. I've run out of cornflakes.

Petey Well, what else have you got?

Meg Nothing.

Petey Nothing?

Meg Just a minute. [She leaves the hatch and enters by the kitchen door.] You got your paper?

Petey Yes.

Meg Is it good?

Petey Not bad.

Meg The two gentlemen had the last of the fry this morning.

Petey Oh, did they?

Meg There's some tea in the pot though. [She pours tea for him.] I'm going out shopping in a minute. Get you something nice.

Petey Good.

Meg Oh, I must sit down a minute. [Sits at the table, right.]

Petey How are you then, this morning?

Meg I've got a splitting headache.

Petey [reading.] You slept like a log last night.

Meg Did I?

Petey Why don't you have a walk down to the shops? It's fresh out. It'll clear your head.

Meg Will it?

Petey Bound to.

Meg I will then. Did I sleep like a log?

Petey Dead out.

Meg I must have been tired. [She looks about the room and sees the broken drum in the fireplace.]

Oh, look. [She rises and picks it up.] The drum's broken. [PETEY looks up.] Why is it broken?

Petey I don't know.

[She hits it with her hand.]

Meg It still makes a noise.

Petey You can always get another one.

Meg [sadly.] It was probably broken in the party. I don't remember it being broken though, in the party. [She puts it down.] What a shame.

Petey You can always get another one, Meg.

Meg Well, at least he did have it on his birthday, didn't he? Like I wanted him to.

Petey [reading.] Yes.

Meg Have you seen him down yet? [PETEY does not answer.] Petey.

Petey What?

Meg Have you seen him down?

Petey Who?

Meg Stanley.

Petey No.

Meg Nor have I. That boy should be up. He's late for his breakfast.

Petey There isn't any breakfast.

Meg Yes, but he doesn't know that. I'm going to call him.

Petey [quickly.] No, don't do that, Meg. Let him sleep.

Meg But you say he stays in bed too much.

Petey Let him sleep... this morning. Leave him.

Meg I've been up once with his cup of tea. But Mr McCann opened the door. He said they were talking. He said he'd made him one. He must have been up early. I don't know what they were talking about. I was surprised. Because Stanley's usually fast asleep when I wake him. But he wasn't this morning. I heard him talking. [Pause.] Do you think they know each other? I think they're old friends. I know he did. [Pause.] I didn't give him his tea. He'd already had one. I came down again and went on with my work. Then, after a bit, they came down to breakfast. Stanley must have gone to sleep again.

[Pause.]

Petey When are you going to do your shopping, Meg?

Meg Yes, I must. [Collecting the bag.] I've got a rotten headache. [She goes to the back door, stops suddenly and turns.] Did you see what's outside this morning?

Petey What?

Meg That big car.

Petey Yes.

Meg It wasn't there yesterday. Did you... did you have a look inside it?

Petey I had a peep.

Meg [coming down tensely, and whispering.] Is there anything in it?

Petey In it?

Meg Yes.

Petey What do you mean, in it?

Meg Inside it.

Petey What sort of thing?

Meg Well... I mean... is there... is there a wheelbarrow in it?

Petey A wheelbarrow?

Meg Yes.

Petey I didn't see one.

Meg You didn't? Are you sure?

Petey What would Mr Goldberg want with a wheelbarrow?

Meg Mr Goldberg?

Petey It's his car.

Meg [relieved.] His car? Oh, I didn't know it was his car.

Petey Of course it's his car.

Meg Oh, I feel better.

Petey What are you on about?

Meg Oh, I do feel better.

Petey You go and get a bit of air.

Meg Yes, I will. I will. I'll go and get the shopping. [She goes towards the back door. A door slams upstairs. She turns.] It's Stanley! He's coming down-what am I going to do about his breakfast? [She rushes into the kitchen.] Petey, what shall I give him? [She looks through the hatch.] There's no cornflakes. [They both gaze at the door. Enter GOLDBERG. He halts at the door, as he meets their gaze, then smiles.]

Goldberg A reception committee!

Meg Oh, I thought it was Stanley.

Goldberg You find a resemblance?

Meg Oh no. You look quite different.

Goldberg [coming into the room.] Different build, of course.

Meg [entering from the kitchen.] I thought he was coming down for his breakfast. He hasn't had his breakfast yet.

Goldberg Your wife makes a very nice cup of tea, Mr Boles, you know that?

Petey Yes, she does sometimes. Sometimes she forgets.

Meg Is he coming down?

Goldberg Down? Of course he's coming down. On a lovely sunny day like this he shouldn't come down? He'll be up and about in next to no time. [He sits at the table.] And what a breakfast he's

going to get.

Meg Mr Goldberg.

Goldberg Yes?

Meg I didn't know that was your car outside.

Goldberg You like it?

Meg Are you going to go for a ride?

Goldberg [to PETEY.] A smart car, eh?

Petey Nice shine on it all right.

Goldberg What is old is good, take my tip. There's room there. Room in the front, and room in the back. [He strokes the teapot.] The pot's hot. More tea, Mr Boles?

Petey No thanks.

Goldberg [pouring tea.] That car? That car's never let me down.

Meg Are you going to go for a ride?

Goldberg [ruminatively] And the boot. A beautiful boot. There's just room... for the right amount.

Meg Well, I'd better be off now. [She moves to the back door, and turns.] Petey, when Stanley comes down...

Petey Yes?

Meg Tell him I won't be long.

Petey I'll tell him.

Meg [vaguely.] I won't be long. [She exits.]

Goldberg [sipping his tea.] A good woman. A charming woman. My mother was the same. My wife was identical.

Petey How is he this morning?

Goldberg Who?

Petey Stanley. Is he any better?

Goldberg [a little uncertainly.] Oh... a little better, I think, a little better. Of course, I'm not really qualified to say, Mr Boles. I mean, I haven't got the... the qualifications. The best thing would be if someone with the proper... mnn... qualifications... was to have a look at him. Someone with a few letters after his name. It makes all the difference.

Petey Yes.

Goldberg Anyway, Dermot's with him at the moment. He's... keeping him company.

Petey Dermot?

Goldberg Yes.

Petey It's a terrible thing.

Goldberg [sighs.] Yes. The birthday celebratin was too much for him.

Petey What came over him?

Goldberg [sharply.] What came over him? Breakdown, Mr Boles. Pure and simple. Nervous breakdown.

Petey But what brought it on so suddenly?

Goldberg [rising, and moving upstage.] Well, Mr Boles, it can happen in all sorts of ways. A friend

of mine was telling me about it only the other day. We'd both been concerned with another case-not entirely similar, of course, but... quite alike. [He pauses.] Anyway, he was telling me, you see, this friend of mine, that sometimes it happens gradual-day by day it grows and grows and grows... day by day. And then other times it happens all at once. Poof! Like that! The nerves break. There's no guarantee how it's going to happen, but with certain people... it's a foregone conclusion.

Petey Really?

Goldberg Yes. This friend of mine-he was telling me about it-only the other day. [He stands uneasily for a moment, then brings out a cigarette case and takes a cigarette.] Have an Abdullah.

Petey No, no, I don't take them.

Goldberg Once in a while I treat myself to a cigarette. An Abdullah, perhaps, or a...[He snaps his fingers.]

Petey What a night. [GOLDBERG lights his cigarette with a lighter.] Came in the front door and all the lights were out. Put a shilling in the slot, came in here and the party was over.

Goldberg [coming downstage.] You put a shilling in the slot?

Petey Yes.

Goldberg And the lights came on.

Petey Yes, then I came in here.

Goldberg [with a short laugh.] I could have sworn it was a fuse.

Petey [continuing.] There was dead silence. Couldn't hear a thing. So I went upstairs and your friend-Dermot-met me on the landing. And he told me.

Goldberg [sharply.] Who?

Petey Your friend-Dermot.

Goldberg [heavily.] Dermot. Yes. [He sits.]

Petey They get over it sometimes though, don't they? I mean, they can recover from it, can they?

Goldberg Recover? Yes, sometimes they recover, in one way or another.

Petey I mean, he might have recovered by now, mightn't he?

Goldberg It's conceivable. Conceivable.

[PETEY rises and picks up the teapot and cup.]

Petey Well, if he's no better by lunchtime I'll go and get hold of a doctor.

Goldberg [briskly.] It's all taken care of, Mr Boles. Don't worry yourself.

Petey [dubiously.] What do you mean? [Enter MCCANN with two suitcases.] All packed up?

[PETEY takes the teapot and cups into the kitchen. MCCANN crosses left and puts down the suitcases. He goes up to the window and looks out.]

Goldberg Well? [MCCANN does not answer.] McCann. I asked you well.

McCann [without turning.] Well what?

Goldberg What's what? [MCCANN does not answer.]

McCann [turning to look at GOLDBERG, grimly.] I'm not going up there again.

Goldberg Why not?

McCann I'm not going up there again.

Goldberg What's going on now?

McCann [moving down.] He's quiet now. He stopped all that...talking a while ago.
[PETEY appears at the kitchen hatch, unnoticed.]
Goldberg When will he be ready?
McCann [sullenly.] You can go up yourself next time.
Goldberg What's the matter with you?
McCann [quietly.] I gave him...
Goldberg What?
McCann I gave him his glasses.
Goldberg Wasn't he glad to get them back?
McCann The frames are bust.
Goldberg How did that happen?
McCann He tried to fit the eyeholes into his eyes. I left him doing it.
Petey [at the kitchen door.] There's some Sellotape somewhere. We can stick them together.
[GOLDBERG and MCCANN turn to see him. Pause.]
Goldberg Sellotape? No, no, that's all right, Mr Boles. It'll keep him quiet for the time being, keep his mind off other things.
Petey [moving downstage.] What about a doctor?
Goldberg It's all taken care of.
[MCCANN moves over right to the shoe-box, and takes out a brush and brushes his shoes.]
Petey [moves to the table.] I think he needs one.
Goldberg I agree with you. It's all taken care of. We'll give him a bit of time to settle down, and then I'll take him to Monty.
Petey You're going to take him to a doctor?
Goldberg [staring at him.] Sure. Monty.
[Pause. MCCANN brushes his shoes.]
So Mrs Boles has gone out to get us something nice for lunch?
Petey That's right.
Goldberg Unfortunately we may be gone by then.
Petey Will you?
Goldberg By then we may be gone.
McCann [Breaking in] You know that girl?
Goldberg What girl?
McCann That girl had nightmares in the night.
Goldberg Those weren't nightmares
McCann No?
Goldberg [irritably] I said no.
McCann How do you know?
Goldberg I got up. I went to see what was the matter.
McCann I didn't know that.
Goldberg [sharply] It may be that you didn't know that. Nevertheless, that's what happened.

McCann Well, what was the matter?

Goldberg Nothing. Nothing at all. She was just having a bit of a sing-song

McCann A sing-song?

Goldberg [To PETEY] Sure. You know how young girls sing. She was singing.

McCann So what happened then?

Goldberg I joined in. We had a few songs. Yes. We sang a few of the old ballads and then she went to bye-byes.

[PETEY rises]

Petey Well, I think I'll see how my peas are getting on, in the meantime.

Goldberg The meantime?

Petey While we're waiting.

Goldberg Waiting for what? [PETEY walks towards the back door.] Aren't you going back to the beach?

Petey No, not yet. Give me a call when he comes down, will you, Mr Goldberg?

Goldberg [earnestly.] You'll have a crowded beach today...on a day like this. They'll be lying on their backs, swimming out to sea. My life. What about the deck-chairs? Are the deck-chairs ready?

Petey I put them all out this morning.

Goldberg But what about the tickets? Who's going to take the tickets?

Petey That's all right. That'll be all right. Mr Goldberg. Don't worry about that. I'll be back.

[He exits. GOLDBERG rises, goes to the window and looks after him. MCCANN crosses to the table, left, sits, picks up the paper and begins to tear it into strips.]

Goldberg Is everything ready?

McCann Sure.

[GOLDBERG walks heavily, brooding, to the table. He sits right of it noticing what MCCANN is doing.]

Goldberg Stop doing that!

McCann What?

Goldberg Why do you do that all the time? It's childish, it's pointless. It's without a solitary point.

McCann What's the matter with you today?

Goldberg Questions, questions. Stop asking me so many questions. What do you think I am?

[MCCANN studies him. He then folds the paper, leaving the strips inside.]

McCann Well?

[Pause. GOLDBERG leans back in the chair, his eyes closed.]

McCann Well?

Goldberg [with fatigue.] Well what?

McCann Do we wait or do we go and get him?

Goldberg [slowly.] You want to go and get him?

McCann I want to get it over.

Goldberg That's understandable.

McCann So do we wait or do we go and get him?

Goldberg [interrupting.] I don't know why, but I feel kncked out. I feel a bit...It's uncommon for me.

McCann Is that so?

Goldberg It's unusual.

McCann [rising swiftly and going behind GOLDBERG's chair. Hissing.] Let's finish and go. Let's get it over and go. Get the thing done. Let's finish the bloody thing. Let's get the thing done and go!

[Pause.]

Will I go up?

[Pause.]

Nat!

[GOLDBERG sits humped. MCCANN slips to his side.]

Simey!

Goldberg [opening his eyes, regarding MCCANN.] What-did-you-call-me?

McCann Who?

Goldberg [murderously.] Don't call me that! [He seizes MCCANN by the throat.] NEVER CALL ME THAT!

McCann [writhing.] Nat, Nat, Nat, NAT! I called you Nat. I was asking you, Nat. Honest to God. Just a question, that's all, just a question, do you see, do you follow me?

Goldberg [jerking him away.] What question?

McCann Will I go up?

Goldberg [violently.] Up? I thought you weren't going to go up there again?

McCann What do you mean? Why not?

Goldberg You said so!

McCann I never said that!

Goldberg No?

McCann [from the floor, to the room at large.] Who said that? I never said that! I'll go up now!

[He jumps up and rushes to the door, left.]

Goldberg Wait!

[He stretches his arms to the arms of the chair.]

Come here.

[MCCANN approaches him very slowly.]

I want your opinion. Have a look in my mouth.

[He opens his mouth wide.]

Take a good look.

[MCCANN looks.]

You know what I mean?

[MCCANN peers.]

You know what? I've never lost a tooth. Not since the day I was born. Nothing's changed. [He gets up.] That's why I've reached my position, McCann. Because I've always been as fit as a fiddle. All my life I've said the same. Play up, play up, and play the game. Honour thy father and thy mother. All along the line. Follow the line, the line, McCann, and you can't go wrong. What do you think,

I'm a self-made man? No! I sat where I was told to sit. I kept my eye on the ball. School? Don't talk to me about school. Top in all subjects. And for why? Because I'm telling you, I'm telling you, follow my line? Follow my mental? Learn by heart. Never write down a thing. And don't go too near the water.

And you'll find-that what I say is true.

Because I believe that the world... [Vacant.]...

Because I believe that the world...[Desperate.]...

BECAUSE I BELIEVE THAT THE WORLD...[Lost.]...

[He sits in chair.]

Sit down, McCann, sit here where I can look at you.

[MCCANN kneels in front of the table.]

[Intensely, with growing certainty.] My father said to me, Benny, Benny, he said, come here. He was dying. I knelt down. By him day and night. Who else was there? Forgive, Benny, he said, and let live. Yes, Dad. Go home to your wife. I will, Dad. Keep an eye open for low-lives, for schnorrers and for layabouts. He didn't mention names. I lost my life in the service of others, he said, I'm not ashamed. Do your duty and keep your observations. Always bid good morning to the neighbours. Never, never forget your family, for they are the rock, the constitution and the core! If you're ever in any difficulties Uncle Barney will see you in the clear. I knelt down. [He kneels, facing MCCANN.] I swore on the good book. And I knew the word I had to remember-respect! Because McCann- [Gently.] Seamus- who came before your father? His father. And who came before him?... [Vacant-triumphant.] Who came before your father's father but your father's father's mother! Your great-grand-granny.

[Silence. He slowly rises.]

And that's why I've reached my position, McCann. Because I've always been as fit as a fiddle. My motto. Work hard and play hard. Not a day's illness.

[GOLDBERG sits.]

Goldberg All the same, give me a blow. [Pause.] Blow in my mouth.

[MCCANN stands, puts his hands on his knees, bends, and blows in GOLDBERG's mouth.]

One for the road.

[MCCANN blows again in his mouth. GOLDBERG breathes deeply, smiles.]

Goldberg Right!

[Enter LULU. MCCANN looks at them, and goes to the door.]

McCann [at the door.] I'll give him five minutes. [He exits.]

Goldberg Come over here.

Lulu What's going to happen?

Goldberg Come over here.

Lulu No, thank you.

Goldberg What's the matter? You go to the needle to Uncle Natey?

Lulu I'm going.

Goldberg Have a game of pontoon first, for old time's sake.

Lulu I've had enough games.

Goldberg A girl like you, at your age, at your time of health, and you don't take to games?

Lulu You're very smart.

Goldberg Anyway, who says you don't take to them?

Lulu Do you think I'm like all the other girls?

Goldberg Are all the other girls like that, too?

Lulu I don't know about any other girls.

Goldberg Nor me. I've never touched another woman.

Lulu [distressed.] What would my father say, if he knew? And what would Eddie say?

Goldberg Eddie?

Lulu He was my first love, Eddie was. And whatever happened, it was pure. With him! He didn't come into my room at night with a briefcase!

Goldberg Who opened the briefcase, me or you? Lulu, schmulu, let bygones be bygones, do me a turn. Kiss and make up.

Lulu I wouldn't touch you.

Goldberg And today I'm leaving.

Lulu You're leaving?

Goldberg Today.

Lulu [with growing anger.] You used me for a night. A passing fancy.

Goldberg Who used who?

Lulu You made use of me when my defences were down.

Goldberg Who took them down?

Lulu That's what you did. You quenched your ugly thirst. You taught me things a girl shouldn't know before she's been married at last three times!

Goldberg Now you're a jump ahead! What are you complaining about?

[Enter MCCANN quickly.]

Lulu You didn't appreciate me for myself. You took all those liberties only to satisfy your appetite.

Oh Nat, why did you do it?

Goldberg You wanted me to do it, Lulula, so I did it.

McCann That's fair enough.

Lulu [Turning] Oh!

McCann [Advancing.] You had a long sleep, Miss.

Lulu [backing upstage left.] Me?

McCann Your sort, you spend too much time in bed.

Lulu What do you mean?

McCann Have you got anything to confess?

Lulu What?

McCann [savagely.] Confess!

Lulu Confess what?

McCann Down on your knees and confess!

Lulu What does he mean?

Goldberg Confess. What can you lose?

Lulu What, to him?

Goldberg He's only been unfrocked six months.

McCann Kneel down, woman, and tell me the latest!

Lulu [retreating to the back door.] I've seen everything that's happened. I know what's going on. I've got a pretty shrewd idea.

McCann [advancing.] I've seen you hanging about the Rock of Cashel, profaning the soil with your goings-on. Out of my sight!

Lulu I'm going.

[She exits. MCCANN goes to the door, left, and goes out. He ushers in STANLEY, who is dressed in a dark well cut suit and white collar. he holds his broken glasses in his hand. He is clean-shaven. MCCANN follows and closes the door. GOLDBERG meets STANLEY, seats him in a chair.]

Goldberg How are you, Stan?

[Pause.]

Are you feeling any better?

[Pause.]

What's the matter with your glasses?

[GOLDBERG bends to look.]

They're broken. A pity.

[STANLEY stares blankly at the floor.]

McCann [at the table.] He looks better, doesn't he?

Goldberg Much better.

McCann A new man.

Goldberg You know what we'll do?

McCann What?

Goldberg We'll buy him another pair.

[They begin to woo him, gently and with relish. During the following sequence STANLEY shows no reaction. He remains, with no movement, where he sits.]

McCann Out of our own pockets.

Goldberg It goes without saying. Between you and me, Stan, it's about time you had a new pair of glasses.

McCann You can't see straight.

Goldberg It's true. You've been cockeyed for years.

McCann Now you're even more cockeyed.

Goldberg He's right. You've gone from bad to worse.

McCann Worse than worse.

Goldberg You need a long convalescence.

McCann A change of air.

Goldberg Somewhere over the rainbow.

McCann Where angels fear to tread.
Goldberg Exactly.
McCann You're in a rut.
Goldberg You look anaemic.
McCann Rheumatic.
Goldberg Myopic.
McCann Epileptic.
Goldberg You're on the verge.
McCann You're a dead duck.
Goldberg But we can save you.
McCann From a worse fate.
Goldberg True.
McCann Undeniable.
Goldberg From now on, we'll be the hub of your wheel.
McCann We'll renew your season ticket.
Goldberg We'll take tuppence off your morning tea.
McCann We'll give you a discount on all inflammable goods.
Goldberg We'll watch over you.
McCann Advise you.
Goldberg Give you proper care and treatment.
McCann Let you use the club bar.
Goldberg Keep a table reserved.
McCann Help you acknowledge the fast days.
Goldberg Bake your cakes.
McCann Help you kneel on kneeling days.
Goldberg Give you a free pass.
McCann Take you for constitutionals.
Goldberg Give you hot tips.
McCann We'll provide the skipping rope.
Goldberg The vest and pants.
McCann The ointment.
Goldberg The hot poultice.
McCann The fingerstall.
Goldberg The abdomen belt.
McCann The ear plugs.
Goldberg The baby powder.
McCann The back scratcher.
Goldberg The spare tyre.
McCann The stomach pump.
Goldberg The oxygen tent.

McCann The prayer wheel.
Goldberg The plaster of Paris.
McCann The crash helmet.
Goldberg The crutches.
McCann A day and night service.
Goldberg All on the house.
McCann That's all.
Goldberg That's it.
Goldberg We'll make a man of you.
McCann And a woman.
Goldberg You'll be re-orientated.
McCann You'll be rich.
Goldberg You'll be adjusted.
McCann You'll be our pride and joy.
Goldberg You'll be a mensch.
McCann You'll be a success.
Goldberg You'll be integrated.
McCann You'll give orders.
Goldberg You'll make decisions.
McCann You'll be a magnate.
Goldberg A statesman.
McCann You'll own yachts.
Goldberg Animals.
McCann Animals.
[GOLDBERG looks at MCCANN.]
Goldberg I said animals. [He turns back to STANLEY.] You'll be able to make or break, Stan. By my life. [Silence. STANLEY is still.] Well? What do you say?
[STANLEY's head lifts very slowly and turns in GOLDBERG's direction.]
Goldberg What do you think? Eh, boy?
[STANLEY begins to clench and unclench his eyes.]
McCann What's your opinion, sir? Of this prospect, sir?
Goldberg Prospect. Sure. Sure it's a prospect.
[STANLEY's hands clutching his glasses begin to tremble.]
What's your opinion of such a prospect? Eh, Stanley?
[STANLEY concentrates, his mouth opens, he attempts to speak, fails and emits sounds from his throat.]
Stanley Uh-gug...uh-gug...eeehhh-gag...[On the breath.] Caahh...caahh...
[They watch him. he draws a long breath which shudders down his body. He concentrates.]
Goldberg Well, Stanny boy, what do you say, eh?
[They watch. He concentrates. His head lowers, his chin draws into his chest, he crutches.]

Stanley Ug-gughh...uh-gughhh...

McCann What's your opinion, sir?

Stanley Caaahhh...caaahhh...

McCann Mr Webber! What's your opinion?

Goldberg What do you say, Stan? What do you think of the prospect?

McCann What's your opinion of the prospect?

[STANLEY's body shudders, relaxes, his head drops, he becomes still again, stooped. PETEY enters from door, downstage, left.]

Goldberg Still the same old Stan. Come with us. Come on, boy.

McCann Come along with us.

Petey Where are you taking him?

[They turn. Silence.]

Goldberg We're taking him to Monty.

Petey He can stay here.

Goldberg Don't be silly.

Petey We can look after him here.

Goldberg Why do you want to look after him?

Petey He's my guest.

Goldberg He needs special treatment.

Petey We'll find someone.

Goldberg No. Monty's the best there is. Bring him, McCann.

[They help STANLEY out of the chair. They all three move towards the door, left.]

Petey Leave him alone!

[They stop. GOLDBERG studies him.]

Goldberg [insidiously.] Why don't you come with us, Mr Boles?

McCann Yes, Why don't you come with us?

Goldberg Come with us to Monty. There's plenty of room in the car.

[PETEY makes no move. They pass him and reach the door. MCCANN opens the door and picks up the suitcases.]

Petey [broken.] Stan, don't let them tell you what to do!

[They exit.]

[Silence. PETEY stands. The front door slams. Sound of a car starting. Sound of a car going away.

Silence. PETEY slowly goes to the table. He sits on a chair, left. He picks up the paper and opens it.

The strips fall to the floor. He looks down at them. MEG comes past the window and enters by the back door. PETEY studies the front page of the paper.]

Meg [coming downstage.] The car's gone.

Petey Yes.

Meg Have they gone?

Petey Yes.

Meg Won't they be in for lunch?

Petey No.

Meg Oh, what a shame. [She puts her bag on the table.] It's hot out. [She hangs her coat on a hook.]

What are you doing?

Petey Reading.

Meg Is it good?

Petey All right.

[She sits by the table.]

Meg Where's Stan?

[Pause.]

Is Stan down yet, Petey?

Petey No...he's....

Meg Is he still in bed?

Petey Yes, he's...still asleep.

Meg Still? He'll be late for his breakfast.

Petey Let him...sleep.

[Pause.]

Meg Wasn't it a lovely party last night?

Petey I wasn't there.

Meg Weren't you?

Petey I came in afterwards.

Meg Oh.

[Pause.]

It was a lovely party. I haven't laughed so much for years. We had dancing and singing. And games.

You should have been there.

Petey It was good, eh?

[Pause.]

Meg I was the belle of the ball.

Petey Were you?

Meg Oh yes. They all said I was.

Petey I bet you were, too.

Meg Oh, it's true. I was.

[Pause.]

I know I was.

[Curtain.]