

The King of Spain's Daughter

and other one-act plays

BY
TERESA DEEVY

NEW FRONTIERS PRESS

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TERESA DEEVY

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Other Plays by TERESA DEEVY

TEMPORAL POWERS

KATIE ROCHE

WIFE TO JAMES WHELAN

THE WILD GOOSE

LIGHT FALLING

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IN SEARCH OF VALOUR was first produced in the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, with the following cast:

MRS. MAHER MAY CRAIG
 ELLIE IRWIN KATE CURLING
 STASIA CLAREMORRIS MAUREEN DELANEY
 MRS. GLITTERON EILEEN CROWE
 MR. GLITTERON BARRY FITZGERALD
 JACK THE SCALP DENIS O'DEA

The play was produced by Lennox Robinson

In Search of Valour

SCENE: Mrs. Maher's "parlour." It is an ill-kept room in a tumble-down house. The walls are slanting and uneven, and in places the paper is coming off the walls. The table, in the centre of the room has been partly cleared after one person's tea. There is a window at the back, centre, a small porch at the right side, and at the opposite side of the room a door which leads to the rest of the house.

Mrs. Maher sits dozing by the fire. She is between fifty and sixty years of age, and wears shabby black clothes.

From outside comes a loud noise, as of zinc striking on zinc. Mrs. Maher starts up, clasping her hands in terror. After a moment she relaxes, settles back in her chair again.

Another noise—this time in the house—as of a chair being dragged over tiles. Mrs. Maher gets up, goes to the door which leads to the kitchen and calls, "Ellie! Ellie!" in a tone of grievance.

Ellie Irwin comes in. She is sixteen, small and sallow, with an air of smouldering fury. Over a greenish dress she wears a brightly coloured overall which is stained and torn. Her shoes are good, and her feet well shaped. Her manner is contemptuous—and there is rage and despair in the look she turns on her mistress.

MRS. MAHER: 'Tis a wonder but you'd take the cloth from the table.

ELLIE: Ha! (Springs rather than walks to the table, sweeps a plate, a cup, a jug and a saucer on to the nearest chair, and clutches at the cloth).

MRS. MAHER: Mind the crumbs!

(With a tremendous effort of patience ELLIE waits for a moment, then together they carry the cloth to the fire-place and let the crumbs slip into the grate. ELLIE springs to the chair again, seizes all the things she has left on it, and balancing them, piled one on another, turns to go)

Oh, but it is hard—finding good servants for other people, and myself putting up with you!

ELLIE: If a body would do things proper!

MRS. MAHER: Proper?

ELLIE: Sayin' prayers! . . . Sittin' by the fire and sayin' your prayers!

MRS. MAHER: And what else could I do, Ellie Irwin, to while away the time?

ELLIE: Spirit I likes more than prayer!

MRS. MAHER: Spirit! That's a queer word to be saying to your mistress. What need any Christian ask but to say their prayers, and make a bit of money in their life.

ELLIE: What did you want taking this ramshack?

MRS. MAHER: Ramshack?! A good little house, an' in the right place—

ELLIE: Right place! A bit of a lane between mountain and bog . . . and it flooded more often than dry!—

MRS. MAHER: Between county and town, exact what I wanted—convenient for them do be motorin' to town, and lookin' always for good cooks. An' no need of a stir out of myself from the fire: girls glad enough to come here an' they lookin' for a job.

ELLIE: Often I look at the ones that come here: women with life in them, and all they ask to be took by someone till they're too old to be took at all, an' then to draw the Old Age, and sit on the bench an' the sun shining, an' shiverin' when the sun don't shine, an' spyin' on one another. Often I look at them.

MRS. MAHER: Look at the cup now! You're spilling the tea over the saucer! . . . Wait! tidy up them papers before you go!

(ELLIE leaves all the things down on the floor, crosses to where a pile of newspapers has been left in the corner. She brings the newspapers over to the table, spreads them out. As she does this there comes the noise of banging zinc from outside. MRS. MAHER starts nervously, but ELLIE listens as to a friendly sound.)

MRS. MAHER: Glory! What was that?

ELLIE: Likely the old gate that is swingin' on the hinge. It puts me thinkin' on Coriolanus . . .

MRS. MAHER: *(Hastily, as one who hears too much of Coriolanus)* Ready them papers.

ELLIE: *(Determined)* Coriolanus . . . Caius, Marcius, Coriolanus . . . he done things proper . . . tramplin' on the lot of them to the end of his life.

MRS. MAHER: There was never a great man but called himself a crawling worm . . . And the strong shall be thrun out and the weak ones bolstered up . . .

ELLIE: He done things proper. *(Looks at the papers)* Like them that lives. Wait till I tell you. *(Eager now)*. Here is two that have spirit; Mr. Glitteron that owns the house over . . . and the new wife he married only last May. *(Reads joyfully)* "The hearing of the case of Glitteron v. Glitteron is listed for . . ."

MRS. MAHER: *(Snatches the paper)* Better the eyes to fall out of your head on the table! 'Tis divorcin' they are.

ELLIE: *(Holds the paper, pleads)* Leave me put it where I know. . . I'm following all them cases of people that lives. Yes, if my body is here aself can't my mind soar like another . . . up . . . up?

(The gate bangs loudly; MRS. MAHER throws up her hands.)

MRS. MAHER: Holy St. Joseph! They're saying Jack the Scalp is in hiding round here.

ELLIE: I'm stuffed with Jack the Scalp! What good is he no more than any common thief and murderer—but a man like Mr. Glitteron here that would be after goin' through that amount of wives! And not one of them to get the upper hand of him!

MRS. MAHER: Oh may I be deaf sooner than have scandal in me ears! *(Covers her ears.)*

ELLIE: I don't know what would he look like? . . . a man with a great set to his shoulder for sure . . . *(Raises her voice)* The first one died right, the second he threw off from him. There was one—I disremembers what number—that he followed by land and sea, and got the better of her too in the end . . . And now I don't know what'll it be. *(Turns the paper over)* How well I never seen his photograph, but ever them racers that do be gettin' killed. Dead they likes a man to be, better than livin' the way that would make your heart burn out with longing to set eyes on him! *(Takes the papers, turns to go.)*

MRS. MAHER: There's no call for them papers to be took out of this! There in the corner is their place. Not that I'd put eye near such trash, but to have them in the room for . . . for . . .

ELLIE: For ornie-ment! How well he never comes to the house over . . . What would he want, says you, and him with the whole world under his feet, and all them women—

MRS. MAHER: I believe that Jack the Scalp is makin' for England now with all that he has robbed—

ELLIE: By private airie-o-plane they went after the weddin' from London to Paris. That not six months gone, and them through and done with theirselves, and wantin' something new. 'Twould pierce you. Like fire they do be dartin' here an' dartin' there, and we mouldin' our life away with every day the same shadow fallin' on the flag—!

MRS. MAHER: To save my soul by doin' no harm is what I puts before me—better than flying into the mouth of the everlasting fire.

ELLIE: If the likes of them knew how *we* lived they'd laugh! They'd say what was we but worms!

MRS. MAHER: Look at St. Joseph that never asked but to hammer a nail—

ELLIE: What was we but worms . . . worms that do be in old furniture . . .

MRS. MAHER: And which is the better off in the last,—St. Joseph or them that takes up with the flyin'? *(Draws nearer to the*

fire) Thanks be to God, 'tis the great comfort of a holy religion we have no need to worrit with moving a step from the spot God put us down on—

ELLIE: They're trampin' . . . they're conquerin', and we ferritting here and ferritting there—and spatterin' holy water. (*The gate bangs*)

MRS. MAHER: Holy Angels save us this night! They tell me Jack the Scalp is tearing mad now—like a man out of his mind, with the whole of the police pressin' him on—

ELLIE: He is then, and double fierce by the same token, killin' as many as he can reach before he's put off from it entirely . . . Likely and the night to come so bad he'll be here askin' this roof over his head.

MRS. MAHER: What would he want with the roof, Ellie Irwin, and him after trampling the world wide—(*Frightened*)

ELLIE: Not a want, but that's the word to get him into the house, and to get on with the killing . . . like at poor Maggie Brady's that was. The knock came on the door in the dead of night—a night like what's in it. If the knock came on the door here it might maybe be better for us—(*She relents*)—Ah, Mrs. Maher, woman, teasing I am! Sure what is Jack? Only a man that might have been born in the one house with yourself. 'Tisn't so long gone that the same Jack was at the poor school over in Ballycullane. Sure what interest could be took in a man that would eat the same bread might be in your own mouth? . . . But if someone would come and lift the two of us—or maybe only me—up out of this . . .

(*The gate bangs*)

MRS. MAHER: 'Twould put the heart across you—like the thought of Judgment strikin' on you!

ELLIE: The clangin' on that gate is the trumpet of my hope! (*Sententious*)

MRS. MAHER: You and your hope! Ready the room!

ELLIE: Sol nor sorra will come here this night!

MRS. MAHER: There's a lady calling here for to interview a servant.

ELLIE: Are there? And what girl would come here and the night that's in it?

MRS. MAHER: Stasia Claremorris don't mind rain nor wind—

ELLIE: That old one! Who's wantin' her?

MRS. MAHER: Young Mrs. Glitteron.

ELLIE: Young Mrs. Glitteron! Coming here! Is that the truth? Oh, Mrs. Maher, woman!!

MRS. MAHER: I hope it won't be counted against me . . .

ELLIE: 'Tis my falling-star wish—me to be mixed up with them that do be divorcin' in and out!

MRS. MAHER: If she's a sinner aself she can pay me right well . . .

ELLIE: 'Tis my own fate comin' this night!

MRS. MAHER: Your fate, Ellie Irwin, is to be kept in the kitchen!

(*Loud knock*)

ELLIE: (*Springs forward*) I'll open it!

MRS. MAHER: You will not! (*She goes to the door. ELLIE makes a few wild efforts to tidy herself and the room. MRS. MAHER opens the door. STASIA CLAREMORRIS—a big kindly woman, plain in appearance and dress—comes in*)

ELLIE: Huh! Stasia Claremorris! An' I rightin' the room.

STASIA: Before the right time I am, owing to the fact of being drove in a motor (*A little flustered*)

ELLIE: Do you know who's wanting you?

MRS. MAHER: Ellie Irwin!

STASIA: Drove in a motor—to the door.

MRS. MAHER: That was as well for you—the night being so bad.

STASIA: "Could I go past you, Stasia?" says he. Like a drowned rat I was at the time. "Get in out of the wind and the rain," says he.

MRS. MAHER: Well you're safe here now to do your business.

STASIA: The chaffis must have reckernised me: he near knocked me down in the middle of the road. Mr. Jimmy stuck his head out of the window, "Lemme give you a lift, Stasia," says he, "I'm goin' to the house over beyond." The chaffis being there I didn't care to speak (*Very dignified*) or I'd have told him Mrs. Glitteron is takin' me on.

ELLIE: Told who? Who was drivin' the car?

STASIA: The chaffis was steerin' and blowin' the horn, Mr. Glitteron beside of him—

ELLIE: Mr. Glitteron! Took you in his car!

STASIA: He did to be sure; Mr. Jimmy was ever kind-hearted—

ELLIE: Stasia Claremorris—!

STASIA: And from the time he was that high he was fond of his Stasia.

ELLIE: Were you with the Glitterons?

STASIA: From the time they were childer—whenever they'd want me.

ELLIE: And I never to look twice at you!

STASIA: And young Mrs. Glitteron is wantin' me now—

MRS. MAHER: Presumably so, seein' you know the queer ways of them.

STASIA: I'm not one to be talkin'—but cookin' their dinner—

ELLIE: I don't know what would he look like? (*To STASIA, almost reverent.*)

MRS. MAHER: Take them things to the kitchen! (*ELLIE takes tray moves towards the door but delays*)

ELLIE: Are him and herself over there now, the both of them?

STASIA: That I don't know to my certain knowledge—

MRS. MAHER: 'Tisn't likely he'd say—

STASIA: No, the chaffis being there no one could speak.

ELLIE: What is the appearance of young Mrs. Glitteron like?

STASIA: I can't say that—not yet having seen her.

(*ELLIE puts down the tray, takes the duster, starts to polish the furniture*)

MRS. MAHER: What did I tell you? (*Points to door*)
 ELLIE: I must right the room first. (*Turns to STASIA*) I don't know would you remember Miss Charlotta Burke?
 STASIA: Miss Charlotta Burke?
 MRS. MAHER: A sinful bad creature—
 STASIA: The name I calls to mind but the face I can't.
 ELLIE: The kind of person Mrs. Glitteron might likely resemble!
 MRS. MAHER: Please God and she won't—!
 ELLIE: Miss Charlotta Burke was the kind of person made for the world to be under her feet—
 MRS. MAHER: —The worst of the three—the flesh and the devil,—but the world is the worst.
 ELLIE: She done Coriolanus at the Convent beyond couple of years ago—
 MRS. MAHER: A pity but she kept to the Convent—
 ELLIE: She rose my heart in one hour till I seen the scum we are.
 MRS. MAHER: A bad hour when she ever put foot on the stage—
 ELLIE: The nuns wouldn't leave her wear men's clothes, but she made up for that: no one could take their eye from off her face: she carried the house,—'twas only a room, but she carried it easy: no one in the end but was cheerin' for her—
 MRS. MAHER: A pity but she gave heed to the voice of God—
 ELLIE: They thought to make a nun of her, thank you, says she, and went to London and on to the stage—and done well.
 MRS. MAHER: Done Well! God forgive you, Ellie Irwin!
 ELLIE: Done fine—and—took poison!
 STASIA: Look at that now! That was a mistake for her, the creature. Unbeknownst it might happen—
 ELLIE: Took poison for to do away with herself! (*Determined*)
 MRS. MAHER: Great good was her actin' to her, and she put to stand out then before the throne of God. To fall from her it would, and she shiverin'.
 ELLIE: There was a lot wrote about it—she was that high up—they asked the why and the cause—and who was chasin' her. . . . She said nothing—only died . . . She done things proper . . . Off the wrapper that was round the seakale I was readin' it . . . She kept to Coriolanus for sure.
 MRS. MAHER: A pity but she kept to her religion! (*The gate bangs*) Stop your scandal talk now. We don't know what danger might be hid in the dark night. (*Gets up*) I suppose it's myself must put the bolt on the back door. (*Moves towards the door*).
 ELLIE: Great good is bar nor bolt against Jack the Scalp! (*Then to STASIA*) He's in hidin' round here. He took the scalp off a woman and she alive.
 MRS. MAHER: No one could do that—only the Injuns. (*Frightened. Goes out*)

ELLIE: (*After her*) From the Injuns he learned! (*Laughs*) Herself and Jack the Scalp! (*A knock. ELLIE springs to the door, turns to STASIA*) Lucky an' her to be gone! Now we'll see!
 (*Flings open the door. Mrs. GLITTERON comes in. She is young, and richly dressed, but is at once seen to be a cheap, vulgar woman. She brushes quickly past ELLIE and turns angrily on STASIA*)
 MRS. GLITTER.: Stasia Claremorris? (*STASIA stands up*) You?
 STASIA: Yes, ma'am, that's me.
 MRS. GLITTER.: I'm Mrs. Glitteron.
 STASIA: I know, ma'am, I know.
 MRS. GLITTER.: You told him I was coming here!
 STASIA: Divil a bit did I tell anyone.
 MRS. GLITTER.: You must have told him. I saw his car. He brought you here.
 STASIA: Oh, alannah, look at that now!
 MRS. GLITTER.: You needn't pretend— You needn't tell lies.
 STASIA: Honey, you're making a mistake.
 MRS. GLITTER.: You came in his car.
 STASIA: Mr. Jimmy gave me the lift—
 MRS. GLITTER.: Oh, "Mr. Jimmy." Very kind. What brought him here?
 STASIA: That I can't say. The chaffis being there I didn't care to speak.
 MRS. GLITTER.: I don't believe you—
 STASIA: Oh dearie me—
 MRS. GLITTER.: Mr. Glitteron was down here last month. Who was with him? Who had he then? I want to know. That's why I sent for you to come here. And that's why—
 STASIA: Oh dearie me, stop quiet a minute and look at yourself!
 MRS. GLITTER.: Stasia—help me—have pity on me.
 STASIA: To be sure I will, honey: sure, Stasia is only for helping people.
 MRS. GLITTER.: Tell me about him. I must have proof—
 STASIA: But listen, alannah—
 MRS. GLITTER.: How much do you want? (*Opens her bag.*) I can pay well.
 ELLIE: Won't you fight him fair?!—(*aghast*)
 MRS. GLITTER.: Who are you?!
 ELLIE: Are you tryin' to bribe?!
 MRS. GLITTER.: Who ever are you?
 ELLIE: Whoever I am—that's a mean thing!
 MRS. GLITTER.: How dare you! I'm Mrs. Glitteron.
 ELLIE: Mrs. a while don't make you his equal! —
 STASIA: Whisht, Ellie, whisht!
 ELLIE: Whisht yourself! she's no great shakes by what I'm hearin' now!—spyin' on a man the likes of him!
 MRS. GLITTER.: Remember your place!
 ELLIE: I remember me pride!—You to be paired with a great man!
 MRS. GLITTER.: Leave the room! You've no right to be here!

ELLIE: I see you now! Mrs. a while till you're thrun out! (*Shrill*)
 MRS. GLITTER.: You'll be sorry for this!
 ELLIE: A twisting little worm eatin' at him—
 MRS. GLITTER.: You'll pay for it!
 ELLIE: A crawlin' little midget bitin' at him!
 STASIA: Let you stop, Ellie!
 ELLIE: A treacherous old reptile turnin' on him! And I puttin' the like on you of Miss Charlotta Burke!
 MRS. GLITTER.: Burke! You knew that woman?
 ELLIE: Woman! she wasn't! but a great actress.
 MRS. GLITTER.: Yes! Actress! Was she down here with Mr. Glitteron? Tell me the truth! I know she was!
 ELLIE: Pride she had—and spirit!
 MRS. GLITTER.: Was she here? Tell me at once!
 ELLIE: Askin' of me! Askin' of Stasia! Oh, wirra—an' I thinkin' of you oftentimes—that you'd be like a Queen!
 MRS. MAHER: (*Runs in*) 'Tis Jack the Scalp! Near drove in the back door with the blow he gave on it! (*Sinks to her knees*) Holy Angels! (*Loud knocking followed by a blow on the door, as of an angry man striking with a stick. Mrs. Glitteron and Ellie stand petrified with fear, Mrs. Maher rocks on her knees and moans*)
 STASIA: (*Springs to the door*) Get out of that! You rascal you!! There's no fright on us before you! Scalp and all! (*Another bang*)
 MRS. MAHER: (*Trembling*) Stasia, leave us barricade the inner door.
 ELLIE: The inner door won't hold against a child. (*Whispering, frightened*)
 MRS. MAHER: We'd better turn to heaven so since there's nothin' else for us!
 ELLIE: Bah!—I'll open the door! I'll let him in!
 STASIA: Whisht alannah! Invitin' death! —
 ELLIE: Better be dead than lookin' at that! (*Points to Mrs. MAHER on her knees, laughs wildly*) Lookin' at that for the rest of my life! (*Another bang. From outside a man's voice is heard—'Let me in.'*)
 STASIA: Mr. Jimmy! (*In sudden joy*) 'Tis Mr. Jimmy!
 MRS. GLITTER.: Don't open it! Don't let him in!
 STASIA: But it's Mr. Jimmy — Mr. Glitteron himself!
 ELLIE: Mr. Glitteron! Outside of the door!
 MRS. GLITTER.: Don't open it! Who asked him here?
 STASIA: (*Calling*) One minute, Honey! (*Then to Mrs. GLITTERON*) Sure we couldn't leave him outside in the night.
 MRS. GLITTER.: He can go home. He's not wanted here.
 ELLIE: Not by spies for sure! I'll let him in!
 (*She flings open the door: a little old man comes in slowly and shakily: as he stands just inside the door, leaning on his stick, coughing, and looking round at them all he seems to be on the point of crying. ELLIE is open-*

mouth, Mrs. GLITTERON *contemptuous*: STASIA *draws out a chair for him. Mrs. MAHER slowly realises that danger is past.*)
 STASIA: Poor Mr. Jimmy!
 ELLIE: (*To STASIA*) You said Mr. Glitteron!?
 STASIA: So 'tis too Mr. Jimmy himself!
 MRS. GLITTER.: A great hero you see!
 ELLIE: Him! That —! Mr. Glitteron! —
 MR. GLITTER.: Stasia, why did you try to keep me out?
 STASIA: Divil a try, honey, if we knew who you were.
 MRS. MAHER: It is Jack the Scalp we were in fear of, sir, so don't blame it on us that we kept you waiting.
 MR. GLITTER.: She (*pointing at Mrs. GLITTERON*) tried to make you keep me out. . . . She tried to turn you against me. . . .
 MRS. GLITTER.: Don't be a fool!
 STASIA: Ah, be nice to him now!
 MR. GLITTER.: Stasia, I went to the house beyond: she wasn't there. Coming back I saw her car stopped outside here. Ha,—trying to find out all about me—I'm taking that car now, Stasia,—I sent my own away—
 STASIA: That was a mistake for you then, sir. (*He coughs*) And how well you'd never keep the bit of flannel on your chest.
 MRS. GLITTER.: That car belongs to me.
 MR. GLITTER.: It belongs to *me*! (*Shrill*)
 MRS. GLITTER.: I have the licence.
 MR. GLITTER.: I paid for it!
 MRS. GLITTER.: The car is mine.
 MR. GLITTER.: No,—it's mine!
 MRS. GLITTER.: Ah shut up!
 MR. GLITTER.: The car is mine!
 MRS. GLITTER.: I'm going on! (*Brushes out past him*)
 MR. GLITTER.: Stop! wait! (*But she bangs the door*) Call her back! Call her back! The car! I want the car!
 STASIA: What matter at all,—leave her off for herself.
 MR. GLITTER.: But the car! Call her back, Stasia! I can't get home! I want the car!
 MR. GLITTER.: Stop; wait! (*But she bangs the door*). Call her back!" "My car! my car!" Ha! ha!
 MRS. MAHER: Ellie Irwin!
 ELLIE: —An' I thinkin' of him! Dreamin' of him! —
 STASIA: Ah, shut your mouth, Ellie! Leave him alone!
 ELLIE: "I can't get home! I want me car!" Ha, ha! Like snivellin' little Tom at the corner beyond! I dunno where would you find any pride at all! —
 MR. GLITTER.: Who's the little girl, Stasia, who?
 (*The door is pushed open very quietly: JACK THE SCALP—a wild looking man—comes in, revolver in hand*)
 MRS. MAHER: (*Utters a shriek*) Have mercy! have mercy! Don't shoot! don't kill us! (*On her knees*)

JACK: Shut your mouth!

MR. GLITTER.: Who are you? Clear out of this! (*Bangs his stick on the table*)

JACK: Keep quiet, Johnny. Don't make a row.

STASIA: Don't, alannah,—'tis Jack the Scalp.

MRS. MAHER: Don't rise his anger for the love of the saints!

JACK: Look lively—clear out—the lot of ye—the police are comin'. I'm goin' to put up the devil's own fight—

MRS. MAHER: I beg and beseech of you go fight outside. (*On her knees again*)

JACK: Keep out of my way— (*Dragging the table towards the door*)

MRS. MAHER: 'Tis the just judgment of God—I didn't get out of the bed saying the Happy Death prayer last night that had slipped from my mind.

STASIA: Would you believe God that spiteful? Don't be dying till you're dead.

JACK: (*Peering through the window*) Ha! they're comin' . . .

ELLIE: To kill you they want? (*A reverent whisper*)

JACK: They're wantin' a long time: they'll likely do it now.

MR. GLITTER.: I'll hand you over to the police!

JACK: Do. Johnny . . . do.

STASIA: He don't mean that! He don't mean it at all!

MR. GLITTER.: I'll have you in jail—

JACK: That bit of leather'll do for me. (*Catches MR. GLITTERON'S coat*) Off with it. Quick! It'll do me for padding . . .

MR. GLITTER.: What! what do you mean?

JACK: Off with it!—or—? (*Puts revolver against MR. GLITTERON, then shakes him out of the coat.*)

STASIA: Ah, don't, let you, don't. He have a cold on his chest.

JACK: Put him between the blankets let you.

MR. GLITTER.: I'll report this matter . . . I'll—

STASIA: Whisht now! . . . keep quiet like a man!

ELLIE: We have a Man in it now!

JACK: Moving up slow—a dozen of them. (*At the window*)

ELLIE: A dozen against you (*Thrilled*)

JACK: They'll be fewer goin' home. They'll get Jack—pretty dear.

MR. GLITTER.: I'll give evidence—I'll tell how you threatened . . .

MRS. MAHER: Don't give the lives of us all for the last word!

JACK: Take that little fellow to bed . . . And clear out—the rest of ye. The bullets will be flyin' very soon.

MRS. MAHER: Come on, Stasia, the bullets will be flyin'—hurry on—oh, don't fire for one minute!

STASIA: Come on Mr. Jimmy, come out of this! (*When she has him at the door, she turns to JACK*) We're on your side—and we're hoping you'll win! Come, little Ellie, and (*To JACK*) good luck to you now (*Bobbing to him*) and we'll do all we can . . . We'll wait in the kitchen.

ELLIE: (*Shuts the door*) I'm stayin' with Marcus.

JACK: Marcus? Jack's my name.

ELLIE: Marcus is a name I likes. Hold that before you (*giving him the cover of the coal box*) 'Twill shield you maybe.

JACK: Jack the Scalp—a name that brings fear to all.

ELLIE: Caius Marcus Coriolanus—

JACK: None gets in Jack's way but is sorry for it after. (*Peers out*) Ho! They're movin' in a circle now—fearin' to come in.

ELLIE: Fearin' you! a dozen men!

JACK: Like at daybreak this morning. I near died with the laughin'. They were stealing round the old shed they thought I was in, and myself looking down from the rock above—each was waiting for the other to be first into the shed, and the thought of each one of them—to save his own skin. They ran off in the end!

ELLIE: Twelve armed men running from you!

JACK: They went for to get help—a machine gun maybe!

ELLIE: Ha! a machine gun maybe! (*Close to him.*)

JACK: (*Suddenly nervous*) Keep back out of that!

ELLIE: I knew my fate was coming this night.

JACK: Your fate?

ELLIE: I'll stop beside you forever now!

JACK: Keep out of that youngster! What's on you at all?

ELLIE: I knew you'd come. I was pinin' for you. A man like yourself. I knew I'd find you. I'll go with you now through weal and woe! I'll go to the end of the world with you.

JACK: You will not!

ELLIE: Wherever you'll be I'll be there: I'll cook your food, and mend for you.

JACK: Get out of here!

ELLIE: Wherever we'll be I'll be content. I'll share your food, I'll share your bed.

JACK: Keep back from me!

ELLIE: Come with me now, I knows a place they'll never get us—

JACK: Us? . . . You with me!

ELLIE: They'll never find us—We'll stop for months together, safe.

JACK: Clear out of this! Go in with them! (*Points revolver at her*)

ELLIE: I have no fear: I'm fit comrade for you.

JACK: (*Lowers revolver*) But . . . but I'm a respectable man.

ELLIE: Are you fearin' me?

JACK: I . . . I had no dealin' with a woman ever!

ELLIE: Look me straight in the face! Is there fear in your heart?

JACK: I'm willin' ever to risk me life clean. I'm willin' to shoot whoever you'd like but—I was brought up respectable!

ELLIE: Fearin' me that you should by right be tramplin' on!—

JACK: I'm only tryin' to keep myself decent!

ELLIE: Fearin' me that should be like dust under your feet!

JACK: I . . . I never rested me eyes on a woman. I made a mistake to come here at all. Maybe I'll take the chance to run—

ELLIE: Runnin' from me! The police are outside—

JACK: What matter— If I must die aself isn't it better to save me soul?

ELLIE: (*With deep contempt*) There is no *MAN* livin' now. Small wonder any woman would take poison!

JACK: Oh, let me out of this! (*He pulls open the door*)

ELLIE: I hopes they'll get you! I hopes you'll be hanged! (*JACK rushes out: the door bangs*) Them were best off that were born long ago. Wirra—why weren't I born in a brave time?!

CURTAIN

Strange Birth

Characters: SARA MEADE, MRS. TAYLOR, MR. BASSETT,
MRS. STIMS, BILL.

SCENE—The hall of Mrs. Taylor's house—No. 19 Mountain View Road. The hall door, which is closed, is centre back. At the right side two doors, at the left a curtained archway leading to the stairway, which goes both up and down.

It is a Summer morning, about 9 a.m.

When the curtain rises Sara Meade is working in the hall, polishing the linoleum. About thirty years of age, strongly built, somewhat ungainly of movement, she glows with happy energy, and goes at her work with heavy goodwill.

A postman's knock—some letters fall into the box, and from it on to the floor. Sara swoops over and seizes them. She stands for a moment close to the hall door, listening as though to make sure there is no one outside—or rather that the postman's steps are receding. Then having carefully examined the envelopes, with a headshake over one, a smile over another, she places three of them on the hall table, and with one in hand goes to one of the doors on the right,—the one nearer to the hall door. Here she hesitates, listening again, as for a movement inside. Turning from the door she leaves this letter also on the table, takes her mop, and restarts work, humming softly.

A moment later this door opens and a tall, grey-haired woman comes into the hall. She wears dressing-gown and bedroom slippers.

SARA: Well Mrs. Taylor—out of bed so early!

MRS. TAYLOR: I thought there might be a letter.

SARA: I thought you were dozing or I'd bring it in. (*Pounces on the letter, brings it to Mrs. Taylor.*)

MRS. TAYLOR: Sara, my son . . .

SARA: Ah, I was thinking . . .

MRS. TAYLOR: My glasses . . . my glasses . . . (*excited, shaking*).

SARA: I'll get them for you (*rushes into Mrs. Taylor's room and returns with glasses—*) I'll put on the kettle (*disappears into the other room. Mrs. Taylor stands in the centre of the hall, reading. Sara re-appears*) I have it plugged in.

MRS. TAYLOR: Sara, he's coming . . . safe home again . . .

SARA: That's the best ever.

MRS. TAYLOR: Out of all danger.

SARA: Hooray for the day. Get back to bed now, and read for yourself, and I'll bring you in a cup of tea.

MRS. TAYLOR: Back to bed! I'll be up and about. I'm a different woman.

SARA: Good so, you are. This will be the making of you. We'll have the place grand. We'll put up the new curtains.

MRS. TAYLOR: Yes, and settle the blind. (*Shaky*)

SARA: We'll be mashers. I'll give the room a great doing. What time will he come?

MRS. TAYLOR: Some time in the evening—that's all he said.

SARA: Out of the draught now Mrs. Taylor (*bringing her to the door*).

MRS. TAYLOR: You're a good girl. Sara those months when I was frightened for him . . . terrified and worried . . . I'd never have got through the Winter without you.

SARA: What did I do? will you tell me that. (*smilingly matter-of-fact*)

MRS. TAYLOR: You to talk to . . . so much comfort . . .

SARA: Mr. Bassett will be coming down for his letters,—it wouldn't do you to be here. (*gets her into her room*) That's right now, I have the tray ready. (*shuts the door, again goes at work. Suddenly she stops and listens—pressing her hand to her heart. The hall door is opened from outside; a young man comes in, putting his latch-key into his pocket.*)

SARA: Well, Mr. Bassett you're out early!

MR. BASSETT: Yes, the early worm don't you know.

SARA: I couldn't think for my life who was opening the door.

MR. BASSETT: Bad for the heart, isn't it, life and all that. Any letters?

SARA: Not the right one. (*gently*)

MR. BASSETT: Are these all the letters? (*with keen disappointment. She nods slowly and with sympathy: she has ceased work*)

SARA: Maybe Mr. Bassett, by the second post.

MR. BASSETT: No. She won't write to me now, ever again . . . Why doesn't she. Can you understand it—from what I told you?

SARA: What understanding would I have—the likes of me?

MR. BASSETT: I think you have—you've more than . . . some . . . (*a silence*) If she'd write—no matter what—

SARA: Take it square on the jaw Mr. Bassett.

MR. BASSETT: I'm not a whiner.

SARA: Indeed you're not. I often thought how brave you were, when you'd be telling me all about her, and the bad times you'd be having.

MR. BASSETT: Will the Taylor lady mind if I loiter . . . its lonesome above . . . (*lights a cigarette for himself—*)

SARA: She'll mind nothing this morning: her son's coming home. . . Her world goes round him . . . Isn't it terrible and awful to be that way?

MR. BASSETT: Will you have a fag, Sara?

SARA: I couldn't smoke here.

MR. BASSETT: Keep for this evening. (*tosses to her, it falls on the floor. SARA picks it up eagerly and stores safely away*). Why I was out so early this morning — my mother's wedding.

SARA: Her wedding? This morning?

MR. BASSETT: Oh, she was married before I was born, very good and all of that. Twenty-five years ago to-day: she'd have me make it a great occasion—out for Mass, and I'm to meet my fate to-day, so she said — that's why I was hoping—(*breaks off, glances towards the letters*).

SARA: You had a right to tell me all this sooner, (*rallying him*) I'd have it broadcast up the road that you'd be out. There'd be plenty of early birds around.

MR. BASSETT: All but the right one. (*with the disillusionment of twenty-five. At this moment MRS. STIMS comes through the archway: she is a small, fair, washed-out woman of forty: shabbily dressed, very tidy, wears glasses: she has come up the stairs from the garden flat*).

MRS. STIMS: Is that what you're employed for, Sara, talking to people in the hall? (*she appears to be inwardly fuming*).

MR. BASSETT: I beg your pardon, that's a question for Mrs. Taylor.

MRS. STIMS: I beg your pardon, mind your business.

SARA: There's the kettle—her tea. (*she disappears*).

MRS. STIMS: I suppose there are no letters for me—yes, two: she couldn't be bothered bringing them down—no—she's too busy. Oh, she has far too much to do.

MR. BASSETT: Is that part of her job—to bring down your letters?

MRS. STIMS: She's awkward and rough, a bossy young woman . . . she ought to be sent away from here.

MR. BASSETT: That's an idea . . . (*turns and goes slowly up the stairs, whistling. MRS. STIMS stands at the hall table: she has opened her letters and glanced over them—now she looks about*).

MRS. STIMS: Yes—empty as soon as I appear—nobody wants me. (*SARA reappears carrying a tray from the back room into MRS. TAYLOR. Seeing her MRS. STIMS turns her back, and pretends to be engrossed in her letters. When SARA disappears she looks round again, then pushes up her glasses and presses her fingers to her tired eyes*).

SARA: (*coming into the hall*). I was hoping there'd be good word for you.

MRS. STIMS: Thank you for bringing it down to me . . .

SARA: I might have indeed . . . I might easily have . . . Is it good news for you, Mrs. Stims?

MRS. STIMS: That's my private affair, my correspondence . . .

SARA: But you were telling me all . . . you . . .

MRS. STIMS: I'll tell you more when I see fit . . . A girl gone quite beyond her station . . . (*silence. MRS. STIMS goes, SARA looks after her for a moment, then takes the mop, about to work again. A knock. She hops to the door with eagerness; waits for a moment, glowing; another knock; SARA opens the door. The postman*

is seen: he is medium size, and at first glance seems nondescript, but when he speaks we are aware of a quiet forcefulness altogether out of the ordinary).

SARA: Oh, Bill the post—and you coming in. (*with a laugh which is almost a guffaw; her attitude towards him is one of amusement, unconsciously adopted, perhaps, to hide a glowing excitement in his presence*).

BILL: Shut the door for a minute . . . (*Sara laughs again, shuts the door and turns to him*).

SARA: And what is it now?

BILL: (*very serious*) I've a letter here for Mrs. Kirwan. Would there be a Mrs. Kirwan in this house?

SARA: There is not.

BILL: No, I thought not.

SARA: Would it be for Mr. Bassett?

BILL: Kirwan . . Kirwan . . number 19 . . that's your number.

SARA: Well then it must be for Mrs. Stims . . .

BILL: Sara, don't be talking nonsense . . .

SARA: (*a little wildly*) Well, Mr. Bassett is above and Mrs. Stims is down below and Mrs. Taylor on this floor, and that's all the Christian people in this house.

BILL: Besides yourself.

SARA: Do I live here Bill the post—

BILL: Don't you come here daily working?

SARA: Sara Meade—if you could make a Mrs. Kirwan out of that . .

BILL: It might be made . . . It might very well be (*an instant's silence; they look at one another*). Will I leave it here on the table till someone will claim it.

SARA: And I'll mark it 'not known' and throw it into the pillar beyond.

BILL: What matter but there's something worth reading in that letter.

SARA: How could you know?

BILL: I have knowledge.

SARA: (*a little nervous*). Why couldn't you drop it in the box and save me the time and all this trouble?

BILL: Sure I wouldn't see you then, and how could I face the live-long day if I didn't see you in the morning?

SARA: Phew-ew! A postman too—one of the Government—an oldish man.

BILL: You're no chicken yourself, you must be thirty.

SARA: I was thirty-one last week.

BILL: Sara! Don't say it! You'd want to look round.

SARA: I spent my whole time looking round and wasn't able to find a fellow to suit me.

BILL: Ah-h. . . the pity of it. . . We're all the same and the world full of men and women. It is like the sorting out of letters. I was in that department once, you know.

SARA: I'm sure you were.

BILL: Why are you sure? What do you infer by that?

SARA: Nothing at all,—only to say what's expected.

BILL: A foolish habit. (*Severely: then, gently*)—I am watching you a long time now, you might have noticed.

SARA: (*with a guffaw*) A knock at the door every morning, and for no reason.

BILL: What will we do about this letter?

SARA: Unless you'd alter the name you have on it.

BILL: Now I can see you understand me.

SARA: Bill, you're a knotty question.

BILL: A good sensible girl with a happy heart, a good steady worker; the sort of girl to make a man happy.

SARA: Won't the people be waiting for their letters?

BILL: I am on the return journey.

SARA: Oh, you would.

BILL: You'd be my choice—if I'd be yours.

SARA: I would?

BILL: You would. You are the girl of my desire. My world lies at your two feet.

SARA: No! don't! (*steps back as though struck. Then, nervously*). Would love be born from hearing that?

BILL: I couldn't venture any opinion. (*with his amazing restraint*).

SARA: I wouldn't like that it would happen; (*low, fumbling*) to be caught up with this loving business; I'd be afraid; it might give you a fearful time.

BILL: Will you read this letter! (*passionate*).

SARA: Bill Kirwan, why did you put your own name on it. (*they are crying to one another now*).

BILL: It will be yours.

SARA: I'm leaving here—(*wildly, turning from him*).

BILL: When did you make this decision?

SARA: Only this minute. I'll give Mrs. Taylor my month's notice—

BILL: She'll regret it.

SARA: So will I . . . 'Sensible, happy'—what you call me. It would surprise you how happy you'd be washing and cleaning and shining the brasses, and watching one day follow another . . . But all the people in this house . . . they're someway suffering, and by love. . . There's nothing left in Mrs. Stims who's down below, only vinegar, that's all . . . because of some one she was fond of . . . 'Twould terrify you. I think I'm better not to have it.

BILL: Sensible, happy, comfortable coward!

SARA: Well maybe I am. I'd be afraid of my life now so I would.

BILL: We'll tear this up (*the letter*).

SARA: Don't tear it yet . . . I'd like to see.

BILL: You won't see till you're ready to call yourself Mrs. Kirwan.

SARA: Yes,—but I'm ready. I am ready all the time—if you and I came to an agreement. I only ask that you won't go waking love in me . . .

BILL: I won't marry without love at all. There's girls without end that I could have—hundreds of them.

SARA: (*groaning*) I am losing all my comfort . . . Oh, Mrs. Taylor (*with relief seeing Mrs. Taylor come out of her room. Mrs.*

TAYLOR, now very much younger in appearance, is dressed in outdoor things and carries a shopping basket).

MRS. TAYLOR: What's it now? (*gaily*) Have you told Bill he brought me the best of news?

SARA: No, I didn't. (*dully*) I forgot to tell him.

MRS. TAYLOR: (*to Bill*) Twenty years have fallen off me. My boy's coming home this evening. You brought the letter.

BILL: I'm very glad.

MRS. TAYLOR: I'm going now for the fatted calf. (*opens the hall door—*) Oh, what a lovely morning . . . (*turning to SARA*) There's nothing like a summer morning.

SARA: (*in hard tones*) Mr. Bassett couldn't bear sometimes that the sun would be shining.

MRS. TAYLOR: Bunkum and rubbish! He's very young. (*turns to BILL*) I suppose you called to ask Sara a question . . .

BILL: That might be. (*MRS. TAYLOR goes, leaving the door open: the tree-lined road in view is flooded with sun*).

SARA: I'd have laughed before when she said that,—but now I couldn't laugh at all . . . Isn't that a bad sign for me?

BILL: I'll tear this up—(*the letter*) you couldn't read it.

SARA: But . . . (*with sudden resolve she springs at him*) Give it to me . . . (*seizes the letter*).

BILL: Did I give it? or did you take it?

(*SARA, arms crossed on breast, the letter clasped tightly in one hand, stands facing him*).

SARA: I took it Bill. I'll keep it now. Don't tell it to me—what you said.

BILL: I said you were a mine of wisdom—.

SARA: Get along—(*a happy laugh*).

BILL: I said I didn't know you yet.

SARA: And you don't either. (*slightly troubled*).

BILL: But that I knew you're the mine I could dig in forever.

SARA: That was queer.

BILL: I said you had nature,—kindness and depth in your easy ways,—and you were happy.

SARA: If you shut the door, Bill, we could have a kiss.

BILL: But then you'd be destroyed entirely, since I'm not going to marry you.

SARA: (*after an instant*) For a minute that went stabbing through me . . . I knew this is the way I'd be, if love got born.

BILL: Got born, — you fool! (*roughly catching her wrist, and drawing down her arm—uncrossing the arms*) You have loved me for a long time past. I have seen it often in your eyes.

SARA: I think you're right. I didn't know. Now I'll keep a hold on it always. (*with great gentleness*).

BILL: I'll leave you now because I'm late—and I won't ask you to marry me — until to-morrow. You were too slow in the beginning — I'll come back to-morrow morning . . . (*she smiles at him with the same gentleness; he turns and goes*).

SARA: Don't shut the door . . . (*but he has drawn it out; she sits down on the hall chair, her arms crossed again as though hugging a treasure to herself, the envelope held tightly in her hand . . .*

MR. BASSETT comes quickly downstairs, hurrying out to his day's work; at the door he stands for a moment, looks back at SARA).

MR. BASSETT: All the same Sara, wasn't she heartless . . .

SARA: What matter . . . what matter (*quietly*) . . . you have something. (*He looks at her, puzzled, then, giving it up, hurries out*). Curtain.

THE KING OF SPAIN'S DAUGHTER was first produced on April 29, 1935, in the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, with the following cast:

PETER KINSELLA JOHN STEPHENSON
 JIM HARRIS CYRIL CUSACK
 MRS. MARKS ANN CLEARY
 ANNIE KINSELLA RIA MOONEY
 RODDY MANN J. WINTER

The play was produced by Fred Johnson

The King of Spain's Daughter

SCENE—An open space on a grassy road. At each side road-barriers with notices "No Traffic" and "Road Closed." At the back an old dilapidated wall; a small door in the centre of the wall stands open and fields can be seen beyond. County Council workers have been employed here. Two coats, a thermos flask, an old sack and a man's hat and stick have been left on a pile of stones near one of the barriers. PETER KINSELLA, a heavily built man of fifty, comes through the doorway. He carries a pick-axe; his overalls and boots are covered with a fine dust. He stands in the centre, looks away to the left, shading his eyes,—then to the right. JIM HARRIS comes on, whistling. He is twenty-four, wears a cap and dusty overalls. He leaves his spade against the wall, goes to the barrier at the right side, leans on it, looking away to the right.

JIM: Great work at the weddin' below. Miss What's-her-name getting married. The women were gathered at the wharf an hour and a half before time for send-off. (*Laughs. PETER nods without interest.*) Right well it looked from above, with the white launch, an' the flags flyin' an' the sun on the water. Brave and gay at the start however 'twill go. (*Takes his thermos flask.*) Come on, man. With the noise of the sirens I didn't hear the whistle, an' I kept workin' five minutes too long. Wasn't that a terrible thing to have happen to me?

PETER: She's late with my dinner.

JIM: (*dismayed*) What! didn't she come here at all?

PETER: She did not. Late—the second time in the week.

JIM: 'Tis on account of that weddin'. She'll be up now. They don't feel time or weather when they're waitin' for a bride.

PETER: I'll make her feel something . . . her father without his dinner.

JIM: (*looking to the right*). Is it at the wharf she is? or the far side of the river watchin' the start?

PETER: Do I, or anyone, ever know where Annie'd be? Only sisters you have but they'd give you more thought than that daughter of mine. Oh, she'll be sorry yet.

JIM: It is because of the day; the women can think of nothin' else; they're all the same. Molly and Dot were up at the dawn—would it be a fine day! You'd think they were guests invited. They know her by eye-sight so they'll go stand in the crowd and see how she'll look.

PETER: If I knew where to get Annie.

JIM: Annie'll be here now. They're scattering away off the wharf—though I can't pick her out.

PETER: And how would you? More than likely she's off with Roddy Mann. Philanderin' with the like of him—that's all she's fit for—or with any boy she can lay hold of.

JIM: If she goes on a bit aself 'tis because she must; she's made that way, she can't help it.

PETER: I'll make her help it! You're in no great hurry to have her.

JIM: (*flings round on him*). You know that I am!

PETER: Why don't you marry her so? and stop her goin' on? You're in no hurry.

JIM: I want that, and you know it. How can I force the girl?

PETER: Ay, how indeed? (*Laughs contemptuously*). Aw, you're very young. (*Goes to the door, stands there looking out across the fields. JIM sits down on the stones and begins his dinner. MRS. MARKS, a big woman of fifty-five or so, wearing a shawl and with a basket on her arm, comes to the barrier at the right. She pushes the barrier a little aside and comes on.*)

MRS. MARKS: Can I pass this way? 'Twould be a short cut.

JIM: Are you a motor car, ma'am? (*Looks her up and down*). You are not—'tis two legs are under you. You can, and welcome.

MRS. MARKS: I thought you had sense in your head, Jim Harris. (*Puts down her basket, resting it against a large stone*). There's a terrible weight in that basket, there is.

JIM: That was a great send-off they gave the bridal pair.

MRS. MARKS: It was so. I wasn't on the wharf on account of my bad knee, but I seen from above, an' I met some of them now. I'm glad she had it fine, the poor young thing.

JIM: What "poor" is on her? Isn't it the day of her life?

MRS. MARKS: You could never tell that. It might. They say he wanted the money. They say it was signed and settled before ever he seen her. Well, she'll have her red carpet and all her fine show for her poor heart to feed on. That's the way.

PETER: (*coming from the door*). Fine day, ma'am.

MRS. MARKS: It is indeed, thanks be to God. 'Tis a day of the earth and the sky.

JIM: With the whole month of April floatin' around.

MRS. MARKS: Annie was tellin' me the bride looked like a queen.

PETER: Did you see Annie? She didn't bring me my dinner.

MRS. MARKS: Oh, look at that now! a shame and a sin! She's off across the field with that Roddy Mann.

JIM: (*jumps up*) I'll go call her.

PETER: *Stop where you are!* (*He strides off*).

JIM: (*to MRS. MARKS*) You had a right to keep that to yourself.

MRS. MARKS: To leave her father without his bit! an' she romancin' around!

JIM: He'll have her life.

MRS. MARKS: She earns what she gets. Why don't she settle down? She's a bold wild thing.

JIM: He treats her cruel; it don't do her any good.

MRS. MARKS: And what would do her good? That Annie Kinsella will be romancin' all her life with whoever she can.

JIM: The way he treats her — it only drives her on worse.

MRS. MARKS: You're too soft-hearted, Jimmy Harris. But I have a great wish for you, for the sake of your mother, God rest her soul. You'd be better to give Annie up.

JIM: Give up my life, is it?

MRS. MARKS: You have two good sisters, can't you settle with them, or get a sensible girl. I'm telling you now—that one—her head is full of folly and her heart is full of wile. She'd do you no good.

JIM: You have a lot of old talk. (*Silence. Then distant cheering*). They're not done with it yet.

MRS. MARKS: I was thinking of my marriage day when I was looking at them two. It is a thought would sadden anyone.

JIM: How is that, Mrs. Marks?

MRS. MARKS: That's how it is; the truth is the best to be told in the end.

JIM: Haven't you Bill and Mary, and the little place. You didn't fare bad.

MRS. MARKS: Bad. What have bad or good to do with it? That is outside the question. For twenty years you're thinking of that day, an' for thirty years you're lookin' back at it. After that you don't mind — you haven't the feelin' — exceptin' maybe an odd day, like to-day. (*She takes her basket. They hear someone coming. MRS. MARKS puts down her basket again, and waits, expectant*). Annie . . . and you may be sure she's not alone.

(ANNIE KINSELLA is seen in the doorway. She is about twenty. She wears a dark shawl, a red dress, black shoes and stockings — all very neat. Her hair is bright gold. With her is RODDY MANN, a big lounging figure, cap pulled low over his eyes).

ANNIE: Now, Roddy, don't come any further. (*Low tone. MRS. MARKS listens, JIM moves a little farther from the doorway. Give me the tin. (RODDY hands a tin to her).*)

RODDY: What did you promise?

ANNIE: Wait first till I tell you how she looked (*low, eager*).

RODDY: You have told me already; you have talked of nothin' else.

ANNIE: She was like what you'd dream. I think I never seen anything so grand. She was like a livin' flame passin' down by us. She was dressed in flamin' red from top to toe, and — (puts her hand to her breast) — here she had a diamond clasp.

RODDY: And there you have your heart. Now give us a kiss. What did you promise? Leave down the tin.

(ANNIE puts the tin on the ground, slips her hands up about his neck and gives him a long kiss).

ANNIE: That will do now.

RODDY: You have my heart scalded. (He moves off. Annie takes up the tin, wipes her mouth on her sleeve, very thoroughly, turns to wave to Roddy. Comes in).

ANNIE: Jimmy, it was like heaven. She looked that lovely. The launch was all white, and the deck covered with flowers. They had a red carpet —

JIM: You're late with his dinner.

ANNIE: Late! (Alarmed). The whistle didn't go!

JIM: Ten minutes apast one.

ANNIE: He'll have my life!

MRS. MARKS: An' small blame to him so! Without a bit or a sup! A man want his dinner. He's gone down to find you.

JIM: Why couldn't you come?

ANNIE: What misfortune came over me? I am at a loss for a word. What will I do now?

MRS. MARKS: Take it down to him, — run.

ANNIE: He'd kill me, he'd kill me dead. I think I'll stop here till he'll come.

JIM: Here he is now. (All look towards the doorway).

MRS. MARKS (turns to JIM): Don't be drawn into it, you. 'Twould be a mistake. Keep your eyes on the ground; 'tis the safest place. You won't see what's happening, and you won't lose your head.

PETER: (coming in). Is she there? (Sees Annie). Ah-h!

ANNIE: (nervous, almost perky). I'm a bit late with the dinner; 'tis because of the weddin' I didn't hear the whistle: I didn't know it had gone one.

(Leaves his dinner-tin on the ground, not too near him, and moves away).

PETER: Hand me that tin.

(ANNIE hands it, keeping as far as possible from him. PETER, hits out at her, ANNIE dodges and escapes, but cries out; JIM springs forward; MRS. MARKS catches JIM by the arm).

MRS. MARKS: 'Tis a terrible misfortune for any man to take the least iota interest in a girl like that. (This flow stops them all).

JIM: (after a silence). What do you want here, Mrs. Marks?

MRS. MARKS: I wouldn't be in it at all but for the sake of your mother, — 'tis well she's in the grave.

PETER: (to ANNIE) Go down there, you—(gestures towards the barrier at the left) — and rake up the few stones I have agen the wall.

(ANNIE hesitates, looks at her father, at JIM, at MRS. MARKS).

PETER: Do you hear what I'm saying?

ANNIE: I don't mind what'll happen I can take care of myself.

(Goes off, L., with a backward look at JIM. JIM would follow but for PETER's forbidding look. PETER goes over to where the coats have been left on the stones. Takes his stick from under the coats).

JIM: This is the best sheltered place for takin' your dinner. You can have the sack on top of them stones.

PETER: Mind yer business.

MRS. MARKS: Steady now, keep steady. Don't let us have anything happen!

JIM: (to PETER). You have your dinner now, can't you leave her alone.

PETER: Does she belong to you? (Pause). Do she? When she do you can talk. (Goes).

MRS. MARKS: Supposin' you were to get a blow instead of herself— what good would that be? It might do you a grievous harm! Great cheer to see her standin' upright if yourself was lyin' low! I wouldn't stir up the embers in a man like that. (JIM walks away from her). Now I'll tell you this — though I know you won't listen — if you were a man at all you'd make her marry you.

JIM: An' how I do that?

MRS. MARKS: Ah, you're too soft-hearted for any woman. 'Tis the hard man wins, and right he should. (Confidential now). Annie Kinsella — when I met her down there — was tellin' me how grand the bride looked. "She was dressed," said she, "in shimmerin' green from head to foot."

JIM: What's wrong with that?

MRS. MARKS: Didn't you hear her now to Roddy Mann, "she was dressed in flamin' red from top to toe."

JIM: So she did.

MRS. MARKS: That's the count she puts on the truth! I'm only tellin' you now so's you'll harden your heart! Whatever'll come easy is what she'll say. Now — for the sake of your mother — if you marry that girl, don't believe one word she'll tell you. That's the only way you'll have peace of mind! (A cry. JIM starts forward: MRS. MARKS catches his arm). Be a man now! Be a man, and don't get yourself hurt!

JIM: Keep out of my way!

(Tries to push her aside. ANNIE, a little dishevelled, frightened, and with her shawl trailing, runs on. She runs to the barrier at the right side, leans against it, and moans, nursing her shoulder.)

MRS. MARKS (to JIM): Now strengthen your heart: quiet your mind. Don't do yourself harm on anyone's account. We get what we merit, and God is good. (Pause). I'll leave ye now. (Takes her basket, does not notice that she has left a small parcel on the stone: moves off. Near the barrier she stops again, looks back at JIM.) Don't be moved to any foolish compassion. The hard man wins.

(Goes. JIM comes a little forward: sits down on an old plank, his back to ANNIE: takes a small notebook from his pocket, turns the pages: glances over his shoulder in ANNIE'S direction, slips the notebook into his pocket again: waits for ANNIE to come to him. After a moment she brushes aside her tears, comes over and sits down close beside him.)

ANNIE: It was a grand sight, Jim, it was like heaven.

JIM (catches her wrist): He hurt you then,—did he do you any harm?

ANNIE: Ah, leave that now! Let us leave that behind us. . . . The band was playing, and the flags were grand—

JIM: 'Tis a shame you'd madden him. He'll harm you some day, and all your own fault. You won't have any life left. An' what can I do?

ANNIE: Didn't you see the launch at all?

JIM: I saw well from above.

ANNIE: You should have been on the wharf. The cheering an' the music, an' all the sun on the river, an' everyone happy—

JIM: We'd be all happy if you'd have sense.

ANNIE: She looked lovely passin' along, her hand restin' in his, and her body swayin' beside him down the path. The arms of the two families were painted on the launch: the sun was shinin' on it: everything was white or burnin' red, but she was dressed in pale, pale gold and—(hands to breast)—two red flowers were crushed agen her here.

JIM (springs up): What lies are you tellin'? I saw her myself: she was dressed in grey: she had no flowers.

ANNIE (gentle, bewildered): Jimmy, what's wrong with you?

JIM: She was dressed in grey. Tell the truth!

ANNIE: It was in pale gold I saw her.

JIM (furious): And in shimmerin' green, an' in flamin' red, an' in milk-white when it will suit you!

(Silence)

ANNIE (gets up slowly): You are a pack of blind owls — all the lot of you! I saw what I saw!

(Turns from him.)

JIM: But why won't you tell the truth,—an' it just as easy?

ANNIE: Stop your fool talk! The truth! Burstin' in where you don't know. Oh, if I could have love!

JIM: Will you leave talkin' of love when I'm tired of askin' you'd come to the priest with me! Are we to be married ever? Are we?

ANNIE (quietly): Whisht, Jimmy, whisht.

(Looks off away to the right in the direction of the river.)

JIM: Are we? I must know.

ANNIE (to herself):

"Then the wet windin' roads,
Brown bogs and black water,
And my thoughts on white ships
And the King of Spain's daughter."

JIM: I'm sick of that thing! Who's the King of Spain's daughter?

ANNIE: Myself.

JIM: Yourself. . . . (A laugh.) And the bride beyond!

ANNIE: It is myself I seen in her — sailin' out into the sun, and to adventure.

JIM: Are you going to marry me? Make up your mind.

(They hear a sound as of someone coming.)

ANNIE: What's that? (Frightened.) Is he coming? Jim, he says he'll make me sign on for the factory.

JIM: The factory? in the town beyond? (She nods.) That you couldn't stand before?

ANNIE: I was there six months: it would be five years this time.

JIM: Five years! you couldn't do that!

ANNIE: They're only takin' them will be bound for five years. I couldn't face it. (Falters.) Every mornin' walkin' the road, every evenin' draggin' back so tired. He has the card: he's coming to make me sign it now.

JIM: It was a pity you didn't bring his dinner in time!

ANNIE: It was a great misfortune for me. I am at a loss to explain it.

JIM: And I think he knew that Roddy was with you.

ANNIE: It is that decided him.

JIM: Why do you go with Roddy, and Jack?

ANNIE: It is very unfortunate that I do! . . . I would face any life — no matter what — before I'd go back to that place.

JIM: Did you kiss Roddy Mann out there just now?

ANNIE (injured): And who else was there for me to kiss?

JIM: When I left you last night, did you go back to Jack Bolger?

ANNIE: Last night . . . no, I don't think I did, last night.

JIM (furious): We're all the wan! You have no heart.

ANNIE: So must I go to the factory? Won't you marry me now?

JIM: Annie! — won't I. You know well — (Overjoyed, but checks himself.) Will you come with me to-night and we'll tell the priest?

ANNIE: Is it stand beside you an' you sayin' that? (Insulted.) The ground would open under me! Go tell him yourself, let you.

JIM: Would you go back on me then?

ANNIE: I would not.

JIM: You would not? You've changed your mind often.

ANNIE: I'll be in the chapel the day he'll name.

JIM: You will? and come with me then?

ANNIE: What else is there for me?

JIM: Annie! — (*checks himself*) — I'll tell them look out for a place so: they can get a room in the town.

ANNIE: Tell who?

JIM: Molly and Dot. 'Tis I have the house: they knew they'd have to go.

ANNIE: Well, then, they needn't. Let them stop where they are. What would I do without a woman to talk to?

JIM: I want you to myself.

ANNIE: I never heard the like! A good "man" he'd make to begin by turnin' his two sisters on the road! And they after mindin' the place since his mother died.

JIM: Will you go back on me so?

ANNIE: Leave Molly and Dot stay where they are.

JIM: I will not.

ANNIE: What great harm would they do?

JIM: They'd be in it — spoilin' the world.

ANNIE: Spoilin' the world! I think you're crazy.

JIM: When we shut the house door I'll have no one in it but you and me.

ANNIE (*after a moment*): I think I'll stop with my father.

JIM: And go to the factory?

ANNIE: Maybe I wouldn't do either,— but run away.

JIM: He'd go after you: he'd have you crippled.

ANNIE: I haven't signed yet. I might get on the soft side of him yet if I'd promise—

JIM: What promise would you keep? (*Silence.*) I have twenty pounds saved.

ANNIE: Where did you get that?

(*Not greatly interested. JIM takes out his notebook, opens it.*)

JIM: Four years ago you said I had no money. I have the house now, and besides what I earn I put by two shillin's every week.

ANNIE: Two shillin's . . . you did! every week . . . since that time long ago?

JIM (*turning the pages of his notebook*): A hundred shillings . . . that was five pounds the first year . . . and another five then . . . and another . . . and this is the fourth. . .

ANNIE (*awed*): You kept it up all that time?

JIM: Did you think I'd fall tired?

ANNIE: Let me see I didn't know you were doin' that. (*Takes the notebook, turns the pages. Silence — then*) Oh, 'tis smudged and dirty. Why couldn't you keep it clean?

(*Angered: throws the book from her. Silence.*)

JIM: Two hundred weeks, and that's all you'd care.

(*Walks away.*)

ANNIE: What would you do with it?

JIM (*coming a little way back to her*). It would set us up. . . . To buy a few things. I'd have to give the priest some. Then whatever you'd like for the house, and yourself, so's we could settle down right.

ANNIE: Settle down. (*A knell to her.*) I dunno could I ever get into service in a place in London?

JIM (*in fury*): If your father heard you were at the crossroad last night — or if the priest heard tell of it — dancin' on the board, an' restin' in the ditch with your cheek agen mine and your body pressed to me.

ANNIE: It is only in the dark I could do it — for when I'd see the kind you are—

JIM (*catches her*): What's wrong with me now?

ANNIE (*holding back*): Is it *me* to go near you — me?

JIM (*crushing her to him*): What's wrong with me?

ANNIE: Jimmy! he's coming! Let go, let me go!

PETER (*coming on*): So that's what you're at! (*ANNIE tries to escape. JIM holds her.*) Stop there, stop there the two of you! You can let her go now. (*To JIM. JIM releases ANNIE. She stands motionless.*) Was she teasin' you?

JIM: She was.

PETER: Tauntin' you like?

JIM: She was.

PETER: I know . . . leadin' you on?

JIM: That's it.

PETER: Well, me fine lady, we'll put a stop to your fun. You can do some work now. Stay where you are! Stay there the two of you. (*Goes to where the coats have been left, takes a card and a pencil from his coat pocket. Comes over to ANNIE.*) Write your name there. (*ANNIE looks at JIM: he avoids her look.*) Do you hear what I say? Write your name. We'll have no more cajolin'.

(*ANNIE writes her name on the card. PETER, taking back the card, hits at her. JIM knocks aside PETER's blow: they face each other angrily.*)

JIM: Can't you leave her alone!

PETER: Standin' up for her now, but you have no right! no more than to be kissin' her like you were. She don't want you. You can go your road. (*Wheels round on ANNIE.*) Will you marry him now, or go to the factory? Five years there or your life with him?

JIM: I'm not askin' you, Annie, I wouldn't,— that way.

PETER: He's backin' out now.

ANNIE (*to JIM*): I might as well have you. (*Low*) Who would I ever meet would be fit for me? Where would I ever find a way out of here?

PETER: Have ye settled it so?

JIM: We have.

PETER: You'll take her like that?

JIM: I will.

PETER: Well, I'll keep the card, fearin' she'd change. (*Puts the card in his pocket. Goes off.*)

ANNIE (*softly*): You have me ruined. It is all over now. You can go settle with the priest.

JIM: You won't ever regret it. You won't (*But she turns away.*)

ANNIE: Go on after him now.

(JIM *hesitates*: goes, ANNIE *moves over to the barrier, looks off away to the right.* MRS. MARKS *comes to the barrier at the left side, shades her eyes, looking on the ground for her parcel.*)

MRS. MARKS: Well,—look where I left it. (*Comes on, takes the parcel she had forgotten.*) Well and indeed! my head will never spare my heels! searchin' high and low. (*Sees JIM's notebook on the ground.*) What is that there?

ANNIE: That belongs to Jim Harris. (*Takes the book.*) Jim Harris and myself are getting married very soon.

MRS. MARKS: What! Is he going to marry you in face of all! Well, well, you might talk your head off, or you might spare your breath — it don't make any difference!

ANNIE: Maybe I won't mind it as much as I think.

MRS. MARKS: Be a good wife to him now. Don't give him the bad time you gave your poor father. Often I felt for that poor man when he wouldn't know where you'd be. (*More kindly*) You have no wish for it? (*ANNIE shakes her head.*) And there's many a girl would be boundin' with joy. Is there any other you'd liefer have? (*ANNIE shakes her head.*) Well now, well, you'll be all right. A good sensible boy. And you'll have a nice little place. Mind you keep it well,— that'll give you somethin' to do. You won't feel the days slippin'. (*ANNIE moves restlessly away from her.*) Well, well, if you could get to care for him that would be a blessin' from God. It might come to you later. Sometimes it do, and more times it don't. It might come with the child.

ANNIE: I dread that.

MRS. MARKS: What's that you said? . . . Fie on you, then! Did you think you needn't suffer like the rest of the world? Did you think you were put here to walk plain and easy through the gate of heaven?

ANNIE: I dread it . . . dread it.

MRS. MARKS: Would you ask to get in on what others would suffer?

ANNIE (*to herself*): I couldn't bear I'd be no more than any other wife. (*Distant cheering is heard: ANNIE listens, looking away towards the river,—she flashes.*) It wont be all they'll say of me: "She married Jimmy Harris."

MRS. MARKS: And what better could they say. You have a right to be grateful. Oh, you're a wild creature.

(*But ANNIE is not listening: she has opened JIM's notebook and is studying it.*)

ANNIE (*turning the pages*): June . . . July . . . October . . . November . . . December . . .

MRS. MARKS: Poor Jimmy Harris . . . I hope he's doin' a wise thing.

ANNIE: February . . . March . . . April . . . June, July . . . August . . . October—and I was black out with him then—November, December, April, June . . . August—

MRS. MARKS: A good, sensible boy.

ANNIE: Boy! (*she laughs exultantly*) I think he is a man might cut your throat!

MRS. MARKS: God save us all!

ANNIE: He put by two shillin's every week for two hundred weeks. I think he is a man that—supposin' he was jealous—might cut your throat. (*Quiet, — exultant: she goes.*)

MRS. MARKS: The Lord preserve us! that she'd find joy in such a thought!

CURTAIN

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