

PASSION SUNDAY

written by

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INT. BACHELOR HOUSE, BEDROOM - MORNING

Chaotic bedroom in a rented, Dublin house. Poor quality furniture dominates the small room and books occupy every available space.

The room is in semi-darkness and the sound of a church bell can be heard in the distance.

A dishevelled quilt covers the occupant of the single bed and on it lies an open book.

Without a knock, the door opens and LARRY enters. He is a thirty year old, rugby built, opportunistic salesman, interested in the many assets he is endowed with.

Well dressed and brimming with self confidence, he walks slowly to the window and opens the curtains, flooding the room with sunlight.

The shabby room is further revealed, including two wall posters of Fidel Castro and Tolkein's 'Lord of the Rings'.

He opens the window and looks out in serene expectation of what the new day has to offer, arches his back, stretches his arms and breathes deeply.

LARRY

Ahh, be Jaesus ...it's a grand day
out there, thank God.

The occupant of the bed slowly removes the covers, tossing the open book to the floor.

PETE is a student in his late twenties, theatrically dramatic, quick witted, fiery and frustrated with the world he finds himself in. Content with problems, he ignores solutions as this would leave him vulnerable to action, failure and criticism.

Wiping his eyes, he looks hopelessly at Larry. He is never sure whether Larry parodies himself or is actually serious and Larry delightfully encourages his confusion.

Clearly, the only area of similarity between the two men is that they share the same house.

PETE
(sarcastically) Thank God.

LARRY
What's wrong with ya now, ya heathen.

PETE
What's wrong with me? Did you hear what you just said?

LARRY
(fake despair) No. Not that again.

Pete finds it difficult to speak without dramatic animation.

Energised with the opportunity of attack, he jumps out of bed clad only in underpants, goes to the window and closes the curtains.

PETE
My dear, deluded Lawrence. The vast majority of this world experiences 'grand days' like this all the time.

Even tribal people ... in jungles ... or grasslands ... naked as the day they were born ... running around after antelopes or women ... and every day is as grand as the day before.

And they never even heard of God, never mind thanking him for the lovely day they are having.

LARRY

Jaesus, Pete. Ya poor dogmatic man.
It's only a ... a ...

PETE

Yes?

LARRY

A figure of speech. It means
nothin'.

Disappointed at Larry's quick capitulation, Pete seems
overcome with fatigue and climbs back into bed.

PETE

It means you're daft.

LARRY

No. Not me daft again. Please.

PETE

Well, let's look at the evidence.
Your God pisses rain on you all the
time. Day after miserable day ...
rain ... rain ... rain.

He stretches his arms heavenward, his face transformed in
divine revelation.

PETE

Then one day ... it ... is ...
not ... raining.

Because of His great kindness, He
bestows ... no rain. For one day.

Oh, the joy. Such kindness given to
such lowly, undeserving creatures
as we.

Pete contemptuously returns from his reverie.

PETE

No jury in any other land would uphold your claim that you are not daft.

Now, leave me alone.

An uneasy silence. Larry is reluctant to leave. Pete recognises this and is easily seduced into conversation.

PETE

So, where were you last night?

LARRY

Why? Did ya miss me?

PETE

Yeah, damn it. By about three inches. (*simulates shooting a gun*) But my aim's improving every day.

Were you in Kennedy's?

LARRY

Kennedy's me arse. What kinda fella diya think I am? Hah? That place has no class ... fulla yahoos.

PETE

You were practically living there a few weeks ago.

LARRY

Ah, but that was before I met me darlin' Orla. She's a classy babe, that one.

We went to Horgan's an' then to that new place, what do they call it ... ammm ... yeah, Desirees. That's right.

Did ya go out yourself?

PETE

No.

LARRY

It's time you got a job ... got
money ... got a woman.

PETE

Did you enjoy it, anyway?

LARRY

It was all right, I suppose.

Suddenly, Larry becomes invigorated as he recalls the night's highlights with gleeful smiles, winks and knowledgeable nods of his head.

LARRY

Jaesus, ya shoulda seen me. I was
well pissed all right but I was
doin' great.

Loadsa dirty dancin' with Orla.

I was gettin' her all horny and
damp ... ya know what I mean. An'
she was gettin' all jealous about
the other girls dancin' around me.

I was bumpin' against them an'
everythin'. It was great. Orla
wanted to sit down 'cause she knew
the attention I was gettin'.

Well, a man's gotta do the right
thing, so I sat down an' had
another pint.

PETE

I just hope Orla appreciated the
brave sacrifice you made for her.

LARRY

Ah ...she did. God love her.

Silence. Larry picks up one of Pete's books, opens it and pretends to be interested.

He knows how to draw Pete who is naturally gregarious and curious and is reclusive because of financial constraints.

PETE

Tell us more about Orla getting all damp and horny. Did you make any progress on that front?

Relieved that he is given the opportunity to delve into his favourite conversation item, Larry throws the book on the floor and continues as before.

LARRY

Progress? Are ya jokin'? Of course I did Peter, my poor Philistine friend.

While you were playin' with yourself under those sheets, I was charmin' the knickers off that firm breasted woman of mine.

PETE

So, you did get her back to the sack last night.

Pete is temporarily impressed and indicates in the general direction of Larry's bedroom.

PETE

Is ... ah ... is she still in there?

LARRY

No.

Pete wastes no time in attacking Larry's misfortune.

PETE

Wait, don't tell me. You mean, when you went to the toilet ... all the other girls, who had hitherto been waiting in the wings and now at fever pitch, suddenly seized the moment.

They threatened Orla and chased her off.

Then they began fighting among themselves to determine who would be the lucky recipient of your spermatozoa that night.

Bedlam quickly ensued.

And, amidst the flying fists and handbags, the bouncers were fortuitously able to shepherd you safely outside to a waiting taxi.

LARRY

No, not exactly ...ya heartless bastard.

There was a bit of a cock-up, all right ... but not the one I was expectin'.

PETE

And what, pray tell, happened, Lawrence.

LARRY

Well, anyway ... there I was
gettin' her all turned on and
everythin'.

And there she was ... you know the
way they lean away ... with their
legs crossed ... puffing hard ...
with a kinda agitated stare on
their face ... pretendin' they
don't care and everythin'?

Larry stops, unsure how to put the rest into words.

Pete is unable to contain his enthusiasm.

PETE

Yes, I do ... and what?

LARRY

Well, I leaned over beside her ear
and started doin' the old sweet
nothings number ... and started
kissin' her neck ... and

Jaesus, I almost had it, when ...

Larry again goes mute and Pete leans forward in
anticipation.

PETE

When what?

LARRY

I ... I hughied.

PETE

What?

LARRY

I ralphed.

PETE

What the Hell are you talking about?

LARRY

(shouts) I chundered. I threw up. I vomited.

Pete is stunned. He leans back against the bed head, his arms fall by his side and his mouth hangs open.

PETE

I don't believe it ... I honestly do not believe it.

LARRY

Look, it can happen to a bishop. OK.

Pete remains motionless as Larry walks in an agitated, circular motion.

LARRY

I knew there was somethin' wrong with that damned pint.

PETE

And, though I shudder to ask ... what happened then?

LARRY

Well, the angle I was leanin' an' the way it came on so quick ... ya know ... I had no chance.

I couldn't do it anywhere safe.

Pete straightens his posture, trying to appreciate the gravity of the situation.

PETE

So ... you vomited on Orla's neck.

LARRY

Jaesus, no. What kinda fella do you
think I am?

Pete has the decency to temporarily reflect on this, but
only negative emotions register on his face.

He shakes his head, in failure.

LARRY

I managed to get me head behind her
neck.

So it all kinda fell down there ...
ya know ... between her and the
seat.

PETE

You know Larry, sometimes you
really do amaze me. I am genuinely
impressed.

LARRY

Aw, Jaesus Pete. Knock it off ...
will ya?

PETE

No. Seriously. I mean, that is
something to tell your
grandchildren.

Larry temporarily reflects on this and appears to view it
in a more benign light.

PETE

And ... ah ... what was Orla's
reaction?

Larry remains deep in thought so Pete helps him along.

PETE

Although I admit I only have a nodding acquaintance with the sensitivities of women and I also know that one should not set oneself up as the custodian of public morality or behaviour ...

but I deeply suspect that she may not have been overly enamoured by your spontaneous offering.

Though, let me hasten to reaffirm ... my inexperience in these matters may be very obvious now.

Pete allows him time to answer but Larry remains subdued.

PETE

But, then again, you did say she was a classy lady, so maybe, like all cultured people when you belch or fart in their company, she just ... ignored it ... and pretended it never happened.

LARRY

Well ... maybe she wasn't that bloody classy, after all.

PETE

How did she take it?

LARRY

I've seen better.

PETE

Was it worse than I think?

Bewildered, Larry looks up to the ceiling and continues slowly as if invoking divine solidarity.

LARRY

You'd think the whole fuckin' world collapsed.

Christ almighty. It's not as if it went down her front or anythin'.

I mean ... only a few people saw it.

And I offered to get her a cloth ... or whatever she wanted.

What more could I do?

Pete prudently refrains from comment and nods his head, in empathy.

LARRY

Well, she ... I could only call it a hiss.

She hissed at me somethin' terrible evil.

I've no idea what it was, but there was no way I was goin' to get her to repeat it.

So, I went to the toilet and when I got back she was still sitting there ... with a face on her that would turn a lesser man to jelly.

I tried to have a normal conversation, you know, general chit-chat. But ... no good.

Pete can only continue to sympathise with his plight.

LARRY

And, when the night was over, she wouldn't leave 'til everyone else was gone.

So there I was ... like an eejit ... tryin' to sympathise, and just gettin' rejected.

But I had me revenge ... aha.

PETE

Ah, good. And what did you do to the ungrateful woman?

LARRY

Well, it's not what I did exactly. But I'll tell ya it was hard not to laugh out loud watchin' her tryin' to separate herself from the seat.

She shoulda wiped it up when it was fresh.

Mortified, she was. Women are so damn sensitive.

PETE

Sensitive. Sensitive.

LARRY

You'd think she was the first woman in history that got stuck to the seat with vomit.

Both savour this wisdom. Larry continues apologetically.

LARRY

I know it was our anniversary and all ...

PETE

Anniversary?

LARRY

Yeah. Three months since we met.

It was a big deal for her. You know
the way they are.

So, she cut her hair and ... bought
a new dress.

All the works, ya know.

Ignoring the gravity of the situation, Pete simulates
copulation.

PETE

Anyway. Did you give her one
afterwards?

LARRY

Peter, I did not. In fairness, she
has tremendous will power. God love
her.

Larry struts to a small mirror hanging on the wall, looks
at his reflection and immediately smiles, assured by what
he sees.

He combs his hair with his fingers and hums "The First Time
Ever I Saw Your Face".

NOEL, another housemate, gently knocks on the door and
enters with an easy walk and shy smile. Also in his late
twenties, he is gay, a fastidious member of the Green Party
and an avid vegetarian.

He is small in stature and has a receding personality, but
can shine given the right circumstances.

PETE

Morning, Noel.

NOEL

Good morning Pete. (*subdued*) Larry.

Larry ignores his entry and continues with his humming and grooming ritual.

He finishes abruptly, turns towards Noel and concludes singing " ...and there's forty shades of green".

Noel's dislike for Larry is obvious and reciprocal. Larry continues with mock reverence.

LARRY

Our intrepid adventurer has returned.

Fearlessly walkin' alone through a city park on a Sunday mornin'. What a man!

Well, did you see anythin' strange?

NOEL

Nothing that would interest you.

LARRY

No mutilated bodies? No lust crazed women? Nothing?

Noel makes no response. Larry turns abruptly to Pete.

LARRY

Well gentlemen, I'm off.

PETE

Where are you going?

LARRY

Where am I goin'? Where am I goin'?

It's Sunday mornin' isn't it?

And not only that. It's Passion Sunday.

I'm goin' to Mass, ya poor frightened man.

PETE

Frightened?

LARRY

Yeah, frightened. Frightened of yer country's religion and customs and frightened of loosin' yer old lefty image.

Jaesus, the whole world's shakin' off socialism ... like ... like a condemned man escapin' from death row ... and you're hangin' on to it for dear life.

Ya can hang onto it all ya want ... but it'll hang you in the end, comrade.

Suddenly, Larry rushes to Noel, grabs the lapels of his jacket and continues with mock ferocity to Pete.

LARRY

Yeah, yer frightened to grasp reality ...

shakes Noel back and forth) Give it a good shake ...

(stares into Noel's eyes) Look it straight in the face ...

(kicks Noel's ass) Kick it's ass ...

He releases Noel from his iron grip, relaxes him and smoothes his crumpled jacket back into shape.

LARRY

And come to terms with it.

PETE

The only thing I'm frightened of is that there's lots more of your kind out there and they tend to bring lots of children like themselves into the world.

And, as soon as Orla drops the togs, no doubt you'll be doing just that.

LARRY

May a big friggin' bolt of lightnin' strike ya down and may ya die roarin' for a priest.

Larry walks towards the door, looking with great indignation at Pete, until he exits.

Noel, who had been stunned by Larry's 'attack' on him, regains his composure, looks at Pete and they both laugh.

The front door slams. Noel goes to the window and looks out. A car engine quickly roars into life.

NOEL

Well, there goes the super salesman ... all revved up and blooded with red meat.

PETE

Noel. I'm going to catch an hour's
creative sleep. See you later.

NOEL

OK.

Pete turns away from him and rests his head on the pillow.

Noel walks to the door and hesitates, obviously desiring
conversation.

NOEL

Pete.

PETE

Yes.

NOEL

How did the interview go ... on
Friday?

PETE

Interview?

NOEL

You told me you were going for an
interview.

PETE

Oh, that's right. I ... I'll tell
you about it another time.

NOEL

OK.

Disguising his hurt, Noel goes to exit.

Pete rises up in the bed and pushes down the covers.

PETE

I'm sorry Noel. It's just that
Larry never fails to upset me ...
and I don't know why.

NOEL

You're not the only one. He ...

PETE

(interrupting) What bugs me is that
maybe he makes sense ... and I'm
too 'bright' to notice.

Is he a moron or has he got it all
figured out?

I mean, maybe I am frightened of
the rat race ... or loosing the rat
race.

Anyway, the interview didn't go
well Noel.

NOEL

Are you sure?

PETE

Well, I'm not sure, really. I mean,
it's hard to know where their heads
are at ... isn't it?

There I was ... spick and span ...
nine o'clock ... brimming with
confidence. They were only twenty
minutes late ... not bad.

There was two of them ... suits and
big false grins. But I knew I could
handle anything they threw at me.

But that's just it. They didn't
throw anything at me ... well, not
about managing a hardware store.

NOEL

What do you mean?

PETE

They might as well have been
interviewing me about the courtship
rituals of the dung beetle.

I mean, I have enough experience.
I've worked in my father's hardware
shop since I was a boy.

All my holidays ... and those two
years I took off.

They weren't interested in the
plans I had for the store either.

Stuff that one would consider
important ... don't you think?

NOEL

So, what were they interested in?

PETE

I kept asking myself that same
question.

I couldn't help noticing smirks on
their faces which they were trying
to hide.

At first, I thought maybe they just
liked me.

They did ask me about the different
degrees I've done ... Politics,
History and Psychology ... which,
although it wasn't easy, I
skilfully integrated into my
suitability for the job.

Don't ask me how. But I did ... ok.

NOEL

(defensively) No. It's ok. I realise you have a certain skill with words.

PETE

Anyway, as the interview wore on, the reason for their smirks finally became obvious.

You see ... on my CV, under Hobbies and Interests, with the usual stamp collecting and swimming and stuff, I had listed ... sex.

They seemed to think it was a joke or that I was some kinda idiot.

NOEL

(stunned) Sex? Are you kidding?

Please tell me you are kidding.

Surprised, Pete shakes his head to indicate the negative.

NOEL

Pete ... how can I say this?

Everyone's interested in sex, but they don't have it tattooed on their foreheads.

You can be interested in shoes but you don't mention it on a CV.

PETE

(confidently) Ah, yes. But not everyone uses sex properly ... to their advantage.

A good salesman will use sex to sell what he's selling ... whereas his shoes will only help him if he's selling shoes.

If you interest a customer in sex you will sell him whatever he wants ... or doesn't want. Really!

Sex is as varied as all the different screws in a hardware shop.

A customer's sexual wants are just as important as the kind of screw he wants.

NOEL

But Pete, it's too personal.

Look. When European explorers first encountered native people all over the world ... they began to slaughter them.

Because they were naked and not embarrassed about it.

Europeans have pornography and peep shows and incest. They feel better doing that secretly than discussing healthy sex openly.

PETE

And to think I was worried they would ask me about my stamp collection.

Pete picks up one postage stamp from a nearby table and smiles at a still stunned Noel.

NOEL

Couldn't you use some of your father's contacts ...

PETE

Ah, yes ... the time honoured tradition of wink and elbow and a word in the right direction.

No. Everything I do will be done by me.

NOEL

Well, it can be handy ...

PETE

Till the country is run by inept daddies boys and daddies girls who surround themselves with similar ass-kissing cretins?

For example, imagine a guy with a good sense of organisation joining CIE.

It's possible but, if his bosses ever found out, he'd be on the next late bus out of town.

NOEL

And nobody complains ...

PETE

Yeah. We get what we deserve.

We expect no standards and ... guess what ... we don't get them.

Suddenly, the top right corner of the Fidel Castro poster above Pete's bed looses its sticky mooring on the wall and folds downward.

Both men witness it but make no comment, as Pete is still in mid flow.

PETE

What about the national flag?

NOEL

The national flag?

PETE

Yeah. What are the colours of our national flag? Does anyone know? ... or care?

Even the politicians? It would be interesting to find out, wouldn't it?

A natural performer, Pete simulates a cheery television quiz show host interviewing five politicians, moving his body in the bed from right (TV host) to left (politician) and changing relative accents as he does.

PETE

(TV host) And now to the final question in tonight's show. Ladies and gentlemen ... What is the colour of our national flag?

The colour of our national flag is, green ... white ... and ... Mr Dwane, Fianna Fail.

(Munster accent) Would it be orange?

CONTD ...

(TV host) Mr O'Mara, Fine Gael.

(Midlands accent) It ... it's a kinda pinky colour.

(TV host) Mr Ball, Labour.

(Dublin inner-city accent) Red ... definitely red.

(TV host) Ms Kavanagh, PDs.

(Dublin outer-city accent) Well, it's clearly yellow.

(TV host) Mr Harkin, Sinn Fein.

(Louth accent) Green, white and gold.

(TV host) Ms Grant, Green Party.

(Anglo Irish accent) Well actually ... we're still not quite decided on that, just yet.

(TV host) And the winner is ... Ms Jenny Grant. Hurrah, well done.

Silence as Pete settles himself. Noel is unimpressed. He's heard Pete's comedy many times before.

NOEL

I'll bet your father wants to help.

PETE

He keeps his distance.

NOEL

I often wonder which is right.

PETE

Which what?

NOEL

Maybe you've been given too much space.

You always plough your own furrow,
but a good farmer will use the
wisdom that's been gathered over a
thousand years.

If you go about discovering
everything for yourself you'll
never have time to be good at
anything.

The wheel is already invented.
Don't waste time doing it again.

PETE

So, your father helps you with
computer programming ... does he?

They both laugh. Pete uses humour to avoid dealing with
awkward situations.

NOEL

He's always on to me about buying
land.

PETE

Land?

NOEL

I think he feels guilty or
something. I'm the third son and
definitely not the heir.

In his day, that was a disaster.

Uncharacteristically and to Pete's delight, Noel mimics his father's Roscommon accent.

NOEL

It can't be good for ya. Stuck in
that dingy office, all day.

If I was a fella your age I'd be
lookin' ta get me teeth inta
somethin'.

There's a good twenty five acres
goin' up the road Tandy's
place. Damn good price.

All right, there's a bitta bog and
rushes ... but good care and
attention, that's all it needs.

(loosing his impersonation) He's
convinced that working for a top IT
company is nothing compared to
being the proud owner of a bitta
bog ... in Roscommon.

PETE

(philosophically) I think you'd
make a great farmer ... an
alternative farmer ... self
sufficient ... organic food.

Earth magic and energy meridians
and dancing naked in the moonlight.
Great.

NOEL

And I suppose you'd just love to
live in Roscommon while doing all
that stuff.

PETE

Well, maybe not.

Within two weeks of my arrival
there ... I'd be hanging by my neck
from a tree ... my hands tied
behind my back ... surrounded by
smiling, toothless cretins ...

with Fr. Cumiskey reading aloud
some prayer for the evil man who is
deservedly about to meet his maker.

NOEL

Exactly. Give me the stress-crazed
city any day.

Look at Larry.

He doesn't care about a thing.
Never wondered where Bolivia is on
the map.

Just programmed to adapt. Pure
Darwinism ...

PETE

Yeah. Nature was designed for the
Larrys of this world.

Winning and survival. Respected and
admired by all. No party complete
without him.

He'll be the toast of generations.

(pause)

How did we ever wind up with
someone like that?

Both laugh and Pete simulates shooting himself in the head.

NOEL

Do you remember when his mother
arrived here, that day.

What she told me about that darling
boy. How he wanted, all his life,
to be a priest.

I can't remember most of it. I was
too busy pinching myself to keep a
straight face.

PETE

Yeah. Religion is very important to
him, all right. Sunday's his big
day.

If he has a client on the ropes ...
you know, bruised, but not
beaten ... he finds out where his
local church is and 'accidentally'
bumps into him after Mass.

According to Larry, their
resistance is low after their
weekly celestial hit.

Funerals is another big time for
him. His theory is that people
respond in the same way when
they're high or low ... vulnerable.

I think, he read it in one of my
first year psychology books and
immediately saw the awesome
potential.

I shouldn't leave such lethal
information lying around.

NOEL

But nature seems to be like that,
doesn't it Pete? The majestic oak
tree must die so that the parasitic
vine can live.

Life is heartless and cruel ... but
not for those who are responsible
for the cruelty.

"As I walk through the valley of
death, no danger shall I fear ...
because I'm the worst bastard that
ever walked through that valley."

The Hell's Angels say that and they
know the wisdom of it.

Pete again draws the bed covers to his head and settles
down with a long sigh.

PETE

You're getting profound again,
Noel.

Reproduction, survival ... and
Hell's Angels.

It's all heady stuff for a Sunday
morning. We're too young for this.

And all this talk about sex.
(*simulates masturbation*) I better
get in some practise.

NOEL

OK. See you later.

Noel goes to the poster above Pete's head.

He takes the loose corner and sticks it back into position.

He exits with a wave to Pete who already ignores him.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE, SITTING ROOM - MORNING

A pleasant sitting room of a middle class suburban home with colourful furniture and carpets and tea cups on the coffee table.

DERMOT, a stern looking civil servant wearing conservative attire, is sitting on an armchair reading the Sunday Independent newspaper with supposed intensity.

He is ill at ease and his demeanour is confrontational.

EMER, also dressed conservatively, is a conciliatory, maternal type, busily tidying and dusting as she gently hums 'Don't Cry For Me Argentina'.

Her manner and aspirations have been moulded for her for a long time and her true personality is kept in what she believes to be its proper place.

He is in his mid-fifties and she is in mid-forties.

Suddenly, he slams the paper to the floor.

DERMOT

Is that girl not up yet?

EMER

For the third time Dermot ... no.

DERMOT

I'll tell you something ...

Emer pleadingly interrupts his raised finger delivery.

EMER

Please, Dermot. She's sick.

DERMOT

(*contemptuously*) Hah. You mean just because she's got a period means she can miss Mass.

EMER

I didn't say she has a period. I think she's just sick, that's all.

DERMOT

It took more than a bloody period for me to miss Mass, let me tell you.

EMER

(frustrated) I didn't say she had a period. My God.

Again he grabs the paper and again begins 'reading'.
Silence.

DERMOT

What time did she get in, anyway?

EMER

I'm not sure. It must have been late.

DERMOT

Yeah, late.

Again he throws the paper to the floor, raises the teacup to his mouth and replaces it on the table without taking a sip.

DERMOT

Out galivanting with that fella ... what's his name ... *(sneers)* Larry. Of course she's too tired for Mass.

Dancing they call it. It's just simulated sex ... that's all it is. And that takes place inside the disco ... can you imagine what happens outside?

Do you explain these things to her?

EMER

It's her world, Dermot. We all have
to make the best of the world we
find ourselves in.

Her words are lost on him. Silence.

She tries to alleviate his concern.

EMER

She's all right. Really she is.

He raises two fingers at her and she is temporarily shocked.

DERMOT

(aggressively) Two o'clock.

EMER

Sorry?

DERMOT

Two o'clock for us ... wasn't it?
Bed by two on a Saturday night.

And did it do us any harm?

We were happy, weren't we?

She seems prepared to answer but decides against it. He
picks up the newspaper and begins 'reading' again.

DERMOT

Emer?

EMER

Yes, you're right. It didn't do us
any harm.

DERMOT

No. I mean, how's the dinner coming
along?

EMER

It'll soon be ready, dear.

She goes towards the kitchen to appease his concern. Again he drops his newspaper.

DERMOT

I don't think that fella's right for her.

EMER

But you said that about the last fella ... and the fella before that.

DERMOT

Yeah. But them fellas were just your average yahoos.

But this fella ... he sounds like a real bollox.

EMER

(hurt) You just can't say that.

DERMOT

Yes I can. This fella sounds like a real bollox. See.

EMER

But you don't know him, dear. I mean, Orla speaks so well of him.

(romantically) Refined and well mannered ... and, and ... he's got a good job ... and a nice car.

And he goes to Mass on Sunday.

DERMOT

Which reminds me, I must wash the car.

Reluctantly, he rises from his seat and goes into the hall.

When she hears the bang of the front door, she rushes into the hall.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE, HALLWAY - MORNING

In the hall, Emer goes to the foot of the stairs and calls up to her daughter.

EMER

Orla. Your father's gone out. Get up.

From upstairs, Orla's voice is hoarse and aggressive.

ORLA

I'm coming.

EMER

What?

ORLA

I'm coming. I'm coming.

Emer puts her hand over her mouth and giggles like a naughty schoolgirl.

EMER

Is Larry up there with you?

ORLA

What?

EMER

Never mind. It's OK.

(to herself) Just my little joke.

Disappointed, Emer re-enters the sitting room.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE, SITTING ROOM - MORNING

Emer is looking out the window with a forlorn gaze.

From behind her, ORLA enters, shocked and definitely under the weather. Looking older than her twenty years, one hand is resting against her throbbing head and the other is clutching her unfastened dressing gown.

Wearing old slippers, she stares aimlessly around as if seeing the room for the first time.

On hearing her shuffle, Emer turns with a familiar smile.

EMER

So ... how are you, love? Feeling better now?

Orla nods her head in confirmation. Normally energetic and attractive but, as an only child, she is hampered by ill temper and insecurity.

EMER

How was last night? What do they call it ... Desirees?

Orla looks at her with a pained, vacant expression but Emer is determined to be jovial.

EMER

Did Larry enjoy it?

ORLA

(calmly) Yes.

He had a whale of a time.

Emer continues in animated, Gone-With-The-Wind fashion and uncomfortably attempts feminine affinity and bonding.

EMER

I wish I was young again. Waltzing
off to discos ... dancing the night
away without a care in the
world ... kissing and cuddling ...

ORLA

It's not all it's cracked up to be,
you know.

EMER

Now Orla ... you're just spoiled by
it all. You'll be living out in
suburbia long enough, believe me.

You must enjoy nights like last
night ... while you can.

ORLA

So, you think I should learn to
enjoy nights like last night?

EMER

(enthusiastically) Yes.

Emer finally realises that something is more wrong with
Orla than usual.

EMER

Was everything all right last
night, love?

ORLA

I'm probably just too young to
appreciate it.

Orla turns away. Emer tentatively approaches and puts her
hands on her shoulders.

EMER

You know, you must learn to confide in me.

Anything that happens to you is not new. I've had the very same experience ... many times. Believe me.

You should learn to use my experience, That's what it's there for.

And, as my mother used to say to me, a problem shared is a problem halved.

ORLA

So you had the same experience I had?

EMER

Yes.

ORLA

Probably many times?

EMER

Yes, love. Probably many times.

Orla is determined to enlighten her mother about last night but a bang of the front door thwarts it.

EMER

Damn. Here comes your father.

Frustrated, Dermot enters and strikes his knee against the side of the door.

The front of his trousers is wet.

DERMOT

I need a longer bloody hose or a shorter car.

Orla looks coldly at him and he laughs sarcastically.

DERMOT

Well, well, well. Allah be praised.
The lord arose and appeared to many.

Orla looks defiantly at his wet trousers and shakes her head, disapprovingly.

ORLA

Tch! Tch! You really must learn to open your fly first, Daddy.

Strange ... I thought that's all you men were good at.

Enraged by her insolence, he moves towards her with a finger outstretched.

DERMOT

Now, listen here my fine young lady. Let me tell you ...

Emer jumps between them and looks pleadingly at him.

EMER

Dermot, Please. Stop it.

He turns away and begins to walk slowly around them, measuring each step and continues with mock humility.

DERMOT

Well, maybe I've got it all wrong.

Jesus Christ himself didn't go to
Mass a day in his life.

At least you can beat that record.

Suddenly, he stops and with mock revelation looks upward
with arms outstretched. His wet trousers adds nothing to
his attempt at ridicule.

DERMOT

That's it. Now I know.

You were up there ... in divine
inspiration ... creating the rules
of your new religion.

Rule number 1. Get really hammered
on a Saturday night, so you don't
wake up in time for the last Mass
on Sunday.

Rule number 2. At least once every
day, insult your parents ... who
did everything for you.

Rule number 3 ...

The phone rings and Dermot is forced to hesitate.

Emer rushes and picks it up before he can begin again.

EMER

Hello. Yes.

Oh, hello Monica.

Orla's fine. Why?

Yes, that's right.

OK.

Thanks Monica. OK, bye now. Bye.

Emer hangs up, smiles at them both and addresses Orla.

EMER

Wasn't that nice of Monica Carson.

Her son Andrew saw you at the disco
last night and said you didn't look
well ... like you were sick.

Emer approaches Orla and again puts a loving arm on her
shoulders.

EMER

She was concerned about you love,
and hopes it clears up.

Seething with rage, Orla breaks free from her surprised
mother.

ORLA

Nosey old cow. And, of course, that
little git had to be there.

EMER

Well, that's no way to treat
neighbourly concern.

DERMOT

What happened, anyway?

Orla continues with dramatic sarcasm as Emer struggles to prevent Dermot from physically attacking her.

ORLA

Well. I had a wonderful night last night ... dancing all those jigs and reels at the cross-roads with the fiddles and tin whistles.

And then, when the night was over and I arrived home ... I saw it.

A great heavenly light was all around me.

I looked up ... it was God himself.

He was smiling so sweetly and He was holding a big flat stone.

He told me not to be frightened and said He wanted to give me the commandments for my new religion.

Orla breaks from her reverie and puts a hand on her throbbing head.

ORLA

But the stone slipped out of his hands ... and hit me on the fucking head.

Dermot's anger overpowers him. He breaks free from Emer's grasp and storms at Orla.

She succeeds in evading him by running around the couch.

He bumps against the couch and falls. Emer goes to him and again intervenes.

EMER
(pleading) Please, Dermot.

DERMOT
Don't think you can talk like that
in my house, you little bitch.

ORLA
I've gotta get out of here.

Orla storms off, slamming the door as she exits.

Silence.

Dermot tries to compose himself and strolls purposefully across the room.

DERMOT
Well, well, well. What's got into
that one, do you think?

Emer turns away from him and tries to reassure herself.

EMER
I'd say something happened at the
disco last night.

DERMOT
That's pretty damned perceptive of
you, Emer.

They stand there, looking away from each other, defeated.

He sits and looks into the cold fireplace for inspiration.

Emer sits opposite him, defensively.

The loud mantelpiece clock truncates the awkward silence.

DERMOT

I'm sorry.

EMER

God. I feel so useless sometimes.

DERMOT

It's not you.

EMER

It seems I missed something ...

something important ...

along the way ...

and I'm getting farther away from
it all the time ...

or it's getting farther away from
me.

DERMOT

Is it me?

EMER

No.

DERMOT

Well ... I feel I did something
wrong.

She moves beside him, rests down on her haunches and
cradles his hands with hers.

EMER

It's not that ...

maybe you expect to always have
that sweet, little girl with the
long plaited hair ... remember.

He remembers.

EMER

The one wearing the green dress
with butterflies.

The one that would drag you out of
that seat to show you some
fascinating object she discovered
in the kitchen.

She allows him time to say something. He remains looking at
her hands.

DERMOT

Emer, are you happy?

EMER

What?

DERMOT

Are you happy? You know.

EMER

Happy? Why shouldn't I be?

DERMOT

Oh. There's probably lots of
reasons why you shouldn't be. Tell
me?

EMER

Life's been good to us ... hasn't
it?

I mean, things could be worse ...
couldn't they?

DERMOT

Tell me.

EMER

I don't know what brought this on.

DERMOT

Just tell me ... please.

Sensing his urgency, she steadies herself as an ancient door creaks open and she enters a world that she would prefer did not exist.

EMER

Do you remember the time ... years ago ... we were dating for about three months ... and you took me for a long walk ... from Bray to Greystones?

Do you remember?

DERMOT

Go on.

She stands and moves away from him, reliving the memory.

EMER

It was a beautiful Autumn evening ... with the setting sun shining on the sea and the heather.

And you looked into my eyes and said you would always love me ... just the way I was that day ... for the rest of your life.

Do you remember that, Dermot?

DERMOT

Yes.

EMER

Yes, I thought you did.

DERMOT

What's the matter?

EMER

Those words ... those words have
always haunted me.

Whenever I think of them ... they
send a shiver down my spine.

Startled, he rises and stares at her though she is turned
away from him. She becomes increasingly distraught.

DERMOT

But, I don't understand.

EMER

Those words became a trap for you.

Every time we had our
differences ... and, God knows, we
had a few ... I couldn't help
feeling that ... that promise
was ...

a cage that's keeping you a
prisoner ...

DERMOT

Emer ...

EMER

Suffocating you ...

She covers her face with her hands and sobs.

Unaccustomed to a comforting role, he puts his arm on her
shoulder.

DERMOT

Emer. It's all right ... really.

Defiantly, she turns to face him wiping her eyes.

EMER

Is it?

Realising she will not be easily brushed aside, he ventures an uneasy reply.

DERMOT

I suppose, there was a few times.

EMER

Yes.

DERMOT

Sometimes maybe a bit
claustrophobic.

But that's only natural, Emer? I
mean, we can't be as free as ... as
rabbits.

EMER

But you did it for me, Dermot ...
not yourself.

DERMOT

Emer ...

She brushes his comforting arm aside.

EMER

I don't have to remind you.

But it was just an hour after I
told you about ... about my
condition.

DERMOT

Emer ...

EMER

You decided to do the honourable
thing ... and you stuck by it ...
because that's your nature.

As she begins to sob again, Orla's footsteps are heard running down the stairs and into the hall.

She exits, slamming the front door.

EMER

You want her to stay as lovely as
Bray Head on that Autumn evening.

You don't want her to go wrong,
like I did.

DERMOT

Please, Emer. You're getting it
mixed up.

EMER

You never even mentioned Helen
Delaney ... in all that time.

This visibly shakes Dermot and he responds too hastily.

DERMOT

Who?

EMER

Please don't pretend. She was your
woman.

You went out with me just to get
her jealous, after you had a row.

Everyone expected you to get back
together again.

She was just right for you.

Educated ... from the country.

DERMOT

Who told you this?

EMER

(ignoring him) But, full credit to you, Dermot. You never even mentioned her once in all this time.

Even when I dropped little hints ... to remind you ... you still said nothing.

But I could tell you remembered her.

God forgive me, but I even took pleasure in it. I wanted you to have some of the hurt I was feeling.

Remember how I'd say how much I liked pink ... pink clothes, pink lipstick, pink nail varnish.

I hate pink ... But I could see that you remembered.

Loyalty contains as much destruction as virtue, Dermot.

I don't know which is worse ... the ghost of a past love or a whole string of one night stands.

DERMOT

Emer, please. You're letting your emotions get the better of you.

His defensive words sound hollow and serves only to invigorate her as she continues angrily.

EMER

I forgot. Emotions. You told me all about the emotional woman.

She'd rather get a kiss from someone she loves than a whole lorry full of gold.

She'd rather listen to a few kind words than a lecture from the greatest orator.

And instead of dealing with things as they really are, she is always chasing moonbeams.

Emer breaks from him and begins to 'tidy' the living room again. He wisely doesn't respond.

Suddenly, she straightens herself and continues sarcastically.

EMER

Well, let's get back to reality.

I'll make the dinner and you can continue to safeguard the morality of the house.

Hmmm? How was that? Am I doing all right?

He remains surprised. She walks towards the kitchen, stops and turns to him, purposefully.

EMER

Or, maybe, I should get on that telephone and talk to Monica's son about last night.

DERMOT

Ahhh. Maybe we shouldn't ...

EMER

Shouldn't what?

DERMOT

Well, you know ... meddle in her affairs.

Emer addresses him like a school teacher and he responds like a chastised child.

EMER

You know, you amaze me.

You love huffing and puffing all the time ... but you're never in any rush to do something.

DERMOT

I suppose, I'm afraid to do something wrong.

EMER

Well, you won't know till you've done it. Will you?

Her storm passed, she continues in a conciliatory mood.

EMER

You know, I used to cherish my mother's opinions.

Always steering me in the right direction.

Do you remember me talking about Jim ... bald Jim?

DERMOT

Yes ... the one that was married.

EMER

Yes. But it was my mother who first suspected it.

Eventually, I wouldn't do anything without consulting her.

She became my best friend.

Emer goes to Dermot and lovingly touches his face.

EMER

We're more likely to loose Orla not because of something we did, but because of something we didn't do.

DERMOT

Maybe you're right.

EMER

I know I am, Dermot.

You see, I know her so well ...
much better than I knew myself
twenty five years ago.

Assured of her new found confidence, she continues with abandon.

EMER

You know, my mother kept telling me to go for a big company ... because there would be more men to choose from.

So, I joined the Civil Service ...
and you know what, she was right.

And then you came ... in charge of
the whole section.

And then you asked me out ...

She returns from her temporary bliss and 'fixes' herself.

She goes to the phone and dials purposefully.

EMER

Hello, Monica. It's me, Emer.

Yes, I'm fine.

Yes, she's fine.

I wonder can I talk to Andrew about
that, actually. Is he there?

Yes, I'll wait. Thanks.

Emer gives Dermot a reassuring thumbs-up as he nervously
wrings his hands and returns to the security of his
armchair.

INT. BACHELOR HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Typical chaotic living room in the bachelor house.

Mismatched items of inferior furniture are in haphazard order and the untidy table contains an un-cleared breakfast.

An inappropriately small television sits on an unsteady stool and the room is covered with a garish wallpaper.

Pete and Noel are dressed very casually and sit on a shabby settee like Staffordshire Dogs.

Noel is engrossed in the Sunday Times newspaper and Pete is trying to read a book.

Clearly bored, Pete lets the book drop from his hands and pretends to die from a heart attack.

He falls to the floor clutching his chest, gasping noisily and writhing in agony.

Noel ignores him and continues reading.

Pete rises and slowly surveys the room, finally resting his gaze on Noel.

Before he can interrupt Noel's solitude, the phone rings.

As if his life depends on it, he rushes to the phone and answers enthusiastically.

PETE

Yellow ... hell loo ... hellloo.

The other end is clearly dead so he hangs up, disappointed.

Not wanting to engage in lengthy debate, Noel does not raise his head from the paper.

NOEL

No one there?

Glad of the conversation, Pete hastily returns to his former position on the settee.

Noel moves his body away from him knowing what is to come.

PETE

Of course there was ... but she just didn't have the nerve to speak.

A truly gorgeous woman ... admiring me from a distance, for years ...

eventually finds the courage to ring.

But, when she hears my voice, her carefully rehearsed lines desert her and she is left ... quivering ...

... wanting me ...

but tragically unable to speak.

Noel is unimpressed with Pete's fake sobbing so he reluctantly changes direction.

PETE

You know, after what I've heard this morning I'm almost afraid to ask.

This does not work either.

Pete is forced to continue without being prompted.

PETE

How did you get on last night?

NOEL

The usual.

PETE

As good as all that? Where were you
anyway?

Noel ignores him and continues to read.

Silence.

Pete bows reverently and continues sarcastically with a
posh, imperialist English accent.

PETE

The Sunday Times. Oh, I'm terribly
sorry.

How dare I drag you away from such
sublime literary heights to the
ghastly mire of warm human banter?

Noel drops the paper to his knees and looks with disdain at
him. Encouraged by this, Pete continues as before.

PETE

The misguided ones speak of our
disgusting behaviour in the world.

Pete dramatically gestures with an outstretched arm towards
the newspaper.

PETE

But, I ask you. How could one,
having read the Sunday Times,
believe such nonsense?

Oh, what benevolent Brits are we.

Pete moves closer to Noel and pretends to read from the newspaper, this time adopting a west-Brit, Dublin suburban accent.

PETE

What have those horrible Sinn
Feiners done to them, now? ... Tch!
Tch!

We should all beg forgiveness of
them for being such undeserving
neighbours.

Maybe we should burn down our
houses and kill our children as a
gesture of goodwill.

NOEL

My God, Pete. I like to get both
sides ... solidarity ...that's all.

As if struck by a lightening bolt, Pete jumps to his feet and delivers a well rehearsed oration with his usual panache.

PETE

Solidarity. Always the refuge of
the victim.

So, after thirty years of innocent
people being killed by the British
military in Ireland it was
interesting to see the solidarity
over there.

The endless media debate demanding
the killers be brought to
justice ... the peace rallies and
concerts.

A deluge of tears for what the men
who represent them have done.

Pete waits dramatically for a response. None comes.

PETE

Noel, call me psychic, but I know they didn't even stop eating their chips ... because there's no such thing as an innocent Irish person over there.

NOEL

Jesus Pete ...you are the most imbalanced man I've ever met.

PETE

On the contrary, Noel. Balance is what I ask for.

Where is the demand that their history books and media tell the truth?

Our elected representatives?
Jaesus. Complacent rednecks ... still stuck in the mud of the parish they came from.

Every tug of the post-colonial forelock only increases the disrespect of the imperialist ... and arms another of our unbeaten brethren in the North.

Instead of facing up to their own cowardice, it's easier to identify with the aggressor and condemn those who refuse to be servants in their own house.

If the bootlickers of this country looked up they'd see the wearer of the boots laughing ... and calling them 'Thick Micks'.

NOEL

(exasperated) God. So, the fight must go on ... with no settlement in sight.

PETE

Come on, Noel. You don't solve the problem of the school yard bully by giving him sweets.

A settlement won't be reached by party politicians only interested in their careers.

Everything must be on the table ... for everyone to see.

Nothing hidden or censored.

And everyone must admit to past crimes and mistakes and apologise for them.

Otherwise, you are just giving an aspirin to a leper.

Following his passionate outburst, Pete proudly holds his head in the air as if waiting for an applause.

NOEL

Are you finished?

PETE

(smiles) You know me. I could go on forever.

Noel recognises this truth with a wry smile and changes the conversation.

NOEL

So ... warm human banter.

What kind do you have in mind for
this peaceful Sunday afternoon?

He picks up Pete's discarded book and looks casually at the
title.

NOEL

'Anarchy. A Resolution For
Conflict.' ... my God.

PETE

I am not an anarchist, Noel. I'm ...

NOEL

(interrupting) I've heard your
radical beliefs before, Pete.
Please.

PETE

(defensively) OK.

(pause)

So, what do you consider radical?

A rock star who refuses to wear
sunglasses ... indoors.

NOEL

All I know is that it's not good
for you ... all this red meat and
revolution.

You should practice meditation.

Anything that might soothe the
repetitive, raging beast inside
you.

PETE

But it's boring, Noel. I prefer to do something.

(conceding) Or, correction ... talk about doing something.

Noel tries hard not to return Pete's beaming smile.

He raises the paper to a reading position, forcing Pete to plead.

PETE

Oh, come on. I gave you my undivided attention this morning.

Where were you last night?

NOEL

Are you sure you don't want to talk revolution?

PETE

I promise ... honest.

NOEL

I was visiting Barry.

PETE

So, did you two love birds go anywhere?

NOEL

No. And yourself?

PETE

(apologetically) I went to Desperate Dans.

Noel drops the newspaper in genuine surprise.

NOEL

Desperate Dans? ... My God.

(pause)

Pete, your average laboratory rat,
after a few electric shocks, learns
not to do something.

But after an incredible large
amount of electric shocks ... you
go back for more.

So how was it, anyway?

Pete is uncharacteristically quiet. He puts his hands on
his head in an attempt to shut out the pain.

NOEL

The usual big crowd?

PETE

(dramatically) What shall I compare
it to? ... Ah, yes.

The papal gathering in the Phoenix
Park in '79 was a mere platoon
compared to the regiments assembled
under the roof of Desperate Dans
last night.

Any self-respecting sardine would
give it a wide berth.

Pete pauses while he tempers his passion and continues
professorially.

PETE

It is true that breathing was possible but only if you inhaled while your neighbour exhaled.

It was a perfect fusion of manhood and womanhood, lager and stout, elbows and knees, beer stains and saliva ... into one swaying mass of

(said as a shriek) Great Crack.

You know, it is probably the greatest testament to the irrepressible Celt that some people actually tried to dance through this human quagmire.

Oh, to partake in that revelry. If only I could enjoy it as they did.

But alas, my carefully rehearsed enthusiasm quickly deserted me and, once again, I was plunged into the old familiar cocktail of claustrophobia, panic and fear.

NOEL

You've only yourself to blame.

PETE

(ignoring Noel) If you came suitably attired for the place the bouncers wouldn't let you in. A suit of armour or, at least, a pair of overalls is simply not acceptable to them.

So, when my pants and shirt were sufficiently soaked in incredibly expensive drink, I saw a breach and went for it ... to the safety of the street outside.

NOEL

Are those people not concerned
about a fire?

What if there's an emergency?

PETE

Listen. The clientele of Desperate
Dans would be hard pressed to walk
and talk at the same time.

Silence as Pete's previous night's disappointment subsides.

NOEL

So, I don't suppose you met a woman
there?

Pete looks around the room as if surveying the women.

PETE

Of course I did. I met lots of
them.

Great hulks of repressed
womanhood ... all lumps and bumps
and booze.

Pete lowers his head to his shoulders and puffs out his
cheeks. He leans forward, clenches his fists and sticks out
his elbows, creating a concave chest. He then tramps around
flatfooted, with a silly grin, shrieking "Great Crack".
Noel silently observes his act.

Eventually, Pete regains his former decorum and resumes.

PETE

I know that centuries of English
and Church repression must have
been horrific ... but Jesus Noel,
could it have produced that?

I mean, your average water buffalo
has more sexual chemistry.

Noel remains silent. Pete's frustration subsides somewhat.

PETE

Where do they go, Noel?

(angelically) Ahh yes ... Club Nirvana. Where the women are sexy and not pissed off ... or pissed.

Where the music is not a relentless pneumatic power drill.

Where you don't spend two hours answering questions like "Where do you come from" and "What part of Galway" and "Do you know Johnny Mooney".

The same three questions ...always in that sequence. It must have been part of the tuition they received from the nuns.

God, you'd think that some really energetic mind would be able to, at least, vary the sequence ... just once.

Maybe start with "Do you know Johnny Mooney" ... and if the answer is "No" ... then they can counter with "Well, where do you come from?"

Or dispense with questions altogether.

Maybe ... "If you were from Galway, you'd know Johnny Mooney". Or "I can't remember Johnny Mooney describin' a fella he knows that would fit your description".

Noel is about to say something but Pete continues dejected.

PETE

But that is never as bad as later
on in the night, after some
industrial amounts of fast drinking
is done.

You are sure to be answering gems
like "Are ya a votin' man,
yerself?" or "What diya mean you
don't know that Kilkenny is playing
Tipperary next week?"

Noel wisely waits until Pete has to take a breath.

NOEL

What did you think you'd find at
Desperate Dans?

Fashion models are busy sleeping
with as many big ugly slobs as it
takes to further their careers.

It's just nice, ordinary, people
trying to have a good time ...
that's all.

Anyway Pete, I can't remember
seeing lots of Leonardo De Caprios
there.

It's full of awkward, shabby
men ... busily engaged in the manly
task of drinking as many pints as
it takes to give them enough
courage to say hello to a woman.

Pete is ready to respond but Noel doesn't allow this.

NOEL

Why should they bother?

Why should a woman be sensual with
some incoherent yahoo who is too
busy winking at his buddies to
notice that he's spilling most of
his beer on her.

Women have fantasies too, Pete ...
and I can assure you it doesn't
involve the constant struggle to
detect any cerebral activity in her
man's eyes while, simultaneously,
trying to keep him standing on his
feet.

PETE

Fantasies? The only fantasies those
girls have involve creamy cakes,
crisps, chips, chocolate and loads
and loads of drink.

NOEL

And I thought your ideal woman
would be a Marxist
revolutionary ... with hand
grenades in her bra.

PETE

(ignoring Noel) I mean, can you
imagine landing on some South Sea
island and the native women coming
to greet you ...

Pete re-adopts his former Irish woman persona and again
tramps around with a concave chest and a silly grin,
shrieking "Great Crack".

While he is thus engaged, a still-distraught Orla enters
the room and stares aghast at Pete who does not see her.

Stunned, she turns towards Noel and both direct their attention to Pete's act.

NOEL

Ahhh ... Pete?

Still engaged in his parody, Pete turns and stares at Orla.

All are temporarily transfixed.

ORLA

I'm ... I'm looking for Larry.

Noel attempts to achieve a semblance of normality.

NOEL

(casually) And who are you?

ORLA

My name is Orla. Orla Casey. I'm sorry, but the door was open and ... I was in a bit of a rush.

I did ring the doorbell ...

NOEL

It's broke.

ORLA

I know. I ... I thought he'd be here.

Do you boys live with Larry?

Disengaging from his act and remembering the events she endured the previous night, Pete tries to be jovial.

PETE

Yes. Yes we do.

The folly of advertising in the newspaper.

Orla does not return the bonhomie. Pete courageously continues.

PETE

Well ... Ahhh ... Larry left for Mass this morning ... and I think he's meeting a few people after ... to go for a drink ... so, I guess there's where he is.

Orla covers her face with her hands and releases a long, high pitched wail. Noel and Pete are temporarily frozen.

Noel rises, goes to her and puts a comforting arm on her shoulder.

She puts her arm around his neck, rests her head on his shoulder and continues to sob.

The men exchange glances, unsure what to do.

Awkwardly consoling her, Noel leads her to the settee and they sit down together.

The men try to find some inspiration in each other for this unfamiliar state of affairs.

At last, Noel gingerly speaks.

NOEL

Ahh ... can I get you a cup of tea?

ORLA

(angrily) Fuck.

Distraught and sobbing, she slowly turns to look at him. Her face and eyes are wet and streaked with mascara as she corrects her ill humour.

ORLA

I'm sorry. No, thanks. I don't want a cup of tea.

Pete goes to her and stretches out his hand, positively.

PETE

Hello. I'm Pete and this is Noel.

ORLA

Pleased to meet you.

She shakes Pete's hand and then shakes Noel's outstretched left hand as his right arm is restrained behind her shoulder.

NOEL

Hello.

A nervous embarrassment follows.

As Orla wipes her face, Pete tries to prompt Noel to take the lead in any form of conversation, but Noel is unfamiliar with this role and cannot respond.

Finally, Pete attempts to lighten the atmosphere.

PETE

Let's not all speak together.

ORLA

(too emotional to understand) I wasn't going to say anything.

PETE

Well, you can if you want to.

ORLA

But I don't want to ... it doesn't concern you.

PETE

(acquiescent) That's all right. You're perfectly welcome to just sit there and say nothing at all. Really.

All three shuffle nervously. Pete sits on a chair beside the breakfast table.

NOEL

We can point you in the direction
of the pub Larry's in, if you want.

Pete nods approvingly but it only heightens Orla's frustration.

ORLA

That's all ever seems to happen to
me. I get pointed in some damned
direction. Isn't that strange?

Always following other people.
Nobody ever follows me. Why is
that?

One of these days I'm going to
point myself in my own direction.

But, right now, if it's all right
with you guys, I'll just sit here
till he gets back.

PETE

Sure.

ORLA

Thanks.

PETE

(empathising) Yeah. As a wise man
once said ... if you don't know
where you're going you'll wind up
somewhere else.

ORLA

(impressed) Which wise man said
that?

PETE

Me, of course. Is there another?

This relaxes them and they all attempt a laugh.

ORLA

Yes, there is. And, he's sitting at home right now ... with all the answers to all the questions that nobody bloody asked.

PETE

Ah yes, parents. The ultimate ego trip.

Setting standards for the next generation that they themselves failed to achieve.

And so, the hurt and failure gets passed on ... generation after generation ... leaving us all inadequate and frustrated.

ORLA

(ignoring him) If only they were themselves ... just once.

NOEL

The most important job of all ... and every fool is eligible to do it.

ORLA

(defensively) I didn't say they were fools.

NOEL

No. I didn't mean it that way.

PETE

Orla. Are you sure you don't want a
drink ... or something.

ORLA

No, thanks.

She is impressed with his civility and continues awkwardly.

ORLA

You know, I thought you ... Well,
when I came in ... you were ... I
thought you were a bit ...

She tries to simulate his movements with her arm and
shoulders and silly grin.

Realising what she means, he laughs nervously.

PETE

Oh that.

No ... you see, I was just
describing this guy ... a real head
case ... that pestered me once ...
in America ... downtown LA, it was.

He was trying to sell me some
cocaine ... crack cocaine.

Pete again resumes his parody (modified, to fulfil its new
role) and again shrieking, but with an American accent ...
"Great Crack".

Sadly, Dermot and Emer enter and witness the spectacle, too
shocked for words.

Oblivious, Pete continues while Orla and Noel stare at the
entrants.

Orla is a mess with a mascara smeared, lipstick-smudged wet face and Noel continues to keep a comforting arm on her shoulder.

Pete, turns to his audience and sees their attention is directed behind him towards the door.

Still contorted in his parody, he follows their stare and witnesses the entrants.

Stunned silence.

Emer breaks the impasse, rushes towards the settee and sternly slaps Noel's face.

Orla jumps up and grabs her arm.

ORLA

(shouts) Stop it. What are you doing?

EMER

I'm going to give that fella a piece of my mind ... for you.

Orla protests Noel's innocence and prevents her mother from slapping him.

Taking courage from Emer's actions, Dermot rushes towards the settee.

Looking as mean as possible, he aggressively prods Noel in the chest with his finger.

DERMOT

Don't think you'll get off that easy, bucko. I'm Orla's father.

Paralysed with disbelief, Noel's arm remains suspended in the same comforting position, though Orla has deserted it.

Knowing what happened the previous night, Pete intervenes.

PETE

Easy, now. Settle down everybody.

He begins to move Dermot away from Noel as the men become aware of Orla admonishing her mother.

ORLA

This is not Larry. He's not here.

Confusion reigns until Pete triumphantly takes matters in hand.

PETE

All right. All right.

So ... *(pointing at Dermot)* you are Orla's father, and *(pointing at Emer)* you are Orla's mother?

DERMOT and EMER

(together) Yes.

PETE

(pointing at Noel) However, this gentleman is not Larry.

And, I think I can safely say, he doesn't resemble him in even the slightest way.

Allow me to introduce Noel, if you please.

All stare at Noel. He looks away. Silence.

EMER

Oh, I'm very sorry Noel ... really I am.

NOEL

It's OK.

Noel casually turns to Pete and indicates the other three.

NOEL

Maybe we should direct them to
Larry. I'm sure there's something
they all want to discuss with him.

Pete realises this is not the appropriate time to enlighten
Noel about what happened.

PETE

Maybe they're just welcoming a new
member into the family.

Dermot is incensed at his cockiness and imitates Pete's
antics that he witnessed on entry.

DERMOT

And I suppose you're Big Bird.

ORLA

(coming to Pete's defence) No. It's
just a drug dealer in America.

DERMOT

(enraged, to Pete) A drug dealer?

ORLA

(frustrated) Jesus ...

Emer slaps Dermot's arm to demonstrate her regained manners
and to correct his.

EMER

Oh, I'm sorry ... the door was open
... and we were upset ... you
see ... well ...

NOEL

(interrupting) Peter. I know you wanted to get some fresh air into the place but ... could you please close the door?

Oh, and ... could you please refrain from that 'dance' you do so well. It seems to bring out the worst in people.

Dermot, encouraged by Noel's civility, surveys the room with disdain and begins to browse through Pete's books stacked on a shelf.

Orla turns defiantly towards her mother.

ORLA

Jesus, I can't believe what I'm seeing. How did you get here? Why did you come, anyway?

(sarcastically) My dinner's ready?

EMER

Look Orla. We were worried about you. So, we rang Monica Carson and spoke to Andrew ...

DERMOT

(interrupting) What's all this we?

EMER

(ignoring him) He told me everything about last night.

(compassionately) I'm sorry Orla, I really am.

Anyway, we found Larry's address and number in your address book and we drove down here ...

ORLA

(enraged) You went looking in my address book. My God.

EMER

I never did that before, Orla. You must believe me.

So, I rang the number to see if anyone was at home and, well I can see now, it was one of these fellas that answered it.

Anyway, we came down here to give that fella a bit of our minds.

That's all, love. We didn't know you were here ...

DERMOT

(interrupting) I knew it was stupid trying to do the right thing for that one.

ORLA

(ignoring him) Well, here I am. Now would you please leave and let me live my own life.

Emer resurrects her desire for a good relationship with her daughter.

EMER

I'm sorry, I really am.

But you may well thank me one day for what I tried to do.

ORLA

(confused) What? ...

EMER

Believe me. There's no substitute
for experience.

Noel strokes his wounded face, to remind her of her
fallibility.

EMER

(affronted) I said I'm sorry.

Uneasy silence.

Disappointed with what has transpired, Emer 'fixes' herself
and addresses Orla.

EMER

I'm sorry, we'll go now.

Emer is about to leave when Dermot sparks back into life
with an evil laugh, after picking up Pete's discarded book.

DERMOT

Be gob ...

All look in his direction. Bravely, he reads the title of
the book.

DERMOT

'Anarchy. A Resolution For
Conflict.' I'll bet that's one of
that bucko's books. *(sneers)*

Anarchy. I'll give him anarchy ...

Orla is overcome again and shouts through her tears.

ORLA

Shut up. You're just busy bodies.
Poking your noses into my affairs.

DERMOT

(triumphant laugh) Some affairs.

ORLA

(seething) Just get the fuck out.

EMER

OK, love. Don't upset yourself.
We're leaving.

She goes towards the open door and, as Dermot follows, he points a threatening finger at Orla.

DERMOT

Less of your lip, madam.

EMER

(screams) Dermot.

Defiantly, she turns to him. He frightens at her uncharacteristic outburst.

EMER

You're not at home now.

Her words petrify Dermot. His pace slows to a stop as he looks at her with a face that has again slipped into that morass of dark, subterranean emotion.

She confronts his threatening stare with the same tenacity as in her sitting room.

DERMOT

(vacantly) That's right. I'm not at home now.

Dermot slowly walks towards her, their eyes locked in an unheralded combat which, for them, is only appropriate away from the sanctuary of their own marital home.

He continues walking, until he passes her, and both are forced to turn in order to remain facing each other.

Unnoticed by the two combatants, the three younger ones are squirming in the depths of unease and embarrassment, nervously glancing at each other, though absorbed in the unfolding drama.

DERMOT

I'm not allowed to reprimand my own daughter for throwing herself at any silly bollox. Is that right?

EMER

You must allow her to make her own mistakes.

DERMOT

Just like you?

EMER

Just like me.

DERMOT

It was a mistake ... the whole thing ... wasn't it?

EMER

What do you think?

DERMOT

I think you wanted out of the Civil Service. And I was your passport.

That's what I think.

Emer is shocked.

She takes some moments to regain her composure and continues with great difficulty.

EMER

Yes. I wanted out, all right. Maybe that was my first mistake.

But I also wanted to meet Mr Right and be a good wife and make him happy.

I suppose that was my second mistake.

And I fancied you ... in every natural way.

(dejected) But a woman can't do that, can she? It's men who draw up the battle lines in this war of the sexes.

She must be aloof and withdrawn from the very man she wants to surrender to.

So, that was my third mistake.

And my fourth mistake was that I didn't recognise a silly bollox when I met him.

Orla is enraged with embarrassment but Pete is entranced.

ORLA

What the Hell's wrong with you two?

PETE

Let them be. Please. I think it's important.

ORLA

But they don't talk like this.

Emer and Dermot are oblivious to the concerns and comments of their younger observers.

EMER

Would you like to be free?

DERMOT

Would you like me to free you?

EMER

If that would make you happy.

Silence.

Not relishing the enfolding conflict, Noel addresses Pete and Orla.

NOEL

Maybe, we should leave them alone?

ORLA

Let them leave. Why should you
leave your own house?

Dermot is drained and Emer continues bravely.

EMER

You can leave now, by yourself ...
if you want.

DERMOT

I suppose, I want to leave as much
as Ruby wanted to leave.

EMER

(confused) Ruby?

DERMOT

Remember the rabbit?

EMER
Rabbit?

ORLA
Rabbit?

PETE
Rabbit?

NOEL
Rabbit?

(The repetition of 'rabbit' is a pun on all the dialogue.)

DERMOT
It must be about twelve years ago
now, I suppose.

Taken off guard by Dermot's un-confrontational manner, Emer slowly remembers.

EMER
Yes. Yes, I do.
What about him?

DERMOT
Do you remember when we got him?

EMER
Yes ... I think I do.

DERMOT
We were out in Kildare ... visiting
the Daly's ... and they showed you
some rabbits they had in a pen.

Anyway, you took a shine to this
particular one and you named him
Ruby ... and you wanted to take him
back.

CONTD ...

I didn't agree with him living in a cage in a city garage. But ... you had your wish.

You and Orla took so much pleasure in him ... and, the surprising thing was, he seemed to be happy too.

I began to doubt my own instincts.

But, after a few months, he made his move.

One day you went to feed him ... and he scurried past you.

You were inconsolable for a while after.

But I figured he'd be all right.

Silence. Though the tension between Emer and Dermot has eased somewhat, the unease of the others continues unabated.

NOEL

Look ... does anyone want some tea?

PETE and ORLA

(together) Shut up, Noel.

PETE

Have some sensitivity.

ORLA

Do you want them here all day?
Jesus.

EMER

You're not too late ... yet.

DERMOT

If I was going I would've done it
years ago.

EMER

And why didn't you?

DERMOT

And where to ... huh?

(pause)

No. You're the only thing I ever
wanted ... since that day on Bray
Head.

And then, when I saw Orla, I knew I
was right.

And, two weeks after Ruby left, I
got the confirmation I needed.

EMER

What?

DERMOT

I found him ... dead.

With growing interest in her father's story and remembering
the rabbit, Orla moves closer to her father, distraught.

ORLA

What?

DERMOT

He was lying under the hedge ...
behind the garage ... looking at
the house.

ORLA

(sobbing) Why didn't you tell me?

You said he was in the woods
playing with all the other rabbits.

Orla's anger quickly subsides in keeping with the general calm around her.

ORLA

What did you do with him?

DERMOT

I buried him where he lay. It was
better to say nothing.

The women reflect on this for a while. Orla is pacified as her childhood fondness for her father returns.

ORLA

What happened, Daddy? Did he come
back ... to die?

DERMOT

I don't know, my dear.

I don't know if he made it to the
fields and came back again ...

Or if he just hid in the hedge and
watched us for two weeks.

ORLA

Maybe he never wanted to leave, at
all.

DERMOT

I think he wanted to prove he could
do it, Orla.

Drained, Pete and Noel sit as Orla and Emer continue to study Dermot with tears in their eyes.

He looks, purposefully, into Emer's face.

DERMOT

If I'm in a cage there's nowhere
else I'd rather be.

EMER

Thanks, love.

DERMOT

You know, you're a silly girl
really ...

EMER

(surprised) Why?

DERMOT

Helen Delaney. God, you really can
get things wrong sometimes.

Everyone expected it to be a hit,
you were right there.

Family, friends, everyone ...
except me.

And then, you came along. Full of
life ... and fun.

We didn't know each other for long,
I know that. But it didn't bother
me.

I was only afraid it bothered you.

EMER

(relieved) Thanks, love.

DERMOT

By the way, you did remind me of her, many times ... but I never realised you did it deliberately.

That look on my face ... what you thought was longing ... was a painful memory of the pink prison I escaped from.

They both laugh and tenderly embrace, resolved and relieved.

DERMOT

I thought you were the one who was ... unhappy.

You seemed to have so many qualities and I was ... so inadequate.

EMER

(playfully) Don't let your inadequacy stop you talking, in the future.

DERMOT

OK. But I think we did enough talking for one day.

EMER

Yes, love. Let's go home.

Dermot presents her with his hand and she takes it.

EMER

(to Orla) Sorry again, love. See you.

With a wide range of emotions, all five exchange farewells as Dermot and Emer go to exit.

At the door, their path is blocked by the entry of Larry.

Carrying a large bottle of whiskey and singing 'Oh, What A Beautiful Morning', he swaggers in with carefree abandon.

With a broad smile and without showing any surprise, he looks at Orla, Emer and Dermot, in turn.

LARRY

Hello there ... everybody.

Orla glares defiantly at him. She is even more distraught looking than before, the fresh tears having further devastated her facial make-up.

Larry continues to smile at her and stretches out his arms, allowing her to rush forward and embrace him.

LARRY

Orla.

Orla remains motionless. From behind him, Dermot points at him and gestures to Pete, silently mouthing "Is that him"?

As Pete is struggling to understand Dermot's gestures, Noel turns casually to him.

NOEL

We really must close that door,
Pete.

ORLA

(to her parents) Goodbye.

Dermot and Emer respond to their daughter's concern and silently exit.

LARRY

Was that your parents?

As Orla boils, Noel defuses an explosive situation.

NOEL

Yes, it was. And, in your absence,
I had to endure violent parental
protection which was intended for
you.

(recalling) I don't think I was
hated that much in all my life.

Larry understands and is greatly relieved. He slaps Noel on
the back, too strong to be a friendly gesture.

LARRY

Ah, you're a grand fella, Noel. May
you live long and may none of your
sons be homosexual.

NOEL

May none of your sons be born.

Larry looks at all three with a broad smile and stretches
his arms towards them.

LARRY

(messianic) Enough of this
frivolity and depression.

Ladies and gentlemen, I have great
news. Join with me in a
celebration.

He again slaps Noel on the back, this time forcing him to
splutter.

LARRY

Noel, my fearless minder. Fetch the
glasses and kill the fatted calf.

Noel's contempt for him is seething.

Observing this and Orla's silent turmoil, Pete bows
reverently towards Larry.

PETE

Thanks for your kind invitation
Lawrence, but I think we have
witnessed enough passion in this
house for one Sunday.

Heeding Pete's cue, Noel follows him towards the door.

LARRY

Where are you two goin'?

PETE

Kennedy's.

Not wishing to be alone with Orla, Larry presents the
whiskey bottle to Pete.

LARRY

Ya can get pissed here.

PETE

Such kindness ... but the solace of
the pub is what I desire, sir.

(reverting to his fantasy) You
never know what the Gods may
bestow.

An overheard comment ... an address
or phone number.

Something that will surely lead me
to ... Club Nirvana.

And I won't find it sitting here.

LARRY

(nervously) So, we'll probably see
ya in Kennedy's then.

In a very dramatic theatrical gesture, Pete bows reverently to the floor, mouths "Goodbye" and throws them a parting kiss.

As he goes to exit, Larry interrupts.

LARRY

Ya should check out Desirees
sometime. It's good.

Orla gasps. He smiles and indicates to her to be calm.

PETE

Ah, yes. Maybe.

God works in mysterious ways.

His temporary theatrical bliss fades as he 'witnesses' the scene.

PETE

But, somehow, I know exactly what
it's like.

Neanderthal guys screaming into the
ears of like minded girls as the
relentless noise system blasts out
masterpieces like ...'I Wanna Have
Sex With Your Sex Crazy Body' by
'The Sex Machine'.

LARRY

Ahh. Go on. Give it a belt.

You've got nothin' to loose.

PETE

(feigning shock) Nothing?

You call an ageing student with a
stereotypical lefty image ...
nothing.

NOEL

(to Pete) From what I've heard, you
should check out the Civil
Service ... you might even get a
job there.

Pete is not amused, he waves goodbye to Larry and Orla and
both he and Noel exit.

Larry continues to look at their departure.

LARRY

Club Nirvana. He's been leanin' on
that crutch for a long time now.

He'll spend his whole life hopin'
to get there ... and, you know what?

He never will, the poor bastard.

Larry smiles blissfully at Orla, who has no idea what he is
talking about.

She turns away, looking totally unapproachable. Larry
approaches her.

LARRY

I have somethin' for ya.

ORLA

(subdued) What.

LARRY

A little anniversary present.

He gallantly withdraws an envelope from his pocket and
presents it to her.

She grabs it from his hand and tears it open.

She withdraws a Brown Thomas voucher and is clearly
impressed with the amount.

ORLA

A Brown Thomas voucher.

That's where I bought the dress.

LARRY

I know.

She conceals her joy well.

He tries to kiss her face but she, defensively using her shoulders, does not allow him.

LARRY

I suppose ya were wonderin' why I
want to celebrate ... and
everythin'.

She folds her arms and remains silent, allowing him to
continue.

LARRY

I had a pint with the boss ... and
he told me he was very ... very ...
pleased with my performance this
past year ... and sooo ...

(dramatically) he made me an
offer ... which I couldn't refuse.

Orla is steadfast, showing no sign of recognition.

LARRY

Orla, you have the great pleasure
of talkin' to the new sales manager
for the entire country.

Whattaya think a that?

She turns, unfolds her arms and looks at him, unsure of how to respond. He stretches his arms towards her.

ORLA

Seriously?

LARRY

Well, they're not giving me over twice me pay ... and a toppa-the-range Beamer for nothin'.

Orla is broken. She heartily embraces and kisses him.

ORLA

Congratulations. You deserve it.

You're great, Really.

LARRY

Do ya think so?

ORLA

Well, Mammy said she likes the sound of you.

And I think she knows what she's talking about.

LARRY

You've got a wise mother there, Orla.

They are both relieved at the restored relationship.

LARRY

So, ya come down here to see me?

ORLA

Yeah, but ... it's nothing.

LARRY

(profoundly) Yes, but ya know
somethin' Orla.

It's nothin' more than you deserve.

They sit on the settee and enthusiastically embrace. He
kisses her face.

He then proceeds to kiss her neck.

Recalling the previous night's encounter with her neck, she
recoils and points a stern finger at him.

They both laugh uproariously.

THE END