

THE CRIPPLE OF INISHMAAN

Martin McDonagh

From

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whom please address all communications
about the work to which this slip is attached.

THE CRIPPLE OF INISHMAAN

BILLY - 17 / 18. Crippled
EILEEN - Mid 60's..
KATE - Mid 60's.
JOHNNY - Mid 60's.
BARTLEY - 16 / 17.
HELEN - 17 / 18. Pretty.
BOBBY - Early 30's. Handsome, muscular.
DOCTOR - Early 40's.
MAMMY - Early 90's.

SCENE ONE

(A SMALL COUNTRY SHOP ON THE ISLAND OF INISHMAAN CIRCA 1934. DOOR IN RIGHT WALL. COUNTER ALONG BACK, BEHIND WHICH HANG SHELVES OF CANNED GOODS, MOSTLY PEAS. AN OLD DUSTY CLOTH SACK HANGS TO THE RIGHT OF THESE, AND TO THE LEFT A DOORWAY LEADS OFF TO AN UNSEEN BACK ROOM. A MIRROR HANGS ON THE LEFT WALL AND A TABLE AND CHAIR ARE SITUATED A FEW YARDS AWAY FROM IT. AS THE PLAY BEGINS, EILEEN OSBOURNE, LATE SIXTIES, IS PLACING SOME MORE CANS ONTO THE SHELVES. HER SISTER KATE ENTERS FROM THE BACK ROOM)

KATE: Is Billy not yet home?

EILEEN: Not yet is Billy home.

KATE: I do worry awful about Billy when he's late returning home.

EILEEN: I banged me arm on a can of peas worrying about Cripple Billy.

KATE: Was it your bad arm?

EILEEN: No, it was me other arm.

KATE: It would have been worse if you'd banged your bad arm.

EILEEN: It would have been worse, although it still hurt.

KATE: Now you have two bad arms.

EILEEN: Well, I have one bad arm and one arm with a knock.

KATE: The knock will go away.

EILEEN: The knock will go away.

KATE: And you'll be left with the one bad arm.

EILEEN: The one bad arm will never go away.

KATE: Until the day you die.

EILEEN: I should think about poor Billy, who has not only bad arms but bad legs too.

KATE: Billy has a host of troubles.

EILEEN: Billy has a hundred troubles, or more than a hundred.

KATE: What time was this his appointment with McSharry was and his chest?

EILEEN: I don't know what time.

KATE: I do worry awful about Billy when he's late in returning, d'you know?

EILEEN: Already once you've said that sentence.

KATE: Am I not allowed to repeat me sentences so when I'm worried.

EILEEN: You are allowed.

KATE: (PAUSE) Billy may've fell down a hole with them feet of his.

EILEEN: Billy has sense enough not to fall down holes, sure.

KATE: I suppose he does but I still worry.

EILEEN: That's more like something Bartley McCormick'd do is fall down holes.

KATE: Do you remember the time Bartley McCormick fell down the hole?

EILEEN: Bartley McCormick's an awful thick.

KATE: He's either a thick or he doesn't look where he's going proper.

EILEEN: The same differ, sure.

KATE: I suppose. (PAUSE) Has the egg-man been?

EILEEN: He has but he had no eggs.

KATE: A waste of time him coming, so.

EILEEN: Well it was nice of him to come and not have us waiting for eggs that would never arrive.

KATE: If only Billy would pay us the same courtesy. Not with eggs but to come home quick and not have us worrying.

EILEEN: Maybe Billy stopped to look at a cow like the other time.

KATE: A fool waste of time that is, looking at cows.

EILEEN: If it makes him happy, sure, what harm?

KATE: Only it reflects bad on us is all I'm saying.

EILEEN: There are a hundred worse things to occupy a lad's time than cow-watching. Things would land him up in hell. Not just late for his tea.

KATE: Kissing lasses.

EILEEN: Kissing lasses.

KATE: (PAUSE) Ah, no chance of that with poor Billy.

EILEEN: Poor Billy'll never be getting kissed. Unless it was be a blind girl.

KATE: A blind girl or a backward girl.

EILEEN: Or Jim Finnegan's daughter.

KATE: She'd kiss anything.

EILEEN: She'd kiss a bald donkey.

KATE: She'd kiss a bald donkey. And she'd still probably draw the line at Billy. Poor Billy.

EILEEN: A shame too.

KATE: A shame too, because Billy does have a sweet face if you ignore the rest of him.

EILEEN: Well, he doesn't really.

KATE: He has a bit of a sweet face.

EILEEN: Well he doesn't really, Kate.

KATE: Or his eyes, I'm saying. They're nice enough.

EILEEN: Not being cruel to Billy but you'd see nicer eyes on a goat.

KATE: Poor Billy.

EILEEN: If he did have a nice personality you'd say all well and good, but all Billy has is he goes around staring at cows.

KATE: I'd like to ask him one day what good he gets, staring at cows.

EILEEN: Staring at cows and reading books then.

KATE: No-one'll ever marry him. We'll be stuck with him til the day we die.

EILEEN: We will. (PAUSE) I don't mind being stuck with him.

KATE: I don't mind being stuck with him. Billy's a good gosawer, despiting the cows.

EILEEN: Billy's a good gosawer including the cows. (PAUSE) I hope that the news from McSharry was nothing to worry o'er.

KATE: I hope he gets home soon and not have us worrying.
I do worry awful when Billy's late in returning.

(THE SHOP DOOR OPENS AND JOHNNYPATEENMIKE, AN OLD
MAN OF ABOUT THE SAME AGE AS THEM, ENTERS)

EILEEN: Johnnypateenmike.

KATE: Johnnypateenmike.

JOHNNY: How is all?

EILEEN: Fine indeed...

JOHNNY: Johnnypateenmike does have three pieces of news
to be telling you this day...

KATE: You didn't see Cripple Billy on your travels now,
Johnnypateen?

JOHNNY: (PAUSE. PUT OUT) You have interrupted me pieces
of news now, Mrs Osbourne, and the third piece
of news was a great piece of news, but if you
want to interrupt me with fool questions so be
it. Aye, I saw Cripple Billy on me travels. I
saw him sitting on the hedgebank, the bottom of
Darcy's fields.

KATE: What was he doing sitting on the hedgebank?

JOHNNY: He wasn't doing anything at all. Or, anything
but looking at a cow. Do ye have any more
interruptions?

KATE: (SADLY) We don't.

JOHNNY: I will get on with me three pieces of news- so.
I will leave me best piece of news til the end
so's you will be waiting for it. Me first piece
of news, a fella o'er in Lettermore stole a book
out of another fella's house and pegged it in
the sea then.

EILEEN: Sure that's no news at all, sure.

JOHNNY: I suppose it's not, now, only that the fella was
the other fella's brother and the book he pegged
was the Holy Bible! Eh?!

KATE: God love us.

JOHNNY: Now is that no news at all?!

EILEEN: That is news, Johnnypateen, and big news.

JOHNNY: I know well it's big news, and if I have any more doubting of how big me news is I'll be off on the road for meself to somewhere me news is more appreciated.

EILEEN: Your news is appreciated, Johnnypateenmike.

KATE: We never once doubted how big your news was, Johnnypateen.

JOHNNY: Me second piece of news, Jack Ellery's goose bit Patty Brennan's cat on the tail and hurt that tail and Jack Ellery didn't even apologise for that goose's biting, and now Patty Brennan doesn't like Jack Ellery at all and Patty and Jack used to be great friends. Oh aye.

EILEEN: (PAUSE) Is that the end of that piece of news?

JOHNNY: That is the end of that piece of news.

EILEEN: Oh that's an awful big piece of news that is. Oh aye.

(EILEEN ROLLS HER EYES TO THE CEILING)

JOHNNY: That is an awful big piece of news. That goose might start a feud. I hope that goose does start a feud. I like a feud.

KATE: I hope Patty and Jack do put it behind them and make up.

JOHNNY: There's a woman speaking if ever I heard one. What news is there in putting things behind ya? No news. You want a good feud, or at least a bible pegged about, or a thing like me third piece of news, which is about the biggest piece of news Johnnypateenmike has ever had...

(BILLY, SEVENTEEN, ONE ARM AND ONE LEG CRIPPLED, ENTERS, SHUFFLING)

BILLY: I'm sorry I'm late, Aunty Kate and Aunty Eileen. Hello Johnnypateenmike...

JOHNNY: You've interrupted me news-telling, Cripple Billy.

KATE: What did the doctor say to you, Billy?

BILLY: He said there was nothing on me chest at all but a bit of a wheeze and nothing but a bit of a wheeze.

JOHNNY: I didn't hear the lad had a wheeze. Why wasn't Johnnypateen informed?

KATE: Why are you so late home so, Billy? We was worried.

BILLY: Oh I just had a sit down for meself in the sun there at Darcy's fields.

KATE: A sit down and did what?

BILLY: A sit down and did nothing.

KATE: Did nothing at all?

BILLY: Did nothing at all.

KATE: (TO JOHNNY) Now!

BILLY: Nothing at all but look at a couple of cows came over to me.

(KATE TURNS AWAY FROM HIM)

JOHNNY: (TO KATE) Now who's nowing?!

EILEEN: Can't you just leave cows alone, Billy?

BILLY: I was just looking at them cows.

KATE: There's nothing to see in cows! You're a grown man!

BILLY: Well I like looking at a nice cow, and I won't let anybody tell me the differ.

JOHNNY: (SCREAMING) If ye don't want to hear me news I'll take it and go!!

EILEEN: We do want to hear your news.

JOHNNY: Talking about cows with an eej!

BILLY: An eej, is it?

EILEEN: Tell us your news, now, Johnnypateenmike.

JOHNNY: If ye've finished with the cow-talk I'll tell you me news, although I'm sure I'd get a better audience for it from winkles.

KATE: We're a good audience for it...

EILEEN: We're a good audience for it...

BILLY: Don't pander to him.

JOHNNY: Pander, is it, Cripple Billy?

BILLY: And don't call me Cripple Billy, you.

JOHNNY: For why? Isn't your name Billy and aren't you a cripple?

BILLY: Well do I go calling you 'Johnnypateenmike with the boring news that's so boring it'd bore the head off a dead bee'?

JOHNNY: Boring is it? How is this for boring news so, although why I should tell you me boring news now I've been insulted I don't know.

BILLY: At least you do agree it's boring news anyways. That's one thing.

JOHNNY: (PAUSE) From Hollywood, California, in America they're coming, led be a Yank be the name of Robert Flaherty, one of the most famous and richest Yanks there is. Coming there to Inishmore they're coming and why are they coming? I'll tell you why they're coming. To go making a moving picture film will cost o'er a million dollars or near a million dollars, will be shown throughout the world, will show life how it's lived on the islands, will make film stars of whosoever should be chose to take part in it and will take them back to Hollywood then and be giving them a life free of work, or anyways only acting work which couldn't be called work at all, it's only talking. Colman King I know already they've chosen for a role, and a hundred dollars a week he's on, and if Colman King can play a role in a film anybody can play a role in a film, for Colman King is as ugly as a brick of baked shite and everybody agrees, and excuse me language but I'm only being descriptive. A little exodus Johnnypateenmike foresees to the big island so, of any lasses or lads in these parts with the looks of a film-star about-them, wants to make their mark in America. That rules out all in this house-hold, I know, it goes without saying, unless of course it's cripples and ingrates they're looking for. Me in me younger days they'd've been sure to've took, what with me blue eyes and me fine head of hair, and probably still today they'd be after taking me, what with me fine oratory skills could outdo any beggar the Dublin stage, only, as ye know, I have me drunkard mammy to look after. 'The Man of Aran' they're going calling the film, and Ireland mustn't be such a bad place so if the Yanks want to come to Ireland to do their filming.

(BILLY SITS ON THE SIDE-TABLE, DEEP IN THOUGHT)

JOHNNY: (CONT.) That was Johnnypateenmike's third piece of news, and I'll go asking you now was that a boring piece of news?

EILEEN: Not at all was that a boring piece of news. That was the biggest piece of news I did ever hear.

JOHNNY: And you, bad-leg-boy, I'll ask you was that a boring piece of news?

BILLY: That wasn't nearly a boring piece of news, although I'd be intrigued to hear how you did obtain that piece of news.

JOHNNY: Johnnypateenmike does never reveal his sources, but if we've all agreed on the bigness of me news... 'Bigness' isn't a word, I know, but I can't be bothered to think of a better one for the likes of ye... I will take me payment in kind for that piece of big news, and me payment today will be a small boxeen of eggs for I do fancy an omelette, I do.

EILEEN: Oh.

JOHNNY: What 'oh'?

EILEEN: The egg-man came and he had no eggs.

JOHNNY: No eggs?! I've gave you me big piece of news on top of me two smaller but almost as good pieces of news and ye've no eggs?!

EILEEN: He said the eggs weren't laying and Slippy Helen dropped the only eggs he had.

JOHNNY: What do ye have for me tea so?

EILEEN: We've peas.

JOHNNY: Sure peas won't go far for a grown man's tea. Give me that bit of bacon there, so. That one there.

EILEEN: Which one? The lean one?

JOHNNY: The lean one, aye.

EILEEN: Jeez, your news wasn't that bloody big, Johnnypateen.

(JOHNNY STARES AT THEM ALL, HATEFULLY, THEN EXITS, FUMING)

That fella.

KATE: We oughtn't be getting on his wrong side, now, Eileen.

EILEEN: For why?

KATE: How else will we know what's going on in the outside world but for Johnny?

EILEEN: But isn't that the first decent bit of news that fella's had in twenty years?

KATE: Aye, and we might miss out on the next bit, now.

EILEEN: Coming with his egg extortions every week.

BILLY: That was an interesting bit of news, aye.

KATE: (APPROACHING HIM) You're not usually at all interested in Johnnypat's biteens of news, Billy.

BILLY: Not when they're about sheep falling o'er or frogs coughing, no. When they're about films and getting away from Inishmaan I am, aye.

KATE: You're not thinking about your poor mammy and daddy again, are ya?

BILLY: No, now. I'm just thinking about general things for meself, now.

EILEEN: Is he off again?

KATE: (SIGHING) He is.

EILEEN: Off thinking?

KATE: That lad'll never be told.

EILEEN: The doctor didn't look at your head when he looked at your chest did he, Billy?

BILLY: (BLANKLY) No.

EILEEN: I think that's the next thing to go checking out is his head.

KATE: I think that's the next item on the agenda, aye.

(THE SHOP DOOR SUDDENLY BANGS OPEN AND JOHNNY STICKS HIS HEAD IN)

JOHNNY: (ANGRILY) If ye aren't chasing after me I'll take your bloody peas, so!

(EILEEN HANDS JOHNNY A CAN OF PEAS. JOHNNY SLAMS THE DOOR ON HIS EXIT, BILLY NOT NOTICING HIM AT ALL, THE WOMEN BEMUSED. BLACKOUT)

SCENE TWO

(BARTLEY, SIXTEEN, AT THE COUNTER, LOOKING OVER THE PENNY SWEETS IN THE TWO RECTANGULAR BOXES EILEEN IS TILTING UP FOR HIM. BILLY IS SITTING ON THE CHAIR, READING)

BARTLEY: (PAUSE) Do ya have any Mintios?

EILEEN: We have only what you see, Bartley McCormick.

BARTLEY: In America they do have Mintios.

EILEEN: Go to America so.

BARTLEY: Me Aunt Mary did send me seven Mintios in a package.

EILEEN: Good on your Aunt Mary so.

BARTLEY: From Boston Massachusettes.

EILEEN: From Boston Massachusettes, uh-huh.

BARTLEY: But you have none?

EILEEN: We have only what you see.

BARTLEY: You should get some Mintios really, because Mintios are nice sweeties. You should order some in. You should get somebody from America to go sending you some. In a package. Now I'll have to be taking another look for meself.

EILEEN: Take another look for yourself, aye.

(BARTLEY LOOKS OVER THE BOXES AGAIN. BILLY SMILES AT EILEEN, WHO ROLLS HER EYES TO THE CEILING AND SMILES BACK)

BARTLEY: (PAUSE) Do ya have any Yalla-mallows?

EILEEN: (PAUSE) We have only what you see.

BARTLEY: They do have Yalla-mallows in America.

EILEEN: Oh aye. I suppose your Aunt Mary did send you some in a package.

BARTLEY: No. She sent me a photograph of some in a package. The only proper sweeties she sent me were the seven Mintios. (PAUSE) Really it would've been better if she'd only sent me four Mintios and then put in three Yalla-mallows with them, so then I could've had like a selection. Or three

BARTLEY: (CONT.) Mintios and four Yalla-mallows. Aye. But, ah, I was happy enough with the seven Mintios if truth be told. Mintios are nice sweeties. Although the photograph of the Yalla-mallows did raise me curiosity about them. (PAUSE) But you have none?

EILEEN: Yalla-mallows?

BARTLEY: Aye.

EILEEN: No.

BARTLEY: Oh.

EILEEN: We have only what you see.

BARTLEY: I'll have to be taking another look for meself so. I want something to go sucking on. For the trip, y'know?

BILLY: For what trip, Bartley?

(THE SHOP DOOR BANGS OPEN AND HELEN, A PRETTY GIRL OF ABOUT SEVENTEEN, ENTERS, SHOUTING AT BARTLEY)

HELEN: Are you fecking coming, you, fecker?!

BARTLEY: I'm picking me sweeties.

HELEN: Oh you and your fecking sweeties!

EILEEN: Lasses swearing, now!

HELEN: Lasses swearing, aye, and why shouldn't lasses be swearing when it's an hour for their eejit fecking brother it is they're kept waiting. Hello Cripple Billy.

BILLY: Hello there, Helen.

HELEN: Is it another oul book you're going reading?

BILLY: It is.

HELEN: You never stop, do ya?

BILLY: I don't. Or, I do sometimes stop...

EILEEN: I heard you did drop all the eggs on the egg-man the other day, Helen, broke the lot of them.

HELEN: I didn't drop them eggs at all. I went pegging them at Father Barratt, got him bang in the gob with fecking four of them.

EILEEN: You went pegging them at Father Barratt?

HELEN: I did. Are you repeating me now, Mrs?

EILEEN: Sure, pegging eggs at a priest, isn't it pure against God?

HELEN: Oh, maybe it is, but if God went touching me arse in choir practice I'd peg eggs at that fecker too.

EILEEN: Father Barratt went touching your... behind in choir pr...

HELEN: Not me behind, no. Me arse, Mrs. Me arse.

EILEEN: I don't believe you at all, Helen McCormick.

HELEN: And what the feck d'you think I care what you believe?

BILLY: Helen, now...

BARTLEY: The worst part of the entire affair, it was a sheer waste of eggs, because I do like a nice egg, I do, oh aye.

HELEN: Are you entering the egg-debate or are you buying your fecking sweeties, you?

BARTLEY: (TO EILEEN) Do you have any Chocky-top Drops, Mrs?

EILEEN: (PAUSE) You know what me answer's going to be, don't you, Bartley?

BARTLEY: Your answer's going to be ye have only what I see.

EILEEN: We're getting somewhere now.

BARTLEY: I'll take another look for meself, so.

(HELEN SIGHS, IDLES OVER TO BILLY, TAKES HIS BOOK FROM HIM, LOOKS AT IT'S COVER, GRIMACES AND GIVES IT BACK)

BILLY: Are ye going on a trip, did Bartley say?

HELEN: We're sailing o'er to Inishmore to be in this film they're filming.

BARTLEY: Ireland mustn't be such a bad place, so, if the Yanks want to come here to do their filming.

HELEN: From the entire of the world they chose Ireland, sure.

BARTLEY: There's a French fella living in Rosmuck nowadays, d'you know?

EILEEN: Is there?

BARTLEY: What's this, now, that the French fella does do, Helen? Wasn't it some funny thing?

HELEN: Dentist.

BARTLEY: Dentist. He goes around speaking French at people too, and everybody just laughs at him. Behind his back, like, y'know?

HELEN: Ireland mustn't be such a bad place, so, if French fellas want to live in Ireland.

BILLY: When is it you're going, so, Helen, to the filming?

HELEN: The morning-tide tomorrow we're going.

BARTLEY: I can't wait to go acting in the film.

HELEN: You, are you picking or are you talking?

BARTLEY: I'm picking and talking.

HELEN: You'll be picking, talking and having your bollocks kicked for ya if ya back-talk me again, ya feck.

BARTLEY: Oh aye.

BILLY: Sure, why would you think they'd let ye be in the filming at all, Helen?

HELEN: Sure, look at as pretty as we are, or as pretty as I am anyways, and as fairly pretty as he is, which he can't help, being related to me. If I'm pretty enough to get clergymen groping me arse, it won't be too hard to wrap film fellas round me fingers.

BARTLEY: Sure, getting clergymen groping your arse doesn't take much skill. It isn't being pretty they go for. It's more being on your own and small.

HELEN: If it's being on your own and small, why so has Cripple Billy never had his arse groped be priests?

BARTLEY: You don't know at all Cripple Billy's never had his arse groped be priests.

HELEN: Have you ever had your arse groped be priests, Cripple Billy?

BILLY: No.

HELEN: Now.

BARTLEY: I suppose they have to draw the line somewhere.

HELEN: And you, you're small and often on your own. Have you ever had your arse groped by priests?

BARTLEY: (QUIETLY) Not me arse, no.

HELEN: D'ya see?

BARTLEY: (TO EILEEN) Do ya have any Fripple-frapples, Mrs?

(EILEEN STARES AT HIM, PUTS THE BOXES DOWN ON THE COUNTER AND EXITS INTO THE BACK ROOM)

Where are you going, Mrs? What about me sweeties, Mrs?

HELEN: You've done it now, haven't ya?

BARTLEY: Your oul aunty's a mad woman, Cripple Billy.

HELEN: Mrs Osbourne isn't Cripple Billy's aunty at all, anyways... She's only his pretend aunty, same as the other one. Isn't that right, Billy?

BILLY: It is.

HELEN: They only took him in when Billy's mam and dad went and drowned themselves, when they found out Billy was born a cripple-boy.

BILLY: They didn't go and drown themselves.

HELEN: Oh aye, aye...

BILLY: They only fell o'erboard in rough seas.

HELEN: Uh-huh. What were they doing sailing in rough seas, so, and wasn't it at night-time too?

BILLY: Trying to get to America be the mainland, I think they were.

HELEN: No, trying to get away from you they were, be distance or be death, it made no differ to them.

BILLY: Well how the hell would you know when you were just a babby at the time, the same as me?

HELEN: I did give Johnnypateenmike a cheesy praitie one time and he told me.

BILLY: And what would Johnnypateen know what was in their heads that night? He wasn't in that boat.

HELEN: Well didn't they have a sackful of stones tied between themselves?

BILLY: That's only pure gossip that they had a sackful of stones tied betw...

BARTLEY: Maybe he had a telescope.

HELEN: Maybe who had a telescope?

BARTLEY: Maybe Johnnypateenmike had a telescope.

HELEN: What differ would having a telescope have?

(BARTLEY THINKS, THEN SHRUGS)

You and your fecking telescopes. You're always throwing telescopes into the conversation.

BARTLEY: They do have a great array of telescopes in America now, d'know? You can see a worm a mile away.

HELEN: Why would you want to see a worm a mile away?

BARTLEY: To see what he was up to.

HELEN: What do worms usually be up to?

BARTLEY: Wriggling.

HELEN: Wriggling. And how much do telescopes cost?

BARTLEY: Twelve dollars for a good one.

HELEN: So you'd pay twelve dollars to find out worms go wriggling?

BARTLEY: (PAUSE) Aye. I would.

HELEN: You don't have twelve hairs on your bollocks, let alone twelve dollars.

BARTLEY: I don't have twelve dollars on me bollocks, no, you're right there. I saw no sense.

(HELEN APPROACHES HIM)

Don't, Helen...

(HELEN PUNCHES HIM HARD IN THE STOMACH)

(WINDED) Hurt me ribs that punch did.

HELEN: Feck your ribs. Using that kind of fecking language to me, eh? (PAUSE) What was we talking about, Cripple Billy? Oh aye, your dead mammy and daddy.

BILLY: They didn't go drowning themselves because of me. They loved me.

HELEN: They loved you? Would you love you if you weren't you? You barely love you and you are you.

BARTLEY: (WINDED) At least Cripple Billy doesn't punch poor lads ribs for them.

HELEN: No, and why? Because he's too fecking feeble to. It'd feel like a punch from a wet goose.

BARTLEY: (EXCITED) Did ye hear Jack Ellery's goose bit Patty Brennan's cat on the tail and hurt that tail...

HELEN: We did hear.

BARTLEY: Oh. (PAUSE) And Jack didn't even apologise for that goose's biting and now Patty Brennan...

HELEN: Didn't I just say we fecking heard, sure?

BARTLEY: I thought Billy mightn't have heard.

HELEN: Sure Billy's busy thinking about his drowned mammy and daddy, Bartley. He doesn't need any of your days-old goose-news. Aren't you thinking about your drowned mammy and daddy, Billy.

BILLY: I am.

HELEN: You've never been on the sea since the day they died, have you, Billy? Aren't you too scared?

BILLY: I am too scared.

HELEN: What a big sissy-arse, eh Bartley?

BARTLEY: Sure anybody with a brain is at least a biteen afraid of the sea.

HELEN: I'm not a biteen afraid of the sea.

BARTLEY: Well there you go, now.

(BILLY LAUGHS)

HELEN: Eh? Was that an insult?!

BARTLEY: How would that be an insult, saying you're not afraid of the sea?

HELEN: Why did Cripple Billy laugh so?

BARTLEY: Cripple Billy only laughed cos he's an odd boy. Isn't that right, Cripple Billy?

BILLY: It is, aye. Oh plain odd I am.

(HELEN PAUSES, CONFUSED)

BARTLEY: Is it true you got nigh on a hundred pounds when your mammy and daddy drowneded, Billy?

BILLY: It is.

BARTLEY: Jeebies. Do ya still have it?

BILLY: I have none of it. Didn't it all go on me medical bills at the time?

BARTLEY: You don't have even a quarter of it?

BILLY: I don't. Why?

BARTLEY: No, only if you had a quarter of it you could probably buy yourself a pretty classy telescope, d'you know? Oh you could.

HELEN: Do you have to bring telescopes into fecking everything, you?

BARTLEY: I don't, but I like to, ya bitch. Leave me!

(BARTLEY DASHES OUT OF THE SHOP AS HELEN ADVANCES ON HIM. PAUSE)

HELEN: I don't know where he gets the fecking cheek of him from, I don't.

BILLY: (PAUSE) How are ye two sailing to Inishmore, so, Helen? Ye've no boat.

HELEN: We're getting Babbybobby Bennett to bring us in his boat.

BILLY: Are you paying him?

HELEN: Only in kisses and a bit of a hold of his hand, or I hope that it's only his hand I'll be holding. Although I've heard it's a big one. Jim Finnegan's daughter was telling me. She knows everybodys. I think she keeps a chart for herself.

BILLY: She doesn't know mine.

HELEN: And you say that like you're proud. I suppose she wasn't sure whether you had one, as mangled and fecked as you are.

BILLY: (SADLY) I have one.

HELEN: Congratulations, but would you keep it to yourself? In more ways than one. (PAUSE) Me, the only ones I've seen belong to priests. They keep showing them to me. I don't know why. I can't say they whetted me appetite. All brown. (PAUSE) What have you gone all mopey for?

BILLY: Would Babbybobby be letting me go sailing with ye?

HELEN: What have you to offer Babbybobby, sure? He wouldn't want to go holding your hand.

BILLY: What has Bartley to offer Bobby, so, and he's still going with ye?

HELEN: Bartley's promised him two yalla-mallows and a Mintio.

BILLY: We have no Yalla-mallows or Mintios.

HELEN: Or similar, I think he said.

BILLY: Sure I could offer him more sweeties than Bartley could offer him.

HELEN: Bartley said he'd help with the rowing on top of it. Could you help with the rowing?

(BILLY LOWERS HIS HEAD)

What would you want to be coming for, anyways?

BILLY: (SHRUGGING) To be in the filming.

HELEN: You?

(HELEN STARTS LAUGHING, SLOWLY, AS SHE MOVES TO THE DOOR)

I shouldn't laugh at you, Billy... but I will.

(SHE EXITS LAUGHING. PAUSE. EILEEN RETURNS FROM THE BACK ROOM AND SLAPS BILLY ACROSS THE HEAD)

BILLY: What was that fer?!

EILEEN: Over my dead body are you going to Inishmore filming, Billy Claven!

BILLY: Ah I was only thinking aloud, sure.

EILEEN: Well stop thinking aloud! Stop thinking aloud and stop thinking quiet! There's too much out thinking done in this house with you around. Did you ever see the Virgin Mary going thinking aloud?

BILLY: I didn't.

EILEEN: Is right, you didn't. And it didn't do her any harm!

(EILEEN EXITS TO THE BACK ROOM AGAIN. PAUSE. BILLY GETS UP, SHUFFLES OVER TO THE FULL-LENGTH MIRROR, LOOKS HIMSELF OVER A MOMENT, THEN SADLY SHUFFLES BACK TO THE TABLE. BARTLEY OPENS THE SHOP DOOR AND POPS HIS HEAD INSIDE)

BARTLEY: Cripple Billy, will you tell your aunty or your pretend aunty I'll be in for me Mintios later, or, not me Mintios but me sweeties generally.

BILLY: I will, Bartley.

BARTLEY: Me sister just told me your idea of being in the filming with us and I did have an awful laugh. That was a great joke, Billy.

BILLY: Good-oh, Bartley.

BARTLEY: They may even bring you to Hollywood after. They may make a star out of ya.

BILLY: They might at that, Bartley.

BARTLEY: A little cripple star. Heh. So you'll remind your aunty I'll be in for me Mintios later, or, not me Mintios but me...

BILLY: Your sweeties generally.

BARTLEY: Me sweeties generally. Or if not later then tomorrow morning.

BILLY: Goodbye, Bartley.

BARTLEY: Goodbye, Cripple Billy, or are you okay there, Cripple Billy, you do look a little bit sad for yourself?

BILLY: I'm fine, Bartley.

BARTLEY: Good-oh.

(BARTLEY EXITS. BILLY WHEEZES SLIGHTLY, FEELING HIS CHEST)

BILLY: (QUIETLY) I'm fine, aye.

(PAUSE. BLACKOUT)

SCENE THREE

(A SHORE AT NIGHT. BABBYBOBBY FIXING HIS CURRAGH. JOHNNY ENTERS, SLIGHTLY DRUNK, WALKS UP TO HIM AND WATCHES A WHILE)

JOHNNY: I see you're getting your curragh ready, Babbybobby.

BOBBY: I am, Johnnypateen.

JOHNNY: (PAUSE) Are you getting your curragh ready so?

BOBBY: Didn't I just say I was getting me curragh ready?

JOHNNY: You did, aye. (PAUSE) So you're getting your curragh ready. (PAUSE) All spick and span you're getting it. (PAUSE) Aye. (PAUSE) All nice and prepared, like. (PAUSE) All ready. (PAUSE) All ready for a trip or something. (PAUSE) Aye. (PAUSE) That's a nice boat, that is. A nice boat for a tripeen. And it's even more nice now that you've got it all prepared for yourself. Aye. (PAUSE) All prepared and ready.

BOBBY: If it's a question you have to ask me, Johnnypateen, go ahead and ask me the question and don't be beating around the bush like some fool of an eejit schoolchild.

JOHNNY: I have no question to ask you. What question would I have to ask you? If Johnnypateenmike has a question to ask he comes right out and asks it with no hesitation at all. You don't see Johnnypateen beating around a bush. Oh no. (PAUSE) Just commenting on how nice your curragh is is all. (PAUSE) How nice and ready you're getting it. (PAUSE) Nice and ready for a trip or something. (PAUSE. ANGRILY) Well if you won't tell me where you're going I'll fecking be off with meself!

BOBBY: Be off with yourself, aye.

JOHNNY: I will be off with meself. After your treatment!

BOBBY: I gave you no treatment.

JOHNNY: You did give me treatment. You never tell me any news. Your Mrs up and died of TB the other year, and who was the last to know? I was the last to know. I wasn't told until the day she died, and ye beggars knew for weeks and weeks, with not a thought for my feelings...

BOBBY: I should've kicked her arse down the road for her to tell you, Johnnypateen, and, d'you know, I've regretted not doing so ever since.

JOHNNY: One more time I'll say it so. So you're getting your curragh ready. All nice and prepared for a trip or something, now.

BOBBY: Ask me a question outright and I'll be pleased to give you the answer, Johnnypateen.

(JOHNNY STARES AT BOBBY A SECOND, FUMING, THEN STORMS OFF RIGHT. BOBBY CONTINUES WITH THE BOAT)

(QUIETLY) Ya stupid fecking eej. (PAUSE. CALLING OFF LEFT) Who's that shuffling on the stones?

BILLY: (OFF) It's Billy Claven, Babbybobby.

BOBBY: I should've guessed that. Who else shuffles?

BILLY: (ENTERING) No-one, I suppose.

BOBBY: Are your aunties not worried you're out this late, Cripple Billy?

BILLY: They'd be worried if they knew but they don't know. I snuck out on them.

BOBBY: You shouldn't sneak out on aunties, Cripple Billy. Even if they're funny aunties.

BILLY: Do you think they're funny aunties too, Babbybobby?

BOBBY: I saw your Aunty Kate talking to a stone one time.

BILLY: I've heard tell of the stone business.

BOBBY: Talking to a stone and listening to a stone.

BILLY: And she shouts at me for staring at cows.

BOBBY: Well I wouldn't hold staring at cows up as the height of sanity, Billy.

BILLY: Sure, I only stare at cows to get away from me aunties a while. It isn't for the fun of staring at cows. There is no fun in staring at cows. They just stand there looking at you like fools.

BOBBY: Do you never throw nothing at them cows?

BILLY: No.

BOBBY: That might liven them up.

BILLY: I wouldn't want to hurt them, sure.

BOBBY: You're too kind-hearted is your trouble, Cripple Billy. Cows don't mind you throwing things at them.

BILLY: You don't know that, Babbybobby.

BOBBY: I threw a brick at a cow once and he didn't even moo, and I got him bang on the arse.

BILLY: Sure that's no evidence. He may've been a quiet cow.

BOBBY: (PAUSE) He may've. And, sure, I'm not telling you to go pegging bricks at cows. I was drunk when this happened. Just if you get bored, I'm saying.

BILLY: I usually bring a book with me anyways. I've no desire to injure livestock.

BOBBY: You could throw the book at the cow.

BILLY: I would rather to read the book, Bobby.

BOBBY: It takes all kinds, as they say.

BILLY: It does. (PAUSE) Are you getting your curragh ready there, Babbybobby?

BOBBY: Oh everybody's awful observant tonight, it does seem.

BILLY: Ready to bring Helen and Bartley o'er to the filming?

(BOBBY LOOKS AT BILLY A MOMENT, CHECKS OUT RIGHT TO MAKE SURE JOHNNY ISN'T AROUND, THEN RETURNS)

BOBBY: How did you hear tell of Helen and Bartley's travelling?

BILLY: Helen told me.

BOBBY: Helen told you. Jeez, and I told Helen she'd get a punch if she let anyone in on the news.

BILLY: Helen's a tough one. She probably didn't even care about a punch.

BOBBY: Is true enough. Ah, I probably wouldn't even have punched Helen anyways.

BILLY: There's no call in punching a lass, I suppose.

BOBBY: It's not that but I be a biteen scared of Helen, I do. She's fearsome.

BILLY: I hear she's paying you in kisses for this boat-trip.

BOBBY: She is, and, sure, I didn't want paying at all. It was Helen insisted on that clause.

BILLY: So you'd've took them without payment at all?

BOBBY: I would. I wouldn't mind having a look at this filming business meself. What harm in taking passengers along?

BILLY: Would you take me as a passenger too, so?

BOBBY: (PAUSE) No.

BILLY: Why, now?

BOBBY: I've no room.

BILLY: You've plenty of room.

BOBBY: Did I not say no, now?

BILLY: That boat could take four easy.

BOBBY: A cripple fella's bad luck in a boat, and everybody knows.

BILLY: Since when, now?

BOBBY: Since Poteen-Larry took a cripple fella in his boat and it sank.

BILLY: That's the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard, Babbybobby.

BOBBY: Or if he wasn't a cripple fella, he had a bad leg on him anyways.

BILLY: You're just prejudiced against cripples is all you are.

BOBBY: I'm not at all prejudiced against cripples. I did kiss a cripple girl one time. Not only crippled but disfigured too. I was drunk, I didn't mind. You're not spoilt for pretty girls in Antrim.

BILLY: Don't go changing the subject on me.

BOBBY: Big green teeth. Oh you'd get a terrible taste off her. What subject?

BILLY: The subject of taking me to the filming with ye.

BOBBY: I thought we closed that subject.

BILLY: We hardly opened that subject.

BOBBY: Sure, what do you want to go to the filming for? They wouldn't want a cripple boy.

BILLY: You don't know what they'd want.

BOBBY: I don't, I suppose. No, you're right there. I did see a film there one time with a fella who not only had he no arms and no legs but he was a coloured fella too.

BILLY: A coloured fella? I've never seen a coloured fella, let alone a crippled coloured fella. I didn't know you could get them.

BOBBY: Oh they'd give you a terrible scare.

BILLY: Coloured fellas? Are they fierce?

BOBBY: Awful fierce. They're less fierce with no arms or legs on them, because they can't do much to ya, but even so they're still fierce.

BILLY: I heard a coloured fella a year ago came to Dublin a week.

BOBBY: Ireland mustn't be such a bad place, so, if coloured fellas want to come to Ireland.

BILLY: It mustn't. (PAUSE) Ar, Babbybobby, you've only brought up coloured fellas to put me off the subject again.

BOBBY: There's no cripple fellas coming in this boat, Billy. Maybe some day, in a year or two, like. If your feet straighten out on ya.

BILLY: A year or two's no good to me, Bobby.

BOBBY: Why so?

(BILLY TAKES OUT A LETTER AND HANDS IT TO BOBBY; WHO STARTS READING IT)

What's this?

BILLY: It's a letter from Doctor McSharry, and you've got to promise you'll not breath a word of it to another living soul.

(HALFWAY THROUGH THE LETTER, BOBBY'S EXPRESSION TURNS SAD. HE GLANCES AT BILLY, THEN CONTINUES)

BOBBY: When did you get this?

BILLY: Just a day ago I got it. (PAUSE) Now will you let me come?

BOBBY: Your aunties'll be upset at you going.

BILLY: Well is it their life or is it my life? I'll send word to them from over there. Ah, I may only be gone a day or two anyways. I get bored awful easy. (PAUSE) Will you let me come?

BOBBY: Nine o'clock tomorrow morning be here.

BILLY: Thank you, Bobby. I'll be here.

(BOBBY GIVES HIM BACK THE LETTER AND BILLY FOLDS IT AWAY. JOHNNY QUICKLY ENTERS, HIS HAND HELD OUT)

JOHNNY: No, hang on there, now. What did the letter say?

BOBBY: Ah Johnnypateen, will you feck off home for yourself?

JOHNNY: Be showing Johnnypateen that letter now, you, cripple-boy.

BILLY: I won't be showing you me letter.

JOHNNY: What d'you mean you won't be showing me your letter? You showed him your letter. Be handing it over, now.

BOBBY: Did anybody ever tell you you're a biteen rude, Johnnypateenmike?

JOHNNY: I'm rude? I'm rude? With ye two standing there hogging letters, and letters from doctors, is the most interesting kind of letters, and ye have the gall then to go calling me rude?

BOBBY: The letter is Cripple Billy's letter and nothing to do with you.

JOHNNY: Oh I suppose it is, and I suppose there are plenty other things I heard here tonight are nothing to do with me, but do you think they won't be bandied around town if ye don't show me the letter?

BOBBY: Things like what, now?

JOHNNY: Oh, things like you rowing schoolies to Inishmore and you kissing green-teeth-girls in Antrim is the kind of thing, now.

BOBBY: Is it blackmail you're trying on me now, Johnnypateen?

JOHNNY: It isn't at all blackmail nor not nearly blackmail, or, alright, yes it is blackmail, but a newsman has to obtain his news be hook or be crook.

BOBBY: Be hook or be crook, is it? Well have this for hook or be crook.

(BOBBY GRABS JOHNNY BY THE HAIR AND WRENCHES HIS ARM UP BEHIND HIS BACK)

JOHNNY: Aargh! Be letting go of me arm there you, ya thug!
I'll get the constabulary on ya.

BOBBY: Be lying down on the sand there, you, for yourself.

(BOBBY FORCES JOHNNY FACE DOWN ON THE GROUND)

JOHNNY: Be running for the polis now you, cripple-boy,
or shuffling anyways.

BILLY: I won't. I'll be standing here watching.

JOHNNY: An accomplice that makes ya.

BILLY: Good-oh.

JOHNNY: I'm only an oul fella.

(BOBBY STEPS UP ONTO JOHNNY'S BACKSIDE)

Aargh! Get off of me arse, you!

BOBBY: Billy, go pick up some stones for me.

BILLY: (DOING SO) Big stones?

BOBBY: Middling-size stones.

JOHNNY: What do you want stones for?

BOBBY: I'm to go pegging them at the back of your head
til you promise not to go bandying me business
about town.

(BILLY GIVES BOBBY SOME STONES)

JOHNNY: You'll never get me to make such a promise. I
can withstand any torture. Like Kevin Barry I
am.

(BOBBY THROWS A STONE AT JOHNNY'S HEAD)

Aargh! I promise, I promise.

BOBBY: On Christ ya promise?

JOHNNY: On Christ I promise.

BOBBY: Sure that withstanding didn't last very long.

(BOBBY GETS OFF JOHNNY, WHO STANDS BACK UP, BRUSHING
HIMSELF OFF)

JOHNNY: Standing on an oul fella and pegging stones at him then? I've never heard the like!

BOBBY: You've heard the like now.

JOHNNY: I wouldn't get that kind of treatment in England! And now I have sand in me ears.

BOBBY: Take that sand home with ya and show it to your drunken mammy so.

JOHNNY: You leave my drunken mammy out of it.

BOBBY: And be remembering that promise.

JOHNNY: Under duress that promise was made.

BOBBY: I don't care if it was made under a dog's arsehole. You'll be remembering it.

JOHNNY: (PAUSE) Ya feckers, ya!

(JOHNNY STORMS OFF RIGHT, SHAKING HIS FIST)

BOBBY: I've wanted to peg stones at that man's head for fifteen year.

BILLY: I'd never get up the courage to peg stones at his head.

BOBBY: Ah, I suppose you shouldn't peg stones at an oul fellas head, but didn't he drive me to it? (PAUSE) You got up the courage to travel to Inishmore anyways, and you scared of the sea.

BILLY: I did. Is Johnnypateen gone?

BOBBY: (AFTER CHECKING) I can hear him muttering in the distance.

BILLY: We'll meet at nine tomorrow so.

BOBBY: Better make it eight, Cripple Billy, in case Johnnypateen lets the cat out of the bag.

BILLY: Do you not trust him so?

BOBBY: I'd trust him as much as I'd trust you to carry a pint for me without spilling it.

BILLY: That's not a nice thing to say.

BOBBY: I'm a hard character, me.

BILLY: You're not a hard character at all, Babbybobby. You're a soft character.

BOBBY: (PAUSE) My wife Annie died of the same thing, d'you know? TB. But at least I got a year to spend with her. Three months is no time.

BILLY: I won't even see the summer in.

BOBBY: I'm glad I was able to help you in some way anyways, Cripple Billy.

BILLY: Would you do me a favour, Babbybobby? Would you not call me Cripple Billy any more long?

BOBBY: What do you want to be called so?

BILLY: Well, just Billy.

BOBBY: Oh. Okay so, Billy.

BILLY: And you, would you rather just be called Bobby and not Babbybobby?

BOBBY: For why?

BILLY: I don't know why.

BOBBY: I do like being called Babbybobby. What's wrong with it?

BILLY: Nothing at all I suppose. I'll see you in the morning so, Babbybobby.

BOBBY: See you in the morning so, Cripple Billy. Em, Billy.

BILLY: Didn't I just say?

BOBBY: I forgot. I'm sorry, Billy.

(BILLY NODS, THEN SHUFFLES AWAY)

Oh, and Billy?

(BILLY LOOKS BACK. BOBBY MAKES A GESTURE WITH HIS HAND)

I'm sorry.

(BILLY BOWS HIS HEAD, NODS, AND EXITS RIGHT. PAUSE. BOBBY NOTICES SOMETHING IN THE SURF, PICKS A BIBLE UP OUT OF IT, LOOKS AT IT A MOMENT, THEN TOSSES IT BACK INTO THE SEA AND CONTINUES WORKING ON THE BOAT. BLACKOUT)

SCENE FOUR

(BEDROOM OF MAMMY O'DOUGAL, JOHNNY'S NINETY YEAR OLD MOTHER. MAMMY IN BED, DOCTOR MCSHARRY CHECKING HER WITH A STETHOSCOPE, JOHNNY HOVERING)

DOCTOR: Have you been laying off the drink, Mrs O'Dougal?

JOHNNY: Did you not hear me question, Doctor?

DOCTOR: I did hear your question, but amn't I trying to examine your mammy without your fool questions?

JOHNNY: Fool questions, is it?

DOCTOR: Have you been laying off the drink, Mrs O'Dougal, I said?

MAMMY: (BURPS) I have been laying off the drink or I've sort of been laying off the drink.

JOHNNY: She has a pint of porter now and then is no harm at all.

MAMMY: Is no harm at all.

JOHNNY: Is good for you!

DOCTOR: So long as you keep it at a pint of porter is the main thing so.

MAMMY: It is the main thing, and a couple of whiskies now and then.

JOHNNY: Didn't I only just say not to mention the whiskies, ya thick?

DOCTOR: How often is now and then?

JOHNNY: Once in a blue moon.

MAMMY: Once in a blue moon, and at breakfast sometimes.

JOHNNY: 'At breakfast', jeez...

DOCTOR: Johnnypateenmike, don't you know well not to go feeding a ninety year old woman whisky for breakfast?

JOHNNY: Ah she likes it, and doesn't it shut her up?

MAMMY: I do like a drop of whisky, me, I do.

JOHNNY: From the horse's mouth.

MAMMY: Although I do prefer poteen.

DOCTOR: But you don't get given poteen?

MAMMY: I don't get given poteen, no.

JOHNNY: Now.

MAMMY: Only on special occasions.

DOCTOR: And what qualifies as a special occasion?

MAMMY: A friday, a saturday or a sunday.

DOCTOR: When your mammy's dead and gone, Johnnypateen, I'm going to cut out her liver and show it to you, the damage your fine care has done.

JOHNNY: You won't catch me looking at me mammy's liver. I can barely stomach the outside of her, let alone the inside.

DOCTOR: A fine thing that is for a fella to say in front of his mammy.

MAMMY: I've heard worse.

JOHNNY: Leave me mammy alone now, you, with your mangling. If she's been trying to drink herself dead for sixty-five years with no luck, I wouldn't start worrying about her now. Sixty-five years. Feck, she can't do anything right.

DOCTOR: Why do you want to drink yourself dead, Mrs O'Dougal?

MAMMY: I do miss me husband Donal. Ate be a shark.

JOHNNY: 1871 he was ate be a shark.

DOCTOR: Oh you should be trying to get over that now, Mrs O'Dougal.

MAMMY: I've tried to, Doctor, but I can't. A lovely man he was. And living with this goose all these years, it just brings it back to me.

JOHNNY: Who are you calling a goose, ya hairy-lipped fool? Didn't I go out of me way to bring Doctor McSharry home to ya?

MAMMY: Aye, but only to go nosing about Cripple Billy Claven is all.

JOHNNY: No, not... not... Ah you always go spilling the beans, you, ya lump.

MAMMY: I'm an honest woman, me, Johnnypateen.

JOHNNY: Honest me hairy hole.

MAMMY: And you didn't get me drunk enough.

(THE DOCTOR PACKS UP HIS BLACK BAG)

DOCTOR: If I'm only here under false pretences...

JOHNNY: You're not here under false pretences. Me mammy did seem awful bad earlier... cough, mammy...

(MAMMY COUGHS)

But she seems to be over the worst of it, you're right there, although, now, while you're here, Doctor, what is all this about Cripple Billy? He wouldn't be in a terrible way, would he? Maybe something life-threatening, now? Oh I suppose it must be something awful serious if you go writing letters to him.

DOCTOR: (PAUSE) Did you ever hear of a thing called doctor-patient confidentiality, Johnnypateenmike?

JOHNNY: I did, and I think it's a great thing. Now tell me what's wrong with Cripple Billy, Doctor.

DOCTOR: I'm going to open up that head of yours one day, Johnnypateen, and find nothing inside it at all.

JOHNNY: Don't go straying off the subject now, you. Tell me what's wrong with... or was that a clue to the subject, now? There's something on the inside of his head that's wrong? A brain tumour! He has a brain tumour!

DOCTOR: I wasn't aware...

JOHNNY: Tell me he has a brain tumour, doctor. Oh that'd be awful big news.

DOCTOR: I'm off home, I thank you for wasting me precious time, but before I go I'll just say one thing, and that's I don't know where you got your information from this time o'er Cripple Billy, for it's usually such accurate information you do get, oh aye...

JOHNNY: Polio, polio. He has polio.

DOCTOR: But as far as I'm aware, apart from those deformities he's had since birth, there is nothing wrong with Billy Claven at all, and it would be better if you didn't go spreading fool gossip about him.

JOHNNY: (PAUSE) TB. TB. Ah it must be TB.

(THE DOCTOR WALKS AWAY)

JOHNNY: (CONT.) Where are you off to? Don't go hogging all the decent news, you!

(THE DOCTOR HAS EXITED)

Ya beggar! Is Billy in such good health that rowing to Inishmore in the freezing morning as he did this day'll do him no harm, so?

(PAUSE. THE DOCTOR RETURNS, THOUGHTFUL)

Didn't that get him running back quick?

MAMMY: Like a cat with a worm up his arse.

JOHNNY: That was a descriptive turn of phrase, mammy.

DOCTOR: Billy's gone to Inishmore?

JOHNNY: He has. With Slippy Helen and Bartley and Babbybobby rowing them. Babbybobby who'll be arrested for grievous bodily harm the minute he returns, or grievous headily harm anyways, for it was me head he grievously harmed. I don't know if grievous bodily harm applies to heads.

DOCTOR: They've gone to see the filming?

JOHNNY: To see the filming or to be in the filming, or anyways Helen and Bartley to be in the filming, because can you imagine Cripple Billy being in the filming? Heh.

DOCTOR: But the filming finished yesterday, sure. It's only clearing the out cameras and whatnot they are today.

JOHNNY: (PAUSE) I suppose they must've been given unreliable information somewhere along the way, so.

MAMMY: Aye, be this goose.

JOHNNY: Don't you be calling me goose, I said.

MAMMY: Get me a drink, goose.

JOHNNY: If you retract goose I'll get you a drink.

MAMMY: I retract goose.

JOHNNY: And you won't go changing it to 'Duck' or something when I get you the drink?

MAMMY: I won't go changing it.

(JOHNNY GIVES HER A DRINK. MAMMY MUMBLES SOMETHING)

JOHNNY: Hah?!

MAMMY: (INNOCENTLY) Nothing.

JOHNNY: (PAUSE) Would you like a drink too, Doctor, after I have stunned you with me Cripple Billy revelation?

DOCTOR: What do I care about that arse-faced revelation?

JOHNNY: Oh 'What do I care about that arse-faced revelation' he says. Heh. We'll see if your story's the same when Cripple Billy returns home dead because of your secrecy o'er his sickness, and their aunties point their finger at you, or their fingers at you, because it's two aunties, and you're drummed out of doctorhood and forced to scrape the skitter out of bent cows, is all you were ever really fit for anyways, oh we all know.

DOCTOR: Billy won't be returning home dead because there's nothing the matter with Billy but a wheeze.

JOHNNY: Are you persisting in that one, you?

DOCTOR: You tire me patience, Johnnypateen.

JOHNNY: Well, sure, isn't it better to tire your patience than to murder your patients? That's a different spelling of 'Patience', I know, but I'm using it as a pun, to provoke ya.

DOCTOR: Shall I say it one more time, thicko? There is nothing wrong with Billy Claven. Okay?

(THE DOCTOR EXITS)

JOHNNY: Cancer! Cancer! Come back you! Would it be cancer? Tell me what it begins with. Is it a 'C'? Is it a 'P'?

MAMMY: You're talking to thin air, ya fool.

JOHNNY: (CALLING) I'll get to the bottom of it one way or the other, McSharry! Be hook or be crook! A good newsman never takes no for an answer!

MAMMY: No. You just take stones pegged at your head for an answer.

JOHNNY: Let the stone matter drop, I've told you twenty times.

(JOHNNY SITS ON THE BED, READING A NEWSPAPER)

MAMMY: You and your shitey-arsed news. Do you think it makes you big, goosey?

JOHNNY: Leave goosey out of it!

MAMMY: It doesn't. Nobody gives two ticks about you or your news, unless it's to laugh at your news the minute your back is turned.

JOHNNY: Nobody laughs at my news. My news is great news, sure it is. I do keep half the Western World informed of current affairs with my news. Did you hear Jack Ellery's goose and Pat Brennan's cat have both been missing a week? I suspect something awful's happened to them, or I hope something awful's happened to them.

MAMMY: Even though you're me own son I'll say it, Johnnypateen, you're the most boring oul fecker in Galway. And there's plenty of competition for that fecking post!

JOHNNY: There's a sheep here in Kerry with no ears, I'll have to make a note.

MAMMY: (PAUSE) Leave the bottle with me if you're going bringing up sheep deformities

(HE GIVES HER THE WHISKY BOTTLE)

JOHNNY: Sheep deformities is interesting news. Is the best kind of news. Excluding major illnesses.

MAMMY: There's a blackhead on your neck there, Johnnypat, will I squeeze it for ya?

JOHNNY: I can squeeze me own blackheads, thank you. I'm a grown man.

MAMMY: You never let me do anything for ya.

JOHNNY: You'd probably turn it septic with your skittery hands. (PAUSE) And I want to see half that bottle gone be teatime.

MAMMY: (PAUSE) Cripple Billy probably has no disease at all. He's probably in fine shape.

JOHNNY: Cripple Billy hasn't been in fine shape since the day he was born. Isn't that why his mammy and daddy went drowning themselves?

MAMMY: That's only what you say, that his mammy and daddy went drowning themselves.

JOHNNY: Didn't they tell me they were about to a second before they got in the curragh, sure?

MAMMY: And you didn't lift a finger to stop them.

JOHNNY: How could I, with me holding the baby be the waterside? What was it to do with me, anyways, them drowning themselves? Nothing. I wasn't about to miss out on news that big.

MAMMY: They should've writ poor Billy a noteen anyways, to say goodbye, and sorry, if nothing more.

JOHNNY: It was lucky they didn't write him a noteen to say goodbye, else he'd never've got the insurance, saved his life for him.

MAMMY: Poor Billy. That's another gosawer I'll see buried before me, if your letter assumptions are right. It's too many of the coffins of gosawers I've seen laid in the ground in me time.

JOHNNY: Drink up, so. You may save yourself the trouble this time.

MAMMY: Ah, I'm holding out to see you in your coffin first, Johnnypat. Wouldn't that be a happy day?

JOHNNY: Isn't that funny, because I'd enjoy seeing you in your coffin the same as ya, if we can find a coffin big enough to squeeze your fat arse into. Course we may have to saw half the blubber off you first, oh there's not even a question.

MAMMY: Oh you've upset me awful with them harsh remarks, Johnnypateen, oh aye. (PAUSE) Eej. (PAUSE) Anything decent in the paper, read it out to me. But no sheep news. And no politics news.

JOHNNY: The same differ.

MAMMY: The same differ.

JOHNNY: There's a fella here, riz to power in Germany, seems to causing a hell of a rumpus...

MAMMY: Didn't I just say no politics news?

JOHNNY: If you'd let me finish me sentence I was going to say the fella has a funny moustache on him, but if you're going interrupting me...

MAMMY: Oh does it have a picture of his funny moustache, Johnnypateen?

JOHNNY: It does have a picture of his funny moustache, but if you're going interrupting me all the time I don't see why I should show it ya...

MAMMY: Please, Johnnypateen, you know I do like a funny moustache. Ar you're a good gosawer, so you are...

(JOHNNY RELUCTANTLY SHOWS HER THE PICTURE IN THE PAPER. SHE SNORTS)

That's a funny moustache.

JOHNNY: It is a funny moustache. You'd think he'd either grow a whole moustache or else shave that poor biteen of a straggle off. A-dolf Hitler.

MAMMY: That fella seems to be caught in two minds.

JOHNNY: Ah we shouldn't laugh at him. He seems a nice enough fella, despite his funny moustache. (PAUSE) There's a German fella living out in Connemara now, d'you know? Out Leenaun way.

MAMMY: Ireland mustn't be such a bad place if German fellas want to come to Ireland.

JOHNNY: They all want to come to Ireland, sure. Germans, dentists, everybody.

MAMMY: And why, I wonder?

JOHNNY: Because in Ireland the people are more friendly.

MAMMY: They are, I suppose.

JOHNNY: Of course they are, sure. Everyone knows that. Sure, isn't it what we're famed for? (LONG PAUSE) I'd bet money on cancer.

(JOHNNY NODS, RETURNING TO HIS PAPER. BLACKOUT)

SCENE FIVE

(THE SHOP. A FEW DOZEN EGGS STACKED ON COUNTER)

KATE: Not a word. (PAUSE) Not a word, not a word, not a word, not a word, not a word, not a word, not a word. (PAUSE) Not a word.

EILEEN: Oh how many more times are you going to say 'Not a word', Kate?

KATE: Am I not allowed to say 'Not a word' so, and me terrified o'er Billy's travellings?

EILEEN: You are allowed to say 'Not a word', but one or two times and not ten times.

KATE: Billy's going to go the same way as his mammy and daddy went. Dead and buried be the age of twenty.

EILEEN: Do you ever look on the optimistic side, you?

KATE: I do look on the optimistic side, but I fear I'll never see poor Billy alive again.

EILEEN: (PAUSE) Billy could've at least left a note that he was going to Inishmore, and not have us hear it from oul Johnnypateen.

KATE: Not a word. Not a word, not a word, not a word.

EILEEN: And Johnnypateen revelling in his news-telling then, along with his intimating o'er letters and doctors.

KATE: I fear Johnnypateen knows something about Billy he's not telling.

EILEEN: When has Johnnypateen ever known something and not told, sure? Johnnypateen tells if a horse farts.

KATE: Do you think?

EILEEN: I know.

KATE: I still worry o'er Cripple Billy.

EILEEN: Sure, if McSharry's right that the filming's o'er, it won't be long at all before Billy's home, and the rest of them with him.

KATE: You said that last week and they're still not home.

EILEEN: Maybe they stayed to see the sights.

KATE: On Inishmore? What sights? A fence and a hen?

EILEEN: Maybe a cow came o'er to Cripple Billy and he lost track of time.

KATE: It doesn't take much time to look at a cow, sure.

EILEEN: Well, you used to take an age in talking to stones, I remember.

KATE: Them stone days were when I had trouble with me nerves and you know well they were, Eileen! Didn't we agree on never bringing the stones business up?

EILEEN: We did, and I'm sorry for bringing the stones business up. It's only because I'm as worried as ya that I let them stones slip.

KATE: Because people who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stone-conversations at me.

EILEEN: What glass house do I live in?

KATE: We had twenty Yalla-mallows in the ha'penny box the other day and I see they're all gone. How are we ever to make a profit if you keep eating the new sweeties before anybody's had a chance to see them?

EILEEN: Ah Kate. Sure with Yalla-mallows, when you eat one, there's no stopping ya.

KATE: It was the same excuse with the Mintios. Well if you lay one finger on the Fripple-Frapples when they come in, you'll be for the high jump, I'm telling ya.

EILEEN: I'm sorry, Kate. It's just all this worry o'er Billy didn't help matters.

KATE: I know it didn't, Eileen. I know you like to stuff your face when you're worried. Just try to keep a lid on it is all.

EILEEN: I will. (PAUSE) Ah sure that Babbybobby's a decent enough fella. He'll be looking after Billy, I'm sure.

KATE: Why did he bring poor Billy off with him anyways so if he's such a decent fella? Didn't he know his aunties would be worrying?

EILEEN: I don't know if he knew.

KATE: I'd like to hit Babbybobby in the teeth.

EILEEN: I suppose he...

KATE: With a brick.

EILEEN: I suppose he could've got Billy to send a note at the minimum.

KATE: Not a word. Not a word. (PAUSE) Not a word, not a word, not a wor...

EILEEN: Ah Kate, don't be starting with your 'Not a word's again.

(KATE WATCHES EILEEN STACKING THE EGGS A WHILE)

KATE: I see the egg-man's been.

EILEEN: He has. The egg-man has a rake more eggs when Slippy Helen doesn't be working for him.

KATE: I don't see why he keeps Helen on at all.

EILEEN: I think he's scared of Helen. That or he's in love with Helen.

KATE: (PAUSE) I think Billy's in love with Helen on top of it.

EILEEN: I think Billy's in love with Helen. It'll all end in tears.

KATE: Tears or death.

EILEEN: We ought look on the bright side.

KATE: Tears, death or worse.

(JOHNNY ENTERS, STRUTTING)

EILEEN: Johnnypateenmike.

KATE: Johnnypateenmike.

JOHNNY: Johnnypateen does have three pieces of news to be telling ye this day.

KATE: Only tell us if it's happy news, Johnnypat, because we're a biteen depressed today, we are.

JOHNNY: I have a piece of news concerning the Inishmore trippers, but I will be saving that piece of news for me third piece of news.

KATE: Is Billy okay, Johnnypateen? Oh tell us that piece of news first.

EILEEN: Tell us that piece of news first, aye, Johnnypateen.

JOHNNY: Well if ye're going arranging what order I tell me pieces of news in, I think I will turn on me heels and be off with me!

KATE: Don't go, Johnnypat! Don't go!

JOHNNY: Hah?

EILEEN: Tell us your news in whatever order you like, Johnnypateen. Sure, aren't you the man who knows best about news-ordering?

JOHNNY: I am the man who knows best. I know I'm the man who knows best. That's no news. I see you have plenty of eggs in.

EILEEN: We do, Johnnypateen.

JOHNNY: Uh-huh. Me first piece of news, there is a sheep out in Kerry with no ears at all on him.

EILEEN: (PAUSE) That's a great piece of news.

JOHNNY: Don't ask me how he hears because I don't know and I don't care. Me second piece of news, Patty Brennan's cat was found dead and Jack Ellery's goose was found dead and nobody in town is said to've seen anything, but we can all put two and two together, although not out loud because Jack Ellery's an awful tough.

KATE: That's a sad piece of news because now it sounds like a feud is starting.

JOHNNY: A feud is starting and won't be stopped til the one or the two of them finish up slaughtered. Good. I will take six eggs, Mrs, for the omelette I promised me mammy a fortnight ago.

EILEEN: What was the third piece of news, Johnnypateen?

JOHNNY: I mention me mammy and nobody even asks as to how she is. Oh it's the height of politeness in this quarter.

KATE: How is your mammy, Johnnypateen?

JOHNNY: Me mammy's fine, so she is, despite me best efforts.

EILEEN: Are you still trying to kill your mammy with the drink, Johnnypateen?

JOHNNY: I am but it's no use. A fortune in booze that bitch has cost me over the years. She'll never go. (PAUSE) Well now, I have me eggs, I've told you me two pieces of news. I suppose that's me business finished here for the day.

KATE: The... the third piece of news, Johnnypateen?

JOHNNY: Oh, the third piece of news. Wasn't I almost forgetting? (PAUSE) The third piece of news is Babbybobby's just pulled his boat up on the sands, at the headland there, and let the young adventurers off. Or, let two of the young adventurers off anyways, Helen and Bartley. There was no hide nor hair of Cripple Billy in that boat. (PAUSE) I'm off to have Babbybobby arrested for throwing stones at me head. I thank you for the eggs.

(JOHNNY EXITS. PAUSE. KATE SADLY CARESSES THE OLD SACK HANGING ON THE WALL, THEN SITS AT THE TABLE)

KATE: He's gone from us, Eileen. He's gone from us.

EILEEN: We don't know at all that he's gone from us.

KATE: I can feel it in me bones, Eileen. From the minute he left I knew. Cripple Billy's dead and gone.

EILEEN: But didn't the doctor assure us five times there was nothing wrong with Cripple Billy?

KATE: Only so not to hurt us that assuring was. It was Johnnypat who had the real story all along, same about Billy's mam and dad's drowning he always had the real story.

EILEEN: Oh lord, I see Babbybobby coming up the pathway towards us.

KATE: Does he look glum, Eileen?

EILEEN: He does look glum, but Babbybobby usually looks glum.

KATE: Does he look glummer than he usually looks?

EILEEN: (PAUSE) He does.

KATE: Oh no.

EILEEN: And he's taken the hat off him now.

KATE: That's an awful bad sign, taking the hat off ya.

EILEEN: Maybe just being gentlemanly he is?

KATE: Babbybobby? Sure, Babbybobby pegs bricks at cows.

(BOBBY ENTERS, CAP IN HAND)

BOBBY: Eileen, Kate.

EILEEN: Babbybobby.

BOBBY: Would you be sitting down a minute there for yourself, now, Eileen? I've news to be telling ye.

(EILEEN SITS AT THE TABLE)

I've just brought the two McCormicks home, and I was supposed to bring yere Billy home, I know, but I couldn't bring yere Billy home because... because he's been taken to America for a screen test for a film they're making about a cripple fella. Or... I don't think the whole film will be about the cripple fella. The cripple fella'd only be a minor role. Aye. But it'd still be good part, d'you know? (PAUSE) Although, there's more important things in the world than good parts in Hollywood films about cripple fellas. Being around your family and your friends is more important, and I tried to tell Cripple Billy that, but he wouldn't listen to me, no matter how much I told him. Be boat this morning they left. Billy wrote a letter here he asked me to pass onto ye. (PAUSE) Two or three months at minimum, Billy said probably he'd be gone. (PAUSE) Ah, as he said to me, it's his life. I suppose it is, now. I hope he enjoys his time there anyways. (PAUSE) That's all there is. (PAUSE) I'll be seeing ye.

EILEEN: Be seeing you, Babbybobby...

KATE: Be seeing you, Bobbybabbybobby.

(BOBBY EXITS. KATE OPENS THE LETTER)

EILEEN: What the devil's a screen test, Kate?

KATE: I don't know at all what a screen test is.

EILEEN: Maybe in his letter it says.

KATE: Oh the awful handwriting he has.

EILEEN: It's never improved.

KATE: 'Dear aunties, can ye guess what?'. Yes, we can guess what. 'I am off to Hollywood to make a screen test for a film they're making, and if they like the look of me a contract they will give me and an actor then I'll be'. He doesn't explain at all what a screen test is.

EILEEN: With all the thinking he does?

KATE: What's this, now? I can't make out even two words in this sentence with his writing... 'But if it's a big success I am... it might only be two or three months before I am too busy with acting work to be getting in touch with ye too often at all... so if ye don't hear from me much from Summertime on... don't be worrying about me. It'll only mean I'm happy and healthy and making a go of me life in America. Making something of meself for ye and mammy and daddy to be proud of. Give my love to everyone on the island except Johnnypateen, and take care of yourselves, Kate and Eileen. You moan the world to me... mean the world to me'. It looks like 'Moan'. (PAUSE) Yours sincerely... Billy Claven. (PAUSE) Turned his back on us, he has, Eileen.

EILEEN: (CRYING) And us worrying our heads off o'er him.

(EILEEN GOES TO THE COUNTER AND QUIETLY FISHES THROUGH THE SWEETIE BOX)

KATE: After all we've done for him down the years.

EILEEN: We looked after him and didn't care that he was a cripple boy at all.

KATE: After all the shame he brought on us, staring at cows, and this is how he repays us.

EILEEN: I hope the boat sinks before it ever gets him to America.

KATE: I hope he drowns like his mammy and daddy drowned before him.

EILEEN: (PAUSE) Or are we being too harsh on him?

KATE: (CRYING) We're being too harsh on him but only because it's so upset about him we are. What are you eating?

EILEEN: Oh Yalla-mallows and don't be starting on me.

KATE: I thought you'd ate all the Yalla-mallows.

EILEEN: I'd put a couple of Yalla-mallows aside for emergencies.

KATE: Eat ahead, Eileen.

EILEEN: Do you want one, Kate?

KATE: I don't. I have no stomach for eating at all, this day. Let alone eating Yalla-mallows.

EILEEN: (PAUSE) We'll see Cripple Billy again one day,
won't we, Kate?

KATE: I fear we've more chance of seeing Jim Finnegan's
daughter in a nunnery before we see Cripple
Billy again. (PAUSE) I'm not sure if I want to
see Cripple Billy again.

EILEEN: I'm not sure if I want to see Cripple Billy again.
(PAUSE) I want to see Cripple Billy again.

KATE: I want to see Cripple Billy again.

(PAUSE. BLACKOUT)

(INTERVAL)

SCENE SIX

(THE SHOP, SUMMER, FOUR MONTHS LATER. A COUPLE OF FLYERS FOR 'THE MAN OF ARAN', BEING SHOWN AT THE CHURCH HALL, HANG ON THE WALLS. THE SWEETIE BOXES AND A STONE LAY ON THE COUNTER, BESIDE WHICH BARTLEY STANDS, PURSING HIS LIPS DUMBLY AND DOING OTHER STUFF FOR A FEW MOMENTS TO FILL IN TIME AS HE WAITS FOR KATE TO RETURN. HELEN ENTERS CARRYING A FEW DOZEN EGGS)

HELEN: What are you waiting for?

BARTLEY: She's gone in the back to look for me Frippl-frapples.

HELEN: Oh you and your fecking Frippl-frapples.

BARTLEY: Frippl-frapples are nice sweeties.

(HELEN ARRANGES THE EGGS ON THE COUNTER)

I see you've brought the eggs up.

HELEN: You, you're awful observant.

BARTLEY: I thought bringing the eggs was the egg-man's job.

HELEN: It was the egg-man's job, but I did kick the egg-man in the shins this after and he didn't feel up to it.

BARTLEY: What did you kick the egg-man in the shins for?

HELEN: He insinuated it was me murdered Jack Ellery's goose and Pat Brennan's cat for them.

BARTLEY: But it was you murdered Jack Ellery's goose and Pat Brennan's cat for them.

HELEN: I know it was, but if it gets bandied around town I'll never be getting paid.

BARTLEY: How much are you getting paid?

HELEN: Eight bob for the goose and ten bob for the cat.

BARTLEY: Why did you charge extra for the cat?

HELEN: Well, I had to pay Ray Darcy for the borrow of his axe. See, the goose I only had to stomp on him. It takes more than a stomp to polish a cat off.

BARTLEY: A plankeen of wood you could've used on the cat, and saved shelling out for the axe at all.

HELEN: Sure I wanted the job carried out professional, Bartley. A plank is the weapon of a flat-faced child. I wouldn't use a plank on a blue-arsed fly.

BARTLEY: What would you use on a blue-arsed fly?

HELEN: I wouldn't use a thing on a blue-arsed fly. There's no money involved in killing blue-arsed flies.

BARTLEY: Jim Finnegan's daughter killed twelve worms one day.

HELEN: Aye, be breathing on them.

BARTLEY: No, be sticking needles in their eyes.

HELEN: Now there's the work of an amateur. (PAUSE) I didn't even know worms had eyes.

BARTLEY: They don't after Jim Finnegan's daughter gets through with them.

HELEN: What's this stone here for?

BARTLEY: I caught Mrs Osbourne talking to that stone when first I came in.

HELEN: What was she saying to the stone?

BARTLEY: She was saying 'How are you, stone', and then putting the stone to her ear like the stone was talking back to her.

HELEN: That's awful strange behaviour.

BARTLEY: And asking the stone, then, if it knew how our Cripple Billy was doing for himself in America.

HELEN: And what did the stone say?

BARTLEY: (PAUSE) The stone didn't say anything, Helen, because stones they don't say anything.

HELEN: Oh, I thought you said Mrs Osbourne was doing the voice for the stone.

BARTLEY: No, Mrs Osbourne was just doing her own voice.

HELEN: Maybe we should hide the stone and see if Mrs Osbourne has a nervous breakdown.

BARTLEY: Sure that wouldn't be a very Christian thing to do, Helen.

HELEN: It wouldn't be a very Christian thing to do, no, but it'd be awful funny.

BARTLEY: Ah let's leave Mrs Osbourne's stone alone, Helen. Hasn't she enough on her mind worrying o'er Cripple Billy?

HELEN: Cripple Billy's aunties should be told that Billy's dead or dying, and not have them waiting for a letter from him that'll never come. Four months, now, isn't it they've been waiting, and not a word, and them the only two on Inishmaan not been informed what Babbybobby knows.

BARTLEY: What good would it do, sure, informing them? At least this way they've the hope he's still alive. What help would Babbybobby's news be to them? And you never know but maybe a miracle's happened and Cripple Billy hasn't died in Hollywood at all. Maybe three months wasn't a fair estimate for Cripple Billy.

HELEN: I hope Cripple Billy has died in Hollywood, after taking his place in Hollywood that was rightfully a pretty girl's place, when he knew full well he was about to kick the bucket.

BARTLEY: A pretty girl's place? Would use would a pretty girl be in playing a cripple fella?

HELEN: I could turn me hand to anything, me, given a chance.

BARTLEY: I've heard.

HELEN: Heard what?

BARTLEY: I've heard Hollywood is chock full of pretty girls, sure. It's cripple fellas they're crying out for.

HELEN: What are you defending Cripple Billy for? Didn't he promise to send you a package of Yalla-mallows you've never seen a lick of?

BARTLEY: Maybe Cripple Billy died before he had a chance of sending me them Yalla-mallows.

HELEN: It's any excuse for you, ya weed.

BARTLEY: But dying's an awful good excuse for not sending a fella the sweeties he promised.

HELEN: Too kind-hearted you are. I'm ashamed to admit you're related to me sometimes.

BARTLEY: It doesn't hurt to be too kind-hearted.

HELEN: Uh-huh. Does this hurt?

(HELEN PINCHES BARTLEY'S ARM/SHOULDER)

BARTLEY: (IN PAIN) No.

HELEN: (PAUSE) Does this hurt?

(HELEN GIVES HIM A CHINESE BURN ON THE FOREARM)

BARTLEY: (IN PAIN) No.

HELEN: (PAUSE) Does this hurt?

(HELEN PICKS UP AN EGG AND BREAKS IT AGAINST HIS FOREHEAD)

BARTLEY: (SIGHING) I'd better say yes before any further you go.

HELEN: You should've said yes on the arm pinch, would've been using your brain.

BARTLEY: I should've said yes but you'd still've broken an egg on me.

HELEN: Now we'll never know.

BARTLEY: You're just a terror when you get around eggs.

HELEN: I do like breaking eggs on fellas.

BARTLEY: I had guessed that somehow.

HELEN: Or could you classify you as a fella? Isn't that going a biteen overboard?

BARTLEY: I notice you never broke an egg on Babbybobby Bennett when he reneged on your kissing proposals.

HELEN: We were in a row-boat a mile from land, sure. Where was I supposed to get an egg?

BARTLEY: Reneged because you're so witchy-looking.

HELEN: Reneged because he was upset o'er Cripple Billy, and watch your 'Witchy-looking' comments, you.

BARTLEY: Why is it runny eggs don't smell but boiled eggs do smell?

HELEN: I don't know why. And I don't care why.

BARTLEY: Reneged because you look like one of them ragged-looking widow women waiting on the rocks for a rascal who'll never return to her.

HELEN: That sentence had an awful lot of 'R's.

BARTLEY: It was insulting with it, on top of the 'R's.

HELEN: You've gotten awful cocky for a boy with egg running down his gob.

BARTLEY: Well there comes a time for every Irishman to take a stand against his oppressors.

HELEN: Was it Michael Collins said that?

BARTLEY: It was some one of the fat ones anyways.

HELEN: Do you want to play 'England versus Ireland'?

BARTLEY: I don't know how to play 'England versus Ireland'.

HELEN: Stand around this way and close your eyes. You'll be Ireland.

(BARTLEY FACES HER AND CLOSES HIS EYES)

BARTLEY: And what do you do?

HELEN: I'll be England.

(HELEN PICKS UP THREE EGGS FROM THE COUNTER AND BREAKS THE FIRST AGAINST BARTLEY'S FOREHEAD. BARTLEY OPENS HIS EYES AS THE YOLK RUNS DOWN HIM, AND STARES AT HER SADLY. HELEN BREAKS THE SECOND EGG ON HIS FOREHEAD)

BARTLEY: That wasn't a nice thing at all to...

HELEN: Haven't finished.

(HELEN BREAKS THE THIRD EGG ON BARTLEY)

BARTLEY: That wasn't a nice thing at all to do, Helen.

HELEN: I was giving you a lesson about Irish history, Bartley.

BARTLEY: I don't need a lesson about Irish history. (SHOUTING) Or anyways not with eggs when I've only washed me hair!

HELEN: There'll be worse casualties than egggy hair before Ireland's a nation once again, Bartley McCormick.

BARTLEY: And me best sweater, look at it!

HELEN: It has egg on it.

BARTLEY: I know it has egg on it! I know well! And I was going to go wearing it to the showing of the film tomorrow, but you've put paid to that idea now, haven't ya?

HELEN: I'm looking forward to the showing of the film tomorrow.

BARTLEY: I was looking forward to the showing of the film too until me sweater became destroyed.

HELEN: I think I might go pegging eggs at the film tomorrow. 'The Man of Aran' me arsehole. 'The Lass of Aran' they could've had, and the pretty lass of Aran. Not some oul shite about thick fellas fecking fishing.

BARTLEY: Does everything you do have to involve egg-pegging, Helen?

HELEN: I do take a pride in me egg-work, me. Is this bitch never bloody coming to pay for me eggs? (CALLING) You, stonewoman!

BARTLEY: Kate's taking an age to bring me Fripple-frapples.

HELEN: Ah I can't waste me youth waiting for that mingy hole. You collect me egg-money, Bartley, and give it to the egg-man on the way home.

BARTLEY: I will, Helen, aye.

(HELEN EXITS)

I will me fecking arse, ya shite-gobbed fecking bitch-fecker, ya...

(HELEN POPS HER HEAD BACK IN)

HELEN: And don't let her dock you for the four you went and broke on me.

BARTLEY: I won't, Helen.

(SHE EXITS AGAIN)

(SIGHING) Women.

(KATE SLOWLY ENTERS FROM THE BACK ROOM, ABSENT-MINDEDLY, NOTICING BARTLEY AFTER A SECOND)

KATE: Hello there, Bartley. What can I be getting for ya?

BARTLEY: (PAUSE. BEMUSED) You were going in the back to look for your Fripplle-frapples, Mrs.

(KATE THINKS TO HERSELF A MOMENT, THEN SLOWLY RETURNS TO THE BACK ROOM. BARTLEY MOANS LOUDLY IN FRUSTRATION, PUTTING HIS HEAD DOWN ON THE COUNTER. SLIGHT PAUSE, THEN KATE RETURNS AND PICKS UP HER STONE)

KATE: I'll bring me stone.

(SHE EXITS TO THE BACK ROOM AGAIN. PAUSE. BARTLEY PICKS UP A WOODEN Mallet, SMASHES ALL THE EGGS ON THE COUNTER WITH IT AND WALKS OUT, SLAMMING THE DOOR. BLACKOUT)

SCENE SEVEN

(SOUND OF BILLY'S WHEEZING STARTS, AS LIGHTS COME UP ON HIM SHIVERING ALONE ON A CHAIR IN A SQUALID HOLLYWOOD HOTEL ROOM. HE WHEEZES SLIGHTLY THROUGHOUT)

BILLY: Mam? I fear I'm not longer for this world, mam. Can't I hear the wail of the banshees for me, as far as I am from me barren island home? A home barren, aye, but proud and generous with it, yet turned me back on ye I did, to end up alone and dying in a one-dollar rooming-house, without a mother to wipe the cold sweat off me, nor a father to curse God o'er the death of me, nor a colleen fair to weep tears o'er the still body of me. A body still, aye, but a body noble and unbowed with it. An Irishman! (PAUSE) Just an Irishman. With a decent heart on him, and a decent head on him, and a decent spirit not broken by a century's hunger and a lifetime's oppression! A spirit not broken, no... (COUGHING) but a body broken, and the lungs of him broken, and, if truth be told, the heart of him broken too, be a lass who never knew his true feelings, and now, sure, never will. What's this, mammy, now, that you're saying to me?

(HE LOOKS AT A SHEET OF PAPER ON THE TABLE)

Be writing home to her, I know, and make me feelings known. Ah, tis late, mammy. Won't tomorrow be soon enough for that task?

(HE GETS UP AND SHUFFLES TO THE MIRROR LEFT, QUIETLY SINGING 'THE CROPPY BOY')

'Farewell father and mother too, and sister Mary I have none but you. And for my brother, he's all alone. He's pointing pikes on the grinding stone.'

(BILLY STUMBLES, ILL, CRAWLS UP ONTO THE BED, WHEEZING, AND LOOKS AT THE PHOTO ON THE DRESSER)

What would Heaven be like, mammy? I've heard tis a beautiful place, more beautiful than Ireland even, but even if it is, sure, it wouldn't be near as beautiful as you. I do wonder would they let cripple boys into Heaven at all. Sure, wouldn't we only go uglifying the place?

(HE PUTS THE PHOTO BACK ON THE DRESSER)

BILLY: (CONT. SINGING) 'Twas in old Ireland this young man died, and in old Ireland his body's lain. All the good people that do pass by, may the lord have mercy on this croppy boy'. Oh it's a bad way the chest of me is in tonight, mammy. I think it's a little sleep I should have now for meself. For there's mighty work in the rail-yard tomorrow to be done. (PAUSE) What's that, mammy? Me prayers? I know. Sure, would I be forgetting, as well as you taught them to me? (BLESSES HIMSELF) And now I lay me down to sleep, I pray to God my soul to keep. But if... (PAUSE) But if I die before I wake... I pray to God... (TEARFULLY) I pray to God...

(PAUSE, RECOVERING HIMSELF. HE SMILES)

Ara, don't worry, mammy. Tis only to sleep it is that I'm going. Tis only to sleep.

(BILLY LIES DOWN. HIS PAINED WHEEZES GET WORSE AND WORSE, UNTIL THEY SUDDENLY STOP WITH AN ANGUISHED GASP, HIS EYES CLOSE, HIS HEAD LOLS TO ONE SIDE, AND HE LAYS THERE MOTIONLESS. FADE TO BLACK)

SCENE EIGHT

(A CHURCH HALL IN SEMI-DARKNESS. BOBBY STANDING TO ONE SIDE; MAMMY IN A WHEELCHAIR, BOTTLE IN HAND; JOHNNY, HELEN, BARTLEY, EILEEN AND KATE SITTING IN A SEMI-CIRCLE OF CHAIRS, BACKS TO US. ALL ARE STARING UP AT THE FILM 'MAN OF ARAN' BEING PROJECTED ON A WIDE WHITE SHEET HANGING ACROSS THE BACK WALL. THE FILM IS NEARING ITS END, AND IT'S SOUNDTRACK IS EITHER VERY LOW OR NOT HEARD AT ALL)

MAMMY: What's this that's happening?

JOHNNY: What does it look like that's happening?

BARTLEY: Aren't they going catching a shark, Mrs, and a big shark?

MAMMY: Are they?

JOHNNY: Shut up and drink up, you.

MAMMY: I will, goosey.

BOBBY: I hope only water it is that's in that bottle, Johnnypateenmike.

JOHNNY: Of course it's only water. (WHISPERED) Don't be breathing out near Babbybobby, mammy.

MAMMY: I won't be.

JOHNNY: And mind the 'Goosey'.

KATE: (PAUSE) That's a big fish.

EILEEN: Tis a shark, Kate.

KATE: Tis a wha?

EILEEN: A shark, a shark!

HELEN: Have you forgot what a shark is, on top of talking to stones?

KATE: What's this a shark is?

BARTLEY: It's a big fish, Mrs, cept awful fierce.

KATE: I was thinking it was a big fish.

BARTLEY: It's mostly off America you do get sharks, and a host of sharks, and so close to shore sometimes they come, sure, you wouldn't even need a telescope to spot them, oh no...

HELEN: Oh telescopes, Jesus..!

BARTLEY: It's rare that off Ireland you get sharks. This is the first shark I've ever seen off Ireland.

JOHNNY: Ireland mustn't be such a bad place so if sharks want to come to Ireland.

BARTLEY: (PAUSE) Babbybobby, you weren't in long with the polis at all when you was took down for Johnnypat's head-stoning, how comes?

BOBBY: Oh the guard just laughed when he heard about Johnnypat's head-stoning. 'Use a brick next time', he said. 'Stop piddling around with stones'.

JOHNNY: That guard wants drumming out of the polis. Or at least to have spiteful rumours spread about him.

BOBBY: And we all know who the man for that job'll be.

JOHNNY: He beats his wife with a poker, d'you know?

HELEN: Sure is that news? They don't let you in the polis now unless you beat your wife with a poker.

BOBBY: And that's an outright lie anyways about the guard beating his wife with a poker, and Johnnypateen knows full well it is. (PAUSE) A biteen of a rubber hose was all he used.

KATE: (PAUSE) Not a word. Not a word from him.

HELEN: Is stoney off again?

EILEEN: She is.

HELEN: Hey, stoney!

EILEEN: Ar leave her, Helen, will ya?

HELEN: (PAUSE) Ah they're never going to be catching this fecking shark. A fecking hour they've been at it now, it seems like.

BARTLEY: Uh-huh. Three minutes would be more accurate.

HELEN: If it was me had a role in this film the fecker wouldn't have lasted as long. One good clobber and we could all go home.

BARTLEY: One good clobber with Ray Darcy's axe, I suppose.

HELEN: Cut the axe talk, you.

BARTLEY: Doesn't shark-clobbering take a sight more effort than cat besecting?

JOHNNY: What's this that Johnnypateen hears?

BARTLEY: And gosawer-egging then.

(HELEN GRABS BARTLEY BY THE HAIR AND WRENCHES HIS HEAD AROUND)

HELEN: Just you wait til I fecking get you home. Just you fecking wait...

BARTLEY: Ah that hurts, Helen, that hurts...

HELEN: Of course it hurts. It's supposed to fecking hurt.

BOBBY: Be leaving Bartley alone now, Helen.

HELEN: Up your arse you, Babbybobby Bennett, you fecking kiss-reneger. Would you like to step outside with me?

BOBBY: I wouldn't like to.

HELEN: Shut your hole so.

BOBBY: Not if there was to be kissing involved, anyways.

(HELEN RELEASES BARTLEY ROUGHLY. JOHNNY MAKES A NOTE IN HIS POCKETBOOK)

JOHNNY: A little noteen, now, Johnnypateen has made for himself. A side of lamb at minimum this news'll get me, off Patty Brennan or Jack Ellery anyways. Eeh.

HELEN: You'll be eating that lamb with a broken neck, so, if that news gets bandied about before Jack and Pat've paid up.

JOHNNY: When are they due to pay up?

HELEN: A week on monday's me final instalment.

JOHNNY: I'll wait til a week on monday, so, to do me bandying.

HELEN: Never let it be said you're not an honourable man, Johnnypateenmike.

JOHNNY: I'll never let it be said.

HELEN: A nosey scrounging bollocks, aye, but an honourable one at the same time.

BARTLEY: (TO KATE) Helen can never be paying a compliment without qualifying it, Mrs.

KATE: Have you been falling down any holes since, Bartley?

BARTLEY: Oh Mrs, sure wasn't I seven when I fell down the hole I fell down? D'ya have to keep dragging that up?

HELEN: Well you fell off two trees last week.

BARTLEY: And is a tree a hole?

HELEN: No, a tree isn't a hole.

BARTLEY: There!

HELEN: Are you thereing me?

BARTLEY: I'm not thereing you.

HELEN: (PAUSE) Oh they still haven't caught this fecking shark! How hard is it?

(HELEN THROWS AN EGG AT THE SCREEN)

BOBBY: Oh don't be pegging any more eggs at the film, Helen. Weren't the five you pegged at the woman in it enough?

HELEN: Not nearly enough. I never got her in the gob even once, the bitch. She kept moving.

BOBBY: You'll ruin the egg-man's bedsheet anyways.

HELEN: Ah, the egg-man's bedsheet is used to being egggy.

BARTLEY: How do you know the egg-man's bedsheets are used to being egggy, Helen?

HELEN: Em, Jim Finnegan's daughter was telling me.

MAMMY: I do like Helen's egg-pegging!

JOHNNY: Of course you do, cos you're as paluthered as a blue pig.

BOBBY: Paluthered on water, is it, Johnnypateen?

JOHNNY: Me, I've spilt the cat out of the bag.

BARTLEY: Helen's another one likes spilling cats. Aargh!

MAMMY: (PAUSE) Ah why don't they just leave the poor shark alone? He was doing no harm.

JOHNNY: Sure what manner of a story would that be, leaving a shark alone? You want a dead shark.

BOBBY: A dead shark, aye, or a shark with no ears on him.

JOHNNY: A dead shark, aye, or a shark kissed a green-teethed girl in Antrim.

BOBBY: Do you want a belt, you, mentioning green-teeth girls?

JOHNNY: Well you interrupted me and me mammy's shark debate.

MAMMY: They should give the shark a belt, then leave the poor gosawer alone.

JOHNNY: Why are you in love with sharks all of a sudden? Wasn't it a shark ate daddy?

MAMMY: It was a shark ate daddy, but Jaysus says you should forgive and forget.

JOHNNY: He doesn't say you should forgive and forget sharks.

BARTLEY: (PAUSE) Sharks have no ears to begin with, anyways.

(PAUSE. THEY LOOK AT HIM)

Babbybobby was saying a shark with no ears.
(PAUSE) Sharks have no ears to begin with, anyways.

JOHNNY: We've moved on from ears-talk, you, ya thick.

BARTLEY: What are we onto now?

JOHNNY: We're onto Jaysus forgiving sharks.

BARTLEY: Oh aye, that's an awful great topic for conversation.

HELEN: I always preferred Pontius Pilate to Jesus. Jesus always seemed full of himself.

BARTLEY: Jesus drove a thousand pigs into the sea one time, did you ever hear tell of that story? Drowned the lot of the poor devils. They always seem to gloss o'er that one in Sunday School.

KATE: I didn't know Jesus could drive.

HELEN: Mrs? You've gone loopy, haven't you Mrs? Haven't you gone loopy?

KATE: I haven't gone loopy.

HELEN: You have. Your stone was telling me earlier.

KATE: What did me stone say?

HELEN: Did you hear that one, Bartley? 'What did me stone say?'

BARTLEY: (RE FILM) Look at the size of that fella's nose.

JOHNNY: Of course poor Kate's gone loopy, Helen. I'm surprised oul Eileen hasn't too, with the gosawer they raised and loved sixteen year preferring to take his TB to Hollywood for his dying than to bear to be in the company of them.

(EILEEN STANDS WITH HER HANDS TO HER HEAD AND TURNS TO FACE JOHNNY, AS DOES BOBBY)

BARTLEY: Look at the size of that fella's nose, I said.

JOHNNY: Johnnypateen's spilled the cat out of the bag again, I believe.

BOBBY: There'll be more than cats spilled before this day is over.

(HE GRABS JOHNNY ROUGHLY AND DRAGS HIM UP)

Didn't I say to ya?! Didn't I say to ya?!

JOHNNY: Sure don't they have a right to know about their dying fosterbobby, stabbed them in the back without a by-your-leave?

EILEEN: (STUNNED) Wha? Wha?

BOBBY: Can't you keep anything to yourself?

JOHNNY: Johnnypateenmike was never a man for secrets.

BOBBY: Outside with ya, so, and see if you can keep this beating a secret.

JOHNNY: You'll frighten me mammy, Babbybobby, you'll frighten me mammy...

MAMMY: Ah you won't, Bobby. Go on and give him a good beating for yourself.

JOHNNY: That was the last omelette you'll ever eat in my house, ya bitch!

MAMMY: Carrot omelettes don't go, anyways.

JOHNNY: You never like anything adventurous!

(JOHNNY IS DRAGGED OFF RIGHT BY BOBBY. SOUND OF HIS YELPS GETTING MORE AND MORE DISTANT. EILEEN IS STANDING IN FRONT OF BARTLEY, HANDS STILL TO HER HEAD)

EILEEN: What was this Johnnypateen was saying about...

BARTLEY: Would you mind out of me way, Mrs, I can't see.

(EILEEN MOVES OVER TO MAMMY)

HELEN: What's to fecking see anyways but more wet fellas with awful sweaters on them?

EILEEN: Mrs O'Dougal, what now was this that your Johnny was saying?

MAMMY: (PAUSE) TB they say your Cripple Billy has, Eileen. Or, they say he had anyways. Four months ago Billy was told, and told he had only three months left in him.

BARTLEY: That means he's probably been dead a month, Mrs. Simple subtraction that is. Three from four.

EILEEN: Ah sure, if this is only your Johnnypateen's oul gossiping I wouldn't be believing you at all...

MAMMY: Aye, if it was Johnnypateen's gossiping you wouldn't need to care a skitter about it, but it isn't Johnnypateen's gossiping. Babbybobby's news this is, and first-hand Babbybobby got it, from Cripple Billy himself, showed him a letter from McSharry the night before they sailed. Sure, Babbybobby would never've taken Cripple Billy, only his heart went out to him. Didn't Bobby's wife Annie die of the same thing?

EILEEN: She did, and in agony she died. Oh Cripple Billy. The days and nights I've cursed him for not writing us, when how could he write us at all?

HELEN: When he was buried six feet under. Aye, that'd be an awful hard task. There's the bitch!

(HELEN TOSSES AN EGG AT THE ACTRESS WHO HAS APPEARED ON SCREEN)

Bang on.

BARTLEY: You hardly scratched her.

HELEN: Bang on the nose I got her.

BARTLEY: Hmm. Well you hardly made it difficult for yourself with that woman's nose.

(THE FILM IS ALMOST COMING TO ITS END)

EILEEN: But... but Doctor McSharry five or six times I've asked, and nothing at all wrong with Billy did McSharry say there was.

HELEN: Thank Christ, the fecker's over.

MAMMY: Sure, I suppose he was only trying to keep it from you, Eileen, so's you wouldn't be hurt, same as everyone around. Everyone except that beggar of a son of mine anyways.

(HELEN AND BARTLEY STAND AND STRETCH, BACKS TO SCREEN,
AS THE CREDITS RUN)

BARTLEY: That would explain McSharry's keeping it from ya, aye. Either that or he was telling the truth, and Cripple Billy only made up the letter from him, just to kid Babbybobby, when there's not a thing wrong with Cripple Billy at all.

HELEN: Sure that's a bit fecking convoluted. Sounds more like a tale out of one of them books Cripple Billy used go reading.

BARTLEY: I suppose. I'm always crawling up me own arse, me.

HELEN: It's nice that you admit it anyways.

(THE FILM WINDS OUT, LEAVING THE SCREEN BLANK. A
LIGHT GOES ON BEHIND IT, ILLUMINATING THE SILHOUETTE
OF CRIPPLE BILLY ON THE SCREEN, WHICH ONLY KATE SEES.
SHE STANDS AND STARES AT IT)

MAMMY: Is the film over so?

HELEN: It is. A pile of owl shite.

MAMMY: (WHEELING HERSELF AWAY) Did they catch the shark in the end?

HELEN: They did.

MAMMY: (SADLY) Ohh.

HELEN: Ah it wasn't even a shark at all, Mrs. It was a tall fella in a grey donkey-jacket.

MAMMY: How do you know, Helen?

HELEN: Didn't I give the fella a couple of kisses to promise to put me in their next film, and didn't I stamp on the bollocks of him when his promise turned out untrue?

MAMMY: All that fuss o'er a fella in a grey donkey-jacket.
I don't know.

HELEN: He won't be playing any more sharks for a while
anyways, Mrs, the stamp I gave the feck.

(HELEN AND MAMMY EXIT. BARTLEY STANDS STARING AT
BILLY'S SILHOUETTE, HAVING JUST SPOTTED IT. EILEEN,
CRYING, STILL HAS HER BACK TO IT. KATE PULLS BACK
THE SHEET, REVEALING BILLY, ALIVE AND WELL)

(OFF. CALLING OUT) Are you coming, you, fecker?

BARTLEY: In a minute I'm coming.

BILLY: I didn't want to disturb ye til the film was o'er.

(EILEEN TURNS, SEES HIM, AND SITS DOWN STUNNED. KATE
DROPS HER STONE AND EMBRACES BILLY)

BARTLEY: Hello there, Cripple Billy.

BILLY: Hello there, Bartley.

BARTLEY: Just back from America are ya?

BILLY: I am.

BARTLEY: Uh-huh. (PAUSE) Did you get me me Yalla-mallows?

BILLY: I didn't, Bartley.

BARTLEY: Ar, ya fecking promised, Billy.

BILLY: They had only Fripple-frapples.

(BILLY TOSSES BARTLEY A PACKET OF SWEETS)

BARTLEY: Ah jeebies, Fripple-frapples'll do just as fine.
Thank you Cripple Billy.

KATE: You're not dead at all, are you Billy?

BILLY: I'm not, Auntie Kate.

KATE: Well that's good.

BARTLEY: Was I near the mark with me made-up letter guessing,
Cripple Billy?

BILLY: You was bang on the mark, Bartley. How did you make
such a good guess?

BARTLEY: Ah I can be awful clever sometimes, me, despite what everyone says. What would McSharry give you a letter for when if he was telling you he'd tell you in person? And why would he go about denying it still, four months later, when everyone on Inishmaan believed you were dead or dying?

EILEEN: Not everyone on Inishmaan. Some of us only believed you'd run off, and run off because you couldn't stomach the sight of us.

BILLY: Not for a second was that true, Auntie Eileen, and wasn't the reason I returned that I couldn't bear to be parted from ye any longer? Didn't I take me screen test not a week ago and have the Yanks say to me the part was mine? But I had to tell them it was no go, no matter how much money they offered me, because I know now it isn't Hollywood that's the place for me. It's here on Inishmaan, with the people who love me, and the people I love back.

(KATE KISSES HIM)

BARTLEY: Ireland can't be such a bad place, so, if cripple fellas turn down Hollywood to come to Ireland.

BILLY: To tell you the truth, Bartley, it wasn't an awful big thing at all to turn down Hollywood, with the arse-faced lines they had me reading for them. 'Can I not hear the wail of the banshees for me, as far as I am from me barren island home'.

(BARTLEY LAUGHS)

'An Irishman I am, begora! With a heart and a spirit on me not crushed by a hundred years of oppression. I'll be getting me shillelagh out next, wait'll you see'. A rake of shite. And had me singing the fecking 'Croppy Boy' then.

KATE: Sure I think he'd make a great little actoreen, don't you, Eileen?

BARTLEY: Them was funny lines, Cripple Billy. Do them again.

KATE: I'll be off home and air your room out for you, Billy. There was a spider in there I saw the other day I'll have to tread on for ya.

BILLY: Oh do tread on that spider, aunty, aye.

BARTLEY: Em, you've forgot your stone there, Mrs.

KATE: Ah I'll leave me stone. I have me Billy-boy back now to talk to, don't I, Billy?

BARTLEY: You do, aunty.

(KATE EXITS)

Oh she hasn't started up with the bloody stones again, has she?

BARTLEY: She has. Talks to them day and night, and everybody laughs at her, me included.

BILLY: You shouldn't laugh at other people's misfortunes, Bartley.

BARTLEY: (CONFUSED) Why?

BILLY: I don't know why. Just that you shouldn't is all.

BARTLEY: But it's awful funny.

BILLY: Even so.

BARTLEY: We-ell I disagree with you there, but you've got me me Fripplefrapples so I won't argue the point. Will you tell me all about how great America is later, Cripple Billy?

BILLY: I will, Bartley.

BARTLEY: Did you see any telescopes while you were over there?

BILLY: I didn't.

BARTLEY: (DISAPPOINTED) Oh. How about me Aunt Mary in Boston Massachusettes? Did you see her? She has funny brown hair on her.

BILLY: I didn't, Bartley.

BARTLEY: Oh. (PAUSE) Well, I'm glad you're not dead anyways, Cripple Billy.

(BARTLEY EXITS)

BILLY: (PAUSE) That's all Bartley wants to hear is how great America is.

EILEEN: Is it not so?

BILLY: The first night I arrived I was walking be a bridge, and I saw a couple of their polis, a street away from me, break a bottle o'er the head of a young down-and-out there. The down-and-out wasn't doing anything to them, just lying there. (PAUSE) America's just the same as Ireland really. Just with more polis. And more down-and-outs.

(EILEEN GETS UP, GOES OVER TO BILLY AND SLAPS HIM
ACROSS THE HEAD)

BILLY: (CONT.) Aargh! What was that fer?!

EILEEN: Forget down-and-outs and forgettelescopes! Would
it have killed you to write a letter all the time
you were away? No it wouldn't, and not a word.
Not a blessed word!

BILLY: Ah aunty I was awful busy.

EILEEN: Uh-huh. Too busy to write your aunties, were
worried sick about you, but not too busy to go
buying Fripple-frapples for an eejit gosawer and
only to show off the big man you think you are.

BILLY: Ah it only takes a minute to buy Fripple-frapples,
sure. Is that a fair comparison?

EILEEN: Don't you go big-wording me when you know you're
in the wrong.

BILLY: Sure, 'Comparison' isn't a big word.

EILEEN: Mr Yankee-high-and-mighty now I see it is.

BILLY: And I found the American postal system awful
complicated.

EILEEN: It's any excuse for you. Well don't expect me
to be forgiving and forgetting as quick as that
one. She's only forgiven cos she's gone half
doolally because of ya. You won't be catching
me out so easy!

BILLY: Ah don't be like that, aunty.

EILEEN: (EXITING) I will be like that. I will be like
that.

(LONG PAUSE, BILLY'S HEAD LOWERED. EILEEN STICKS
HER HEAD BACK IN)

And I suppose you'll be wanting praitie cakes
for your tea too?!

BILLY: I would, aunty.

EILEEN: Taahhh!

(SHE EXITS AGAIN. PAUSE. BILLY LOOKS AT THE
SHEET/SCREEN, PULLS IT BACK ACROSS TO ITS ORIGINAL
DIMENSIONS AND STANDS THERE STARING AT IT, CARESSING
IT SLIGHTLY, DEEP IN THOUGHT. BOBBY QUIETLY ENTERS
RIGHT, BILLY NOTICING HIM AFTER A MOMENT)

BILLY: Babby-bobby. I daresay I owe you an explanation.

BOBBY: There's no need to explain, Billy.

BILLY: I want to, Bobby. See, I never thought at all this day would come when I'd have to explain. I'd hoped I'd disappear forever to America. And I would've too, if they'd wanted me there. If they'd wanted me for the filming. But they didn't want me. A blond lad from Fort Lauderdale they hired instead of me. He wasn't crippled at all, but the Yank said 'Ah, better to get a normal fella who can act crippled than a crippled fella who can't fecking act at all'. Except he said it ruder. (PAUSE) I thought I'd done alright for meself with me acting. (PAUSE) I gave it a go anyways. I had to give it a go. I had to get away from this place, Babbybobby, be any means, just like me mammy and daddy had to get away from this place. (PAUSE) Going drowning meself I'd often think of when I was here, just to... just to end the laughing at me, and the sniping at me, and the life of nothing but shuffling to the doctor's and shuffling back from the doctor's and pawing over the same ol books and finding any other way to piss another day away. Another day of sniggering, or the patting me on the head like a broken-brained gosawer. The village orphan. The village cripple, and nothing more. Well, there are plenty round here just as crippled as me, only it isn't on the outside it shows. (PAUSE) But the thing is, you're not one of them, Babbybobby, nor never were. You've a kind heart on you. I suppose that's why it was so easy to cod you with the TB letter, but that's why I was so sorry for coddling you at the time and why I'm just as sorry now. Especially for coddling you with the same thing your Mrs passed from. Just I thought that would be more effective. But, in the long run, I thought, or I hoped, that if you had a choice between you being coddled a while and me doing away with meself, once your anger had died down anyways, cos we all know how angry you can get, when your anger had died down you'd choose you being coddled every time. Was I wrong, Babbybobby? Was I?

(BOBBY SLOWLY WALKS OVER TO BILLY, STOPS JUST IN FRONT OF HIM, AND LETS A LENGTH OF LEAD PIPING SLIDE DOWN HIS SLEEVE INTO HIS HAND)

BOBBY: Aye.

(BOBBY RAISES THE PIPE...)

BILLY: No, Bobby, no...!

(BILLY COVERS UP AS THE PIPE SCYTHES DOWN. BLACKOUT, WITH THE SOUNDS OF BILLY'S PAINED SCREAMS AND THE PIPE SCYTHES AGAIN AND AGAIN)

SCENE NINE

(THE SHOP, LATE EVENING. THE DOCTOR TENDING TO BILLY'S
BRUISED AND BLOODY FACE. KATE AT THE COUNTER, EILEEN
AT THE DOOR, LOOKING OUT)

EILEEN: Johnnypateenmike's near enough running o'er the
island with his news of Billy's return to us.

KATE: This is a big day for news.

EILEEN: He has a loaf in one hand and a leg o' mutton
neath each armeen.

KATE: Billy's return and Babbybobby's arrest and Jim
Finnegan's daughter joining the nunnery then.
That was the biggest surprise.

EILEEN: The nuns must be after anybody if they let Jim
Finnegan's daughter join them.

KATE: The nuns standards must have dropped.

BILLY: Sure why shouldn't Jim Finnegan's daughter become
a nun? It's only pure gossip that Jim Finnegan's
daughter is a slut.

DOCTOR: No, Jim Finnegan's daughter is a slut.

BILLY: Is she?

DOCTOR: Aye.

BILLY: How do you know?

DOCTOR: Just take me word.

EILEEN: Isn't he a doctor?

BILLY: (PAUSE) Just I don't like people gossiping about
people is all. Haven't I had enough of that meself
to last me a lifetime?

DOCTOR: But aren't you the one who started half the
gossiping about you, with your forging of letters.
from me you'll yet have to answer for? Sure, with
the consensus of opinion ranged against me, didn't
I begin doubting meself whether I'd diagnosed
you as dying.

BILLY: I'm sorry about the letter business, Doctor, but
wasn't it the only avenue left open to me?

EILEEN: It's 'Avenues' now, do ya hear?

KATE: It's always big-talk when from America they return.

EILEEN: Avenues. I don't know.

BILLY: Aunties, I think the doctor might be wanting a mug of tea, would ye get him one?

KATE: Would you want a mug of tea, Doctor?

DOCTOR: If it's no trouble only, Kate.

KATE: You were right, Billy.

(SHE EXITS TO BACK ROOM)

BILLY: Why don't you go help her, Auntie Eileen?

EILEEN: Sure how hard a task is tea-making?

BILLY: Go keep her company, I mean, til her mind gets full right again.

EILEEN: Is it getting rid of me you're after? If it is, just say so.

BILLY: It's getting rid of you I'm after.

(EILEEN STARES AT HIM A MOMENT THEN MOODILY EXITS TO THE BACK ROOM)

DOCTOR: You shouldn't talk to her like that, now, Billy.

BILLY: Ah she keeps going on and on.

DOCTOR: I know she does but she's old.

BILLY: I suppose. (PAUSE) Would you tell me something, doctor? What do you remember of me mammy and daddy, the people they were?

DOCTOR: Why do you ask?

BILLY: Oh, just when I was in America there I often thought of them, what they'd have done if they'd got there. Wasn't that where they were heading the night they drowned?

DOCTOR: They say it was. (PAUSE) As far as I can remember, they weren't the nicest of people. Your daddy was an owl drunken tough, would rarely take a break from his fighting.

BILLY: I've heard me mammy was a beautiful woman.

DOCTOR: No, no, she was awful ugly.

BILLY: Was she?

DOCTOR: Oh she'd scare a pig. But, ah, she seemed a pleasant enough woman, despite her looks, although she'd always be on the cadge for a couple of bob and wouldn't let up until she got it, and the breath on her, well it would knock you.

BILLY: They say it was that dad punched mammy while she was heavy with me was why I turned out the way I did.

DOCTOR: Who says?

BILLY: People say.

DOCTOR: And do you believe people? Disease caused you to turn out the way you did, Billy. Not punching at all. Don't go romanticising it.

(BILLY COUGHS/WHEEZES SLIGHTLY)

I see you still have your wheeze.

BILLY: I still have a bit of me wheeze.

DOCTOR: That wheeze is taking a long time to go.

(THE DOCTOR USES A STETHOSCOPE TO CHECK BILLY'S CHEST)

Has worse or better it got since your travelling?
Breathe in.

BILLY: Maybe a biteen worse.

(THE DOCTOR LISTENS TO BILLY'S BACK)

DOCTOR: But blood you haven't been coughing up, ah no.

BILLY: Ah a biteen of blood. (PAUSE) Now and again.

DOCTOR: Breathe out. How often is now and again, Billy?

BILLY: (PAUSE) Most days. (PAUSE) The TB is it?

DOCTOR: I'll have to be doing more tests.

BILLY: But the TB it looks like?

DOCTOR: The TB it looks like.

BILLY: (QUIETLY) There's a coincidence.

(JOHNNY ENTERS QUIETLY, HAVING BEEN LISTENING AT THE DOOR, LOAF IN HAND, A LEG OF LAMB UNDER EACH ARM, WHICH HE CARRIES THROUGHOUT)

JOHNNY: It's the TB after all?

DOCTOR: Oh Johnnypateen, will you ever stop listening at doors?

JOHNNY: Lord save us but from God I'm sure that TB was sent Cripple Billy, for claiming he had TB when he had no TB, and making Johnnypateen's news seem unreliable.

DOCTOR: God doesn't send people TB, Johnnypateen.

JOHNNY: He does send people TB.

DOCTOR: He doesn't, now.

JOHNNY: Well didn't he send the Egyptians boils is just as bad?

DOCTOR: Well boils is different from tuberculosis, Johnnypateen, and, no, he didn't send the Egyptians boils.

JOHNNY: In Egyptian times.

DOCTOR: No, he didn't.

JOHNNY: Well he did something to the fecking Egyptians!

BILLY: He killed their first-born sons.

JOHNNY: He killed their first-born sons and dropped frogs on them, aye. There's a boy knows his scripture. Do your aunties know you have TB yet, Cripple Billy?

BILLY: No, they don't know, and you're not to tell them.

JOHNNY: Sure it's me job to tell them!

BILLY: It isn't your job at all to tell them, and don't you have enough news for one day with me return, and Jim Finnegan's daughter, and Babbybobby's arrest for battering me. Wasn't it you wanted Babbybobby arrested in the first place? I was doing you a favour there. Can't you do me a favour for once in your life?

JOHNNY: (SIGHING) Ah I won't tell them so.

BILLY: Thank you, Johnnypateen.

JOHNNY: Johnnypateen's a kind-hearted, Christian man.

DOCTOR: I heard you were feeding your mammy poteen at the showing of the film today, Johnnypateen.

JOHNNY: I don't know where she got hold of that poteen. She's a devil, d'you know?

DOCTOR: Where's your mammy now?

JOHNNY: At home she is. (PAUSE) Lying at the foot of me stairs.

DOCTOR: What's she doing lying at the foot of your stairs?

JOHNNY: Nothing. Just lying. Ah she seems happy enough. She has a pint with her.

DOCTOR: How did she get lying at the foot of your stairs?

JOHNNY: Be falling down them! How d'ya usually get lying at the foot of a fella's stairs?

DOCTOR: And you just left her there?

JOHNNY: Is it my job to go picking her up?

DOCTOR: It is!

JOHNNY: Sure, didn't I have work to do with me news-divulging? I have better things to do than picking mammys up. D'you see the two legs of lamb I got, and a loaheen too? This is a great day.

(THE DOCTOR PACKS UP HIS BLACK BAG, STUNNED, AS JOHNNY ADMIRES HIS MEAT)

DOCTOR: I'm off now, Billy, to Johnnypateen's house, to see if his mammy's dead or alive. Will you come see me tomorrow, for those further tests?

BILLY: I will, Doctor.

(THE DOCTOR EXITS, STARING AT JOHNNY ALL THE WAY. JOHNNY SITS DOWN BESIDE BILLY)

JOHNNY: Me mammy isn't lying at the foot of me stairs at all. It's just I can't stand the company of that boring feck.

BILLY: That wasn't a nice thing to do, Johnnypateen.

JOHNNY: Well you're hardly the world's authority on nice things to do, now, are you Cripple Billy?

BILLY: I'm not at that, I suppose.

JOHNNY: Ah what harm? Do what you want and feck everybody else is Johnnypateenmichael's motto.

BILLY: Sure that's not a very Christian motto, Johnnypateen.

JOHNNY: I suppose it's not, although it keeps your belly full, and your mammy's belly full. (PAUSE) Full of drink anyways.

BILLY: Did you hear McSharry talking about my mammy when you were listening at the door?

JOHNNY: A bit of it.

BILLY: Was he accurate about her?

(JOHNNY SHRUGS)

Oh isn't it always on this subject your lips stay sealed, yet on every subject from feuds o'er geese to ewe-maiming be lonely fellas, your lips go flapping like a cabbage in the breeze?

JOHNNY: Now, on the subject of feuds over geese, have you heard the latest?

(BILLY SIGHS)

Well we all thought Jack Ellery and Patty Brennan were apt to go killing each other o'er the slaughter of their cat and their goose, but now d'you know what? A child seen them, just this morning there, kissing the faces off each other in a haybarn. I can't make it out for the life of me. Two fellas kissing, and two fellas who don't even like each other.

BILLY: (PAUSE) You've changed the subject, Johnnypateen.

JOHNNY: I'm great at changing subjects, me. What was the subject? Oh, your drowned mammy and daddy.

BILLY: Were they gets like McSharry says, Johnnypateen?

JOHNNY: They weren't at all gets.

BILLY: No? And yet they still left me behind when they sailed off.

(EILEEN RETURNS WITH MUG OF TEA)

EILEEN: I've the Doctor's tea.

BILLY: The Doctor's gone.

EILEEN: Without having his tea?

BILLY: Evidently.

JOHNNY: That's a great word, Cripple Billy, 'Evidently'.

EILEEN: Don't you be big-wording me again, Billy Claven.

JOHNNY: I'll have the Doctor's tea so, if it'll save a family dispute.

(SHE GIVES HIM THE TEA)

Johnnypateen goes out of his way to help people out, and do you have any biscuits there, Mrs?

BILLY: You're changing the subject again, aren't ya?

JOHNNY: I'm not changing the subject. I want a biscuit.

EILEEN: We have no biscuits.

JOHNNY: I'll bet you have a rake of biscuits. What do you have on the shelf behind them peas, there?

EILEEN: We have more peas.

JOHNNY: You order too many peas. A fella can't go having peas with his tea. Unless he was an odd fella. (ADJUSTING LAMB) And there's no way you could describe Johnnypateenmike as an odd fella. Oh no.

BILLY: Johnnypateen. Me mammy and daddy. Their sailing.

EILEEN: Oh that's ancient news, Billy. Just leave it alone...

JOHNNY: Sure if the boy wants to hear, let him hear. Isn't he grown up and travelled enough now to be hearing?

EILEEN: You're not going telling him?

(JOHNNY STARES AT HER A MOMENT)

JOHNNY: It was on the sands I met them that night, staring off into the black, the water roaring, and I wouldn't've thought a single thing more of it, if I hadn't seen the sack full of stones tied to the hands of them there, as they heaved it into the boat. There's the sack up there, still.

(BILLY SHUFFLES OVER TO THE SACK ON THE BACK WALL AND EXAMINES IT. WHILE HIS BACK IS TURNED, EILEEN PATS JOHNNY'S SHOULDER A MOMENT IN THANKS)

BILLY: So they did kill themselves o'er me?

JOHNNY: They killed themselves, aye, but not for the reasons you think. D'you think it was to get away from ya?

BILLY: Why else, sure?

JOHNNY: Will I tell him?

(EILEEN NODS)

A week before this it was they'd first been told you'd be dying if they couldn't get you to the Galway General and medicines down you, and even then your hopes wouldn't've been good. But a hundred pounds or near this treatment'd cost. They didn't have the like of a hundred pounds. I know you know it was their death insurance paid for the treatment saved you. I don't know if you know it was the same day I met them on the sands there that they took their insurance policy out.

BILLY: (PAUSE) It was for me they did it?

JOHNNY: Asked me to cut the bag from them after they were hauled out, they did, so the insurance'd be none the wiser, and asked me to keep quiet about it all til years were passed and no comeback would there be on the money. I couldn't help but tell your aunties early on, just to get it off me chest. But that was all I told. Wherever it was the rumours started, I don't know. It wasn't me on this occasion.

BILLY: So they did love me, in spite of everything.

EILEEN: They did love you because of everything, Billy.

JOHNNY: Isn't that news?

BILLY: That is news. I needed good news this day. Thank you, Johnnypateen.

(THEY SHAKE HANDS AND BILLY SITS)

JOHNNY: You're welcome, Cripple Billy.

BILLY: Billy.

JOHNNY: Billy. (PAUSE) Well, I'm off home to me mammy. Hopefully she'll have dropped down dead when the Doctor barged in and we'll both have had good news this day. (PAUSE) Mrs, d'you have any payment there for Johnnypateen's good news and not peas?

EILEEN: There's Yalla-mallows.

JOHNNY: (LOOKING AT PACKET) What are Yalla-mallows?

EILEEN: They're mallows that are yalla.

JOHNNY: (PAUSE. AFTER CONSIDERING) I'll leave them.

(JOHNNY EXITS. LONG PAUSE)

BILLY: You should have told me before, aunty.

EILEEN: I wasn't sure how you'd take the news, Billy.

BILLY: You still should've told me. The truth is always less hard than you fear it's going to be.

EILEEN: I'm sorry, Billy.

(PAUSE. BILLY LETS HER CUDDLE HIM SLIGHTLY)

BILLY: And I'm sorry for using 'Evidently' on ya.

EILEEN: And so you should be.

(EILEEN GENTLY SLAPS HIS FACE, SMILING. HELEN ENTERS)

Hello, Helen. What can I get you?

HELEN: No, I've just come to look at Cripple Billy's wounds. I've heard they're deep.

BILLY: Hello Helen.

HELEN: You look a fecking fool in all that get-up, Cripple Billy.

BILLY: I do, I suppose. Em, aunty, is that the kettle, now, I hear boiling in the back?

EILEEN: Eh? No. Oh. (TUTS) Aye.

(EILEEN EXITS TO BACK ROOM, AS HELEN PULLS UP BILLY'S BANDAGES TO LOOK UNDER THEM)

BILLY: Hurts a bit that picking does, Helen.

HELEN: Ar don't be such a fecking girl, Cripple Billy. How was America?

BILLY: Fine, fine. Well, fairly fine. And warm anyways.

HELEN: I've heard America is warm.

BILLY: It is warm.

HELEN: That's what I heard. Did you see any girls over there as pretty as me?

BILLY: Not a one.

HELEN: Or almost as pretty as me?

BILLY: Not a one.

HELEN: Or even a hundred times less pretty than me?

BILLY: Well, maybe a couple, now.

(HELEN POKES HIM HARD IN THE FACE)

(IN PAIN) Aargh! Not a one, I mean.

HELEN: You just watch yourself you, Cripple Billy.

BILLY: Do ya have to be so violent, Helen?

HELEN: I do have to be so violent, or if I'm not to be taken advantage of anyways I have to be so violent.

BILLY: Sure, nobody's taken advantage of you since the age of seven, Helen.

HELEN: Six is nearer the mark. I ruptured a curate at six.

BILLY: So couldn't you tone down a bit of your violence and be more of a sweet girl?

HELEN: I could, you're right there. And the day after I could shove a bent spike up me arse.

BILLY: You take the equality of the sexes too far, Helen. It's supposed to be that we end up equally as kind and gentle as each other, not equally as good at kicking the skitter out of each other.

HELEN: Sure when have you been equally as good at kicking the skitter out of anybody?

BILLY: Never, I suppose, but that wasn't me point.

HELEN: All you've ever been good at is shuffling and pretending you've diseases. You'll get nowhere in life with them attributes, Cripple Billy. Barring politics, anyways. (PAUSE) I've just lost me job with the egg-man.

BILLY: Why did you lose your job with the egg-man, Helen?

HELEN: D'you know, I can't for the life of me figure out why. Maybe it was me lack of punctuality. Or me breaking all the egg-man's eggs. Or me giving him a good kick whenever I felt like it. But you couldn't call them decent reasons.

BILLY: You couldn't at all, sure.

HELEN: Or me spitting on the egg-man's wife, but you couldn't call that a decent reason.

BILLY: What did you spit on the egg-man's wife for, Helen?

HELEN: Ah the egg-man's wife just deserves spitting on.

BILLY: Was it a greeny spit?

HELEN: No. Just a plain spit.

BILLY: Sure I can't figure out why they'd go sacking you, so, if it was only a plain spit.

HELEN: Are you being sarcastic to me now, Cripple Billy Claven?

BILLY: Just a little bit sarcastic, Helen, out of fun.

HELEN: You've balls anyway. Despite outward appearances. I still haven't given you a good kick for your taking your place in Hollywood that was rightfully mine. Didn't I have to kiss four of the film directors on Inishmore to book me place you took without a single kiss?

BILLY: But there was only one film director on Inishmore that time, Helen. The man Flaherty. And I didn't see you near him at all.

HELEN: Who was it I was kissing so?

BILLY: I think it was mostly stable-boys who could do an American accent.

HELEN: The bastards! Couldn't you've warned me?

BILLY: I was going to warn you, but you seemed to be enjoying yourself.

HELEN: You do get a decent kiss off a stable-boy, is true enough. I would probably go stepping out with a stable-boy if truth be told, if it wasn't for the smell of pig-shite you get off them.

BILLY: Are you not stepping out with anyone at the moment, so?

HELEN: I'm not.

BILLY: (PAUSE) Me, I've never been kissed.

HELEN: Of course you've never been kissed. You're a funny-looking cripple-boy.

BILLY: (PAUSE) It's funny, but when I was in America I tried to think of all the things I'd miss about home if I had to stay in America. I thought, would I miss the scenery, I thought? The stone walls, and the lanes, and the green, and the sea? No, I wouldn't miss them. Would I miss the weather? The rain, the rain, the cold, the rain and the rain? No, I wouldn't miss it. Would I miss the food? The peas, the prairies, the peas, the prairies and the peas? No, I wouldn't miss it. Would I miss the people?

HELEN: Is this speech going to go on for more long?

BILLY: I've nearly finished it. (PAUSE) What was me last bit? You've put me off...

HELEN: 'Would I miss the people'.

BILLY: Would I miss the people? Well, I'd miss me aunties, or, a bit I'd miss me aunties. I wouldn't miss Johnnypateen with his daft news, or his mostly daft news, or Babbybobby with his lead stick, or all the lads used to laugh at me at school, or all the lasses used to cry if I even spoke to them. Thinking over it, if Inishmaan sank in the sea tomorrow, and everybody on it up and drowned, there isn't especially anybody I'd really miss. Anybody other than you, that is, Helen.

HELEN: (PAUSE) You'd miss the cows you go staring at.

BILLY: I wouldn't really miss them cows. That cow business was blown up out of all proportion. And you can't classify a cow as an anybody, Helen. Not unless you was deranged.

HELEN: Wouldn't you miss our Bartley if he drowned? I'd miss Bartley if he drowned. I'd have no-one to thump of an evening.

BILLY: What I was trying to build up to, Helen, was...

HELEN: Oh, was you trying to build up to something, Cripple Billy?

BILLY: I was, but you keep interrupting me.

HELEN: Build up ahead so.

BILLY: I was trying to build up to... There comes a time in every fella's life when he has to take his heart in his hands and make a try for something, and even though he knows it's a one in a million chance of him getting it, he has to chance it still, else why be alive at all? So, I was wondering, Helen, if maybe sometime, y'know, when you're not too busy or something, if maybe...

BILLY: (CONT.) and I know well I'm no great shakes to look at, but I do have a decent heart on me, and a decent head and a decent spirit on me, and I was wondering if maybe you might want to go out walking with me some evening. Y'know, in a week or two or something?

HELEN: (PAUSE) Sure what would I want to go out walking with a cripple-boy for? And me so pretty I could have any lad in Ireland? It isn't out walking you'd be anyways, it would be out shuffling, because you can't walk. I'd have to be waiting for ya every five yards. What would you and me want to be out shuffling for?

BILLY: For the company.

HELEN: For the company?

BILLY: And...

HELEN: And what?

BILLY: And for the way sweethearts be.

(HELEN LOOKS AT HIM A SECOND, THEN SLOWLY AND QUIETLY STARTS LAUGHING/SNIGGERING THROUGH HER NOSE, AS SHE GETS UP AND GOES TO THE DOOR. ONCE THERE SHE TURNS, LOOKS AT BILLY AGAIN, LAUGHS AGAIN AND EXITS. BILLY IS LEFT STARING DOWN AT THE FLOOR AS KATE QUIETLY ENTERS FROM THE BACK ROOM)

KATE: She's not a very nice girl anyways, Billy.

BILLY: Was you listening, Auntie Kate?

KATE: I wasn't listening or alright I was a biteen listening. (PAUSE) You wait for a nice girl to come along, Billy. A girl who doesn't mind at all what you look like. Just sees your heart.

BILLY: How long will I be waiting for a girl like that to come along, auntie?

KATE: Ah not long at all, Billy. Maybe a year or two. Or at the outside five.

BILLY: Five years...

(BILLY NODS, GETS UP, WHEEZES SLIGHTLY, AND EXITS INTO THE BACK ROOM. KATE STARTS TIDYING AND CLOSING UP THE SHOP. EILEEN ENTERS, HELPING HER. SOUND OF BILLY COUGHING DISTANTLY IN THE HOUSE NOW AND THEN)

EILEEN: What's Cripple Billy looking so glum for? Or so more glum than he usually looks?

KATE: Billy asked Slippy Helen to go out walking with him, and Helen said she'd rather go out walking with a broken-headed ape.

EILEEN: That was a descriptive turn of phrase for Slippy Helen.

KATE: Well, I've tarted it up a bit.

EILEEN: I was thinking. (PAUSE) Cripple Billy wants to aim lower than Helen, really.

KATE: Cripple Billy does want to aim lower than Helen.

EILEEN: Billy wants to aim at ugly girls who are thick, then work his way up.

KATE: Billy should go to Antrim really. He'd be well away. (PAUSE) But Billy probably doesn't like ugly girls who are thick.

EILEEN: Sure there's no pleasing Billy.

KATE: None.

EILEEN: (PAUSE) And you missed the story Johnnypateen spun, Kate, about Billy's mam and daddy tying a sack of stones to their hands and drowning themselves for the insurance money that saved him.

KATE: The stories Johnnypateen spins. When it was poor Billy they tied in that sack of stones, and never knew they had insurance out on them, as no-one would've known if the sea hadn't torn into them as they fled. Poor Billy would still be at the bottom of the sea to this day, if it hadn't been for Johnnypateen's swimming.

EILEEN: We should tell Billy the true story some day, Kate.

KATE: Sure, that story might only make Cripple Billy sad, now, Eileen.

EILEEN: Do you think? Ah there's plenty of time to tell Billy that story anyways.

KATE: There is.

(THE TWO FINISH THEIR CLOSING UP, EILEEN LOCKING THE DOOR, KATE TURNING THE OIL LAMP LOW)

This'll be the first decent night's sleep in many a month I've had, Eileen.

EILEEN: I know it will, Kate. Have you finished for good with your stone shenanigans now?

KATE: I have finished for good with me stone shenanigans. They only crop up when I've been worrying, and, you know, I know I hide it well, but I do worry awful about Billy when he's away from us.

EILEEN: I do worry awful about Billy when he's away from us too, but I try not to let stones enter into it.

KATE: Ah let's forget about stones. We have our Billy back with us now.

EILEEN: We do have our Billy back with us. Back for good.

KATE: Back for good.

(THE TWO SMILE AND EXIT TO THE BACK ROOM, ARM IN ARM. AFTER A PAUSE, BILLY COMES IN FROM THE BACK, SNIFFLING, AND TURNS THE OIL LAMP UP, REVEALING HIS BLOODSHOT EYES AND TEAR-STAINED CHEEKS. HE QUIETLY TAKES THE SACK DOWN FROM THE WALL, PLACES INSIDE IT NUMEROUS CANS OF PEAS UNTIL IT'S VERY HEAVY, THEN TIES THE CORDS AT THE TOP OF THE BAG TIGHTLY AROUND ONE OF HIS HANDS. THIS DONE, HE PAUSES IN THOUGHT A MOMENT, THEN SHUFFLES TO THE DOOR. THERE IS A KNOCK ON IT. BILLY DRIES HIS CHEEKS, HIDES THE SACK BEHIND HIM AND OPENS THE DOOR. HELEN POPS HER HEAD IN)

HELEN: (FORCEFULLY) Alright so I'll go out walking with ya, but only somewheres no fecker would see us and when it's dark and no kissing or groping, cos I don't want you ruining me fecking reputation.

BILLY: Oh. Okay Helen.

HELEN: Or anyways not much kissing or groping.

BILLY: Would tomorrow suit?

HELEN: Tomorrow wouldn't at all suit. Isn't it Bartley's fecking birthday tomorrow?

BILLY: Is it? What have you got him?

HELEN: I got him... and for the life of me I don't know why I did because I know now he'll never stop fecking jabbering on about it or anyways won't stop jabbering til I give him a big thump in the fecking face for himself and even then he probably won't stop, but didn't I get the fecker a telescope?

BILLY: That was awful nice of ya, Helen.

HELEN: I think I must be getting soft in me old age.

BILLY: I think so too.

HELEN: Do ya?

BILLY: Aye.

HELEN: (COYLY) Do ya really, Billy?

BILLY: I do.

HELEN: Uh-huh. Does this feel soft?

(HELEN POKES BILLY HARD IN THE BANDAGED FACE. BILLY YELPS IN PAIN)

BILLY: Aargh! No, it doesn't feel soft!

HELEN: Good-oh. I'll see you the day after tomorrow for our fecking walk, so.

BILLY: You will.

(HELEN KISSES BILLY BRIEFLY, WINKS AT HIM, AND PULLS THE DOOR BEHIND HER AS SHE EXITS. BILLY IS LEFT STANDING THERE STUNNED A MOMENT, THEN REMEMBERS THE SACK TIED TO HIS HAND. PAUSE. HE UNTIES IT, REPLACES THE CANS ON THE SHELVES AND HANGS THE SACK BACK UP ON THE WALL, STROKING IT A MOMENT. HE SHUFFLES OVER TOWARDS THE BACK ROOM, SMILING, BUT STOPS AS HE GETS THERE, COUGHING HEAVILY, HIS HAND TO HIS MOUTH. AFTER THE COUGHING STOPS HE TAKES HIS HAND AWAY AND LOOKS DOWN AT IT FOR A MOMENT. IT'S COVERED IN BLOOD. BILLY LOSES HIS SMILE, TURNS THE OIL-LAMP DOWN AND EXITS TO THE BACK ROOM. FADE TO BLACK)

(END)