


2002-9

## The Carnival King

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### Recommended Citation

Kilroy, Ian (2002) The Carnival King, Fishamble Pigsback first plays, Culleton, Jim (ed), Dublin: New Island, pp 475-564.

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# *The Carnival King*

Ian Kilroy

A Play in Two Acts

**In memory of Bernie Walsh — a man of the theatre**

The *Carnival King* was first produced by Fishamble Theatre Company on 19 July 2001 as part of the Galway Arts Festival in the Bank of Ireland Theatre, NUI Galway. It then toured to the Civic Theatre, Watergate Theatre and Draíocht Studio. The production had the following cast and production team.

**Christy Ruane** Gerard Byrne  
**Phyllis Derrane** Joan Sheehy  
**Francis Devine** John Finegan  
**Sergeant Courtney** Frank O'Sullivan  
**Cathel Lynch** Eamonn Hunt

*Director* Jim Culleton  
*Set Designer* Robert Ballagh  
*Lighting Designer* Paul Keogan  
*Costume Designer* Gabby Dowling  
*Original Music* Laura Forrest-Hay  
*Production Manager* Trevor Ahearn  
*Stage Director* Shelley Bourke  
*Stage Manager* Marjolijn Venema / Maura Howe  
*Administrator / PR* Cerstin Gundlach  
*Fight Director* Paul Burke  
*Producer* Jo Mangan  
*Galway Arts Festival Director* Rose Parkinson

Acknowledgment is made to the Tyrone Guthrie Centre at Annaghmakerrig in Ireland where some of this play was written.

The Characters:

Christy Ruane 50s

Phyllis Derrane 50s

Francis Devine Teens

Justin Courtney 40s-50s

Cathel Lynch 50s

Notes:

The mechanics of the hanging scene, and by necessity the dialogue surrounding it, will vary from production to production. It is best to keep the lines as written, but the order and time of delivery can be worked out in the rehearsal room to best suit the method being used to convey the hanging. Safety should be the paramount concern.

Similarly, the use of the ghost, as well as the places in which the ghost is used, may or may not work, depending on each staging. The ghost should be cut where it does not have the desired impact; and, of course, kept, if the impact is satisfactory.

A realistic setting and design should highlight by contrast the comedy inherent in the incredulous behaviour of the characters

## **Act I**

*A pub in east Galway, Ireland. Stairs leading up to living quarters. A few buntings, not yet correctly hung: a ladder stands in place with which to hang them.*

*Before the lights come up the sound of choral music. The lights slowly rise to a menacing red. A woman walks on-stage. She is bloodstained, ghostly, come to a brutal end. She walks upstage and stares intently at the audience, then moves on. The lights come fully up to daylight. **Francis Devine** is watching a religious programme on daytime television. It is early afternoon.*

*The choral music continues. **Francis** becomes enraptured until he is disturbed by the sounds of primeval shouting and wild African drumming coming from outside. Annoyed, **Francis** turns up the volume, but the music from outside stops. **Francis** turns the sound down to its previous level. After a few moments, the boss, **Christy Ruane**, enters. **Francis** quickly fumbles, turns off the TV and makes himself look busy. **Christy Ruane** is carrying a large plastic fertiliser bag.*

**Francis** Mister Ruane I was just...

**Christy** Why haven't you got those buntings up yet? Do you need the whole day or what?

**Francis** I was just cleaning the...

**Christy** I know what you were doing. Do you think I'm deaf? I heard you zapping away at the TV. A lad your age should be thinking of kissing girls. But no, not our little Saint Francis.

**Francis** I'll finish the buntings now so.

**Christy** Be sure and hang them right this year.

*Francis turns off the TV and goes over to the ladder. He sticks his tongue out at Christy behind his back.*

**Christy** Don't think I can't see you. We've mirrors in case you haven't noticed.

*Francis climbs the ladder and starts work on the buntings. Christy takes off his coat and hangs it up. He then places the fertiliser bag on the counter, goes behind the counter, takes out a large old ledger and starts doing his accounts.*

**Francis**        *[Christy is trying to concentrate]* That drumming would drive you mad. All morning they've been at it *[Christy looks at his watch]*, banging away. It's pure savage. You think they wouldn't be allowed disturb the peace like that, during the day and all. I don't know why Sergeant Courtney doesn't do something about it.

**Christy**        *[Still concentrating]* What harm are they doing?

**Francis**        Well during business hours...how are you supposed to concentrate on your work?

**Christy**        *[Ironically]* A good question. What's 88.31 multiplied by 10?

**Francis**        883 point 1.

**Christy**        Oh yes.

**Francis**        Were they painted up and all?

**Christy**        Who?

**Francis**        Those drummers, the ones making all the racket?

**Christy**        Yes. Africans.

**Francis**        Africans?

**Christy**        Yes. African chieftains with feathers and paint. The works.

**Francis**        Feathers and paint?

**Christy**        Feathers, paint...that's it.

**Francis**        Nothing else?

**Christy**        Nothing else.

**Francis**        Sure?

**Christy**        Sure I'm sure. Didn't I catch the sight of a fellow's slong as proof. All that jigging about and it fell out of his loin cloth for the world to see. I think Mrs. Murphy across the road almost had a stroke she was so excited.

**Francis**        *[Interested despite himself]* Get away!

**Christy**        I'm telling you.

**Francis**        *[Checking his interest]* It's shocking. You think those fellows from the drama society could do something better. What kind of drama is that? Exposing yourself. Couldn't they put on a normal play for a change. Something traditional.

**Christy**        Isn't African dancing traditional?

**Francis**        Get away out of that.

**Christy** I'm telling you. Our ancestors weren't one's for dressing up all tofty for the theatre. It's more in the line of African dancing they went in for.

**Francis** African dancing?

**Christy** Of course African dancing. We'd chieftains here as well you know, and as good as any African chieftain. Agh, I don't know what they teach you in school these days. [*Christy returns to his calculations*] What's 10 per cent of 750?

**Francis** 75.

**Christy** Oh yes.

**Francis** Well I've enough of that drumming. Are they not done practising for tonight by now?

**Christy** [*Getting slightly annoyed as he is trying to concentrate*] How would I know. Go out and ask them.

**Francis** No matter. It'll be all over by tomorrow anyhow.

*A pause while both continue with their work in silence.*

**Francis** What's in the bag?

**Christy** Mind your own business.

**Francis** I was only asking.

*Pause.*

**Christy** Was Phyllis in?

**Francis** No. But I saw her cross the street over to Rafferty's.

**Christy** Rafferty's Menswear? Yes.

**Francis** What would she want over in Rafferty's? She's no fellow to be buying cloths for anymore. It's not your birthday or anything, is it Mr Ruane?

**Christy** Is she not allowed to go into a menswear shop if she has a mind to?

**Francis** Well I was wondering is all.

**Christy** Wondering? Well you must be the only one in town that doesn't know.

**Francis** What?

**Christy** [*Directing Francis. An evasion.*] Here. Wrap that around properly now.

**Francis** I am. I am. What?

**Christy** What what?

**Francis** What is it that I'm the only one in town doesn't know?

**Christy** Oh yes. Phyllis...

**Francis** Yeah?

**Christy** She's a transvestite.

**Francis** Get away.

**Christy** Yes. Always has been.

**Francis** You're pulling my leg.

**Christy** Well where do you think she goes every Saturday night?

**Francis** To the bingo in town.

**Christy** That's what you think. It's her transvestite meetings she's at.

**Francis** Above in town?

**Christy** Yes. Every Saturday night all the transvestites have their meeting in town.

**Francis** Lord. And what do they be at?

**Christy** Well, dressing up as men for starters...if you're a woman like...and as a woman if you're a man. A regular carnival they have every Saturday.

**Francis** Well now I don't think...

**Christy** You don't think what?

**Francis** Well, it's a bit weird. When it's not just messing. Like other than at carnival time.

**Christy** Who asked you for your approval?

*Christy leaves his ledger and starts taking the contents out of the bag. He puts each item one by one up on the counter: a long length of hemp rope, nails, a hammer, lipstick, other types of women's make-up, a pair of tights etc. He takes out the receipts for these purchases and starts writing information from them into his ledger.*

**Francis** And it's only dressing up like?

**Christy** Well, for starters.

**Francis** What do you mean for starters? What else would they be doing?

**Christy** Well, a spot of dancing, and then...well...

**Francis** Well what? What then?

**Christy** Well then they'd take off all their cloths and sit down to a grand feed of spuds.

**Francis** Agh, would you stop pulling my leg. I'm not a fool you know.

**Christy** [*Laughing*] I had you going there for a while.

**Francis** You had not.



**Christy** Well if I hadn't you couldn't tell the difference. Jesus, Francis Devine sometimes I think you'd swallow your own elbow.

**Francis** I would not, and there's no need to be saying Jesus.

**Christy** Agh, stop lecturing me and keep an eye on what you're doing. Look. You left a bit hanging down there.

*Pause. Christy concentrates on his work.*

**Francis** Are you doing the shopping for Phyllis now as well?

**Christy** Em...yeah. She's no time these days with the bloodbank work. Jesus, you're a perceptive young fellow Devine.

**Francis** Oh yeah, I hear she's collecting blood this week. She never lets up trying to get me to donate. To tell you the truth she kind of gives me the willies. Well, not so much any more...

**Christy** It's more giving blood than Phyllis Derrane you're afraid of I'd say.

**Francis** No. I'm telling you, there's something spooky about her. It's because she's an old nurse, not a young one like. Dracula we used call her in school, when she'd come in for the check-up's. Her pale face and dark eyes. Lord save us. One of the lads said he looked in her window one evening, peeking like, and he saw her sleeping in a coffin.

**Christy** [*Laughing*] Agh, get away.

**Francis** I'm telling you. The amount of stories that used to go round about Drac...about old Mrs. Derrane...well you could hardly count them. We'd always bet she'd show up at the carnival dressed as a vampire one of the years. Never did.

**Christy** More's the pity.

*The drumming and shouting start up again, but this time more distant.*

**Francis** Agh, keep it down, can't you.

**Christy** I don't know what your problem is Devine. Most young lad's your age love the carnival. It's only a bit of crack you know.

*The drumming fades away.*

**Francis** [*Reluctantly*] Ah, I suppose.

**Christy** Get into the spirit lad.

**Francis** Yes. What are you dressing up as this year Mr Ruane? A woman again is it?

**Christy** Well, you'll just have to wait and find out, won't you.

**Francis** Agh, go on. Tell me.  
**Christy** I will not  
**Francis** Go on.  
**Christy** No. A man has his secrets.  
**Francis** If I tell you what I'm dressing as will you tell me then?  
**Christy** I can guess what your dressing as.  
**Francis** Go on then.  
**Christy** A priest I suppose.  
**Francis** A bishop actually.  
**Christy** Well wouldn't you know it. His Lordship Devine. A girl would need to be careful around you. A chastity belt could be called for.

*Christy grabs at Francis putting up the buntings.*

**Francis** Would you ever lay off! At least I'm a man every year. You won't find me in any women's cloths. Sure if there was a transvestite meeting in town I bet you'd be first in the door every Saturday. All dolled up in your sister's clothes.

**Christy** [*Gives Francis a sharp look*] What did you say?

**Francis** Wup. I'm sorry Mr. Ruane. I didn't mean...

**Christy** Just you be careful when talking about my sister. All right?

**Francis** I'm sorry Mr Ruane. I didn't mean any disrespect.

**Christy** Agh...grand. Just don't speak of her so lightly in your talk.

*Christy closes the big ledger and puts it away. He looks at his watch.*

**Christy** Hurry up with that drape. I've a job for you.

*Francis does as he's told and descends the ladder. Christy takes the length of rope off the counter, unravels it and winds it up again by holding one end with his hand and wrapping the rope around his elbow with the other.*

**Francis** What's the rope for?

**Christy** To hang you with if your not careful. [*Short pause*]. For a clothesline.

**Francis** Isn't that a bit thick for a clothesline?

**Christy** Do you think I don't know the kind of rope you need for a clothesline?

**Francis** I was only saying.

*Short pause.*

**Christy** Look. What I want you to do is take this rope out front and give it a good skipping. Tie something heavy to the end and drag it along. Loosen out the fibres.

**Francis** Grand Mr. Ruane.

**Christy** Good lad. Give it a good thrashing now, do you hear?

**Francis** Yes. But what about the decorations?

**Christy** Oh, don't worry about them. Leave them to me. When you're finished just leave me in the rope.

**Francis** I'm done then?

**Christy** Yes. I expect you need to get some dinner, get into costume and all.

**Francis** Well fair play to you Mr. Ruane.

**Christy** You've to be back by eight though, do you hear me now? There'll be a fair crowd in here tonight before the carnival. I'll need a spare pair of hands .  
*[At this stage Francis has the rope and is beginning to exit][Christy utters under his breath]* Even if they belong to a bishop. *[To Francis as he exits]*  
 A good thrashing now, do you hear?

**Francis** *[Exiting with rope]* No problem Mr. Ruane!

*Christy is a little pre-occupied when Francis leaves. He begins to absent-mindedly clean up a bit. He looks at the wall where there is a framed pencil sketch of a Woman: the walking ghost we saw some minutes before. A card for the same woman is slotted in the frame with the picture. Slipping into a sombre mood he takes it down and examines it. He reads the words on the cover of the card aloud, "In Loving Memory". He places the card back in its place and continues with minor chores. He looks at his watch. After a few moments he spots the fertiliser bag on the counter. He smiles to himself and goes behind the counter. He looks around. Nobody. He takes a Woman's wig from the fertiliser bag and tries it on. He admires himself in the mirror. After a few moments he hears someone coming. He quickly whips off the wig and places it under the counter. He makes himself look busy.*

*Enter Phyllis Derrane, Christy's friend. As she enters she carries a bag from Rafferty's Menswear. She shouts out to Francis as she walks through the door.*

**Phyllis** When are you going to give me a pint of that grand young blood of yours Devine! [*She enters laughing to herself.*]

**Christy** Jesus Phyllis! You gave me an awful fright.

**Phyllis** Bit jumpy today Christy? The nerves acting up on you?

**Christy** Aren't they always Phyllis, aren't they always. Raining out?

**Phyllis** Not a drop. We always seem to get the weather for the carnival.

**Christy** We're blessed that way.

**Christy** Here. Leave down that stuff and sit down, take the weight off your feet.  
*Phyllis leaves down her bags and sits at a stool. However, she keeps looking behind her at the door: is anyone listening?*

**Christy** A drop?

**Phyllis** A small one.  
*Christy pours two small glasses of whiskey.*

**Christy** Excited about tonight?

**Phyllis** Yes. That young lad can't hear us, can he?

**Christy** Not at all. He's as curious as an old church cat, but even his ears only reach so far. What is it?

**Phyllis** [*Urgently and excitedly, wants to communicate something*] I've something to show you.

**Christy** Yes?

**Phyllis** [*Fumbles in bag.*] Let's just call it, well...the sword of justice.  
*Phyllis is interrupted by the entrance of Francis. He is carrying a newspaper.*

**Francis** Excuse me Mr Ruane, I've your paper.

**Christy** Ah. [*Looks at his watch*] That young Mannion is getting later and later delivering it. [*Francis is looking at the front page*] Give it here.  
*Francis reluctantly hands the paper to Christy who begins to hungrily look through it.*

**Francis** All set for tonight Mrs Derrane?

**Phyllis** Yes Francis.

**Francis** What is it this year then?

**Phyllis** Well now...you'll just have to wait and see. Let's just say, I've tried my best.

**Francis** [*Slightly camp*] Agh, I'm sure your costume's great. And with no clear

candidate this year, I wouldn't be surprised if we had a carnival *queen*  
elected to run proceedings.

**Phyllis** Well now to tell you the truth I wouldn't mind being put in charge for the night. [*Phyllis looks at the portrait on the wall*] I'd sort a few things out around here.

*Francis reads the meaning; he glances at the portrait.*

**Francis** [*Moving the subject on*] Where did that old tradition come from anyway  
Mrs

Derrane?

**Phyllis** [*Broken from her brooding*] What's that?

**Francis** The carnival, with a king given power for the night.

**Phyllis** [*Drinks*] It's very old around these parts Francis. My grandfather said that it stretched back to pagan times. [*Smiles to herself*] In his day my grandfather was carnival king more times than any man or woman in the town.

**Francis** Really?

**Phyllis** Did you not hear how he died?

**Francis** Well I heard a song about him once.

**Phyllis** Agh, it's famous. It was during the carnival once and granddad was awarded the crown for the duration. Now he'd done an ambush a few days before and they were looking for him, they knew well who it was. So instead of running he decided to stay put, right under their noses using his costume for a cover. There he was, being lorded around the town in a wig and mask, the full regalia. And everyone hiding him, knowing well the danger he was in.

**Francis** You think he'd have got away so?

**Phyllis** One of the Lynch's grassed on him. At least we think it was the Lynch's. Anyway, even the soldiers didn't interfere with the feast. They waited until sun-up and the carnival's end. Arrested him then, took him away and shot him. Was never seen alive again.

*She drinks. Pause.*

**Francis** Well...now. That's not how I heard it.

**Phyllis** What?

**Francis** I heard he blew himself up putting down dynamite. Isn't that where Derrane's Hole comes from over by the bridge? From the explosion.

**Phyllis** Who told you that rubbish. It's called Derrane's Grave. That's where they buried him. Agh. People round here know nothing. They remember nothing right.

*Christy has found what he was looking for in the paper.*

**Christy** It's here.

**Francis** What's that Mr Ruane?

**Christy** Kate's anniversary notice. I put it in during the week. [*He reads*] "Ruane. First anniversary. In loving memory of my sister Kate who was brutally murdered on February thirteenth last. 'No rest without justice'. From her loving brother Christopher".

*Francis looks in on the paper.*

**Francis** [*Thinks to himself*] It's funny how a picture can be closer than a photo.

**Christy** What's that?

**Francis** Well you know, that doesn't look like your sister at all Mr Ruane.

*Christy pulls the paper away and looks closer.*

**Francis** [*Indicates the portrait on the wall*] That's much more of a likeness.

**Christy** [*Anger and disgust*] Agh! They mixed up the photos!

**Phyllis** [*Taking the paper*] Give us a look at that. [*She studies the photo.*] Yes.

**Francis** It's only a small mistake. No one will notice.

**Phyllis** [*Leafing through the paper*] I see her "husband" neglected to put a notice in for her.

**Christy** Lynch! Why would he, the bastard. As far as he's concerned the quicker she's forgotten the better. Why would he want reminding everyone. Done his share of acting for the funeral. And all the time thinking on the inheritance. Wouldn't even spend a few quid, not even a few quid of his...murder money! [*Christy is shaking with anger. He pauses to contain himself. He looks at the portrait on the wall.*] Poor Katey. [*Emotionally volatile, he is now becoming upset*] Not even a few quid to give her...to give her a notice in the paper.

**Phyllis** [*Roughly giving paper to Francis so that she can comfort Christy*] Agh now Christy. [*Patting his hand*] Don't upset yourself. [*Phyllis gives*

*Francis a look: clear off, can't you see he's upset*] He'll get what's coming to him.

**Christy** I hope you're right Phyllis. I hope you're right.

**Phyllis** [*Squeezes his hand meaningfully*] I know I'm right Christy.

*Christy picks up that Phyllis has something on her mind.*

**Francis** I hear they're closing the case.

**Phyllis** What?

**Francis** No evidence no case. That's what the Sergeant said. A year with no evidence meant the case would be better forgotten.

**Phyllis** When did he say that?

**Francis** Met him this morning on the way in.

*Short pause.*

**Christy** [*Impersonal voice*] Somehow I knew it would end like this. He'll come gloating soon. Soon he'll come for the rest. This place. My flat upstairs. It's all Kate's you know, the lot. [*Pause*] He won't get it though. I'll not allow it. [*Drinks. Hand shakes.*]

**Phyllis** Keep it together now Christy. You don't want a relapse, do you? [*Looks at Francis*] Isn't that right Francis? [*Francis doesn't answer*] Yes. [*She tries to distract Christy from his thoughts*] Anyway, it's no time for brooding. Haven't we our costumes to think about. [*She pours out two whiskeys, gives one to Christy*] Here. Get that down you. A bit of training for tonight. Ha?

**Christy** *Taking glass. Lightening up*] Yes. The carnival. Tonight. Yes. The young lad saw you over in Rafferty's earlier.

*Francis is avoiding notice. Hanging around listening.*

**Phyllis** [*Indicating bag*] Just getting the finishing touches to my garb.

**Christy** You're all set so?

**Phyllis** Yes. Just about.

**Christy** We'll make a fine pair.

**Phyllis** We will indeed. A right respectable pair.

*They laugh. Laugh subsides. Phyllis indicates Francis to Christy with her eyes.*

**Christy** You still here?

**Francis** I was thinking you might need me.

**Christy** Need you? What would I need you for? Phyllis, what would I need him for? I'd want to be in a bad way. [*Shouts*] Go out and finish that rope!

**Francis** You should treat me better. Or I'll...

**Christy** You'll what?

*Francis exits. Leaves paper on counter. Leaves door open behind him.*

**Christy** It's worse that young fellow is getting. I've heard he's doing the eggs for Lynch

now? You'd think he wasn't getting enough here. Ha?

**Phyllis** I suppose you can't stop him.

**Christy** I could let him go.

**Phyllis** Could you really?

**Christy** I don't know.

**Phyllis** [*Looking after Francis*] The youth these days. They'd turn you in for farting.

**Christy** You had something on your mind Phyllis?

**Phyllis** Yes. It's. Well...this matter of justice. [*Short pause*] It might fall to us to deliver.

**Christy** What do you mean?

**Phyllis** [*Looks. Is Francis gone? Yes.*] You know I was over in Rafferty's earlier. Well, I popped into Murphy's after. Looking for a bulb. Anyway, who walks in the door but Lynch. In he comes, sweating and swaggering, with his dirty old cloths on him...straight from his pigs I'd say.

**Christy** What did he want?

**Phyllis** Well, he goes up to Murphy saying he's looking for a hammer. He hadn't spotted me in the next aisle. Well Murphy says he's all out of hammers...

**Christy** Glad to hear it.

**Phyllis** ...but maybe there might be one left down in the storeroom. Well Lynch starts scratching his arse waiting. And then he starts wandering around, playing with the merchandise. Anyways, he comes to this brand new kitchen knife and starts messing with it. He picks it up by the handle, his big dirty hands on it, and gives it a good squeeze.

**Christy** And he hadn't seen you at all?



**Phyllis** No. Well, Murphy from the storeroom with a lovely new hammer; a nice wooden handle on it. But Lynch starts complaining how he wanted one with a rubber handle, how the wooden handles always split on him.

**Christy** What would he know about hammers.

**Phyllis** Well the long and the short of it is that Murphy takes back the hammer and Lynch leaves. I sneak over, take one of Murphy's plastic bags and ease the knife into the bag, careful not to touch it, and [*Phyllis pulls the bag containing the knife from her pocket and holds it aloft*] into my bag.

**Christy** [*Understanding*] You're a genius woman.

**Phyllis** know.

**Christy** [*He excitedly takes the knife*]. This is what we've waited for.

**Phyllis** [*Christy examines the knife*] Careful now.

**Christy** And Murphy didn't see you?

**Phyllis** Not at all.

*They laugh. Christy pours two more measures.*

**Christy** I always knew you were a smart one Phyllis [*He leaves the knife on the counter*].

**Phyllis** I am surely.

**Christy** I tell you, this is a blessing. [*Thinks*] does it amount to evidence?

**Phyllis** You've only heard the half of it yet. [*Takes a sip. Looks at the door secretively. All clear*] Not only have we Lynch's prints, but we've Kate's blood on top of it. Nurse Derrane, at your service. Blood. Now that I'd call evidence.

*As Phyllis is speaking the last line enter Sergeant Justin Courtney. He is unheard as he enters. He wears very thick eye-glasses and carries a handheld transistor radio very close to his ear on which he is constantly listening to "the match".*

**Courtney** [*More interested in the match than in his surroundings*] Phyllis. Christy.

**Phyllis** [*Surprised; but cooler*] Sergeant Courtney.

*Phyllis quickly and smoothly takes the knife and puts it back in her pocket.*

**Courtney** You're not listening to the match?

**Christy**        What match?

*Courtney holds up his hand for silence as something crucial is happening in the match.*

**Courtney**        [*Disappointed*] Agh! That's the whistle. They'll be lucky to get back with the wind against them in the second half. [*He turns off and puts down the radio*].

**Phyllis**         They will Sergeant.

**Courtney**        [*Gives Phyllis a defensive look; are you being ironic*] Since when are you interested?

**Phyllis**         To tell you the truth I don't know that much about it Sergeant. [*Winding him up*] But I'll tell you one thing, I'm surprised we have a team at all with all the ecstasy tablets young fellows are taking these days. They're in no fit state to be out training at all, let alone playing a match.

**Courtney**        There's none of our team on drugs, and nothing else for that matter. Unless you've *evidence* to the contrary?

**Phyllis**         [*Wary*] I've no evidence.

**Courtney**        That's not what you were saying a minute ago. "Now that I'd call evidence". Oh I heard you on the way in, in case you think I didn't. Now, what was that about Mrs Derrane? Is there something you should tell me?

**Christy**         [*Nervous*] Phyllis was only telling me a story Sergeant.

**Courtney**        Mrs Derrane?

**Phyllis**         [*Pause*] What I said was for Christy's ears alone. A private conversation between two citizens. Now, tell me Sergeant. Is it right for the forces of the law to be intruding in on two friends and their private discussion?

**Courtney**        Private discussion in a public place is not private. And if it's concerning a case of public enquiry, yes: it is right that the forces of the law should be aware of what's going on. Now, what "evidence" would this be Mrs Derrane? [*Silence*] Out with it.

**Phyllis**         Well, if you must know, it concerns the serious matter of Paddy Irishman, Paddy Scotsman and Paddy Englishman: three natives of these Celtic Isles.

**Courtney**        What do you mean the Celtic Isles?

**Phyllis**         Yes the Celtic Isles, the Welsh included, all but one - the English - are Celtic peoples; and even they have a fair dose of it in the blood. Anyway,

the three are sitting in a pub when Paddy Irishman tells the other two lads that he is concerned that his wife is having an affair with a carpenter: having found a hammer and saw under his marriage bed. On hearing this Paddy Scotsman relates how he thinks his wife is having an affair with a farmer, because just the other morning he'd found a wellington and spade under his bed. Well, Paddy Englishman sympathises with the two, and says that he understands their predicament because, as he must confess, he thinks that his own spouse is having an affair with a horse. For that very morning, on looking under his bed, what did he find but a jockey. [*She pauses to take a drink of whiskey*] Now *that* I'd call evidence, Sergeant.

*Phyllis looks at Courtney dead-pan. Courtney feels he's been made a fool of.*

**Courtney** [*At Christy's snigger*] You seem to find it funny Mr Ruane.

**Christy** Well it's better the second time Sergeant.

*Courtney polishes his glasses on the end of his pullover as is his habit.*

**Courtney** Anyway, it's not for reasons of joking that I'm here.

**Phyllis** More serious business I take it.

**Courtney** Yes. I take it you're aware of developments. We're moving on from the Lynch case. We can't convict the man on suspicion. There's no point in going to court with no evidence. Once the carnival weekend is over that'll be it.

**Christy** Just like that?

**Courtney** No, not just like that, as you well know. We've searched the place from top to bottom, more than once. Not a thing. We can't keep searching *ad infinitum*. Following tomorrow's search we'll have to let it rest.

**Christy** [*Anger rising*] For God's sake!

**Courtney** Now I don't like it either Christy. Believe me I'm not easy about leaving a case unsolved, but what can I do? I'm not going arresting the wrong man.

**Christy** I'll tell you what you can do. You can go up to Lynch's farm and put handcuffs on him; you can take him down to the station and charge him with murder; you can send him to the judge for trial, the dog, from where, by rights, he'll be taken out and shot! That's what you can do!

**Phyllis** Calm down Christy. You'll give yourself a stroke if you're not careful.

**Courtney** You'd better listen to Phyllis, Christy. Calm down now before you do yourself harm.

**Christy** It will not be myself I'll do harm to.

**Courtney** I'll ignore that threat, seeing as you're all worked up like. But be careful now or I'll charge you with threatening an officer of the law, throw you in a cell to cool off.

**Christy** Well I'd like to see you try! Phyllis, you'll have another?

**Phyllis** Grand so Christy.

*Christy pours himself and Phyllis another whiskey.*

**Christy** [*Sarcastically*] I don't suppose you'll be having one yourself, Sergeant.

**Courtney** Not while I'm on duty.

**Christy** No, I suppose not.

*A short tense pause.*

**Courtney** I'll check the place so.

**Christy** Agh. The fire reg-u-la-tions

*Christy and Phyllis drink. Courtney takes out a notebook and starts checking that fire regulations have been respected. He checks one thing after another. He ticks off everything he has checked in his notebook.*

**Phyllis** [*Breaking pause. To Courtney*] You'll be a busy man tonight with the celebrations.

*Courtney goes about his work.*

**Courtney** Same as any other year. [*Sighs*] A weekend of lunacy.

**Phyllis** You know Sergeant, when my Grandfather was a boy the police cleared out of the place for the Carnival. Not a tap done with all the drinking that went on. And no closing time either. [*Drinks*] God be with the days.

**Courtney** When your Granddad was a boy? What do you mean? Sure the carnival only started in the thirties.

**Phyllis** Would you get away out of that. Hundreds of years its been going on. An old pagan festival is how it started.

**Courtney** [*Dismissive*] Agh. It was the local business men who started it to get a few visitors into the town, bring a bit of money into the place. Where do you think the carnival committee comes from? Sure everyone knows that Old

Peter Lynch set up the first committee in 1935, and started the carnival the year after.

**Phyllis** Oh! The official memory of events. I tell you this carnival was here long before you, or any of your kind.

**Christy** True for you Phyllis.

**Courtney** [*Looking at the buntings; changing the subject*] Are those fireproofed?

**Christy** [*Suspicious*] What do you mean?

**Courtney** It's regulations that all mobile or suspended decorative embellishments in a public premises be fireproofed.

**Christy** Does he mean the buntings?

**Courtney** Yes.

**Christy** Did them last year.

**Courtney** [*Hesitant*] Well...

*Courtney ticks off the final thing in his notebook and puts it away.*

**Phyllis** All in order Sergeant?

**Courtney** It seems to be.

**Christy** You'll be off so.

**Phyllis** Yes. No time for dilly-dallying, what with the search tomorrow and everything, sure you've your hands full.

**Christy** Yes.

**Courtney** Yes I'd better be off. [*Courtney goes to pick up his radio, as if to go. But he turns at the last moment.*] Just one thing.

**Christy** Always.

**Courtney** By the looks of it you're expecting to have a big party here tonight. Well there'll be no big parties this year. Carnival night or not, you're on your last warning. You'd better close at a respectable hour. I'll be around checking mind? Do you hear me now?

**Christy** Check all you want.

**Courtney** Don't worry about that.

**Phyllis** [ *Half to herself*] You'd do as well catching murderers as harassing publicans.

**Courtney** What have republicans got to do with anything?

**Christy** "Publicans". [*To himself*] Deaf as well as blind.

**Courtney** You stay out of it Derrane. You've been warned. A respectable hour. If I catch you again I'll close the place. But then again, it isn't *your* place now, is it?

**Christy** [*Starts the sentence at a shout, but tapers off the volume throughout*] As you said, you'd better be off.

*Courtney stares them out for a second, then goes and picks up his radio. He turns it on and puts it to his ear to listen to the match which has resumed. A goal is scored, he forgets himself and lets out an intense but suppressed utterance of excitement: "Go on!". He remembers that he is being watched and regains his composure.*

**Courtney** Phyllis. Christy.

*Exit Courtney.*

**Phyllis** [*Looking out the door after Courtney*] That fellow could do with being taken down a peg or two.

**Christy** Thinks he's a Lord or something.

**Phyllis** Yes...and he has the most common type of blood you know.

*Christy goes and closes the door properly after Courtney.*

**Christy** Would have been promoted years ago but for all his cock-up's.

**Phyllis** You know the joke going round is that the only good arrest he made was of young Joe Hennelly, and that was for his own suicide.

*Christy and Phyllis laugh.*

**Phyllis** God forgive me. I shouldn't be saying that.

*Christy pours out two more drinks.*

**Christy** God rest poor Joe Hennelly.

*There is a deep pause; the two lost in their thoughts. After a moment Christy looks at Kate's portrait and broods on it. Phyllis notices.*

**Phyllis** I miss her too Christy.

*[Short pause. Changing subject. Trying to remain upbeat.]*

**Christy** He didn't catch sight of the knife anyhow?

**Phyllis** No.

**Christy** Good. [*Getting excited*] This is a Godsend.

**Phyllis** I'm a bit nervous, now I've had time to think on it.

**Christy** Phyllis! What are you saying!

**Phyllis** Well, planting evidence and all.

**Christy** Lynch is guilty?

**Phyllis** Yes.

**Christy** So what's the problem? If we don't do it he's away with it. Now, would that be right? No. How could Kate rest in peace, with him walking away Scott free. What kind of justice is that? No, we *have* to do it. This has come as a gift. Now you can't spurn a gift, can you? Besides, do you think that mole Courtney will find anything tomorrow? Not a chance. Lynch has the place clean. He's too cute. The way I see it Phyllis, the question isn't is it right to plant that thing, the question is, could we live with ourselves if we didn't?

**Phyllis** I suppose you're right Christy.

**Christy** Of course I'm right. [*Drinks*] You'll have to plant it tonight so.

**Phyllis** Me?

**Christy** Yes you. How could I do it with Sherlock there watching me like a hawk. You saw how he was when he was in here. No. You'll have to do it. New evidence at this stage is suspect enough without me going missing during the carnival to plant it. I'll have to stay in the public eye to be above suspicion.

**Phyllis** I don't know now Christy.

**Christy** Come on Phyllis.

**Phyllis** I've done my part. I'll sort out the blood as well. But fair is fair. You'll have to take it from there.

**Christy** But you're the only one can do it. I can't get young Devine to do it, now can I? [*Short pause*] Phyllis?

*Christy gives Phyllis a sheepish look.*

**Phyllis** Agh! [*Pointing at him; telling him off*] You're my only soft spot Ruane.

**Christy** Good, that's settled. [*Christy fills up their glasses*] You'll never pay for a drink here again.

**Phyllis** Seems to me I never pay anyhow. [*It strikes Phyllis*] You should put yourself

forward.

**Christy** Put myself forward?

**Phyllis** Yes, for carnival king. There's no where more in sight and above suspicion than up on stage. There's no clear candidate this year.

**Christy** Do you think I've got a chance?

**Phyllis** You're not a bad looking fellow. You'll need...something special though.

**Christy** Hold on.

*Christy takes the wig out from under the counter and puts it on.*

**Christy** How's that?

**Phyllis** Oh yes! That should do it.

**Christy** A ribbon maybe?

**Phyllis** [*Simulating rising sexual orgasm*] Yes.

**Christy** A little make-up?

**Phyllis** Yes.

**Christy** Fishnet tights?

**Phyllis** Yes! I can almost see the crown on you now.

**Christy** You know, I'm feeling a little regal already.

*Christy and Phyllis laugh, delighted with themselves.*

**Christy** A toast! To justice!

**Phyllis** To justice! And may Katey rest in peace.

*The two are raising their glasses for the toast when Francis re-enters, looking tired and dragging the rope behind him.*

**Francis** What's the celebration? Are you two finally getting married?

**Christy** [*Whipping off the wig and putting it under the counter*] Whatever gave you that idea? And don't be barging in here so sudden and unannounced like.

**Francis** Well I do work here.

**Christy** For the moment, yes.

**Francis** That's some tough rope you have there Mr Ruane. Well flip it. It nearly killed me.

**Phyllis** [*Teasing*] A bit of exercise is good for a young fellow like yourself. Good for the blood.

**Francis** There's nothing wrong with my blood Mrs Derrane, except for the fact I've just enough for myself.



**Christy** That's Christian altruism for you Phyllis. Here, give that rope here. You can be off.

**Francis** [*Throwing the rope up on the counter in front of Christy*] You can have it.

**Phyllis** [*Finishes her drink*] I'll leave you to it so gentlemen. [*Looks at Christy*] I've a few errands to run before the evening's out. What's the plan for later Christy?

**Christy** I'll see you back here. The place should be packed around eight. I suppose drinking here first, down to the parade, then on to the marquee for the dance proper.

**Phyllis** [*Collecting her things to leave*] Good.

**Christy** [*Conspiratorially*] Yes Phyllis. I'll see you later. You're fine about that so?

**Phyllis** Yes. I'll get on with it.

**Christy** Be sure and call in before eight.

**Phyllis** [*As she exists*] Before eight. Yes, I will. Good luck to you now.

**Francis** See you Mrs Derrane.

**Christy** Right Phyllis.

*Phyllis exists. Christy clears away the glasses. Francis looks at Christy with curiosity.*

**Francis** What's with all the mysterious talk?

**Christy** Something between myself and Phyllis.

**Francis** [*Face lighting up*] I was right, wasn't I? The two of you are getting married. I always knew you'd get married eventually Mr Ruane. And with Mrs Derrane a widow now, who could be better for you.

**Christy** Agh, you don't know your arse from your elbow Devine. Marriage and slavery are one and the same, and they're not for me.

**Francis** Now you shouldn't be saying that. Marriage is a sacred...

**Christy** Enough talk lad. Who are you working for, eh? Over there now and finish those buntings.

**Francis** But you said...

**Christy** I don't care what I said. You can run home later. [*Rubbing his hands together*] There's work to be done.

*The sound of the African drummers returns in the distance. It gets progressively louder as they*

*approach. The music is retained at its loudest after the blackout.*

**Christy**        There's the drummers on their way back down. They'll be crowding in here soon; tongues hanging out for drink. Ready to laugh and dance and celebrate. Well we'll be ready for them. We won't let them down. [*Christy spreads his arms out, embracing all*] Let them come! Come on, and let the carnival begin!

*Blackout and music.*

## **Act II**

*A surreal alternative world. Music, from end of Act I tapers off into silence. Three in the morning. Set as before; however, decorated and dressed with buntings and a brightly coloured drape. A crowd have come and gone. Evidence of revelry. Francis Devine, in bishop's costume, tidying.*

**Francis** For the love of God!

*He throws a bra in the bin.*

**Francis** [Looks at the clock] Three in the morning! Three in the morning and still slaving for that clown. Him having the time of his life and me sweating it out. Nothing but a... “your award awaits you in heaven” Francis. Keep that in mind now. In mind. Complaining gets you nowhere. [Pause] Agh, the filth of the place! *Francis begins to hear strange noises. He works, doing his best to ignore them, but he is afraid and the atmosphere has become slightly sinister. The silhouette of justice [with her sword and scales] appears behind him. It appears angelic, noble, but crouches down into a demonic form, also in silhouette. Francis has not seen this huge shadow that dominates the stage, when it fades he senses something behind him, he turns quickly, not sure if he has seen the after-image of some spirit. He looks for a moment at the portrait of Kate: could it be her presence? He is now quite afraid and begins to pray out loud for comfort.*

**Francis** Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth...

*A door bangs for no apparent reason: Francis sweeps and prays harder.*

**Francis** ...and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us Lord from all evil.

*Loud singing approaches. Someone starts banging loudly on the door. It is **Phyllis** and **Christy**. Christy is dressed half-way between a woman and a king, with a short dress, fishnet tights, a regal cloak, a crown on top of his head [held on by a strap] and a crosier. Phyllis is dressed in a black dress suit, complete with bow-tie and cane, spats, top-hat, dracula-style cloak, painted moustache and monocle. She smokes a cigarette on a long cigarette holder. Her head is totally bald.*

**Christy** [From off] Open up for his royal highness! Open up I say!

*Francis drops what he's doing and opens the door. Christy and Phyllis stumble in singing, arm in arm. Phyllis holds her habitual wig in her hand. On entering she throws it away with a flourish.*

**Christy** Fine girl you are! A bit slow acting on a regal decree my boy. Look lively I say.

Or I'll feed you to the...to the...animals. [*To the imaginary animals with an imaginary whip*] Get back! I'll have order here. [*Wags finger at Francis: advice*] Declaim it me boy. Declaim it and they respect it. Authority of voice is authority of lands. Look lively I say!

**Phyllis** [*To Francis*] Your Lordship. Can I get a dispensation for mass tomorrow morning. I don't think I'll be able to make it [*She laughs*].

**Francis** Look at you. Drunk as sin. And I've to clean up after you. Can I go now Mr Ruane? I've to serve in the morning.

**Christy** Agh, you're too old to be serving mass. Listen. Get myself and the Count here a drink. A good old drop of whiskey, [*rummages in pocket or bag*] and one for yourself. [*Takes some large fake monopoly money from his pocket/bag, gives it to Francis*] I'll pay in new money Sir; legal tender of the realm of Eiropa. A drink. [*Expansive gesture*]

*Phyllis sits at a table; Christy attempts to sit at the bar, fails, and joins Phyllis at the table. Francis does not follow his orders.*

**Christy** Well, come on my boy! Look lively!

**Francis** I'll finish up in the morning. I really have to be going home.

**Christy** Home my arse. You're mother was as drunk as the next man. She'll not miss you. Wine I say! Wine!

**Francis** You should go to bed the pair of you. You've had enough now. I'll see you in the morning.

*Francis moves as if to go. Christy roars with rage. He throws his crosier at Francis, but misses.*

**Christy** You'll go nowhere! [*Pause*] You do work here, don't you? Ha? Well, as long as you do, you do what I say. Do you hear? Now, if you want to keep your job you'll get us whiskey and you'll get it fast.

**Francis** [*Shocked and scared by Christy's outburst*] Is it wine or whiskey so?

**Christy** No matter. Drink. [*To Phyllis*] Isn't that right, Count?

**Phyllis** Yes. No matter. [*Afterthought*] Good lad Francis.

*Francis gets two glasses and a bottle of whiskey.*

**Christy** Now there's a loyal subject. That's what I like to see. Friends shall be rewarded! Rewarded with...with gold! And enemies? What will we do with the enemies my dear Count?

**Phyllis** Drain their blood.

**Christy** Yes! Drain their blood. Drain it and ferment it. Pour it now, two fine beakers of the stuff. The finest draught in all the kingdom. Slating thirst in taverns from Belslow to Ballinafast. [*Francis pours*] Now Count. A verdict from your...your educated palate.

**Phyllis** [*With much ceremony, as tasting wine, holding up to light*] Cuts a rich colour in the light. [*Swishing around*] Undulates round the perimeter of the glass: a certain syrupy quality. Legs long, yet sturdy. Bouquet? [*Smells*] A hint of oriental spices.

**Christy** But the taste, dear Count, the taste?

**Phyllis** [*Takes a sip of the whiskey, sashes it around her mouth, swallows*] O-negative, I would say. 1798.

**Christy** A fine vintage! [*To Francis*] Another glass! Another glass for yourself my Lordship.

**Francis** I, I don't drink. Can't I just go...

**Christy** Another glass I said! [*Tense Pause. Is this a game or is Christy capable of violence?*]

**Phyllis** A regal decree me boy.

**Christy** Custom is custom. I'm ruler of all these lands. The power to free prisoners. The power to cast judgement. To set a man free or send him to his death. All must obey.

**Phyllis** From sundown to sunup.

**Christy** Yes, from sundown to sunup.

*Francis is afraid. He gets a glass for himself. Christy grabs the glass from his hand and pours him a large whiskey. He thrusts the glass back into Francis's hand.*

**Phyllis** Sit down Devine and relax for Christsake.

**Christy** Yes, sit down. Take a sip now, don't just be holding it.

*Francis sits and begins to sip his drink. He is nervous. Pause.*

**Phyllis** That was some night Christy.

**Christy** It certainly was Phyllis. It certainly was. Cheers.

*The two click glasses. Francis looks on.*

**Phyllis** Some night, and smooth too. Everything smoothly.

**Christy** Yes...smoooooth. [*He laughs*]. [*To Francis*] You see, myself and the Count here are celebrating tonight Francis. Not that we're celebrating anything in particular, just celebrating...for the sake of it I suppose.

**Francis** No harm in that.

**Christy** Yes, no harm in that at all. [*Suddenly shouts at Francis*] Pu knird!

**Francis** [*To Phyllis*] Is that German?

**Christy** Pu knird!

**Phyllis** Drink up. It's drink up...backwards.

**Phyllis** Just do as he says.

**Francis** But I don't really...

**Christy** Pu knird!

*Phyllis nods, there is no question of escape, they all drink.*

**Christy** A toast! To justice, for example.

**Phyllis** I'll drink to that.

**Christy** To justice then.

*Phyllis indicates to Francis he should stand up. They all stand.*

**Francis** [*Meekly*] To justice.

**Christy** Do you know what Count, I think we should make this young lad chaplain. Official chaplain to the king here.

**Phyllis** I think so too.

**Christy** Kneel down there Devine and I'll appoint you to your new honour. On your knees!

**Francis** Agh, I don't want to dirty my gown. I've only got it on loan.

**Christy** You're not going to refuse my honour now, are you?

**Francis** No, its just that...

**Christy** [*A threat*] Because you know that would really upset me. You wouldn't want to upset me now, would you? On your knees!

**Phyllis** Go on there now and do what he says, like a good lad.

**Francis** [*Firmly*] I don't have to put up with this.

**Christy** [*Roars viciously. Instilling fear*] On your knees!

*Francis reluctantly gets on his knees in front of Christy.*

**Francis** It's not going to hurt, is it?

*The game begins to take on a more sinister tone.*

**Christy** Not unless you want it to. You see, there are two possible rituals for bestowing this honour: ritual A and ritual B. One hurts, but the other is quite painless. Which one is which, however, must remain a secret. Once you have chosen then all shall be disclosed. Now, choose.

*Christy holds out his two hands, fists closed, knuckles up. Although nothing is in each hand Francis must choose one of them.*

**Francis** I really have to get home.

**Christy** [*Sudden outburst*] Is it home or to Lynch's eggs! Your other little job.

**Phyllis** Easy on there Christy.

**Francis** Let me go home.

**Christy** [*Grabs him by the collar*] If I hear that once more out of you Devine, so help me God!

**Phyllis** Easy I said!

**Christy** [*Lets go of his collar*] Choose.

*Tense pause. Francis chooses one of the hands.*

**Christy** You have chosen well.

*Relief.*

**Christy** You see your Lordship, even a game like this has something to teach, a moral if you like. If you make the correct choice then all shall be well. But if you choose unwisely, well...the consequences can be very great. It's all up to you. Isn't that right my dear count?

**Phyllis** [*Going along with game again*] Certainly right my liege.

**Christy** Yes. Now. [*Christy holds aloft an imaginary sword. He places it first on Francis's left shoulder, then moves it to his right.*] By the power invested in me, [*eyes to heaven*] by the divine Lord himself, may I add, I hereby declare, you, his Lordship Francis Devine, official chaplain to the court of King Christy Ruane. From now...until kingdom...come. [*Quickly*] In the name of the father, and of the son, and of the holy ghost, amen.

**Phyllis** Amen!

**Christy** So, how do you feel me lad? Honoured, doubtless.

**Francis** [*Coldly*] I feel little.

**Christy** [Cynical] And I thought you loved me.

**Phyllis** Get into the spirit of it Francis.

*Francis gets up.*

**Christy** Good lad. We'll make a cardinal of you yet. Now. [To Phyllis] You're always one for the singing Phyllis. How about a song?

**Phyllis** I'm not in the mood.

**Christy** Yes, put something on there, something fitting for the occasion, to lift the spirits. Let's see now.

*Christy gets up and goes to the radio/tape recorder behind the bar. He turns it on and starts flicking from channel to channel, from one kind of music to another, until he comes to some wild Cajun dance music: "Le Chanson de Mardi Gras".*

**Christy** [Referring to the different kinds of music, until he gets what he wants] No. No. Christ, funeral music! [Francis looks a bit sick at this stage] You're not dead yet Francis, ha? Agh, now. That's the stuff. Something you can dance to. Do you like this kind of music Monsieur Count?

**Phyllis** It's grand. Fine and lively.

**Christy** Fine and lively indeed.

**Phyllis** Great rhythm in it. Fancy a dance sire?

**Christy** Well I was going to ask the young lad out, but seeing as you asked first, I'd be more than honoured Sir.

*Christy and Phyllis come together, they bow formally, and begin to dance drunkenly.*

*They fall around the place and spin in wild circles. Eventually they spin into disarray and fall on the floor laughing.*

*Suddenly the laughter is interrupted by a loud knock on the door. The mood alters.*

**Christy** Did you hear that?

**Phyllis** The door?

**Christy** Turn off the radio Francis.

**Francis** [Loud] What?

**Christy** Shush! I said turn off the radio.

*Francis gets up and turns off the radio. It is deadly quiet.*

**Phyllis** Listen.

*Again deadly quiet. Francis makes his way back to his seat. He bangs into something and shatters the silence. He freezes where he is.*



**Christy** Shush!

**Phyllis** It could be Courtney. He said he'd come round and check.

**Christy** Not at this hour. He'd be drunk by now. Shush. Everyone quiet now. Not a sound. Ignore him and he'll go away.

*After a few moments of tense silence a second loud knock is hammered out.*

**Lynch's voice from off** I know you're in there Ruane! Open up!

**Christy** Who's that at this hour?

**Phyllis** It's not Courtney.

**Christy** Someone for late drink I'd say. Well, we'll not deny them. Open up the door

Francis. Go on now. We've all had the thirst on us at one time or other.

*Francis goes to open the door. After a little fumbling with keys the door opens and Cathel Lynch enters. He is a big fat man in his late forties/early fifties. He wears work boots, overalls, a T-shirt and a brown work coat. He has a woollen hat with a bobble on his head, and thick stubble and sideburns on his face. All his cloths are filthy from farmwork, and one gets the impression that he never changes, and may even sleep in his cloths. He carries a brown potato sack in one hand.*

**Lynch** Close the door Devine. Well, what have we here?

*Francis locks the door but leaves the keys in the keyhole.*

**Christy** [*Sitting on the floor, utter shock*] Lynch!?

**Lynch** Surprised to see me I take it. You know most decent women around these parts sit on chairs.

**Christy** How dare you...

**Lynch** Now , now Christy. You'd better be polite. After all, I am your employer now you know, in a kind of a way. Devine, get me a drink.

**Christy** [*To Francis*] Stay where you are.

**Lynch** A drink.

*Francis doesn't know who to heed.*

**Lynch** I'd listen to me if I were you Devine. Who do you think owns this place you're working in? A drink.

*Francis gets him a glass. Lynch takes it off him and pours his own from the bottle on the table.*

**Christy** What do you want?

**Lynch** Oh, I just thought I'd pay you a little visit, seeing as its carnival night and all.

**Christy** Well you're not welcome here.

**Lynch** [*Raising his glass*] Your health, Mrs Derrane.

**Phyllis** I hope you choke on it.

**Lynch** Now now. You should have a little more respect when taking hospitality in my establishment.

*Lynch knocks back his drink. Christy and Phyllis get off the floor. Phyllis sits, Christy remains standing.*

**Christy** I said, you're not welcome here.

**Lynch** What kind of way is that to speak to your own brother-in-law Christy?

**Christy** You're no relation of mine. Go now, before I do harm.

**Lynch** Harm? I don't think you'll do any harm Christy, not with what I have on you.

**Christy** What? What are you talking about?

**Lynch** Agh now, let's just leave it at that. Let bygones be bygones. Had a good night

Phyllis? [*Pause*] The cat got your tongue Phyllis? Sure come on. Give us a song Derrane. Something about your old grand daddy. The great republican hero.

[*Short pause*] Hello?

**Phyllis** I'll not engage in pleasantries with you.

**Lynch** No matter. You never were much good at conversation anyway. What was it

Katey used say? Oh yes. "As bright as my black hole".

*Lynch coolly pours himself another drink.*

**Phyllis** Don't sully her name with your mouth. If the truth's to be known that particular phrase she reserved for you.

**Lynch** Always one for answering back Derrane. It's a shame someone didn't beat manners into you years ago.

**Christy** *You* have something on me?

**Lynch** Well a piece of paper for starters.

**Christy** What paper?

**Lynch** A little scrap concerning the ownership of a certain property. For starters like.

Come here Devine! [*Lynch fills Francis a glass*] Come here and take a drink with your new boss.

*Francis comes to Lynch and takes the glass.*

**Christy** A new boss is it?

**Francis** I...I...

**Lynch** [*Firmly to Francis*] Drink.

*Francis sips.*

**Lynch** Don't be rude now. All of it.

*Francis finishes the drink. After a moment he runs out to the toilet, hand on mouth. We hear him getting sick outside. Lynch laughs.*

**Christy** So now you come.

**Lynch** You've to clear out within the week.

**Christy** You could barely wait the year. Think you're in the clear now and can cause a stir. Is that it?

**Lynch** Seven days. We'll say no more on the matter.

**Christy** [*Rising anger*] I'll kill you first...

**Lynch** Agh, now Ruane. I'm within the law. I'm only taking what's rightfully mine.

**Christy** [*Lunging toward Lynch*] I'll wring your neck...

*Christy grabs Lynch by the throat and trys to choke him...a struggle...Phyllis leaps up and intervenes...pulling Christy away.*

**Phyllis** Hold it! Hold it Christy! Hold on now...have you forgotten the night?

**Christy** What?

**Phyllis** No use spoiling things now. He'll get what's coming to him.

**Christy** [*Remembering*] Yes... Phyllis. You're right. No use in me committing a crime. Yes. No use. I'll leave him to his fate and be done with it. Yes Phyllis.

**Phyllis** [*To Lynch*] You'll not be around to claim this place anyway Lynch. No. You'll be rotting your days away in a cell. Rotting for the murder of Katey Ruane that everyone knows you committed, that's what you'll be doing. So be off with you. Go home and say your prayers...though they'll do you no

good. Hell is the only place you'll be going...so off with you while you can...or so help me God I'll kill you myself.

*Pause. Lynch is unmoved, he drinks calmly.*

**Lynch** A fine speech Phyllis. A pity you gave up the amateur dramatics when you did...it could have been the national stage for you girl...if it wasn't for the old alopecia [*laughs*]. But a little less drama and a little more reality is called for. I'm going nowhere.

**Phyllis** [*In disgust.*] I don't need to stay listening to this.

*Lynch knocks back another whiskey and throw his glass on the floor.*

**Lynch** You'll stay where you are!

*Pause.*

**Lynch** A nice little walk you had for yourself tonight Derrane...got lost did you? You could do better then listen to his highness here. Oh, and by the way, I think you dropped something on your wanderings, a bit of a careless bitch you have working for you Ruane.

*Lynch takes the blood covered knife from his sack and stabs it into the counter where it sticks upright. Christy and Phyllis look on in shock.*

**Lynch** Exhibit A. [*Drinks from the bottle*] Now, does that look familiar to you Derrane? Ha? I had a knife like that myself for slitting the throats of bitches in heat. No bastard puppies I want on my farm you understand? Yes, it does remind me of a knife I once had, but funny, I don't know what I did with it. Neither myself nor Sergeant Courtney seems able to find it...nor none of the other coppers, how hard they try.

**Phyllis** I don't know what you're talking about. Come on Christy. let's go.

**Lynch** Don't know what I'm talking about, is it? I'm no fool, I tell you. You think I don't keep an eye out on carnival night for young pranksters out to let my chickens out or open the gate of a field. Oh yes. But this year who wanders in but Derrane here, thinking no one has seen her and sneaking around. So I thought to myself, well I'll keep quiet, see what she wants. Into the hayshed with her then, in and out real quick, as quiet as a mouse. I let you go, though I should have throttled you there. And what do I find within? [*He slaps the table loudly*] Exhibit A!

**Christy** Ring Courtney Phyllis. We've Lynch here, evidence and all...your prints

are all over that knife Lynch... and poor Kate's blood too. Whose to know if we planted it...it's your word against ours... go on ring him Phyllis.

**Lynch** I wouldn't get Courtney involved if I were you Derrane.

**Christy** Well, go on! *Phyllis moves.*

**Lynch** Perverting the course of justice...planting evidence, it's a serious offence you know. You could do time for that Derrane. [*Drinks, finishes bottle and bangs it down on the table*]. I think this is a matter for the three of us. Don't you?

**Christy** I'll see you rot in a cell yet Lynch. I won't rest till you do.

**Lynch** Agh, I don't think so Ruane. You'll be too busy looking for a job. Anyway, I won't put Courtney on the trail of your little night of crime, just move out nice and quiet and all and we'll bury the hatchet. Water under the old bridge. Within the week mind. [*Noticing Phyllis again*] Jesus, Derrane, would you ever put a hat on or a scarf or something on you and spare me the sight of you. Almost as ugly as your sister that one Ruane. And as loose around the town from what I hear.

*Christy can take no more. He goes for Lynch and grabs him by the throat. They fall onto the floor and a struggle begins.*

**Christy** I'll strangle you!

*After initially being on top Christy is overcome by Lynch. Lynch is on top of him and has him by the throat. He begins to choke Christy. Christy is almost finished when Phyllis decides to act. She takes up the empty whiskey bottle and smashes it on Lynch's head, knocking him out.*

**Phyllis** Are you all right Christy? Christy, speak to me.

**Christy** Ge... ge...

**Phyllis** Go? Where?

**Christy** Get this off me.

**Phyllis** Jesus! Sorry. Hold on now.

*With great effort Phyllis rolls the unconscious Lynch off Christy.*

**Christy** [*Holding his throat*] Is...is he dead?

**Phyllis** No such luck.

*There is a loud knock on the door. They freeze.*

**Phyllis** Lynch didn't have a twin? Did he?

**Christy** Shussh!

*They listen. Another knock comes and a drunk Courtney speaks from off.*

**Courtney** Open up there Ruane! I can hear you moving within!

**Phyllis** Courtney!

**Christy** [*Panicking*] Jesus Phyllis, what'll we do?

**Phyllis** Hold on now, just keep calm...we'll...we'd better let him in...

**Christy** But... what about Lynch?

**Phyllis** He knows we're in here, give me a hand, we'll....

**Christy** [*Referring to Lynch*] He'll do us for attempted murder...any excuse to get me...I'm telling you.

**Courtney** Ruane! [*Knock*]

**Phyllis** Wait...

*Phyllis rips the hanging off the wall and covers Lynch with it, after first laying him flat.*

**Phyllis** Now...

**Christy** But...

**Phyllis** You've nothing to worry about...he can't prosecute you...it's only the pair of us...two old friends having a chat...go on now.

*Reluctantly Christy opens the door, Phyllis sits down and looks calm. Enter Sergeant Courtney lighting a cigarette, although drunk he is pretending to be sober. He has a slight cut on his head. He carries his radio which is now smashed and broken.*

**Christy** Agh, Sergeant...how are you?

**Courtney** I hope you're not selling drink at this hour Ruane.

**Christy** Not at all Sergeant...it's only myself and Phyllis having a chat.

**Courtney** [*Suspicious*] Yes...[*Seeing her without her wig*] Mrs. Derrane?

**Phyllis** What brings you out so late, Sergeant? [The cut] Are you all right?

**Courtney** [*Embarrassed*] Oh...yes. Phyllis...how are you. Em...[*explaining the cut*] there was a fight over at the nightclub...young Hannan again...I got called out to break it up. Thought I'd check in on you on the way home.

*Courtney is eyeing the whiskey. He leaves down his broken radio.*

**Christy** No one hurt I hope?

**Courtney** Not seriously anyway.

**Phyllis** Well, as you can see it's just the pair of us...so...I expect you'll want to get back to bed with your early start tomorrow.

**Courtney** My early start?

**Christy** Yes...down at Lynch's place.

*Phyllis notices that they have forgotten the knife, she positions herself in front of it.*

**Courtney** What?

**Christy** Lynch's. The search?

**Courtney** Oh yes...yes. I'll leave you to it so...you'd do well getting to bed.

**Christy** Yes, we're just going now.

**Phyllis** I was on my way out the door Sergeant.

**Courtney** Grand so. I'll be off. Be sure and lock up now...I don't want people coming seeing the light on and knocking...do you hear me Ruane?

**Christy** No problem Sergeant Courtney...good night now.

*Courtney turns to go, but turns back, wanting an ashtray to extinguish his cigarette. He walks over to the counter on which is placed an ashtray...beside the knife that both Christy and Phyllis had forgotten. Courtney puts out his cigarette and notices the knife.*

**Courtney** *Pulling the knife out of the counter and holding it up with a chuckle, Christy and Phyllis freeze]* Ha! I see Rafferty did his usual trick as a butcher. Jesus, will he ever change his costume and give us all bit of a surprise.

*Courtney puts the knife down and takes the opportunity to rob a whiskey bottle on the counter. He goes to exit.*

**Courtney** Good night so...and lock up lively now Ruane...do you hear me?

**Christy** Yes. Right away Sergeant.

**Courtney** Christy. Phyllis.

*Courtney exits and Christy and Phyllis relax.*

**Christy** Good night.

**Phyllis** Night Sergeant.

*Pause.*

**Christy** My nerves are shot.

**Phyllis** Tell me about it.

*The two sit.*

**Phyllis** Well, that puts paid to that.

**Christy** What?

**Phyllis** The evidence....it's spoiled now... Courtney's prints all over it.

**Christy** Yes. The blind fart.  
**Phyllis** A good plan well banjaxed.  
**Christy** That's putting it mildly. We could still kill him.  
**Phyllis** Well I'll have no part in it.  
**Christy** [*Considers murdering Lynch*] It's a high price for justice.  
**Phyllis** Too high a price.

*Christy has not stopped considering killing Lynch. Pause. They drink.*

**Phyllis** Unless...  
**Christy** Unless what?  
**Phyllis** We could get a confession out of him.  
**Christy** Agh...he'll never confess.  
**Phyllis** He might if he was scared enough.  
**Christy** Nothing would scare that bastard.  
**Phyllis** If we killed him it would.  
**Christy** [*Hopeful*] You're for it so?  
**Phyllis** No, but he doesn't know that.

*A groan comes out of Lynch.*

**Christy** Shush. He's coming round. What are you suggesting?  
**Phyllis** I think we can get our evidence yet. Well, if we convince him we're going to cut his throat or something we can get him to say anything...all we have to do is get it on tape.  
**Christy** [*Pause. Thinks*]. But will it stand up in court.  
**Phyllis** Evidence is evidence.  
**Christy** True enough.  
**Phyllis** Right then, that's settled.  
**Christy** Wait. I've a better idea.

*Christy runs behind the bar and gets the rope from earlier. Using the counter as a mask, he puts a noose on it. He will mount the ladder to fix the rope for a hanging .*

**Christy** You do the tape recorder...there should be a tape in it.  
*Phyllis goes to the taperecorder and sets it up. Phyllis, finished setting up, comes to take the drape off Lynch. At this moment Francis re-emerges from the toilet, looking pale and a little unsteady on his feet. He slumps in a chair near Christy.*

**Francis** I don't feel well.



**Christy** [Seeing Francis] Ah, the dead arose and appeared to many.

**Phyllis** I'll spansel this pig.

*Phyllis ties Lynch's hands, maybe with some bunting*

**Christy** Give us a hand, get that ladder and set it up there next to the stairs. Hurry!

**Francis** What happened him?

**Christy** Never mind, just do as you're told.

**Francis** What are you doing to him?

**Christy** Never mind. Get a move on. Hold that ladder. Phyllis, get a stool, Lynch, get up!

*Christy is probably up the ladder at this stage. Phyllis will use the knife to threaten and restrain Lynch, direct him where she wants him to go*

**Lynch** [groans]

**Phyllis** [Referring to Lynch] Seems like Lazarus here's awake.

**Lynch** [groans] My head.

**Christy** Bit of a headache there Lynch? Well, well, well. Hold that ladder Francis.

**Lynch** Where am I?

**Christy** Remember now, you've the right to remain silent [laughs].

**Lynch** Where am I? [Remembers, becoming more aware of his surroundings]  
Agh!

**Christy** You, for your information, are in the just and regal court of Christopher Ruane. Get up you big heap

**Phyllis** Get up or I'll slit your throat.

**Francis** What's going on?

**Christy** Get up on the stool now.

*Lynch, before he knows what has been happening, has a knife held to his throat and he is forced to mount the hangman's stool*

**Lynch** Agh, give over with the show Ruane, you wouldn't know how to hang up your coat.

**Christy** Shut up.

**Phyllis** Now there is a pretty picture.

**Lynch** What are you saying? Untie me. Untie me Ruane or I'll kick your fucking head in.

**Christy** That's no way to address royalty. Mind your tongue when you have an audience with the king. *[To Francis]* A throne your Lordship. *[Indicating a throne-like chair in the bar]* Francis, get that chair. Let's have a throne worthy of a trial.

**Phyllis** A great idea, a throne.

**Francis** Are you hurting him?

**Christy** Up on the counter with it your lordship.  
*Francis puts the 'throne' on the bar counter.*

**Lynch** Stop playacting Ruane.

**Christy** The drape. Put the drape over it.  
*Francis puts the drape over the throne. It has the effect of making the chair look like an actual royal throne. Christy climbs into his throne and holds one end of the rope, with Lynch's neck in a noose at the other end.*

**Lynch** Stop pulling for Christsake. Untie me Francis.

**Christy** *[Pulling on the rope, inflicting pain]* Shut up!

**Lynch** Untie me I said!  
*Francis considers.*

**Christy** *[Strikes Francis]* Stay where you are Devine, or you'll join him on the gallows!  
*Christy pulls on the rope, inflicts pain and has Lynch submissive and silent for a time.*

**Christy** Another word and I'll tear your head off! *[Pause. Gathers himself]* Phyllis, tie him off!

**Phyllis** With pleasure.  
*Phyllis ties the rope off behind the counter.*

**Christy** Now, my loyal subjects. We are gathered here today for the trial of one Cathel Lynch. The rotund heap you see before you. He stands accused of the most heinous murder of the gentle Kate Ruane, whom he had the gall to call wife. My crosier Francis, bring me my crosier.

**Lynch** Stay where you are Devine.

**Christy** My crosier! *[Francis obeys]* I tell you this, and swear upon it, by this, this staff, that dead, will never again put forth fruit and branches, now the brazen knife has stripped it's flesh. By this I swear to see right done. We pass it through the

generations upholding the time-honoured customs of the people. This staff will be the force behind my judgement. The court is now in session!

**Lynch** All you Ruanes were nothing but peasants...

**Phyllis** *[Wielding knife]* You will bleed.

**Christy** The judge presiding is the Sovereign of the realm itself, the Moon-king and dispenser of rare justice, his highness Christopher Ruane. Note taker and assembled moral majority, the esteemed Count Derrane, sits on your side sinister, the left. And as court clerk, we have a man of the cloth, no less. A lad of honest years but of wavering loyalty. A youth who must prove his allegiance this very night.

**Lynch** Peasants and dirt-farmers...

**Phyllis** Kill the fucker! Off with his head!

**Christy** Order in the court! You will have your head, but in the fullness of time. The niceties of civilisation demand some theatrics first: due process, wigs and gowns.

**Lynch** Cut your shite!

**Christy** Ah, the blubber blurts. Count. *[Phyllis silences Lynch with the knife.]* Let us begin. Will the court clerk please fetch a tome appropriate to the fiscal faith of the man in the dock, so he may take his oath. A man so representative of his nation. The house ledger! Fetch it Devine!

**Francis** I don't like this.

**Christy** As I say!

*Francis goes and gets the ledger.*

**Lynch** You're going too far Ruane.

**Christy** Not as far as you went when you murdered my sister. *[Francis comes with the ledger]*

*Francis brings the ledger to Lynch who is standing up on the chair.*

**Francis** What do you want me to do?

**Christy** Now. I seem to be at a loss. What comes first? The sentence or the evidence? Recalling some of my training in *judice prudence*...

**Francis** Do you want this?

**Christy** Shut up! You're too late for the oath. It is the sentence first, which of course is death, followed by the evidence. Proceed with you're interrogation dear Count. [*Lynch is fidgeting with his ropes*]

**Francis** Mr Ruane, I really think...

**Christy** Shut up I said!

**Francis** I'll have no further part in this. You've gone too far.

**Christy** [*Strikes Francis again*] Shut!

*Francis does as he is told.*

**Phyllis** Thank you me law [*My Lord*].

*Phyllis gets up and walks around, arms behind back, a barrister-at-law*

**Phyllis** Mr Lynch. You stand here accused of murder. A most serious and grave accusation, especially against a man such as yourself, a man prominent in the local farming community.

**Lynch** I'll get you for this Derrane!

**Phyllis** [*Holds knife to Lynch's testicles*] As you have heard the sentence is death. But before the administration of the sentence I have one serious question to put to you, and this, may I impress upon you [*She places the knife between Lynche's legs, threatening castration*] is your opportunity to contest your innocence before the court. Now Mr Lynch, the question. What, Mr Lynch, what is your favourite colour?

**Lynch** You damned bitch!

**Christy** Funny. I though it was an apt question, considering the circumstances. I myself, however, would have inquired after the preferred funerary rite. [*To Lynch*] Would you prefer to be interred in the ground or cremated? I think a pyre would become you...but for the stench of burning fat.

**Lynch** I'll kill you Ruane.

**Christy** A better burial than my sister got.

**Lynch** I'll kill you, you hear me?

**Christy** This is no joke.

**Lynch** You'll follow your fucking sister if I've anything to do with it.

*Christy pulls on the rope hard, and simultaneously stands up and shouts...*

**Christy** Contempt!

**Francis** Easy.

**Christy** Contempt *in facie curiae*. [*He belts Lynch with his crosier*]

Before I hang you I want to hear it from you...you killed Katey, didn't you.

**Lynch** Take this thing off me.

**Christy** You killed her, didn't you!

*Christy begins to pull the rope over the rafter, forcing Lynch to stand on his toes.*

**Lynch** You're choking me!

**Francis** Mrs Derrane...

**Christy** How did you do it? How did you kill Katey?  
How did you kill her Lynch!

**Francis** Mrs Derrane...

**Lynch** Let me down Ruane! Or so help me God...

**Christy** How!

**Lynch** I stabbed her in her bed! Just what the bitch deserved!

**Christy** You murdering bastard!

**Francis** [*Shocked*] You stabbed her?

**Phyllis** Christy... the tape recorder. [*Christy is too far gone to hear her*].

**Lynch** The same bed she whored in!

**Christy** Lies! Lies!

**Lynch** The truth! Katey Ruane was nothing but a whore!

**Christy** You lying bastard!

**Lynch** She got only what was coming to her!

**Christy** [*Pulling harder on the rope*] Lying bastard!

**Phyllis** I think I have the thing working!

**Lynch** I spit on you Ruane! And all the Ruane's!

*(Blackout may occur at about this time, depending on staging.)*

*Lynch spits at Christy. Christy in a rage pulls away the stool. Lynch gives a blood-curdling roar, chokes, and is silent. He is left hanging.*

**Christy** I think I've killed him.

*Ideally a final image of Lynch hanging, then lights down.*

### **Act III**

*The next morning. There is no sign of Lynch or the noose. Remnants of night in the air. The walking ghost of the dead woman enters. She goes to Francis, who is lying asleep, and stares at him intently. She moves on and exists. Francis stirs in his sleep. He is wrapped in the drape which gives him a Mummy-like appearance. As a distant bell sounds mid-day, he slowly sits up. There are vomit stains on his cloths. He goes to the door and opens it, takes a breath of fresh air but quickly returns to refresh himself with some water. As Francis is busy refreshing himself Christy enters, coming down the stairs; he has slept in his costume.*

**Christy** [*Holding his head*] Jesus!

*Christy slumps into a chair.*

**Christy** Francis? Is that you Francis?

**Francis** Um.

**Christy** Bring me a pint of water.

**Francis** No.

**Christy** Agh, come on. Good lad.

**Francis** Get your own water.

**Christy** Do what you're told.

**Francis** I don't have to listen to you. You're not the carnival king today you know...get your own water. I'm sick.

**Christy** What has you sick?

*Francis doesn't answer. Pause.*

**Christy** What time is it?

**Francis** Look at the clock.

*Christy looks at the clock, it is almost mid-day.*

**Christy** Twelve, Jesus. [*Pause*]. What are you doing here anyway.

**Francis** I must have fallen asleep.

**Christy** Where?

**Francis** Counter.

**Christy** Christ. I can't remember a thing. [*Pause*]. I thought you didn't drink.

**Francis** I don't.

**Christy** [*Small laugh...but it hurts to laugh*] Neither do I.

*A clock sounds mid-day.*

**Christy** Christ, my head. That clock is always different to the one at the church.

**Francis** Well, it is *your* clock.

*Pause.*

**Christy** Shouldn't you be getting to mass?

**Francis** [*Realisation*] Oh golly! [*Panic*] I'm supposed to serve.

**Christy** "Golly". Is that the best you can come up with?

**Francis** [*Starts to brush the vomit stains with his hand*] I can still make it if I...

**Christy** "Damn" or something at least would be more appropriate. So genteel. Forget it. You can't go in that state, not until you clean yourself up. Besides, you're too late already.

**Francis** [*Feeling nauseous again, goes to sink and spits*] I'll say I was sick.

**Christy** What are you saying. That's how most bishops look after a good night out.

**Francis** [*Viciously*] Go to hell.

**Christy** That's more like it.

*Pause.*

**Christy** Look, Francis. I don't know what I said last night, I can't rightly remember anything. But I know when I'm drinking I can be a bit, well...difficult. So if I said anything out-of-order, well, it meant nothing. Do you hear?

**Francis** I hear.

**Christy** Well?

**Francis** [*Pause*] The whole thing's a bit of a haze.

*Phyllis comes down the stairs. She is dressed as in Act II, her cloths in disarray like Christy's, however, she is now wearing her wig.*

**Phyllis** Noon ? (*She looks at Christy in the chair*) You'd swear your chariot had turned into

a pumpkin Ruane. You look like shite.

*She sits in a chair.*

**Phyllis** Get us a pint of water like a good lad.

*No answer.*

**Christy** I was wondering who it was snoring in the bed beside me... all I could see was the dress suit.

**Francis** She slept in the bed beside you ?

**Christy** Agh no...the spare bed...

**Francis** You said...

**Christy** I don't know what I'm saying...I'm a little rattled today.

**Phyllis** Doesn't know his arse from his elbow.

**Christy** Yes, don't know my arse from my elbow. Go on Francis, a pint of water.

**Francis** I'm not working today.

**Christy** You are.

**Francis** I'm not.

**Christy** Well I certainly didn't give you the day off.

**Francis** I'm taking it off . Sick leave.

**Christy** You can't do that.

**Francis** I can ...I've to get home. I have to catch mass on the radio. I don't like working Sundays anyhow.

**Christy** I've never heard him complain about getting paid double time for working a Sunday before. Aren't you supporting your mother on it? And saving for the seminary?

**Phyllis** Sunday. The Sabbath. What's that about?

**Christy** Sounds a bit superstitious. Is it some kind of superstition Francis? You're not a member of any cult I hope?

**Phyllis** Yes, cults. Virgins and blood galore.

**Christy**No, that's the church, my dear.

**Francis** From sundown to sun-up. You're familiar with that ritual, your highness? Well, the Sabbath's the sacred version. Something you'd know nothing about.

**Christy**A tad touchy today.

**Phyllis**A bit bitchy indeed.

**Christy**Sacred how?

**Francis**Spiritual. Things of the spirit.

**Christy**Ah. The spirit. Well if you don't mind I'll stick to the body. There's both eating and drinking in it! [*Laughs*]



**Phyllis** Yes, and hangovers.

**Christy** Well you can't have everything, now can you? But the carnal. When it comes down to it that's the side I'll take. Sweet and solid. Like an apple. None of this positing a better world out there. All that's a bit chancy for me. We're here and we're here now. Enough. Isn't that enough? It strikes me as disdainful to be wanting more. When there's a pageant on you'd prefer to go home and dream. Turn your back on creation. Not I. I know a good thing when I see it.

**Phyllis** You're in top form Christy, for a man that can barely stand.

**Christy** I must still be drunk.

**Francis** You must and the rot you're talking. That kind of philosophy ends in the grave. Sweet and solid. What about decay? Have you ever thought of that? The dance stops there I tell you. It's the eternal that's worth real attention. All your hankering after justice. What else is that but positing a better world. If you're so happy with this one then what's all this blab about seeing right done? Personally I'd like to think that there's something beyond the grave.

*Christy grows quite.*

**Christy:**Now there's the educated lad.

**Phyllis**[*Pause*] Get us a pint of water, there's the good lad.

**Christy**Forget the water. The only thing that will cure that head of yours is whiskey.

**Phyllis**I don't know Christy.

**Christy**Keep the party going!

**Phyllis** That's not a good idea.

**Christy**Ah, come on now Phyllis, of course it's a good idea.

**Francis**You'd do better listening to Mrs Derrane.

**Christy**[Turning on Francis] I didn't ask for your opinion, now did I! No. Keep it to yourself. Can a man not have a drink, when he wants to have a drink? [*Squints his eyes and squeezes his two temples with the thumb and index finger of one hand, holding back some pain*] Jesus! [*Shudders. He makes the same gesture again, controlling his thoughts*]  
*Francis gets a bottle of whiskey and gives it to Christy.*

**Christy** Now. Now. That whiskey. Just today again. Continue on into today. [*He drinks*]

That's more like it Phyllis. Who says we can't dance from mid-night to mid-day and beyond. Right into the heart of it. Romping our way rightly. The unendingcarnival! Imagine. Borders collapse. Each man king and subject. And Justice, like the air itself.

**Francis**I hope it does you some good, though I doubt it.

**Christy**Ease on there lad. We got drunk together, I'll never forget that, at least I wouldn't if I could remember. But you're not so bad, Phyllis. A number to raise the spirits.

**Phyllis** I'm not up to you.

**Christy**Agh, come on now. Something festive. Fi...Fi...Finnegan's Wake.

**Francis**Sleep might be more in order.

**Christy**Just a bit of it.

**Phyllis**You're definitely still drunk. But seeing as you're so handsome. All right.

*Phyllis clears her throat.*

**Phyllis** How's it start?

**Christy**Tim Finnegan.

**Phyllis**Yes. I'd rather not.

**Christy**For me Phyllis. Come on.

**Phyllis**Grand so. But if I start I'll only finish when your ears start bleeding. [*Clears throat again, then sings first verse, losing it towards the end*] Tim Finnegan lived on Walking Street. A gentleman Irish mighty odd. He had a tongue both rich and sweet. And to rise in the world he carried a hod. Now. [*Thinks*] Now, Tim had a sort of tip-plin' way. With the love of the liquor he was born. [*Thinks. Gives up*]. I can't remember the words.

**Christy**Agh now!

**Phyllis** How's it go again.

**Francis**[*Getting ready to go*] I'll leave you.

**Christy**You know. He slips or something. Drunk. Kills himself.

**Phyllis** No. He was murdered. Wasn't he? Hit on the head.

**Christy** It doesn't matter. Make it up. Slips, shot, hung. Who cares.

**Francis**I'll drop in tomorrow?

**Phyllis***[Slowly realising and remembering]* He wasn't hung anyhow.

**Christy** Well, just finish him off whatever way you see fit.

**Phyllis** He wasn't hung. Was he Christy?

**Christy** He...*[Realising]* Well...maybe he was.

**Phyllis** Oh my God...

**Christy** I think he was.

**Phyllis** Christy.

**Christy** Definitely was, Phyllis.

*Both Phyllis and Christy look at where Lynch was hanging, then at each other.*

**Francis***[Exiting]* Bye!

**Phyllis** I think I have the tune now.

**Christy** Yes...Francis! Francis!

**Francis** *[Re-enters]* What?

**Christy** You slept here last night, didn't you?

**Francis** Yes. On that bloody counter.

**Phyllis** You slept on the counter you say Francis ?

**Francis** Yes.

**Christy** And before that you were here last night, weren't you.

**Francis** Yeah, cleaning up your mess till near four in the morning...enough is enough...

**Christy** Oh, no problem lad... take the day off...and Monday. ...but you slept here?

**Francis** Yes.

**Christy** Drunk ?

**Francis** Of course drunk...what with you and Lynch forcing drink down my throat. I'd expect that of you, but I really think that Mr Lynch, I really think that Mr Lynch...that

**Phyllis** I've a feeling I know what you think.

**Francis** I think that Mr Lynch...

**Christy** Don't panic now.

**Francis** Was here last night. And...

**Phyllis** Calm yourself.

**Francis** Jesus, murder.

**Christy** Well, I wouldn't put it that way.

**Francis** Oh my God.

**Phyllis** Murder is such an ugly word.

**Francis** You murdered him. Hu...Hung him.

**Christy** Easy on there.

**Francis** I'll...I'll have to tell the Sergeant.

**Phyllis** Don't be hasty now, Francis.

**Francis** I'll have to tell him right away.

**Christy** I don't think that's such a good idea.

**Francis** [*Angry*] I don't care what you think. I've had enough of you and what you think. I've had enough, do you hear?

**Christy** Well, with your involvement, that's all. I'd leave the Sergeant out of it.

**Francis** My involvement? What the hell are you talking about? I had nothing to do with it. I'm off. Don't try and stop me.

**Christy** Grand so. [*As Francis goes*] But it's a shame to see a young lad with such prospects...well, throw it all away.

**Phyllis** Jail can be a hard place Francis.

**Francis** [*Stopping*] Don't try it. You'll be the ones going to jail.

**Phyllis** You're very sure Francis.

**Christy** It's quick you forget.

**Francis** Forget. Forget what?

**Phyllis** The court clerk me boy. Tying up a man...

**Francis** I never...

**Phyllis** ...and taking part in his illegal trial and execution. How's your memory now, Mister Court clerk? If I remember rightly, you were pretty central in the whole affair. You know, a court of law would see you as part of "the gang".

**Christy** [*Arms open wide*] Welcome to the gang, Francis.

**Francis** You made me...ordered me.

**Phyllis** No matter.

**Francis** It was against my will.

**Christy** Will?

**Francis** I was forced. Afraid.

**Phyllis** Fear is of little consequence. The motivation is incidental. It is the action that is all. And what do your actions speak of?

**Christy** Aiding and abetting. An accomplice to murder, pure and simple.

**Francis** Christ!

**Phyllis** Don't take it too hard Francis. The bastard had it coming.

**Francis** To have killed a man...

**Phyllis** The man was a murderer. Now we didn't set out to kill him, that just kind of happened. But now it's done. At least there is some kind of justice to it all.

**Christy** Don't be too hard on yourself young fellow. A life in the priesthood will more than pay for this one misdemeanour. Besides, if you got done they'd never let you into the fold. Because of one mistake? You know rightly. Saul, Paul... whatever. Didn't he kill countless Christians and go on to be a father of the church. Now, what's one man compared to that. Kill a few more and they might make you a saint. No. Better keep this our little secret.

*Francis is silent, contemplating his actions.*

**Phyllis** Agh, he'll be all right.

**Christy** He'll be fine?

**Phyllis** You did well.

**Christy** I did well how?

**Phyllis** [*Drinking*] Agh...up, early like. Where'd you put him ?

**Christy** What ?

**Phyllis** Lynch. Where'd you put him ?

**Christy** I didn't put him anywhere.

**Phyllis** I'm in no mood.

**Christy** I'm telling you ! I didn't put him anywhere.

**Phyllis** You must have hid the body somewhere ?

**Christy** I'm telling you Phyllis, last thing I remember was Lynch hanging from that rafter there...after that my head went all kind of funny...

**Phyllis** A blackout.

**Christy** Next thing I know I'm woken up by your snoring.

**Phyllis** I don't snore...you can't remember a thing ?

**Christy** I was hoping you'd taken him down.

**Phyllis** No, you must have cut him down. As far as I remember I left

you drinking a night-cap to Lynch's soul in hell...you must have cut him down.

**Christy** If I did I can't remember. Jesus, maybe I did ?

**Phyllis** Well if you did you couldn't have dragged him far...not with the weight of him... he must be around here someplace.

**Christy** I suppose I would have put him somewhere near, somewhere out of sight.

**Phyllis** You'd never have got him up those steps.

**Christy** I could barely get myself up.

**Phyllis** He must be around someplace...we'll check. Francis, give us a hand.

Stop moping and make yourself useful.

*Christy and Phyllis check in different places. Francis very reluctantly does the same.*

*After a moment Francis comes in from the garden.*

**Phyllis:** Christ, I think I have him!

*Christy and Phyllis re-enter.*

**Christy:** Where?

**Phyllis:** The garden. There's something looks like a grave. I was afraid to look. Come on.

**Christy:** Wait. Wait now. That's only the dog was knocked down. I tried burying him, but the ground was too stony. That's not Lynch.

**Phyllis:** Back to it then. Come on Francis!

*They all exit, looking in different places. After a moment Phyllis comes back in..*

**Francis:** [*Shouting to others off-stage*] I have him! I have him!

*Christy and Francis re-enter.*

**Christy:** Where?

**Francis:** There's a corpse in the yard. Burnt to a cinder. Smell of petrol off it. Jesus the smell!

**Christy:** Agh! That's only the dog again.

**Francis:** The dog?

**Christy:** When I couldn't bury him I decided a pyre was the best option. Didn't really work though. Just kind of roasted him.

**Francis:** The poor dog.

**Christy:** Back to it. He has to be around here somewhere.

*They all exit again to various locations. After a few moments Christy comes in bearing a bloody cleaver, his arms full with bloody raw meat—big chunks of it, hacked up crudely.*

**Christy:** Heh! Heh!

*Phyllis and Francis re-enter. Christy dumps the meat—in its plastic wrapping—on the bar counter.*

**Francis:** Oh my god!

**Phyllis:** Jesus, Christy.

**Christy:** I can't rightly remember, but it just struck me to check the freezer. I 'm always hacking up sheep for the stew we do. Well, that's as good as any a place for a Christian like Lynch, I thought. I must have done the job quickly. It's a bit messy.

**Phyllis:** Christ. That's not all of it?

**Christy:** Well, there's more of him back in the freezer.

**Francis:** Much more?

**Christy:** Well, he was a fair old size.

*Phyllis is inspecting the meat.*

**Phyllis:** A fair old size is right.

**Christy:** Fat, to be precise.

**Francis:** Couldn't it do with last rites, or something?

**Phyllis:** Fat, yes. So you filleted him and all?

**Christy:** What?

**Phyllis:** Well, there's very little fat on this meat. I'd call that lean, wouldn't you Francis?

**Francis:** [*Inspecting the meat*] Well, yes. That's lean all right.

**Phyllis:** A good job too. Almost as good as Gillane's Butchers, I'd say. And you did that and the state you were in? God you're some man Christy. I'd call that talent.

**Christy:** That's not Lynch?

**Phyllis:** Of course it's not him. That meat's lean. If it was Lynch you'd have to boil it for a week before you'd boil off the lard.

**Christy:** I suppose you're right. Well then, I've no idea what I did with him. He was so mean he might have rotted already.

**Francis:** I'm off. This is your problem. I'll have nothing more to do with it. As far as I'm concerned this never happened. I wasn't even here. God forgive me.

**Christy:** [*Getting angry*] Go on then. Clear off. You're useless anyway. Go on home and say your rosary.

**Phyllis:** Is it safe to let him go?

**Christy:** Either that or we kill him.

*Christy is considering killing Francis, wielding clever.*

**Phyllis:** You understand lad that you're an accomplice, as guilty in the eyes of the law as Christy there. One word and you're gone. One word, in your whole life, understand? No seminary, and what of your mother. Who'd look after her now? You see the seriousness of it? Jail is what I'm talking about. Say nothing...if for no other reason than to save your own skin.

**Francis:** [Agrees with Phyllis] Damn you.

**Phyllis:** Christy, he wasn't here.

**Christy:** Phyllis. He wasn't here.

**Phyllis:** [To Francis] Go on.

*Francis exists.*

**Christy:** [Shouting after Francis as he exists] Tonight, nine sharp, and don't be late!

*Pause. Christy sits and sips some of his whiskey. Phyllis clears away the meat and clever, then sits and takes her drink, thinking.*

**Phyllis:** You wouldn't have taken him outside...in the car maybe ?

**Christy:** I was in no fit state to drive...I would have killed someone.

**Phyllis:** Well somewhere else, out in the small shed?

**Christy:** [Thinks] No. The place was locked up, and Francis had the keys. I'm very strict about that, Francis knows never to leave the place open.

**Phyllis:** Well he couldn't have just disappeared...

**Christy:** Well where is he ?

**Phyllis:** You're the one who should know that. You were that drunk ?

**Christy:** You know yourself Phyllis.

**Phyllis:** There's nothing for it but to get you drunk again...you might remember if you're in the same state...[She fills his glass]...here, start getting that down you.

**Christy:** Well...if you think it will do some good. [Christy drinks]. Agh...I don't know if I'll be able to keep it down.

**Phyllis:** [Pouring him another] Come on now...keep going.

**Christy:** [Burps] Jesus ! That's hard tack. [Christy drinks].

**Phyllis:** [Pouring yet another] Are you beginning to feel anything ?



**Christy** Well...no.

**Phyllis** [*Fills his glass again, and hers also*] Another so...and I'll give you some help.

**Christy** If you say so.

*They drink.*

**Phyllis** Well ? Anything coming to you ?

**Christy** Wait. [*He pours another drink for himself and knocks it back*]. I think I'm beginning to get something. [*He takes a slug out of the bottle*]. It's getting closer.

*He takes another drink from the bottle.*

**Christy**:Yes. I think I almost have it now.

*The proceedings are interrupted by a loud knock on the door.*

**Courtney**[*From off*] You in there Ruane?

**Christy**Jesus, Courtney. [*Panic*] What's he want ?

**Phyllis**Jesus.!

*Christy jumps back from the door in fright. Enter Sgt. Courtney and Lynch. Lynch has the purple and black ring of a bruise around his neck.*

**Lynch** There he is Sergeant, the murdering bastard!

**Courtney**Quiet now Mr. Lynch, I'll do the talking.

**Lynch** Thought maybe you'd seen the last of me, ha ?

**Courtney**I said quiet Cathel. Mr. Ruane please take a seat. I'd like to ask you a few questions. Mrs Derrane, you sit down as well.

**Courtney**Cathel, you sit too.

**Christy**I thought you were...

**Phyllis**Shhh!

*Lynch sits, a distance away from the others...but facing them.*

**Courtney**Now. This should not take too long. As you know the county team are playing, kick off in a few minutes, and I intend to catch the most of it.

We should have won that draw yesterday. But we've a good

chance in the replay today. So listen now and don't waste my time.

[*Looks at his watch*] I think I should tell you from the outset Mr. Ruane that Cathel, Mr. Lynch here, is making certain accusations against you.

As I was saying. There are particular accusations

being made concerning certain events, occurrences of a criminal nature that may have come to pass in the vicinity in the recent past. Occurrences that may have involved particular individuals, possibly in a criminal capacity...but that is yet to be determined. The accusation is being made against one particular well known member of the community by another, also well known to many in the area. However, it is not for me to decide whether this crime has been perpetrated by this particular individual, it is rather my duty to secure the general welfare of the ordinary citizen...in general. As such, it is my responsibility to determine if a breach of the law has occurred, in this case a most serious and heinous breach of the law. If this is indeed the case...as it currently appears... then it falls on me to investigate what evidence there may be to support this particular accusation made by this certain individual. In the event that I happen to discover what I consider to be satisfactory evidence on which to base an arrest of this particular person, then so be it. Yet, in order to remind and caution all concerned, let me just point out that...

**Phyllis** Excuse me Sergeant.

**Courtney**What?

**Phyllis**I was wondering if you could just be a little more specific?

**Courtney** I would appreciate it if I was not interrupted.

**Phyllis**I'm sorry Sergeant, it's just that it appears that there is an accusation being made against Mr. Ruane here...and I'm sure he'd like to know just what it is...if you would come to the point.

**Lynch**I'll tell you what it is...that bastard tried to murder me, that's what !

**Christy**I'm not the murderer around here.

*Both Christy and Lynch have risen from their seats. Courtney blows his whistle to restore order.*

**Courtney**Hold it ! Hold it the pair of you ! [*Silence*]. Now, let me just get one thing clear...I'm running this show, right ? So you speak when I ask you to speak, and when I ask you to shut up you shut up, clear? [*Pause. They sit again. Looks at his*

*watch*] You may have no interest in the game on today, but I do. Now I don't want to end up listening to this match on the radio, is that clear? If

we win this we've a clear run at the championship, it's life and death out there today, and the lads are fitter than ever. I don't know if you appreciate the historic chance on offer. It's been three generations since we beat these bastards, and we've a passionate squad this year. So time is of the essence. Leave the talking to me and we'll have this cleared up in quick time. Right? Grand then.

**Phyllis** Em...Sergeant ?

**Courtney** What ?

**Phyllis** The accusation ?

**Courtney** Well, in short...as you are all aware I had business to conduct up at Cathel's place this morning...business concerning the supposed murder by him of the late Mrs. Lynch.

**Christy** Ruane was her name.

**Lynch** I'll not argue with that.

**Courtney** Gentlemen please ! If you would let me continue.

**Lynch** Sorry Justin...ah, Sergeant.

**Courtney** Well, as you know I was making a final search for any incriminating evidence against...Mr. Lynch here. I, accompanied by two fellow officers, therefore called to Mr. Lynch's farm at about 10 o'clock this morning. As you may imagine I wanted to notify Mr. Lynch of my presence, as we had pre-arranged that I would on my arrival. Nevertheless, I was surprised to find him absent. Regardless of this I, with the aid of my colleagues, decided to set about the search as planned. Beginning with the hayshed, we systematically worked our way through the hen-house, out-house, slurry pit, and tool shed—in that order. As arranged, we were joined by the Garda sub-aqua team at approximately 11 o'clock.

**Phyllis** Garda sub-aqua team?

**Courtney** *[To Christy]* Garda O'Connell has sub-aqua experience...

**Phyllis** Oh yes, he almost drowned as a young lad.

**Courtney** Derrane!

**Phyllis** Sorry Sergeant.

**Courtney** As I was saying...with the aid of Garda O'Connell we set about a search of the small flooded area of the Lynch property.

Our search yielding nothing, and failing to gain admittance to the Lynch House itself, due to the absence of the occupant, we duly decided to end the search and formally close the case.

**Christy** Didn't even search the house !

**Lynch** [*Taking the house keys out of his pocket and holding them up*] Search the house...there's the keys for you...go on.

**Christy** Yes, search the house.

**Lynch** I've nothing to hide Ruane...go on Sergeant, take the keys and search the house from top to bottom...you'll find nothing.

**Courtney** That won't be necessary.

**Lynch** [*Putting the keys back in his pocket*] You heard the man. That won't be necessary. Case closed. Isn't that right Sergeant ?

**Courtney** As I said, case closed.

**Lynch** Case closed.

**Courtney** That case is closed, but quite another one is just opening.

**Phyllis** I don't know what you're talking about.

**Courtney** Well, what I'm talking about is who do I meet staggering up by that old dynamite pit, Derrane's Hole, this morning?

**Phyllis** That's no hole. I won't hear my grandfather's grave talked of like that.

**Lynch** Agh, give over Derrane. He blew himself up with his own bomb, sure everyone know's that. Go on Justin.

**Christy** He was shot by the likes of you and dumped there.

**Lynch** Go on Sergeant.

**Courtney** I'll tell you who we met as we were leaving Lynch's place, the absent Cathel Lynch himself. The poor man almost dead as it happens, a noose around his neck, and barely able to speak. You'd hardly see the likes of it in theatrics. Had to sit him down, free him and let him get his breath for a few minutes before he could utter a word. But when he could speak...well what an interesting story he had to tell. Isn't that right Cathel?

**Lynch** That's right Sergeant. Lucky I had wind left to speak at all.

**Courtney** Yes. Lucky he had wind left at all and the state he was in.

**Phyllis** Seems like all he's full of is wind.

**Courtney** I wouldn't be so smart if I were you Derrane, and the position you're in.

**Phyllis** I think you'll find I'm in no position, but go on with Lynch's little sceal...*[to Lynch]* and I thought the flights of your fancy only rose to the heights of a sheep's back passage...you're surprising me Lynch.

**Lynch***[To Courtney]* What's she implying?

**Courtney** *[Ignores Lynch and Phyllis]* As I was saying. I'm sure both of you will be interested where this story is going. *[Looks at his watch]* Anyways...

*Courtney is aiming at dramatic effect. He takes out a cigarette and lights it with a flourish.*

**Courtney** As I was saying.

**Phyllis** And so eloquently Sergeant.

**Courtney** *[Ignoring her]* What does Mr Lynch tell me but of how he paid you a little social visit after the carnival the night previously...a visit concerning matters of business.

**Christy** Business.

**Lynch** Yes, business.

**Courtney** And of how an argument arose out of these matters Of business...

**Christy** Out of matters of business! And he murdering my sister!

**Lynch** That matter's closed Ruane.

**Courtney** And arising out of other matters admittedly. And of how this argument got out of hand, so out of hand that you first assault the man with a bottle, concealed, as I have found out, this crime from an officer of the law on his rounds, myself in case you think I've forgotten, and of how you then conducted a trial in a bogus and illegitimate court of law, then attempted to murder the man, Mr. Lynch here, in a drunken rage by the method of hanging him by the neck...and all during after hours drinking, may I add.

**Phyllis** Hanging him by the neck...how else would you hang a man?

By the arm? Such rubbish.

**Christy** Yes, pure rubbish.

**Courtney** Well if it's such rubbish could you please tell me how the offended party came by such a grisly wound? Mr. Lynch, please.

*Lynch stands up, pulls down his collar and displays his wound for all to see.*

**Phyllis** Could be through some kind of weird sexual practice...I've heard stories.

**Lynch** What stories?

**Christy** Got his neck caught somewhere it shouldn't have been if you ask me.

**Courtney** A trained eye will recognise these markings as consistent with friction burn caused by the unnatural tightening of natural fibres around the subjects neck, natural fibres such as those found in the common rope.. thank you Mr Lynch. In short he was hung by the neck.

**Courtney** You seem to know a lot about it Sergeant, have you hung many men in your time ?

**Courtney** Unfortunately that penalty has been repealed for serious offences.

**Phyllis** Well even if we can accept that Lynch was in fact hung, who's to say that either myself or Mr. Ruane here had a part in it. For all we know it could have been an attempted suicide on Lynch's part...an attempted suicide motivated by... guilt perhaps.

**Christy** Yes, he could have tried to hang himself.

**Lynch** Rot! Pure rot as you well know.

**Courtney** I think that can be ruled out.

**Christy** And why can you tell me is that?

**Courtney** Well in the first place there is no sign of guilt in the offended subject.

**Christy** Well that's for certain.

**Courtney** And secondly, if Mr. Lynch's story holds out, young Francis Devine should be a witness to his presence here this last night gone, his presence and the hostility showed to him by Mr. Ruane here. Mr Lynch contends that the lad, being led astray, played a central part in the unlawful proceedings—coaxed on as he was by the consumption of intoxicating liquor. Serving alcohol to minors, that's another offence for the record.

**Christy** That proves nothing.

**Phyllis:** And he went home early.

**Christy:** Yes, the lad went home early, was barely here half the night. Ask him yourselves. He'll put you straight.

**Lynch** Where is he? Let the lad speak for himself. He'll speak, I assure you.

**Courtney** And thirdly. Not only can young Devine vouch for Lynch's presence here last night, and the reason for that presence...

**Lynch**The matters of business.

**Courtney** The matters of business. Does that wireless work?

**Christy** Yes.

**Courtney** If you don't mind, I'll just see who won the toss. They should be starting about now. I'll see who won the toss.

**Christy** Fire ahead.

*[Courtney spots the frayed end of the rope still attached to the bar.]*

**Courtney** The matters of business. But also, if Mr. Lynch's story holds, there should be a

piece of actual physical evidence remaining as testament to the crime that was committed here this very night past. The remains of a rope owned by you Mister Ruane, purchased only yesterday as I myself can testify, with the intention and premeditated purpose of murdering Mr. Lynch for reasons of greed and misguided revenge, the likes of which I have thankfully never encountered before in all my years in the force, and I dearly hope I will never again have the misfortune to come across.

*Courtney takes the noose-end of the rope out of his plastic bag and holds its frayed end next to the frayed end of the piece of rope still attached to the bar.*

**Courtney** Seems like we have a match.

**Christy:**For your information, Sergeant, that's my missing clothesline.

**Lynch** Clothesline? Sure that's too thick for a clothesline.

**Courtney**Clothesline or not I think we have sufficient evidence on which to base an arrest. Finger printing and forensics will see to the rest. Christopher Ruane, I hereby charge you with the attempted murder of Cathel Lynch. You're coming with me to the station. As for you Phyllis Derrane, you're charged with being his accomplice. Now come on the pair of you, I've more serious things to attend to.

**Phyllis** *[Breaking her silence]* I wouldn't be so hasty if I were you Sergeant.

**Courtney**What are you talking about?

**Phyllis** Well as I see it you don't have any evidence at all. A man in your position, and with your *experience* would want to be awful careful about who he arrests...about arresting the wrong man, for example.

**Lynch** Wrong man!

**Courtney** I have clear evidence Derrane. Lynch's story checks out all the way. I've got the right man all right. It's plain as day that Ruane had a go at murdering Lynch. The rope matching and the wound all stand up as clear evidence. Oh I think I've nothing to worry about Derrane.

**Phyllis** I wouldn't be so sure. And if I were you I would be sure...Superintendent...ah, sorry, Sergeant Courtney.

**Lynch** Don't listen to her. Come on and we go.

**Courtney** What's there to doubt? Get your things now and come on.

**Phyllis** Well did it ever cross your mind that maybe Lynch wanted you to think Christy had a go at murdering him...to get him out of the way and have a clear run at the property and all.

**Lynch** I've a legal right to the place.

**Christy** Be quiet.

**Phyllis** Yes, but it would make things a lot smoother to get rid of Christy, paint him as a murderer in the eyes of the town. People might suspect he even murdered his own sister, and then set to murdering you, the last large obstacle to his clear ownership of the business...oh I can hear the talk already.

**Lynch** Yes, maybe that's what happened.

**Phyllis** [*Putting her arm out to restrain Christy*] Or maybe that's what you want people to think happened.

**Courtney** We'll talk about this later at the station. I've the evidence I need.

**Phyllis** Evidence left for you to find. Lynch was here last night all right. And yes, there was an argument...an argument about Lynch taking over the place. But that was that. Lynch came in here full of drink and roaring like a bull.

**Lynch** Crap!

**Phyllis** A fight broke out and that's when Lynch was knocked cold. That's all Christy is guilty of. Assault. As far as we were concerned we'd leave Lynch to sleep it off, maybe he wouldn't even remember in the morning. He must have come to and either tried to hang himself or set up this little drama for your benefit, who knows...I was upstairs asleep with Christy. I'm the only witness you need. And as



Francis Devine will tell you, the only one you've got.

**Lynch** Such a load of crap. Come on Sergeant, take them away.

**Courtney** You were in bed with Christy Ruane?

**Phyllis** And I'm not ashamed of it. I'm a widow as you know, and Christy here is a single man. There's nothing wrong with that. Anyway, do you think seriously Sergeant if Mr. Ruane hung Lynch there that he'd still be walking around annoying people. No, he'd be down in hell where he belongs, roasting for his sins and the murder of Katey Ruane. That's where he'd be.

**Christy** Exactly!

**Phyllis** So if I were you Sergeant I'd have a little review of your so-called Evidence, before you go making any hasty decisions.

**Lynch** Don't listen to her Justin. There's more than enough proof here to stand up in court...I'm telling you, a conviction like this and you're Superintendent in no time...come on now.

**Phyllis** You call this proof ! With Devine home early you've no witness, a bit of old rope and no corpse. Listen to reason Sergeant...it's his word against ours...the word of one suspected murderer against that of two decent local people that were never in any trouble in their lives.

**Christy** She's right you know Sergeant.

**Courtney** Wait now and I'll have a think for myself.

**Lynch** There's nothing to think about!

**Courtney** Quiet, just give me a minute.

**Courtney** [*Considers*] What about that bruise on his neck? Now you can't account for that.

**Phyllis** Self-inflicted. Gave himself an old tug with the noose.

**Lynch** Aragh, bollocks!

**Courtney** Self-inflicted?

**Phyllis** It's common enough you know Sergeant. This little fiasco is of Lynch's making. Get rid of Christy to take over the property, and at the same time clear his name in the eyes of the town. I'm only surprised he had the brains to think of it. I'm sorry Sergeant, but I think you're as much the victim here as ourselves. You've been taken in by a hoax.

**Lynch** A hoax my arse!

**Courtney** A hoax you say?

**Phyllis** As plain as day a hoax. Look, the man is alive. As for that rope—that's merely circumstantial evidence. It's all a bit too flimsy to risk wrongly arresting a man. Well, let's just say, it wouldn't be too good for your prospects, not again, if you'll pardon me saying so.

**Lynch** You're not going to listen to that bitch, are you?

**Christy** Hey, mind your language.

**Courtney** [*His confidence undermined*] We're in no rush.

**Lynch** What?

**Courtney** Well, I've been thinking Cathel. Maybe the case isn't as clear as we thought it was. I mean, it seems there's been no real harm done.

**Lynch** No harm done?!

**Courtney** Well, on closer examination of the case, it seems there is some evidence lacking on which to base an arrest.

**Lynch** Have you lost it or something!

**Courtney** Calm down Cathel.

**Lynch** Calm down!

**Courtney** Look...the place is yours anyway, and you seem to be fine and all...maybe there's no need to...

**Lynch** What?

**Courtney** ...to pursue this further.

**Courtney** I thought it was a clear case. You have to understand my position. I can't go arresting someone whenever I like, you know. There are rules and regulations binding me. No. On closer inspection, this case doesn't fulfil the criteria on which to base an arrest.

**Lynch** It's an open and shut case!

**Courtney** I've my reputation to think of, and professional standards to uphold.

**Phyllis** That's right Sergeant.

**Lynch** Damn your standards...arrest these bastards!

**Courtney** [*Getting up*] There's not enough in it Cathel, come on, we're leaving.

**Lynch** Leaving!

**Courtney** Leaving. I'm sorry for the inconvenience Mrs Derrane, Mr

Ruane. I'm sure you'll understand that a mistake has been made, and you'll accept my apologies for it.

**Phyllis** Well, it was an inconvenience. But seeing as we're all human. Well, we'll just say no more about it. Isn't that right Christy?

**Christy** That's right Phyllis. Not another word on the matter.

**Lynch** What is this! The bastard tried to kill me. [*Grabbing a bottle with which to attack Christy*] I swear I'll...!

*Courtney restrains Lynch.*

**Courtney** Calm down Cathel. Calm down or I'll be forced to...

**Lynch** Forced to what? Forced to arrest me! [*Throws bottle on ground*] Agh!

For God's sake! You haven't heard the last of this, do you hear!

To hell with the lot of you!

*Lynch storms out, slamming the door behind him.*

**Courtney** You'll forgive Mr Lynch. As you can see, he's a little upset.

**Christy** Murderers get like that.

**Courtney** Well...I suppose I'll be off. Once again, sorry for the...for the trouble, Mrs Derrane.

**Phyllis** Think nothing of it. [Short pause] You'll miss the match at this stage.

**Courtney** Yes. I'll see the highlights on the television tonight. [*Gets an idea*] But, if you wouldn't mind...[*indicating the radio*]...I might just...for the score?

**Christy** Be my guest.

*Courtney goes to the radio, glasses on the end of his nose, he is unsure how to work it, fiddles with it. Lynch re-enters.*

**Lynch** I still want you out within the week Ruane...do you hear me now?

**Christy** Well, we'll see about that.

**Lynch** [*Disgust*] Agh ! [*To Courtney*] Are you coming or what!

**Courtney** One minuet.

*Francis enters. He is still dressed in bishop's costume.*

**Francis** [*Seeing Lynch*] Jesus! Lynch! In the name of God!

*Courtney hits the play button on the machine, playing the tape from the night before.*

**Taped voices and sound effects from earlier:**

**Christy** You lying bastard!

**Phyllis**I think I have the thing working!

**Lynch** I spit on you Ruane! And all the Ruanes!

**Phyllis**Jesus Christy! Cut the rope! I...

**Christy**I think I've killed him.

*Recording cuts out.*

*Everyone freezes where they are, there is total silence. There is a look of utter shock on the faces of Christy and Phyllis. After a moment Lynch starts to laugh a dirty laugh of victory. Courtney, realising what he has heard, again assumes a position of authority.*

**Courtney**Well, well, well. What have we here?

**Lynch**I think I'd call that evidence Sergeant.

**Courtney** I think you're right Mr. Lynch...wherever it came from, I think you're right. If you don't mind, Mr Ruane, [*Takes tape*] I'll think I'll take this little recording into my possession. Evidence you understand. [*To Phyllis*] Clear evidence worth more than the word of any criminal, I should think. I suppose you've an explanation for this as well Derrane.

**Phyllis** I.I...

**Courtney** You can save your words for official questioning. All I want to know is...why in the name of God were you taping an attempted hanging?

**Christy** That's not what it seems now Sergeant.

**Phyllis** That's enough Christy.

**Christy** But it's only a...

**Phyllis** Shut up! [*Pause*]. We were trying to scare Lynch...get a confession out of him...we didn't mean to hang him...And the bastard did confess !

**Lynch** And where is the confession?

**Courtney**Yes...where is that confession?

**Phyllis** I couldn't get the damned machine working...I taped the wrong part.

**Lynch** Ha! Confession my arse. There was no confession Sergeant...on my word there was none...I'm an innocent man. Wronged. I loved my wife, wouldn't do a thing to harm her. I haven't been right since her death... I never stop thinking about her...her face...

**Phyllis** The only face you remember is a face in the agony of death...I hope it

haunts you till the grave Lynch, and afterwards...for if in this life there's no justice, I dearly hope there is another... only then would the likes of you get dealt out fair punishment.

**Courtney** That's enough out of you Derrane. You've done enough talking for one day. As for that confession of yours...I see no evidence of it...and with no evidence there is no confession. Besides, that no longer concerns me.

**Lynch** Yes...that's no longer of any concern.

**Christy** Francis, tell him!

**Courtney** Agh, young Devine. What gives us the honour of your presence?

**Francis** The ...the...the rosary beads. I forgot them.

**Courtney** Father Neaghtain will be wanting them back. Well he'll have to wait. You've some business with me first.

**Francis** Business, what business?

**Courtney** The minor matter of playing a part in an attempted murder.

**Phyllis** Francis. Tell them about the confession. Tell them what Lynch said.

**Christy** Go on Francis. You're an honest lad. People will believe you.

**Phyllis** If you're afraid of trouble...well, we forced you. We made you take part against your will.

**Christy** Poured drink down you.

**Phyllis** Yes. Yes. That's it.

**Courtney** Well, young Devine. What's this about a confession? Did you hear a confession?

*There is a pause. All the focus is on Francis. His dilemma is unbearable. As he is about to speak Lynch jumps in.*

**Lynch** The lad wasn't here.

**Christy** What?

**Courtney** What?

**Lynch** You heard the tape. There was three voices on there—mine, Ruane's and Derrane's. The young lad wasn't here. He let me in all right, but that's it. He left after. He'd no part in the proceedings.

**Courtney** In your earlier statement you said...

**Lynch** I'd been half hung, how could I know what I was saying? No. The young lad had gone home long before. I misremembered earlier.

**Courtney** Is this right Francis?

**Christy** Francis, I know what we said. But you have to tell the truth.

You were here weren't you? You heard the confession.

**Francis** I...I...

**Lynch** Murder Francis. Attempted murder. You'd no part in that, did you? No.

It's not in your nature. You were never here. Heard no confession. Isn't that right lad?

**Courtney** Is that right Francis?

**Christy** Francis?

*Short Pause.*

**Francis** That's right. I was never here.

**Lynch** Good lad Francis. [*Laughing*] Good lad.

**Christy** [*Hurt*] Francis. Please. You can't let this happen. You can't let him win. I

know we've had our differences. I'm sorry. Listen to your Conscience boy.

**Phyllis** Leave him Christy. He was going that way from the start.

**Courtney** Ruane you're under arrest for attempted murder.

**Christy** [*As the cuffs are put on*] Fools prosper and the unjust lauded. First the crucifixion, then the dice divides what's left. It rolls with no reason, falls where it's weighted. The judge with his wig and his bag of tricks, plays the script...and is paid. Katey...

*Christy is led out by Courtney*

**Lynch** You're not the carnival king today Ruane!

**Courtney** [From off] O'Connell, put him in the car!

*There is a lull after Christy's departure. A weird calm in the air Pause. Courtney re-enters.*

**Courtney** As for you Derrane. I'll have you for assisting in the whole business, withholding information, attempting to pervert the course of justice...

**Phyllis** Not afraid of me anymore Sergeant?

**Courtney** The way I see it Phyllis, the way things have turned out I've nothing to fear from the likes of you. You're on the wrong end of justice. It's more likely

I'll get a promotion for putting you away.

**Phyllis** Question.

**Courtney** What ?

**Phyllis** [*To Lynch*] How did you survive?

**Lynch** Wouldn't you like to know? I blacked out all right. But when I came round on the floor there was no sign of anyone. It's a wonder I wasn't killed.

**Phyllis** More's the pity. Sergeant, take me somewhere where I don't have to look at this.

*Courtney takes Phyllis tightly by the arm and escorts her out the door. Pause.*

**Lynch** [*Goes to Francis and puts his arm around him*] That's my boy Francis. Make sure now that you always pick the winner and you won't go wrong. Sure what did Ruane ever do for you, ha? A waste of space.

*Courtney re-enters.*

**Courtney** Well, Cathel. I think I should say that I'm sorry for...for doubting you.

**Lynch** Agh, don't mention it Justin. A man in your position has to be careful...has to set an example to others...or else the whole shop would go awry.

**Courtney** Now that's the truth Cathel. The thin blue line between order and chaos...that's what a police force is you know. Without us it'd be pure anarchy all over the place, and then where would we be?

**Lynch** Where would we be indeed.

**Courtney** [*Macho buddy laugh with Lynch*] It'd be carnival all the time, ha ?

**Lynch** [*Joining in*] Right. Transvestites running the shop.

*The two men have a laugh, which subsides into an air of warm affection.*

**Courtney** Well I suppose I'd better get those two down to HQ.

**Lynch** Agh sure, what's the rush? Won't you have a drink with me first. To celebrate?

**Courtney** Well...I'd better not Cathel. I'd better not.

**Lynch:** [*Hint of begging*] Agh...just the one!

**Courtney:** I've really to be off.

**Lynch:** I'll pour them sure...

**Courtney:** [*Firmly*] Sorry Cathel. I really have to go.

**Lynch:** [*Disappointed*] I suppose you'll want to catch the end of the match.

**Courtney:** Yes. Francie. Do you want a lift?

**Francis:** Thanks. Em...That'll be great.

**Courtney**     There's clouds on the horizon. I'll say we'll get a downpour. Come on so.  
Cathel.

**Lynch** Sergeant

*Courtney and Francis exit. Lynch is left alone, drinking. Ghost appears behind him. Slow to dark.*