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A Passing Moment

A Play by

John J. Kelly

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A Passing Moment

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CHARACTERS

KATE HIGGS; *50 at rise, later 77; the proprietress of the Pub*

FIONA KENNEALY; *about 20 at rise, later 47; new owner of the Pub*

MICHAEL MAHONEY; *13 at rise, later 40, later 61 (played by 2 actors)*

BRIANNA BLY; *16 at rise, later 43, later 64*

RYAN; *an older man at rise, later an old man*

ANGELIQUE; *initially a (prop) infant, later 21; Fiona's granddaughter*

TIMOTHY MCGOUGH; *a boy (played by actor playing young Michael)*

SETTING

A Pub in a small town near Dublin Ireland

Act One, Scene One – 1918

Act One, Scene Two – 1945

Act Two - 1966

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ACT I: SCENE ONE

SETTING: The exterior of an old Pub in a small Irish town near Dublin, 1918. A small bench sits in front of the establishment.

AT RISE: Fiona Kennealy, a young woman of about 20, enters from indoors followed by Kate Higgs, a woman of 50 who owns the Pub. Fiona comes DS to survey the landscape.

KATE

(On entering) ...but that was some time ago. *(FIONA continues to look out)* Are you certain you know what it is you're doing, girl?

FIONA

Aye. Absolutely certain. This is home. Will be home.

KATE

Might you not wait for your husband to be coming home?

FIONA

Why? What would he be doing that I've not done?

KATE

I cannot say. I know nothing about your man. I know nothing about you. *(She sits)*

FIONA

No, this is it. This is our life. I can feel it in my bones. May I tell you something Mrs. Higgs?

KATE

If you wish. Sit. *(FIONA sits)*

FIONA

This place...this Pub. I need it.

KATE

Need it?

FIONA

Need it... as assurance of the future. Our future, Brendan and I. This war never ends. For years I thought we would avoid it. Brendan showed no interest in it, despite his father's insistence that he join the fusiliers "as all the Kennealys before have done." But then his mate Miles was killed, and his father passed. Next thing you know, Brendan was off to France.

KATE

Leaving you here –

FIONA

To "carry on."

KATE

They say it should all be over soon.

FIONA

And how long do you think they'll be saying it?

KATE

Ah, girl, that I wish I knew. Every day now there is a new name... a new battle... Chateau-Thierry, Bellau Wood, the Marne. The wireless tells of our men winning the war, but the end never comes.

FIONA

It shall. Soon. I know it.

KATE

You do, do you now?

FIONA

Aye.

KATE

So why the rush to buy the Pub? Here, where you know no one?

FIONA

Not a rush. A... determination.

KATE

As you wish.

FIONA

A determination to build a home for us... our family.

KATE

So why an old relic like this? (*Ever the businesswoman*) Grand though it may be.

FIONA

Why not? Brendan would love being a publican. All the comradery. All the blarney. And I could look after the rooms to let while looking after the child.

KATE

The child?

FIONA

Aye. I am with child.

KATE

And your man, Brendan, does he know?

FIONA

Not yet. I only just learned of it myself.

KATE

So you are not yet far along.

FIONA

About two months. Perhaps it happened our last night together. I rather like that. I'm not sure why, but it gives me comfort.

KATE

You must tell him girl.

FIONA

I will. I shall.

KATE

And you intend to run this establishment by yourself while carrying your child?

FIONA

Only until Brendan returns to help me.

KATE

And if his return is not imminent? If this bloody war goes on longer than anyone imagines?

FIONA

I'm sure I'll be fine.

KATE

Fine. On some days "fine". But on others you'll not want to rise. You'll curse the glorious gift you've been given. You'll curse your man. You'll curse every man that ever put woman in such a condition.

I'm sure I –

FIONA

Have you other children?

KATE

No. This will be my – our – first.

FIONA

Six. Four girls. Anne in Kilkenny. The other three in America. Two boys...fighting...God knows where. All brought into the world in this (*Indicates Pub*) old girl. So believe what you're told child.

KATE

Yes ma'am.

FIONA

It would be good to have a babe here in the house once again.

KATE

Then you'll sell?

FIONA

Whatever gave you the idea that I wouldn't?

KATE

(*Hugging her*) Oh thank you, Mrs. Higgs.

FIONA

All right then. Enough. We'd best be making the arrangements. Come inside.

KATE

MICHAEL, a boy of 13 enters with packages, riding a bicycle.

Morning! (*Parks the bicycle and gets off*)

MICHAEL

(*Rising with FIONA*) And here, girl, is the first of many arrangements you'll have to be making.

KATE

(*Kissing KATE*) And how are we this glorious morning?

MICHAEL

KATE

We? We you say? Well I can't be speaking for you, but I am fine. Except for a pain in my ass which is a pain in my ass.

MICHAEL

Mrs. Higgs!

KATE

Fiona Kennealy, this jumble of hair and energy is Michael Sean Mahoney. This is Mrs. Kennealy, the new mistress of the house.

MICHAEL

So you're actually selling the old girl?

KATE

That I am.

MICHAEL

(*To FIONA*) A pleasure to meet you, ma'am.

FIONA

Michael.

KATE

And have you brought everything today? You'll have to watch this one. You'll tell him what it is you'll be needing the next day, and when that next day comes....

MICHAEL

Now, now. I've brought everything you've wanted.

MICHAEL gets two bags from the bicycle.

KATE

(*To FIONA*) Michael does odd jobs, as necessary, for me. And for you as well.

FIONA

(*Amused*) And have I any say in the matter?

KATE

Not with a child on the way.

MICHAEL

(*Shows one bag, then the next*) Bread. Meat from Mr. O'Hanlon.

KATE

Well don't stand there lad, take them inside! Do I pay you to stand and visit?

MICHAEL

(Playfully) For what you pay me—

KATE

(Bustling him off) Now enough of that –

MICHAEL

Yes ma'am.

MICHAEL exits into the pub.

KATE

(Calling after) And don't be forgetting to clean the extra glass. We'll be having the Saturday night regulars tonight. *(To Fiona)* He's a local boy. Too young for the war, thank God. And good as gold. Honest as the day is long and willing to do anything you might need. *(A crash is heard inside)* Good Lord! What are you doing, dancing with the devil? *(Exits inside)*

FIONA

(Sits again and talks to her belly) Well James Patrick Kennealy, for I refuse to believe your father's first born will be a girl, welcome to your home. May God bless it and all who will come to dwell therein. May it be for you the home I never truly had.

MICHAEL

(Enters to shouts from KATE) Our daily ritual. A bit of shouting—bluster and bravado to prove she's still alive and important.

FIONA

Ah.

MICHAEL

I live down the road a ways, with my parents and sister. My brother Colm is in Jerusalem. I do what needs doing around here, to keep the place.

FIONA

And would you be willing to continue on?

MICHAEL

If you like. She's a grand old lady. She just doesn't like anyone knowing about it.

FIONA

How long have you worked for her?

MICHAEL

As long as I could ride my bicycle. I'm not sure she needed me then. But times was hard for us and Da needed money. So suddenly, here I was working for Mrs. Higgs.

FIONA

I'm sure she appreciates your efforts.

MICHAEL

At first, yes. Now, yes. But there were times when she couldn't afford to keep paying me. I'm not certain she can now. Ever since this bloody war—

FIONA

Language!

MICHAEL

Oh. Sorry. Ever since this war began business is down. She used to be full every evening. The local you know. Packed to the gunnels. Then later, just Fridays and Saturdays. Many of the young men volunteered and were taken off—many more than in other parts of the country. Girls won't be going out without their men. And those people who remained thought it best to save what my Da calls "their meager wages" rather than have a night's entertainment.

FIONA

And now?

MICHAEL

Now things are all right. There's enough business to keep her going. A new field office on the other side of town. *(Pause)* You're with child?

FIONA

That I am.

MICHAEL

And the father?

FIONA

Brendan. Off to the war. Volunteered.

MICHAEL

That's good.

FIONA

Glad you approve.

MICHAEL

I'm sorry. I didn't mean... I just think the more of our lads we have in the fighting – like your Brendan and my brother Colm – the better. They say it should all end soon.

FIONA

So everyone tells me.

MICHAEL

They should be home soon. Maybe in time to cut the cord.

FIONA

We can hope.

MICHAEL

Do you know where he's stationed?

FIONA

He's at a place called the Somme.

MICHAEL

That would make him part of the 10th or 16th. Do you know which?

FIONA

The 10th I believe.

MICHAEL

My mate Connor – from in town – he's a bit older than me. He's in the 10th.

FIONA

Perhaps they'll get together. Talk about us here at home.

*BRIANNA BLY, a girl of 16 and
housekeeper at the Pub, enters*

BRIANNA

(As she enters) Talking up the guests again, Mahoney?

MICHAEL

(Surprised) No, I was just—

BRIANNA

Do you think I'm of a mind to be listening to excuses?

MICHAEL

But you don't—

BRIANNA

I don't need to be hearing. Have you work to be doing?

MICHAEL

Yes, but—

BRIANNA

Then you'd best be doing it!

KATE

(Entering) Ah good. As you're still here, could you be taking a look at the window in the rear? It seems it won't open. We'll have no fresh air. No ventilation.

MICHAEL

(Exiting) Well, let's have a good look at it, eh?

KATE

I see you've met the new owner, Brianna.

BRIANNA

The new...?

FIONA

Aye.

BRIANNA

(Offering her hand) Brianna Bly. A pleasure making your acquaintance. *(After a moment)* Will you be keeping me on? There's much to do, day and night. My father and uncle play on Saturdays. I know who pays and who's on the tick. Who's like to do a legger.

KATE

Enough, child. Now, upstairs, if you've a mind. Those rooms won't be straightening themselves.

BRIANNA

Yes ma'am. A pleasure, as I said, Mrs....

FIONA

Kennealy.

BRIANNA

Mrs. Kennealy. *(Exits)*

KATE

(Calling after) There's the wash to be hanging as well!

BRIANNA

(From inside) Yes, ma'am.

KATE

(Sitting, indicating BRIANNA) There's a bit of the spirit for you.

FIONA

She certainly gave Michael his marching orders.

KATE

Those two. Always at each other. They fight like brother and sister.

FIONA

But they're not related.

KATE

Not at the moment.

FIONA

Sorry?

KATE

I predict one day they'll be sharing more than mere workplace. They'll be sharing a family.

FIONA

A family? Those two?

KATE

Indeed.

FIONA

She hardly let him have a word –

KATE

And he enjoyed every moment of it, did he not?

FIONA

That he did, I must admit. But those two? Is she not a bit old, a bit mature, for the boy?

KATE

Today yes. Three years. But three years grow quite small as one grows older. In no time at all, that difference will be of no concern.

FIONA

Perhaps you're right.

KATE

With this God-forsaken war going on and on, year after year, a man such as Michael may be in demand. Are we not hearing, day after day, of losses of our Irish lads at the front?

FIONA reacts painfully. BRIANNA enters with the washing.

KATE, *Continued*

Before you'll be hanging that laundry, would you be getting me a glass of water?

BRIANNA

(Putting laundry down) Of course, Katie.

KATE

And you, Mrs. Kennealy? A water?

FIONA

Please.

BRIANNA exits inside

KATE

I'm sorry. I shouldn't have mentioned... I blather. I'm sorry. Tell me about your husband.

FIONA

Brendan? What would you have me say?

KATE

Well I don't know, woman. How did you meet?

FIONA

In Dublin. In a pub. So you see... *(Indicates the Pub)* He was there with his mates, focused upon a bracing dart match. Round the clock I believe it was. I was visiting friends of my parents. Ciara, their daughter, and I had walked the Liffey and had stopped in for something cool to drink. It'd been hot as Hades all day, and even late in the evening Lucifer was still stoking the fires.

KATE

And how did you end up together?

FIONA

Ciara.

KATE

Ciara?

FIONA

Aye. She fainted from the heat. Brendan was magnificent. He scooped her up. Took her outside. He tended to her as no man I had ever seen tend to a woman. He gathered water. Cooled her temples. Washed her face. Kept her company until all the effects had completely worn off. Then he returned her to me.

KATE

It sounds as if he paid you little mind.

FIONA

True. That evening. And I certainly had more than enough attention from his mates. All hanging upon me, making sure I was all right. They were nice enough lads, but not a one could measure up to Brendan.

KATE

But how did you come to know him, if he was out caring for your friend Ciara?

FIONA

I did not. Not that evening. But the next night, Brendan came to see me. On the pretext of checking upon Ciara,

KATE

Of course.

BRIANNA

(Enters) Two glasses.

KATE

Thank you, darling.

BRIANNA

Michael seems to be having little luck with that window.

KATE

(Rising) Perhaps I should—

BRIANNA

(Pushing her back down) Perhaps you should remain sitting. There's little you can do to help. And even if there were, Michael would take it as an affront to his manhood.

KATE

God forbid!

BRIANNA

So just you be sitting and giving yourself a moment's rest.

FIONA

Yes, Kate, please.

KATE

Well... if the both of you insist.

BRIANNA goes back to the wash and takes it off.

FIONA

(After a moment) And you, Mrs. Higgs? What about you?

KATE

Me?

FIONA

How did you come to be the proprietor of this “old girl” as you call her?

KATE

That was my husband’s doing. I had nothing to do with it. Patrick, my husband, was sure this would put us “on the road to riches“, as he called it. Our “little pot of gold” he’d say. Some pot.

FIONA

And your husband, Patrick?

KATE

Died.

FIONA

I’m sorry.

KATE

I’m not. *(Realizes what she said)* No, that’s not what I mean. Meant. I mean there is no need to feel sorry. He was some twenty years older than I. It was to be expected.

FIONA

Twenty years!

KATE

Twenty two to be exact.

FIONA

And were you never... concerned... about the age difference?

KATE

Aye. But when loves strikes your eye, all other visions become cloudy.

FIONA

Mmm. How long were you married?

KATE

Married 25 years. Together 27. The finest 27 years a woman could desire or deserve.

FIONA

And since his passing?

KATE

Life goes on. It must go on. I tell you, it is a lonely washing that has no man's shirt in it. Now it's only the Pub and my flowers that are my life.

FIONA

Do you like flowers as well? Sometimes I feel as if I'm a slave to their beauty.

KATE

"Flowers seem intended for the solace of ordinary humanity."

FIONA

Ruskin?

KATE

Aye. Flowers may have no soul, but they certainly breathe life. Their art, their beauty, indeed suggests the wisdom and workmanship of God.

FIONA

Have you never wanted to move to be near your children?

KATE

I might have, had any stayed close. But America, no. And I've no taste for Kilkenny.

FIONA

I'm sorry. I just assumed.

KATE

Mmm. Here in this "booming metropolis", what else is there to be doing, eh, but looking after the grand-kids?

FIONA

I didn't mean—

KATE

Don't you be worrying yourself. It does seem the natural thing. It just never was to be.

A loud crash is heard inside

KATE/FIONA

(Overlapping) That would be Michael, looking for attention./ Good Lord, are you all right?

The WOMEN run into the house. After a moment, an older man, RYAN, enters. He looks around a bit. BRIANNA reenters with the empty laundry basket.

RYAN

Pardon, young woman. Is this the Higgs Pub?

BRIANNA

That it is, sir.

RYAN

Are there any other establishments nearby?

BRIANNA

None. Perhaps if you're wanting—

RYAN

This may do. May have to do. For a brief while.

BRIANNA

A brief while?

RYAN

It is not in my nature to be staying any one place too long.

BRIANNA

And why is that?

RYAN

I paint. I am an artist. I go where the light leads me.

BRIANNA

A painter! Might I have seen any of your paintings?

RYAN

No.

BRIANNA

No need to get high and mighty about it.

RYAN

No, I only mean it is unlikely. I paint for private collectors. My work is almost never on display.

BRIANNA

Oh. Sad.

RYAN

Why?

BRIANNA

I equate art with eternal truths, beauty. And beauty should be for all to see, not hidden in the recesses of some rich man's home.

RYAN

Interesting. Would rooms currently be available to let?

BRIANNA

Rooms? How many of you are there?

RYAN

Just the one.

BRIANNA

And how many rooms does an artist need?

RYAN

Just the one. Has anyone ever told you you're an exasperating woman?

BRIANNA

It's been suggested. As to the room, I imagine there is one free. But you'll have to be asking the proprietress.

RYAN

Then I shall be needing the proprietress.

BRIANNA

Of course. Do come this way. *(She leads him in)* If there's one thing we have it's an abundance – an overabundance – of proprietresses.

RYAN

Sorry?

BRIANNA

Let me explain...

END OF SCENE ONE

ACT I: SCENE TWO

SETTING: *The Pub. A late, cool spring, 1945. Little has changed physically since scene one. A new Pub sign hangs in the place of the previous one. Otherwise no changes are apparent.*

AT RISE: *RYAN, aged, is setting up an easel by the bench. MICHAEL, now 40, is helping him.*

RYAN

I am not at all convinced that this is a good idea.

MICHAEL

This, my dear Ryan, is a superb idea.

RYAN

And what if she should change her mind once again and decides not to sit for me?

MICHAEL

(Placing chair downstage) She'll sit. I'm sure.

RYAN

And how can you be so certain?

MICHAEL

Because I told her she would be doing it for you.

RYAN

For me?

MICHAEL

That you needed to get your artistic juices flowing once again.

RYAN

Juices? Really!

MICHAEL

And if we were to be totally honest, this is for you as well. When was the last time you had a commission?

RYAN

It's the damned bloody war. The Western Front. The Mediterranean. The East. Fecking Carpet Chewer. Who thinks of art when tomorrow all we know, all we love, may no longer exist?

MICHAEL

Enough of that! This must be a joyous moment. For Fiona. She can't go on like this. To have lost Brendan, so close to war's end, in a forlorn field somewhere in France. Yet on she soldiered. Always caring. Always doing for others - for us. And now this.

BRIANNA rolls KATE on in a wheel chair. Age has taken its toll on KATE

BRIANNA

And here we are once again.

MICHAEL

(Crossing to BRIANNA) Anything? *(He kisses her)*

BRIANNA

She seems to brighten – seeing people out and about – especially children. Then something reminds her of the war – which war God only knows – and she's off again.

MICHAEL

And this time?

BRIANNA

The Walton boy. Home again, but with so many injuries he'll never be the same again.

KATE

Will any of us be?

FIONA enters from the Pub. She has aged, but not gracefully.

MICHAEL

And here she is! Right on ...

FIONA

Damn that Mr. Churchill. Telling us again how we need to send more of our Irish lads to fight "the good fight." Says it's our patriotic duty. I'll tell you what you can do with your duty. Haven't we done enough?

MICHAEL

(Calming her) You'll not be winning any converts here, Fiona. Why not be giving it a rest? It's time to sit for Ryan, here, and to be showing us that glamorous self of yours.

FIONA

Oh Michael, really!

BRIANNA

He's right you know. What a fit subject for immortality you are!

FIONA

Immortality.

MICHAEL

So, Ryan, what is it we do? Tell us.

RYAN

Very well (*Rising*) You, Mrs. Kennealy, if you would sit there. (*She sits downstage*) Facing, perhaps, a bit more (*Adjusting head*) in this direction.

FIONA

I'm not really certain—

BRIANNA

Fiona, really, you're the ideal model. Grace, beauty, determination.

FIONA

Sags, bags, wrinkles.

MICHAEL

Now no more of that. You are about to be given to the ages.

FIONA

And should the ages not want such a gift?

MICHAEL

You are about to be given to the ages in the work of one of the Emerald Isles most celebrated artists! Is that not right Ryan?

RYAN

Celebrated? Oh yes, indeed. Now, if you please, we must be starting. Good light and all. All of you not vital to the work of creation, off. Off.

MICHAEL

Very well.

BRIANNA

We're leaving.

MICHAEL and BRIANNA exit into the Pub.

FIONA

(*Rising*) I'm sorry, but I'm not really certain –

RYAN

Mrs. Kennealy – Fiona – Please. Please sit. It is a lovely day —the light, the landscape. Everything is perfect.

FIONA

But I am not.

KATE

Fiona.

FIONA

Yes Katie? (*Crosses to her*)

KATE

Where is James? Where has that lovely son of yours gotten to?

FIONA

He's not here Katie.

KATE

Yes, but where is he? He always brought me –

RYAN

He no longer lives here, Mrs. Higgs.

KATE

He no longer...?

RYAN

He isn't here Mrs. Higgs.

KATE

I don't understand.

FIONA

He's dead, Katie. Dead.

KATE

Dead? But...

FIONA

He died in the Ardennes. The Battle of the Bulge they called it. He's been dead some time now.

KATE

But I don't... I...

RYAN

Mrs. Kennealy, if you would rather not –

FIONA

No. I think I would like to sit. Here. Now. In this lovely light, before this lovely landscape. My moment with immortality. I'd like that. If you're still willing.

RYAN

Of course. Please.

HE helps her sit, then sits himself at his easel.

FIONA

So how is this done, exactly?

RYAN

Done?

FIONA

This sitting... what does one do? Other than sit.

RYAN

What would you like to do?

FIONA

You misconstrue my intent. What is it that people do? To keep... occupied.

RYAN

Ah, I see. Some read, some attempt crosswords. Some drink. Others just talk.

FIONA

Talk. Yes, I like that. May I talk?

RYAN

Anything you wish.

FIONA

(Rises, gets a small table with flowers for potting on it) And while I talk, these beauties shall be given new hope for a new life. A better life. *(Sits and begins potting)* I have a request, however. A demand, actually.

RYAN

A demand?

FIONA

That you listen. Only listen. Or don't listen for that matter, it matters not. But don't converse. No questions. No responses.

RYAN

(Thinks a moment) If you wish.

FIONA

Very well. Shall we begin? *(He does not answer)* Oh, you've begun. I see. Thank you.

RYAN

(Nods, then) Am I permitted to nod? Oh, sorry.

FIONA

A single indiscretion. And yes, you may nod. *(He does so)*

FIONA takes a long moment to consider her surroundings

FIONA

What does one talk about in moments like this? Not that you can – or should – tell me. I can just imagine what you should like to hear. Well, no I can't actually. *(Pause)* Have you ever been tired, truly tired Ryan? You know, I don't even know if Ryan is your Christian or family name. Not that it matters, I suppose. For the past quarter century you've simply been Ryan. So many things have changed. So many people have come and gone. You've been a steady and reliable part of our lives here. For that we owe you our thanks. Thank you, Ryan. *(HE nods)* There is much beauty here – in this world. *(Considers a flower)* Why must it be associated with so much pain? Suffering? Loss. When Brendan was lost – lost, it sounds so innocent, so full of the possibility of being found once again – when Brendan passed I thought I might die. Should die. But the days passed. Seasons changed. Spring returned I found. Returned with new life. And somehow life went on. I don't remember how.

RYAN

Fiona.

FIONA

(Stopping him by raising just one finger) Then there was James. Ever smiling James. Ever joyous James. As a babe, a child, a teen. James who you helped bring into this world, took to school, taught to fly fish. James, whose loss affected you as much – perhaps more – than it did me. We never really talked of it, you and I. For that I owe you an apology, Ryan. Apologies.

RYAN

None are needed.

FIONA

What was it we were talking about? Or, not talking about? Ah...tired. Truly tired. Of this life. Have you ever contemplated visiting the sea? High on the cliffs, taking in all that beauty, and then simply ending life? Before the joy of the moment could change to sorrow as so many moments have done?

RYAN

Fiona...

FIONA

No, don't go worrying yourself. I'm not mad, nor suicidal. Though that thought does not repulse me as one might expect. As I expected. My saints, I do ramble on, don't I?

MICHAEL

(Entering with BRIANNA) Fiona, Paddy just came round the rear. Pardon, Ryan. *(RYAN nods)* He wanted to know if you'll be wanting the band for the season, as before.

FIONA

The band? Of course. Life goes on! The summer will bring back the crowds, you'll see.

MICHAEL

So I told him.

FIONA

Thank you, Michael. As I have you all here, I should tell you – this morning – I've received a notice.

MICHAEL

A notice?

FIONA

From Belgium. From Angelique Kennealy.

MICHAEL

Angelique?

FIONA

James' wife. She's coming. Here.

BRIANNA

Angelique is coming?

FIONA

The wording was odd. Arriving shortly. No greeting. No discussion. Just arriving.

MICHAEL

Angelique.

BRIANNA

We've never met James' wife.

FIONA

They married quickly. In haste, as they say. A wartime wedding they called it.

BRIANNA

How exciting, Fiona.

FIONA

For whom?

BRIANNA

Why for you, Fiona. For us.

MICHAEL

For all of us.

FIONA

Is it now? Why?

BRIANNA

How can you ask such a question?

FIONA

I know nothing of the woman.

MICHAEL

Fiona, she's James' wife.

FIONA

Not to me. To me she is only a photograph. Worn. Tired. Hard to distinguish. I know nothing of the woman.

BRIANNA

She was the love of your son's life. What more need you know?

FIONA

Much more. More. More that could be shared between family... those who shared the loss, and pain of loss, together. It has been some time since James was killed. Have we seen or heard from the woman? No.

RYAN

Fiona—

FIONA

(Raising one finger again) No.

MICHAEL

Fiona, there's a war on.

FIONA

Don't I know it. It seems there's always a war on, doesn't it?

BRIANNA

Are you saying you don't want to see her, Fiona?

FIONA

I don't know what I'm saying. Or why I'm saying it. I just know it needed saying.

*A knocking at the rear door offstage
sends BRIANNA in to answer it.*

MICHAEL

And if she should come?

FIONA

Then she will be here. Won't she? Though how she will be traveling our troubled straits, I've not a clue.

MICHAEL

And how would you have us treat her?

FIONA

Treat her? As we would treat any other guest.

RYAN

But she is not any other guest.

FIONA

What would you have me do?

RYAN

Welcome her.

FIONA

All are welcome here. Hospitality is our business. Our calling. And being Irish—

MICHAEL

That's not what he means and you know it.

RYAN

Fiona, she is a member of your family.

FIONA

(Almost silently) Families seem to die quickly. Too quickly. Faster than flowers in foreign soil.

RYAN

Is that what this is about? Death? Are you afraid of death?

FIONA

I have never been afraid of death. I live with it constantly. Incessantly.

RYAN

Fiona, this is not about death. But life. It is a new bit of life, James's life, which will bless us with joy, not sorrow.

FIONA

You should have been a curate.

RYAN

And how do you know that I wasn't?

FIONA

I've heard words escaping that mouth of yours no man of the cloth—

RYAN

Oh, enough with you now. And you've a very narrow view of the Priesthood. The holy men I have known have been—

FIONA

Agh – as you just said – enough with you now.

BRIANNA

(Reenters) She's here.

MICHAEL

Here? Angelique is here?

BRIANNA

Yes. And no.

MICHAEL

And what does that mean? You haven't left her sitting all alone in the Pub, have you?

BRIANNA

She'll be fine for the moment.

MICHAEL

Fine for the moment! *(Exits into the Pub)*

RYAN

Fiona, this child is a part of your life. Of James. Show her the amazing woman we all know, admire, and love.

FIONA

Ah, the blarney! Very well, bring the child out. Let us give her the welcome she deserves.

MICHAEL enters, carrying an infant in his arms. He seems transfixed.

FIONA

Michael, what are you... What is this?

RYAN

Have we gained not one new member of the Kennealy clan but two?

MICHAEL

No, we've but one. A frail woman, speaking no English, placed the babe in Brianna's arms and ran off before we truly knew what was happening.

FIONA

I don't understand.

BRIANNA

(Huddling with the child and MICHAEL) Allow me to introduce Angelique Kennealy.

FIONA

But it is James' wife that is named –

MICHAEL

Angelique. Yes.

BRIANNA

This babe is named Angelique as well. A name bestowed upon her by her father.

MICHAEL

It is all in the note. *(Takes a note from his pocket)*

FIONA

A note. This is all a bit too theatrical for my taste. Where is Angelique? The mother.

MICHAEL

There is no other. The note will explain.

MICHAEL gives the note to BRIANNA, who gives it to FIONA. BRIANNA then hurriedly returns to MICHAEL.

FIONA

I've not my reading glasses. Could you read it for me please?

Neither BRIANNA nor MICHAEL moves toward the note. After a moment, RYAN takes the note and begins to read.

RYAN

"Greetings. My name is Michelle Bonnet. I must begin by apologizing for the nature of this message, and for the... surprise that accompanies it. I can imagine the astonishment it must surely bring. The shock, the suddenness."

FIONA

Does she speak only in riddles? What does the woman mean?

RYAN

I'm sorry. I am translating as best I can.

FIONA

No. It is I who should be sorry. Please continue.

RYAN

"The bundle of wonder and marvel you have received, Angelique Evonne Kennealy, I have sent to you – her only living relative. Or the only one of which I know."

FIONA

Only relative?

BRIANNA

Fiona, please...

RYAN

"Angelique Yvette Kennealy, her mother, wife of James Kennealy, lost in this great never ending war, is no longer of this earth. She has gone to meet James and her Maker in a land much better than this. The circumstances of her death I shall not relate. They are too..." I can't make out the word. "Know only that she died after much suffering. In life due to the loss of the man she adored, as well as in death. It is my hope her child can be provided some happiness. That you can be a source of joy in a life that has known little of it." There is what seems to be some legal language. She concludes "I am sorry I shall not be able to provide you any additional information about Angelique. Our village has been destroyed. Our house, and Angelique's, is but a shell. My husband and I shall be moving. Where we do not know. I wish you may find in Angelique some small bit of her father. I regret he never knew her. He would have adored her."

FIONA

Never knew her?

BRIANNA

It seems Angelique was pregnant with little Angelique when James was killed.

FIONA

And so it continues... it goes on and on.

RYAN

Fiona if you would rather... There are homes for children such as...

FIONA

A home? For James' daughter? Never. *(She rises)*

MICHAEL

Fiona, are you sure.

FIONA

(Crossing to Pub) I've never been more certain.

BRIANNA

We'll be needing diapers.

FIONA

Oh child, and so much more.

*All but KATE and RYAN enter the Pub.
KATE looks out over the horizon.*

RYAN

(Putting his tools away) Enough for one day. Life, it seems, takes precedence over art. Sacrilege! No, I imagine it's as it should be. It is a shame, though. Beautiful day.

RYAN exits as well.

KATE

Yet another day.

MICHAEL

(Reenters) Would you like to be coming in Katie?

KATE

(Shakes her head no; MICHAEL exits) When there's so much beauty in the world?

END ACT ONE

ACT II: SCENE ONE

SETTING: 1966. Another new, bright Pub sign is discovered, along with several new strings of lights radiating out from the establishment. It is evening, a sunset transitioning to dusk and then dark.

AT RISE: *ANGELIQUE* is on the bench sipping tea and reading a pamphlet. A small transistor radio plays the end of *The Beatles* "Yesterday." This is followed by a news report saying "In further news, US President Johnson today announced a new deployment of men to Vietnam. This escalation is..." *ANGELIQUE* turns off the radio.

ANGELIQUE

Deployment. Escalation. Not at all dangerous are they?

BRIANNA enters from the Pub, carrying a cardigan sweater.

BRIANNA

Are you not a bit cold, Angelique?

ANGELIQUE

Cold? No. A bit chilly.

BRIANNA

Would you be liking a sweater then?

ANGELIQUE

That would be nice.

BRIANNA

(Putting the sweater on her) We can't be having you catching a chill.

She sits next to her.

ANGELIQUE

Is Michael feeling any better?

BRIANNA

It's just a bit of the rheumatism. The old goat still believes he's young and healthy.

ANGELIQUE

Well, he's young at heart.

BRIANNA

A lot of good that will do his legs. *(The two stare out for a while)* These lights truly do make quite a difference, don't they?

ANGELIQUE

(Nods) Mmmn.

BRIANNA

It's still a bit early, but when the season finally arrives, when it's warm enough to sit out here and enjoy the evening, it'll be wonderful.

ANGELIQUE

I imagine.

BRIANNA

And what is it you're reading?

ANGELIQUE

Something from a group called the Cork Vietnamese Freedom Association. It came in the mail for Fiona.

BRIANNA

All the way from Cork?

ANGELIQUE

Apparently.

MICHAEL

(Entering from the Pub with a cane) So there you are! I was wondering where the two of you had gotten to.

ANGELIQUE

(Rising) Here, take my seat, Michael, please.

MICHAEL

No need.

ANGELIQUE

No, really. I've been sitting much too long anyway.

MICHAEL

I think I'd rather be standing a while if you don't mind... Get a bit of exercise for these old legs.

ANGELIQUE sits again

BRIANNA

Did you finish the paper then?

MICHAEL

I did. Same news. The same old news. The Viet Cong. The DMZ. What a misappropriation of terminology. It's appalling. But enough about the troubles. What were you two discussing when I interrupted you?

BRIANNA

Nothing.

MICHAEL

Ah, feminine things. Enough said.

BRIANNA

No, not feminine things, Mr. Wiseacre.

MICHAEL

So what then?

BRIANNA

The Cork Freedom Association if you must know.

MICHAEL

The pacifist organization?

BRIANNA

The same.

MICHAEL

Why, in Heaven's name?

ANGELIQUE

This flyer. It came in the post. For Fiona.

MICHAEL

Say no more. If it is pacifist, it's for Fiona.

BRIANNA

Can you be blaming her? After all she endured?

MICHAEL

Not at all. Not at all.

*ANGELIQUE rises and crosses down;
looks out.*

ANGELIQUE

(Changing the subject) The new construction seems to be progressing.

MICHAEL

Aye.

ANGELIQUE

Soon we'll no longer be able to call ourselves a village. We'll be a small city.

MICHAEL

Not so small.

BRIANNA

A metropolis.

ANGELIQUE/ MICHAEL

God forbid!

BRIANNA

It could be for the better. New shops. New business. A bit of culture. Museums. Or galleries.

MICHAEL

Ryan would have liked that. God rest his soul.

BRIANNA.

Ryan, aye. Our perpetual guest.

MICHAEL

Our perpetual friend.

ANGELIQUE

I think I'll have a bit more tea. Would either of you care for some??

MICHAEL

No, thank you.

BRIANNA

Yes, actually. Please.

ANGELIQUE

Something a bit stronger, Michael? A half-un?

MICHAEL
Too early.

ANGELIQUE
I'll be but a moment. (*Exits into Pub*)

MICHAEL
How is she?

BRIANNA
(*Rising*) Fine, I think.

MICHAEL
Has she said anything?

BRIANNA
(*Crossing to him*) She's said many things.

MICHAEL
You know what I mean, woman!

BRIANNA
I do. And no, she has not.

MICHAEL
Is that healthy, do you think? Avoiding it?

BRIANNA
We all cope in our own ways.

MICHAEL
Perhaps. I think I might be sitting down after all.

BRIANNA
(*Helping him to the bench*) I knew it! You've been doing too much. Straining yourself.

MICHAEL
Ah, go on with you, I'm not dead yet.

BRIANNA
And would you be seeking to hurry that along? Are you wishing to make me a widow?

MICHAEL
(*Joking*) Will you be continuing to yell at me like this?

BRIANNA
(*Having gotten him seated*) There.

MICHAEL

Thank you.

BRIANNA

You're most welcome, Mr. Michael Sean Mahoney (*Kisses him*)

MICHAEL

(*Turns on the radio. "Turn, Turn, Turn" by The Byrds begins*) So she's not spoken of her plans for the future either?

BRIANNA

No. I imagine she thinks she cannot speak of the one without bringing up the other.

MICHAEL

Perhaps.

BRIANNA

And you're certainly not to bring it up – nor do or say anything that would force the poor girl to bring it up.

MICHAEL

(*Saluting*) Yes, Captain! My Captain.

BRIANNA

Hush, now.

ANGELIQUE

(*Reenters*) Your tea, madam.

BRIANNA

Why thank you, miss.

ANGELIQUE

A pleasure.

BRIANNA

Tip the lady my dear.

MICHAEL

Ti... what?

BRIANNA

Give the young lady a tip!

MICHAEL

A tip? Of all the... (*Sees he must go along with the foolishness*) Never wager against Arkle!
(*Gives BRIANNA a "so there" look*)

ANGELIQUE

I imagine it's time we discussed Fiona.

BRIANNA

Only if you wish to.

ANGELIQUE

I think I need to. We need to.

MICHAEL

(Turns radio off) It certainly was a shock.

ANGELIQUE

Was it? Should it have been?

BRIANNA

I could never imagine... What was she doing?

ANGELIQUE

We may never truly know. I remember exactly the day...

MICHAEL

(Rising) Won't you be sitting, Angelique?

ANGELIQUE

Michael, your knees.

MICHAEL

Standing or sitting it matters not, they give me troubles. I don't think it's the position so much as the remaining in any one position for too long, sitting or standing. Now please sit. Enjoy your tea.

ANGELIQUE

(Sits) Thank you, Michael.

BRIANNA

You'd best be getting yourself a jacket, darling. It's getting a bit nippy.

MICHAEL

Yes, mother. *(Exits)*

ANGELIQUE

That is a fine man you've got there.

BRIANNA

And don't I know it. Unfortunately, so does he, the bugger.

ANGELIQUE

I had hoped we might have a word alone. Without Michael.

BRIANNA

Without Michael?

ANGELIQUE

Aye. How is he bearing up?

BRIANNA

Michael? Bearing up? As well as can be expected, I imagine. Why?

ANGELIQUE

I always thought Michael was closer to Fiona than either you or I.

BRIANNA

Yes.

ANGELIQUE

Then he's sure to take her death harder than we.

BRIANNA

He once told me he felt a special bond with Fiona. One he had felt since they first met when he was a lad of 12, delivering groceries for the Shaughnessy brothers.

ANGELIQUE

Then we must make certain of his well-being during this time.

MICHAEL

(Reenters) Plotting your womanly ways once again?

BRIANNA

Ah now you've caught us. It's all we women do, don't you know that?

MICHAEL

I have had my suspicions.

ANGELIQUE

What is it you've brought with you?

MICHAEL

Photos. I've kept a box since I was young.

BRIANNA

I didn't know that.

MICHAEL

Well the saints preserve us! The missus Mahoney can still be surprised.

BRIANNA

Ah go on with you now.

MICHAEL

I thought we might share them. Remember.

ANGELIQUE

What a lovely thought, Michael.

BRIANNA

Yes Michael, lovely.

ANGELIQUE

So what have you all in there?

MICHAEL

All sorts of pictures. Different occasions. Holidays. Here is one of all of us. Last Easter.

BRIANNA

A damned cold day it was.

ANGELIQUE

But you'd never know it to look at the picture. All these bright, happy faces.

BRIANNA

Frozen in a perpetual smile.

MICHAEL

Here is an old one of Fiona and I taken... oh I'd say just after we'd met. I think Kate took that picture.

ANGELIQUE

Kate. I wish I could have gotten to know her. I know only the stories.

MICHAEL

She died shortly after you'd arrived from Belgium. You would have liked her – and she you.

BRIANNA

She was a force of a woman, a force of nature—at least until the years took their toll.

MICHAEL

And here is one of the missus in a two piece swimming suit. A bikini I think they call it?

BRIANNA

(Grabbing the photo) I'll be taking that, thank you very much.

MICHAEL

(To ANGELIQUE) There are several here of you and Fiona—when you were a child, at your catechism.

ANGELIQUE

Fiona. May you live forever in our hearts and minds. *(Pause)* Do you think she enjoyed her life here? I mean truly enjoyed her life? So much happened to bring her sorrow and pain.

BRIANNA

So much occurred to bring her happiness as well.

MICHAEL

Your arrival, for example.

ANGELIQUE

I'm not sure I brought—

MICHAEL

I'm sure.

BRIANNA

We're sure.

ANGELIQUE

(Smiles, then) On the day she... When I last saw Fiona she was watching the telly, listening to the morning's news. A report came on – about Vietnam – the war and the like. Commentators discussed Ireland's choice to remain neutral, unlike the North which took part with the United Kingdom. They told of some Irish who had become United States citizens in order to fight, while others fought with the Aussies. "Eejits" she called them. "They does my head in." Then some radical priest, I don't recall his name, presented his reasons why it was imperative that the nation join in the war. How the Good Lord demanded it. He went on and on. Finally Fiona stood up, literally kicked the "blasted box" as she called it, and stormed out.

MICHAEL

She did have a bit of a temper that one.

BRIANNA

A bit of a temper! She'd run amok if given the chance.

ANGELIQUE

When I was going to town later that morning, I saw Fiona again. Outside, in the garden. She had pulled each and every one of her sunflowers from the ground.

MICHAEL

Her sunflowers? Is that why they're gone?

BRIANNA

But she adored those plants. She gave them more attention than most would give their children.

ANGELIQUE

When I asked her why, she just said "It is time." Then she told me she was going out for the day. Taking a day for herself, she said. I asked where she was going and she said she wasn't quite sure. Thought it would be best to go where the winds took her. I suggested a quick trip to Dublin, just to watch the Jackeens, but she said no. No plans. She'd had enough. I thought she meant enough of plans.

BRIANNA

You couldn't have known. No one could.

ANGELIQUE

I suppose. But what was she doing there, of all places? The sea is so far away. I thought she'd be visiting the local galleries, or the gardens. Maybe an afternoon tea at one of the shops. Nothing more. Certainly not Howth.

MICHAEL

I remember her talking of going to Howth to see the sun rise over Lambay Island as a girl.

ANGELIQUE

So you think she went there to – ?

MICHAEL

I don't know. She'd told many stories.

ANGELIQUE

I've never been. What's it like?

BRIANNA

Beautiful. Picturesque they call it. The lighthouse at Green Bayley. The sea, as tempestuous as we Irish ourselves. Birds... constant chatter, wings flying everywhere. Mr. Barrie said the reason birds can fly and we can't is simply because they have perfect faith, for to have faith is to have wings.

MICHAEL

Yeats spent much of his childhood above those cliffs.

BRIANNA

It's a bit of a climb but not difficult, though the footing can be tricky. The path is firm in places, loose gravel in others.

MICHAEL

It would be easy to fall if one wasn't paying attention. Good Lord what an end. What a terrible end.

ANGELIQUE

So you think it was an accident?

MICHAEL

I can't think anything else.

BRIANNA

Can't? Or won't?

MICHAEL

What?

BRIANNA

Is it that you believe that she lost her footing and fell to her end? Or that you dare not believe she might have chosen her end?

MICHAEL

Jeanie Mac! What are you saying?

BRIANNA

What you yourself have been thinking. That the accident was anything but.

ANGELIQUE

You know how recently she had become... agitated... at the very mention of war. Depressed.

MICHAEL

She was hardly depressed.

BRIANNA

Do you mean she didn't sit staring out at nothing at all for hours? That she wasn't found out sitting in the rain? Or the black moods? The turmoil. The look of pain, suffering, loss in her eyes... You yourself saw it.

MICHAEL

What?

BRIANNA

You remarked upon it. That morning she was tending her garden – her sunflowers – when children on their way to school passed. What was it you said?

MICHAEL

What I said?

BRIANNA

You said she smiled – momentarily. But then something changed and she seemed... distraught.

MICHAEL

I really didn't think about it. It was only a passing moment.

ANGELIQUE

I think it was more than that. I think we all believe it was more than that.

MICHAEL

So you think it was...?

ANGELIQUE

War. Again war. Always war. Threatening our lives, our children. First the French in Indochina, now the Americans. Vietnam. The thought of our children, Irish children, again being pulled into battles we had not begun... the horrors... it might have been too much.

BRIANNA

(Changing the subject) We had best be going. The service will be starting.

ANGELIQUE

They'll wait. They'll... see, and wait. We have time yet. *(She exits momentarily)*

MICHAEL

This makes it all the worse. I'm not certain I can....

BRIANNA

You can. And you know you will. You couldn't live with yourself otherwise.

MICHAEL turns on the radio. We hear "And in tonight's news, Vera Brittain publisher of the controversial Letters to Peace Lovers, has been roundly criticized for her opinions on the Allies' conduct of the war, especially the bombing of civilian areas of Germany. She has..." ANGELIQUE enters.

MICHAEL

(Turning it off) Go ahead. Bomb them all! And they'll soon be bombing us! Perhaps if we kill each other this nonsense can end.

ANGELIQUE

Before we go, I must tell you—I've decided to sell the Pub.

Sell the Pub?
MICHAEL

Yes.
ANGELIQUE

You can't.
MICHAEL

Michael.
BRIANNA

It isn't right. Isn't proper. After all Fiona has done for you?
MICHAEL

Michael, please.
BRIANNA

Fiona would not sell the Pub.
MICHAEL

Perhaps not. But Fiona is not here. She's passed. And I am not Fiona.
ANGELIQUE

That much is certain.
MICHAEL

What is it you wish to do, Michael? Hurt me? Shame me?
ANGELIQUE

Remind you. Fiona was as a mother to you.
MICHAEL

Do you think I do not remember it? Do you think there is not a day that passes when I thank both God and Fiona for my life?
ANGELIQUE

Then how can you sell?
MICHAEL

Because this Pub is, was, Fiona's life. The nightly ritual. The coming together, the joining in community that she so loved. The town came alive evenings in this Pub. The Pub was life. Life was the Pub. For Fiona. But not for me. This life... It is not mine. I cannot let it become mine.
ANGELIQUE

BRIANNA

(Comforting Michael) You can understand that, can you not, Michael?

ANGELIQUE

I'm returning to Bruges. To Belgium. I would like to know more of the life I never had a chance to live. About my mother. About her and James, my father. I've received a letter from a Michelle Bonnet. From Antwerp. She says she knew my family.

BRIANNA

It was she who sent you to us.

ANGELIQUE

She thinks she can be of help reuniting me with relatives – admittedly distant ones – should I wish it. I do. I must. You Michael, and you Brianna – and certainly Fiona, God bless and keep her – you've been like family to me.

MICHAEL

(Softly) One does not desert family.

BRIANNA

Michael.

ANGELIQUE

No, one does not. But eventually one must strike out on their own. Make their own way in the world. Which is all that I'm doing. You'll always be family to me.

BRIANNA

And you to us.

ANGELIQUE

(Confessing) Despite all the love I've felt here, I've never really felt I belonged here. . Perhaps in Belgium I can begin to... I don't know...perhaps I'm not... Irish enough? I don't know how to deal with the constant –

MICHAEL

Neither did Fiona, apparently.

ANGELIQUE

Fiona. A solitary woman, running the Pub. Kate before her, single as well. And if all of the tales I was told as a child are true, a Molly and another woman before that. I cannot be another in the line of lonely women, solitary women. I will not be.

BRIANNA

That's understandable, isn't it Michael?

MICHAEL

Yes, of course. Do you truly believe Fiona was lonely?

ANGELIQUE

Not with you and Brianna. No.

BRIANNA

It's hard for a woman alone. For anyone alone.

ANGELIQUE

I hope you'll understand. And forgive me. *(She starts to exit)* It will take some time to arrange the sale. To make arrangements. *(Exits offstage for the funeral)*

MICHAEL

Arrangements.

BRIANNA

Are you all right, Michael?

MICHAEL

Aye... Sell the Pub.

BRIANNA

Hadn't you seen it coming?

MICHAEL

I'd seen... well, I thought she'd...

BRIANNA

This has been like a second home—

MICHAEL

Home.

BRIANNA

A home – for you.

MICHAEL

And for you as well.

BRIANNA

Yes, but in a different way.

MICHAEL

Aye. Things will be... different. Life offers up changes, doesn't she? Changes, for the better or worse.

BRIANNA

Aye.

MICHAEL

Better or worse are determined by what we make of the change presented.

BRIANNA

Where are you going with this?

MICHAEL

I'm just saying... better or worse are ours to determine.

BRIANNA

And this?

MICHAEL

We shall have to see, shan't we?

MICHAEL exits offstage.

BRIANNA

That we shall my love. That we shall.

She follows.

END OF SCENE ONE

ACT II: SCENE TWO

SETTING: One month later.

AT RISE: MICHAEL is on a small step ladder, taking down a string of lights. ANGELIQUE enters from the Pub.

ANGELIQUE

Are you trying to kill yourself man?

MICHAEL

I'll be fine.

ANGELIQUE

Of course you will.

MICHAEL

I've been doing this work since I first came here. I'll be damned if I won't continue until the day I'm forced to leave.

ANGELIQUE

Michael...

MICHAEL

No subtle message intended.

ANGELIQUE

Very well. But did I not tell you to get some help with the more, well, challenging duties?

MICHAEL

That you did.

ANGELIQUE

And?

MICHAEL

That I didn't.

ANGELIQUE

And why didn't you?

MICHAEL

You've no need to be spending your monies on this place – or for me. You'll be needing it all. Back in Belgium.

ANGELIQUE

There's money enough.

MICHAEL

There is never money enough. It's wise to have a bit put aside – for moments of need.

ANGELIQUE

And have you and Brianna put a bit aside? For your moments of need?

MICHAEL

There never seemed to be enough to put aside. Rarely enough to pay the creditors, let alone put any aside.

ANGELIQUE

I can't imagine Fiona ever had much with which to pay you.

MICHAEL

She did what she could. She was a fine woman.

ANGELIQUE

That she was.

MICHAEL

And Kate before her.

ANGELIQUE

As is your Brianna.

MICHAEL

And thank the good Lord for that. I'd be hopeless without her.

BRIANNA

(Enters from offstage) And what makes you think you're not hopeless as you are?

MICHAEL

I stand corrected. I'd be even more hopeless than I am now.

ANGELIQUE

Where've you been, Brianna?

BRIANNA

In town.

MICHAEL

You've been going to town a good deal lately.

BRIANNA

Have you missed me? Can you not do without me?

ANGELIQUE

So he was just saying!

BRIANNA

Really? *(She kisses him)* Well, he's a good bloke.

MICHAEL

Why, thank you madam.

BRIANNA

If a bit daft.

MICHAEL

Ah, now there's the woman I married.

BRIANNA

And now I'll be sitting a moment if you don't mind. *(She sits)*

MICHAEL

Would you be liking something to drink?

BRIANNA

A tea would be perfect.

ANGELIQUE

Permit me. I need to be making a call anyway. *(Exits into Pub)*

MICHAEL

(Sitting as well) Are you all right?

BRIANNA

I'm fine. It's my feet been giving me troubles.

MICHAEL

Again? And yet you're running all over town.

BRIANNA

(Laughs) I hardly run. Not anymore.

MICHAEL

Except perhaps from me.

BRIANNA

Can you be blaming me? Ah, I'd never run from you, my darling. *(Kisses him)*

MICHAEL

You're in a kissing mood today.

BRIANNA

Are you complaining, man?

MICHAEL

No, no. Indeed no. So what have you been up to in town? You've not been shopping. Not if you return with empty arms.

ANGELIQUE

(Reenters) Tea should be but a moment. *(She seems to search the horizon)*

BRIANNA

Are you looking for something, Angelique?

ANGELIQUE

Not exactly. Michael, you haven't seen Quentin Quinn's automobile driving by have you?

MICHAEL

Quinn? The solicitor?

ANGELIQUE

Aye.

MICHAEL

Are you expecting him?

ANGELIQUE

Not expecting. Though he did say he hoped to be coming by today. I telephoned his office, to no avail.

BRIANNA

Perhaps he was out on business.

ANGELIQUE

Perhaps. I think I'll try calling again. *(Exits)*

MICHAEL

You know why she's so anxious.

BRIANNA

One can guess. It doesn't take a genius. The Pub.

MICHAEL

She's found a buyer.

BRIANNA

So it would seem.

MICHAEL

Well, good for her, I say.

BRIANNA

You've changed your tune in the past weeks.

MICHAEL

You were right. It's her life. Not ours. And she has a long life before her.

BRIANNA

You're not planning on departing anytime soon are you?

MICHAEL

And give you the satisfaction of outliving me? Never.

BRIANNA

Good. *(Pause)* What would you do with it?

MICHAEL

What?

BRIANNA

The Pub. What would you do with it if it were yours?

MICHAEL

I've never thought about it.

BRIANNA

Think about it.

MICHAEL

Why should I want to do someth –

BRIANNA

Humor your wife.

MICHAEL

I don't know. Clean up the place, modernize. Brighten it up. Make it attractive to young people perhaps. Make it a place where the young and their children could learn about their past. Our past. Children. I rather like that. Our future.

BRIANNA

And you've not been thinking about it?

MICHAEL

Not really, no.

BRIANNA

I love you, Michael Sean Mahoney.

MICHAEL

Now you're not going to be kissing me again, are you?

BRIANNA

A cross you'll just have to bear. (*Kisses him*) Things will be different. No more bar to tend. Patrons to cajole. No food to cook.

MICHAEL

You'll not be stopping your cooking now will you?

BRIANNA

No darling, but now I be cooking only for you.

MICHAEL

And what better occupation could there be for a loving wife? I'd best be getting back to work. It won't be finishing itself. (*Starts up ladder*)

BRIANNA

You don't have to be doing—

ANGELIQUE

(*Reenters*) Again Michael? Have you a death wish?

MICHAEL

Not at all.

BRIANNA

He says he'll not give me the satisfaction.

ANGELIQUE

I don't follow.

BRIANNA

No matter.

ANGELIQUE

As I'm sure you've surmised, I'm expecting the solicitor Quinn to conclude the sale of the Pub. He's found a buyer.

MICHAEL

(*Coming down again*) A local buyer?

ANGELIQUE

I don't know. One of the conditions of the purchase is the anonymity of the purchaser.

MICHAEL

For what reason?

ANGELIQUE

I don't know. I only know the asking price was met. I expected he might be coming out today to conclude the arrangements.

MICHAEL

Perhaps he's busy and is still on the way.

BRIANNA

I very much doubt it.

MICHAEL

You do? And why are you doubting it, very much?

BRIANNA

Because I know he is not coming.

ANGELIQUE

How do you know that?

BRIANNA

He has no need to come.

ANGELIQUE

No need?

BRIANNA

These are the papers you've been awaiting (*Gives papers to ANGELIQUE*)

MICHAEL

You mean you've had them all the time and made no—

BRIANNA

There seemed no rush.

MICHAEL

No rush, woman? With Angelique waiting on pins and needles?

BRIANNA

She seems no worse for wear.

ANGELIQUE
(Reading) But this says –

BRIANNA
Yes.

ANGELIQUE
You purchased the Pub.

MICHAEL
What?

ANGELIQUE
You're to be the new owner?

BRIANNA
No.

MICHAEL
What do you mean, no? Did you purchase the Pub or not?

This is Not the End of the Play
Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes