AI-Generated Graded Readers
Masaru Uchida, Gifu University

Publication webpage:
https://www1.gifu-u.ac.jp/~masaru/a1/ai-generated_graded_readers.html

Publication date: April 28, 2026

About This Edition

This book is a simplified English adaptation created for extensive reading practice.
The text was generated using ChatGPT and prepared for intermediate English learners as part of an educational project.

Target reading level: CEFR A2-B1

This edition aims to support fluency development through accessible vocabulary, expanded narration, and improved readability while preserving the original story structure.

Content Note

This adaptation is based on a historical literary work. It may contain expressions, attitudes, or depictions that some readers may consider inappropriate or offensive by today's standards. Such elements have been retained or reflected where necessary in order to preserve the historical and literary character of the original work.

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Original work: Dubliners
Author: James Joyce

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James Joyce, *Dubliners* (Simplified Edition, Adapted and Simplified by ChatGPT)

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The Sisters

Part 1

There was no hope for Father Flynn this time. People said he had suffered a third stroke, and everyone knew what that meant. Night after night, during the school holiday, I had passed his house and looked up at the same square of light in the window. The light was always weak and still. I thought that if he was dead, I would see the dark blind and the light of candles behind it, because candles were placed near the head of a dead body.

He had often said to me, “I do not have long to live.” At the time, I had not believed him. Old people often said such things, and I thought he was only speaking sadly. But now his words seemed true. Each night, when I looked up at the window, I said one word softly to myself: paralysis. The word sounded strange and heavy to me, like some difficult word from a schoolbook or from church. It frightened me, but at the same time I wanted to go nearer and see what it had done.

That evening, Old Cotter was sitting by the fire when I came downstairs for supper. He was smoking his pipe, and my aunt was putting food into my bowl. Old Cotter seemed to be continuing a talk that had begun before I entered the room. “No,” he said slowly, “I would not say he was exactly bad. But there was something strange about him. There was something not right. I will tell you what I think.” Then he stopped and pulled at his pipe, as if he needed a long time to put his thoughts in order.

I did not like Old Cotter at that moment. When I first knew him, I had found him a little interesting because he told odd stories about illness and other strange things. But I soon became tired of his long talks. He often began to say something important and then stopped before saying it clearly. Now he was doing the same thing again. “I have my own idea about it,” he said. “I think it was one of those strange cases. But it is hard to say.” Then he smoked again and gave us no real explanation.

My uncle saw me looking at them and spoke to me. “Well,” he said, “your old

friend is gone. You will be sorry to hear it." I asked, "Who?" though I already feared the answer. "Father Flynn," he said. I asked, "Is he dead?" My uncle said, "Mr Cotter has just told us. He was passing the house and heard the news." I knew they were all watching me, so I kept eating as if the news did not matter very much.

My uncle then explained to Old Cotter that Father Flynn and I had been friends. "The boy and the old priest were very close," he said. "The old man taught him many things. They say he had a special interest in him." My aunt said softly, "May God have mercy on his soul." Old Cotter looked at me for a while. I felt his small dark eyes on my face, but I did not look up from my bowl. I did not want him to see what I was feeling.

After a while, Old Cotter spoke again. "I would not like a child of mine," he said, "to spend too much time with a man like that." My aunt asked him what he meant. Old Cotter said, "It is not good for children. A young boy should run about and play with boys of his own age. He should not spend all his time with old people. Am I right, Jack?" My uncle agreed at once and said that boys needed exercise and rough play. He said that when he was young, he took a cold bath every morning, winter and summer, and that it had made him strong.

My aunt brought more food to the table and again asked Old Cotter why he thought such friendship was bad for children. Old Cotter said, "Children's minds are soft. Things make deep marks on them. When they see too much of illness and death, it changes them." He did not say Father Flynn's name directly, but we all knew whom he meant. I was very angry. I filled my mouth with food so that I would not speak. In my mind I called him a foolish old man with a red nose.

Later that night, I could not sleep for a long time. I was angry because Old Cotter had spoken of me as if I were only a little child. But I was also troubled by the broken things he had said. I lay in the dark and tried to understand what he meant. His words had no clear shape, but they stayed in my mind like smoke. I wondered what he thought was wrong with Father Flynn, and why adults always spoke in half-sentences when children were near.

In the darkness, I seemed to see Father Flynn's face again. It was heavy and

grey, the face of a man who could no longer move freely. I pulled the blanket over my head and tried to think of Christmas, of bright rooms and pleasant things. But the grey face followed me there too. It seemed to bend close to me. It seemed to whisper that it wanted to tell me something.

In my dream, or in the half-dream before sleep, I felt that Father Flynn wanted to confess something to me. His voice was low and unclear. His mouth seemed wet, and he seemed to smile again and again. I did not know why he smiled. I felt afraid, but I also felt drawn toward him, as if I had to listen. Then I remembered that he had died of paralysis, and in the dream I felt my own face becoming weak too.

I did not understand the dream, and I did not understand my own feelings. Father Flynn had taught me many things, and I had spent many hours with him. Yet his death did not bring me only sorrow. It brought fear, anger, curiosity, and something like relief. I did not want to admit that feeling, even to myself. So I lay still in the dark, listening to the silence of the house, while the word paralysis moved slowly through my mind.

Part 2

The next morning, after breakfast, I went down to Great Britain Street to look at Father Flynn's house. It was a small, quiet shop, and there was nothing grand about it. The sign in the window said only that it was a drapery shop. But there were not many fine clothes there. Most days, I had seen small children's shoes, umbrellas, and a notice saying that umbrellas could be covered again.

That morning the shop looked different. The shutters were closed, and the usual notice was gone. A dark bunch of cloth and flowers was tied to the door knocker with ribbon. Two poor women and a telegram boy were standing at the door, reading a card that had been fixed there. I went closer and read it too. It said that the Reverend James Flynn, once of Saint Catherine's Church, had died on July first, at the age of sixty-five.

When I read the card, I knew fully that he was dead. Before that moment, the

news had felt unclear, like something said in a room full of smoke. Now it was written in black letters before my eyes. I stood there and felt strangely stopped, as if I had come to a wall. If he had still been alive, I would have gone into the little dark room behind the shop and found him in his chair by the fire.

I could see that room in my mind. He would have been sitting there, covered almost completely by his heavy coat. Perhaps my aunt would have sent him a small packet of snuff, and I would have carried it to him. He liked that snuff very much, but his hands shook so badly that he could not fill his box without help. I was the one who emptied the packet into the black box for him, trying not to spill it on the floor.

Even when the box was full, he had trouble using it. He would lift his large shaking hand to his nose, and small brown clouds would fall between his fingers. The snuff would drop over the front of his old priest's clothes. Maybe that was why the clothes always looked faded and greenish, as if age and dust had settled into them. He kept a red handkerchief with him, but it was always dark with old stains and could not clean much away.

I wanted to go inside and see him, but I did not have the courage to knock. I stood near the door for a little while, then slowly walked away along the sunny side of the street. As I walked, I read the theatre notices in the shop windows. It seemed strange to me that the day was bright and ordinary. It also seemed strange that I did not feel only sadness. I even felt something like freedom, and that feeling troubled me.

I asked myself why I should feel free. Father Flynn had taught me many things, as my uncle had said the night before. He had studied in Rome when he was young, and he knew how church Latin should be spoken. He told me stories about old underground burial places, and also about Napoleon. He explained the different parts of the Mass and the special clothes a priest wore during the service. These things had seemed simple to me before, but he made them seem deep and difficult.

Sometimes he asked me hard questions. He would ask what a priest should do in a serious situation, or whether one kind of wrong act was worse than another. I often did not know the answer. When I answered badly, he would smile and nod

his head slowly, as if he understood my weakness. His questions made the Church seem full of hidden rules. I began to wonder how any man could become a priest without great fear.

Father Flynn also taught me the answers spoken during the Mass. He made me learn them by heart, and sometimes he would test me while he sat in his chair. I would say the words quickly, and he would listen with a quiet smile. Now and then he would take a large pinch of snuff and push it into one side of his nose, then into the other. When he smiled, I could see his large stained teeth and his tongue resting on his lower lip. At first that habit had made me uneasy, though later I grew used to it.

As I walked in the sun, I remembered Old Cotter's words from the evening before. He had said that there was something strange about Father Flynn, but he had not explained himself. I tried to remember the dream I had had during the night. I could remember a room with long dark curtains and an old lamp that swung gently. I had felt that I was very far away from Dublin, in a country with strange ways. I thought it might have been Persia, but I could not remember how the dream ended.

The streets around me were full of light, and people were going about their daily business. Yet my mind was still in the little dark room behind the shop. I thought of the old priest's chair, his black snuff-box, his heavy coat, and his slow smile. I thought also of the closed shutters and the card on the door. The two things did not seem to fit together: the living man in my memory and the dead man named on the card. So I walked on, unable to go in, unable to stay away, and unable to understand what his death had truly done to me.

Part 3

That evening, my aunt took me with her to the house of mourning. The sun had gone down, but the windows of the houses still held a dull gold light from the clouds in the west. Nannie met us in the hall. She was old and rather deaf, so my aunt did not speak loudly to her in that quiet house. Instead, she shook hands with

her for both of us, and Nannie pointed upstairs as if asking whether we wished to go up.

My aunt nodded, and Nannie began to climb the narrow stairs before us. Her body was bent, and her head was hardly higher than the stair rail. At the first landing she stopped and moved her hand, asking us to come forward. The door of the dead room was open. My aunt went in first, and when Nannie saw that I was standing back, she moved her hand again and again, gently but firmly.

I went in on the tips of my toes. The room was dark gold in the evening light, and the candles looked thin and pale. Father Flynn was already in his coffin. Nannie knelt down first at the foot of the bed, and my aunt and I knelt beside her. I tried to pray, but I could not keep my mind on the prayer. Nannie was saying words softly to herself, and the sound pulled my thoughts away.

While I knelt there, I noticed small things that I should not have noticed. I saw that Nannie's skirt was badly fastened at the back. I saw that the heels of her cloth boots were worn down on one side. Then a strange thought came to me. I imagined that Father Flynn was smiling as he lay in the coffin, as if he knew something that we did not know.

But when we stood up and went nearer to the head of the bed, I saw that he was not smiling. He lay there in his priest's clothes, large and still. His hands were loose around a cup used at Mass. His face looked grey, heavy, and hard, and his nose seemed dark in the candlelight. There was a strong smell in the room. I knew it came from the flowers, but it made the air feel thick.

We made the sign of the cross and went downstairs. In the small room below, Eliza was sitting in Father Flynn's old chair. I moved slowly toward the chair where I usually sat, in the corner. Nannie went to the sideboard and brought out a bottle of sherry and some glasses. She invited us to take a little wine, and then, when Eliza told her to do so, she poured it out and passed the glasses to us.

Nannie also asked me to take some cream crackers. I said no, because I was afraid they would make a loud noise when I ate them. She looked a little disappointed and went quietly to sit on the sofa behind her sister. For a time no one spoke. We all looked at the empty fireplace, as if something important might

appear there if we waited long enough.

At last Eliza sighed, and my aunt said, “Well, he has gone to a better world.” Eliza sighed again and bent her head. My aunt touched the stem of her glass and then took a small drink. She asked carefully, “Did he die peacefully?” Eliza said, “Yes, very peacefully. You could hardly tell when his breathing stopped. It was a beautiful death, thanks be to God.”

My aunt asked whether everything had been done for him. Eliza said that Father O’Rourke had come, had prepared him, and had given him the last prayers of the Church. My aunt asked whether Father Flynn had understood what was happening. Eliza said that he had accepted it quietly. “He looked peaceful,” my aunt said. Eliza answered that the woman who prepared the body had said the same thing, and that no one would have thought he could look so calm in death.

My aunt then told Eliza that it must comfort her to know that she and Nannie had done everything they could for him. Eliza smoothed her dress over her knees and said, “Poor James. God knows we did all we could. We are poor, but we never let him go without what he needed.” Nannie had leaned her head against the sofa pillow and seemed almost asleep. Eliza looked at her and said that poor Nannie was worn out from all the work of washing him, laying him out, arranging the coffin, and preparing for the Mass.

Eliza said they could not have managed without Father O’Rourke. He had brought flowers and candlesticks from the chapel. He had written the notice for the newspaper and taken care of the papers for the cemetery and the insurance. My aunt said that this was very kind of him. Eliza closed her eyes and shook her head slowly. “Old friends are the best friends,” she said. “They are the ones a person can trust.”

Then Eliza began to speak more softly about Father Flynn himself. She said he had never been much trouble in the house. He had been quiet, and they hardly heard him. But now that he was gone, she would miss bringing him his cup of beef tea. She would miss my aunt sending him his snuff. After that, she stopped for a while, as if she were looking back into the past.

Then she said that, near the end, she had noticed something strange in him.

When she brought him soup, she sometimes found his prayer book on the floor. He would be lying back in the chair with his mouth open. Still, he kept saying that before the summer ended, he wanted to go for a drive. He wanted to see the old house in Irishtown where he and his sisters had been born, and he wanted to take Eliza and Nannie with him.

My aunt said, “May God have mercy on his soul.” Eliza took out her handkerchief and wiped her eyes. Then she put it away and looked into the empty fireplace for a long time. At last she said that Father Flynn had always worried too much about doing everything exactly right. The duties of a priest had been too heavy for him. My aunt agreed and said that he had been a disappointed man.

Silence filled the little room. While no one was speaking, I went quietly to the table and tasted my sherry. Then I returned to my chair in the corner. Eliza seemed lost in deep thought. We waited for her to speak again, and after a long pause she said slowly, “It was the cup he broke. That was the beginning. They said it was all right because there was nothing in it. They said it was the boy’s fault. But poor James was so nervous.”

My aunt asked whether that was the cause of his trouble. Eliza nodded and said that it had changed his mind. After that, he began to sit alone and speak to no one. One night, when he was needed for a call, no one could find him. They searched everywhere. At last someone suggested looking in the chapel, so they brought the keys and went in with a light.

Eliza lowered her voice as she came to the end of the story. They found Father Flynn sitting alone in the dark in his confession box. He was awake and laughing softly to himself. Eliza stopped suddenly, as if she were listening for a sound in the house. I listened too, but there was no sound. I knew that Father Flynn was lying still upstairs in his coffin, with the empty cup resting on his breast.

After a moment, Eliza spoke again. She repeated that he had been awake in the dark and laughing to himself. Then she said that, after they saw that, people knew something had gone wrong with him. No one spoke after that. The room, the empty fireplace, the sleeping Nannie, and Eliza’s quiet voice all seemed to grow heavy around me. I sat in the corner and thought of the old priest above us,

silent at last, while the secret of his life remained only half spoken.

An Encounter

Part 1

Joe Dillon was the boy who first brought the Wild West into our lives. He had a small library of old boys' papers, full of stories about Indians, brave fighters, and dangerous journeys. Every evening after school, we met in his back garden and made battles of our own. Joe and his younger brother Leo took the stable loft as their fort. The rest of us attacked it from below, shouting and running as if we were in a real war.

We never won those battles. No matter how hard we tried, Joe Dillon always found a way to win. At the end, he danced around the garden like a wild Indian chief. He put an old tea cover on his head, beat a tin with his fist, and cried out strange war sounds. He played more fiercely than the rest of us. We were younger and more careful, and sometimes his energy almost frightened us.

Joe's home did not seem like a place where such fierce games should begin. His parents went to early Mass every morning, and the house had a quiet, proper smell. Mrs Dillon seemed peaceful, and the hall felt neat and safe. Yet in the back garden, Joe became another person. He shouted, jumped, attacked, and led us into make-believe danger. He had a strong power over us because he seemed to believe fully in the world of the stories.

Later, people said that Joe Dillon wanted to become a priest. At first, no one believed it. The idea seemed impossible to us. How could a boy who shouted like an Indian and fought every evening become a priest? But it was true. Even then, though, his fierce games had already changed us for a time.

A spirit of wildness spread among us. Boys who were different in school became part of the same group in the garden. Some joined boldly, some joined only for fun, and some joined because they were afraid of looking weak. I was one of the last kind. I did not really love the Wild West stories in the same way Joe did. They were far from my own nature, but they opened a door in my mind.

I liked American detective stories better. In those stories there were dark streets,

secret plans, and strong girls with loose hair and brave faces. There was nothing very wrong with these stories, but at school we passed them from hand to hand in secret. We knew the masters would not approve. Because the books were hidden, they became more exciting. A plain printed page could feel like a stolen object.

One day, during Roman History, Leo Dillon was caught with one of these papers in his pocket. Father Butler was asking him to read from the lesson. Leo stood there heavily, not knowing where to begin. Father Butler saw that something was wrong and asked, "What do you have in your pocket?" The whole class became still. Leo had to take out the paper and hand it to him.

Father Butler looked at the pages with an angry face. "What is this?" he said. "A story about an Apache chief? Is this what you read instead of studying Roman History?" He told us that such papers were bad and foolish. He said that educated boys should not waste their time on them. His voice was cold, and everyone tried to look innocent.

The scolding hurt the glory of the Wild West for me. In the serious light of school, the stories suddenly looked cheap and shameful. Leo Dillon's round, confused face made me feel guilty too. I thought perhaps we really were foolish to care so much about these papers. For a while, the world of battles and escapes became smaller in my mind.

But when school was far away, the old hunger came back. I again wanted something wild to happen. The evening battles in Joe Dillon's garden no longer satisfied me. They were only games, and I knew how they would end. Morning school was dull, but our make-believe wars had become dull too. I wanted a real adventure, not one that ended with Joe dancing around the garden.

I began to think that real adventures never came to boys who stayed at home. A boy could not meet danger by sitting in a classroom or playing in a familiar garden. He had to go somewhere else. He had to cross streets he did not know and see places that did not belong to his daily life. That thought grew stronger in me until school, home, and ordinary play all seemed too small.

Part 2

The summer holidays were near, and I decided that I must escape from school for one day. I planned it with Leo Dillon and another boy named Mahony. Each of us saved sixpence, and we agreed to meet at ten o'clock in the morning on the Canal Bridge. Mahony's older sister would write a note for him, and Leo Dillon would tell his brother to say that he was sick. We planned to walk along the Wharf Road, see the ships, cross the river by ferry, and then go out to the Pigeon House.

Leo Dillon was a little afraid that we might meet Father Butler or someone from school. But Mahony said that Father Butler would not be walking around near the Pigeon House. This sounded sensible, so we felt safe again. I collected sixpence from the other two boys and showed them my own coin. On the evening before our adventure, we were all excited, though we tried to act calm. We shook hands, laughing, and Mahony said, "See you tomorrow, mates."

That night I did not sleep well. In the morning I reached the bridge first, because I lived nearest to it. I had hidden my schoolbooks in the long grass near the ash pit at the end of our garden, where no one usually went. Then I hurried along the canal bank. It was a warm, sunny morning in the first week of June, and the day seemed made for freedom.

I sat on the stone edge of the bridge and looked down at my canvas shoes. I had cleaned them carefully the night before, and I felt proud of them. Below me, quiet horses pulled a tram full of people going to work. The trees along the road had small light-green leaves, and the sun shone through them onto the water. The stone of the bridge was already warm, and I tapped it with my hands in time with a tune in my head.

After five or ten minutes, I saw Mahony coming up the hill in his grey suit. He smiled when he saw me and climbed up beside me on the bridge. While we waited, he pulled a catapult from inside his jacket and showed me the changes he had made to it. I asked why he had brought it. He said he wanted to have some fun with birds, and he spoke with the easy slang that he liked to use.

We waited another fifteen minutes, but Leo Dillon did not come. At last Mahony jumped down from the bridge and said, "Come on. I knew Fatty would

be afraid." I asked about Leo's sixpence. Mahony said that Leo had lost it by not coming, and that this was better for us. We now had more money between the two of us, and this made the adventure feel larger.

We walked along the North Strand Road and then turned toward the Wharf Road. As soon as we were away from the public streets, Mahony began to play at being an Indian again. He ran after a group of poor girls, waving his empty catapult. When two small boys began to throw stones at us to defend the girls, Mahony wanted to charge at them. I said they were too small, so we walked on while the group shouted after us.

Their shouting did not trouble us much. In fact, it made us feel as if we had already entered a rougher and freer world. When we came to the Smoothing Iron, we tried to make another battle game. But it failed because there were only two of us, and a siege needed at least three. So we punished Leo Dillon in words. We called him a coward and guessed how much trouble he would be in at three o'clock when school found him absent.

Soon we came near the river. We walked for a long time through noisy streets with high stone walls on both sides. We watched cranes and engines at work, and we stopped too often in the middle of the way. Drivers of heavy carts shouted at us because we stood still and blocked their path. Their angry voices only made the place seem more real and more exciting to us.

At noon we reached the quays. The workers seemed to be eating their lunch, so we bought two large currant buns and sat on some metal pipes beside the river. We looked at the busy life of Dublin's trade. Barges moved far away with little curls of smoke above them, fishing boats lay beyond Ringsend, and a large white sailing ship was being unloaded on the opposite quay. Mahony said it would be great fun to run away to sea on one of those big ships.

As I looked at the tall masts, the maps from school seemed to become real before my eyes. Places that had been only names in a book now seemed to wait beyond the river and the sea. School and home felt far away, as if they belonged to another life. We crossed the Liffey in the ferryboat with two workers and a small man carrying a bag. We were very serious during the crossing, but once our

eyes met and we laughed.

After we landed, we watched the unloading of the beautiful three-masted ship we had seen from the other side. Someone said that it was a Norwegian ship. I went to the back of it and tried to read the name, but I could not. Then I looked at the foreign sailors, wondering if any of them had green eyes, because I had some unclear romantic idea in my mind. Their eyes were blue, grey, or black, and only one tall sailor seemed to have eyes that might be called green.

When we grew tired of the ship, we walked slowly into Ringsend. The day had become hot, and dry biscuits lay in the shop windows. We bought biscuits and chocolate and ate them carefully as we walked through the poor streets where fishing families lived. We could not find a dairy, so we went into a small shop and bought a bottle of raspberry lemonade each. After drinking it, we felt better for a short time.

Mahony then saw a cat and chased it down a lane. The cat escaped into a wide field, and we followed it there. By now we were both tired, so we went at once to a sloping bank. From the top of it, we could see the Dodder. We knew then that it was too late, and we were too tired, to continue to the Pigeon House.

We had to be home before four o'clock, or our adventure might be discovered. Mahony looked sadly at his catapult, as if the day had failed him. I suggested that we should go home by train, and this made him a little more cheerful. The sun went behind some clouds, and the field became quiet around us. We sat there with the crumbs of our food, tired and disappointed, while our great adventure grew smaller in our minds.

Part 3

There was no one in the field except Mahony and me. We lay on the bank for a while without speaking. I chewed a green stem of grass and looked lazily toward the far end of the field. After some time, I saw a man walking slowly toward us. He had one hand on his hip, and in the other hand he carried a stick, which he tapped lightly on the ground.

He was poorly dressed in a dark greenish-black suit, and he wore a tall old hat. He seemed fairly old, because his moustache was grey. When he passed below us, he looked up quickly, then went on. We watched him as he walked away. After about fifty steps, he turned round and began to come back, moving so slowly that I thought he might be looking for something in the grass.

When he came level with us, he stopped and said good day. We answered him, and then he sat down beside us on the bank with slow care. First he talked about the weather. He said it would be a very hot summer, and that the seasons were different now from when he was a boy. Then he said that school days were the happiest time in a person's life, and that he would give anything to be young again.

His talk bored us a little, but we said nothing. Soon he began to ask about school and books. He asked whether we had read Thomas Moore, Sir Walter Scott, or Lord Lytton. I pretended that I had read every book he named, because I did not want to seem ignorant. At last he looked at me and said that he could see I was a bookish boy like himself.

Then he pointed to Mahony and said that Mahony was different because he liked games. Mahony looked at us with wide eyes, not quite knowing what to say. The man said that he had many books at home and never grew tired of reading them. Then he added that some books by Lord Lytton were not suitable for boys. Mahony asked why boys could not read them, and I felt ashamed of his question, because it seemed foolish and too direct.

The man only smiled. When he smiled, I saw wide gaps between his yellow teeth. Then he asked which of us had the most sweethearts. Mahony said lightly that he had three girls. The man turned to me and asked how many I had. I said I had none, but he did not believe me and said he was sure I must have one.

I was silent, and Mahony asked the man how many sweethearts he had had himself. The man smiled again and said that, when he was our age, he had had many. "Every boy," he said, "has a little sweetheart." I thought this was a surprisingly free thing for an old man to say. Part of me felt that his words were not unreasonable, but I did not like hearing them from his mouth.

He went on talking about girls. He spoke about their soft hair, their soft hands,

and their pretty faces. His voice grew lower, then rose again, as if he were telling us a secret and also repeating something he had said many times before. He seemed to move round and round the same thoughts. I looked away toward the bottom of the bank and listened without answering.

After a long time, the man stopped speaking. He stood up slowly and said he had to leave us for a few minutes. Without looking directly at him, I saw him walk away toward the near end of the field. Mahony and I stayed where we were and said nothing. Then, after a short silence, Mahony suddenly cried out, "Look what he's doing!"

I did not raise my eyes. Mahony cried out again and said that the old man was very strange. I still did not look, because I did not want to see anything more. Instead, I said quietly, "If he asks our names, you are Murphy and I am Smith." After that, we were silent again. I wondered whether we should leave at once, but before I decided, the man came back.

He sat down beside us again. Almost at the same moment, Mahony saw the cat that had escaped from him earlier and jumped up to chase it. The man and I watched him run across the field. The cat escaped again over a wall, and Mahony threw stones after it. Then he stayed near the far end of the field, walking about without any clear purpose.

After a little while, the man spoke to me again. He said my friend was a rough boy and asked whether he was often beaten at school. I wanted to answer angrily that we were not the kind of boys who were beaten in that way, but I kept silent. Then the man began to talk about punishing boys. His mind seemed to circle again, this time around the idea of beating.

He said that rough boys should be beaten well. A small slap was no use, he said. A bad boy needed a strong beating to teach him. I was shocked and looked up at him without meaning to. His greenish eyes were watching me closely from under his moving forehead, and I quickly looked away again.

The man continued in the same low, steady voice. He said that if he ever found a boy talking to girls, or having a sweetheart, he would beat him again and again. He spoke as if this thought pleased him deeply. His voice became almost gentle,

and that made it worse. It seemed as if he wanted me to understand him and agree with him.

I waited until he stopped for a moment. Then I stood up suddenly, but I tried not to show my fear. I bent down and pretended to fix my shoe, so that my movement would look ordinary. Then I said that I had to go and wished him good day. I walked calmly up the bank, though my heart was beating fast because I feared he might catch me by the ankles.

When I reached the top of the bank, I turned and called loudly across the field, "Murphy!" I was ashamed of the false name and of the fear in my voice. I had to call again before Mahony noticed me and shouted back. Then he came running toward me across the field. As I watched him run, I felt sorry, because in my heart I had often looked down on him. Now he seemed to be running to help me, and I was grateful.

Araby

Part 1

North Richmond Street was a quiet street because it had no open end. Most of the day, nothing much happened there. The only lively time came when the Christian Brothers' School let the boys out. Then the street filled with voices and quick feet. At the blind end of the street stood an empty two-storey house, standing apart from the other houses in its own square of ground.

The other houses faced one another in a calm, brown row. They looked serious and respectable, as if they knew the lives of the people inside them. Our house had once had a priest as its tenant, but he had died in the back drawing-room before we came there. The rooms still held a closed, old smell, as if fresh air had not entered them for a long time. Behind the kitchen there was a waste room full of useless papers and old things.

Among the papers I found a few books with soft covers. Their pages were yellow, damp, and bent at the edges. One was a story by Walter Scott, another was a religious book, and another was about Vidocq, a famous criminal and police spy. I liked the last one best because its pages looked old and secret. In the wild garden behind the house there was one apple tree and a few weak bushes. Under one of the bushes I found the dead priest's rusty bicycle pump.

People said the priest had been very kind. In his will, he had left his money to good works and his furniture to his sister. But to me he was not really a person I had known. He was more like a shadow that still stayed in the house. The old books, the shut-up rooms, and the things left behind him made the place feel strange. It seemed that another life had ended there, but had not fully gone away.

When the short winter days came, darkness fell before we had finished dinner. After dinner, we went out into the street to play. The sky above us changed into a deep violet colour, and the street lamps gave only weak light. The cold air hurt our faces at first, but soon our bodies grew warm from running. Our shouts echoed along the quiet street and came back to us from the house fronts.

Our games carried us everywhere near the street. We ran through dark, muddy lanes behind the houses. We passed the back doors of gardens where wet smells rose from ash pits and old walls. We went near dark stables, where a coachman sometimes brushed and combed a horse. In those places, the city felt hidden and rough, very different from the calm brown houses at the front.

When we came back to the street, the kitchen windows were bright. Light had filled the lower parts of the houses, and the evening seemed warmer from outside. If we saw my uncle turning the corner, we hid in the shadow until he had gone safely into our house. We did not want the games to end too soon. We liked the dark because it gave us a little freedom.

Sometimes Mangan's sister came out on her doorstep to call her brother in for tea. When this happened, we stopped playing and watched her from the shadow. She looked up and down the street, searching for him. We waited to see whether she would go back inside or remain at the door. If she stayed there, we slowly left the shadow and walked toward Mangan's steps, as if we had no choice.

She stood in the light from the half-open door. Her brother always teased her before he obeyed her call, and the rest of us waited near the railings. I stood there looking at her. Her dress moved when she moved, and her hair swung softly from side to side. I did not speak to her. I only watched, and even that made me feel full and uneasy.

Every morning I lay on the floor in the front parlour and watched the door of her house. The blind was pulled down almost to the bottom, leaving only a narrow space through which I could see. She could not see me, and this made my watching feel safer. When she came out on the doorstep, my heart jumped. I ran to the hall, took my books, and followed her to school.

I always kept her brown figure in sight. I did not walk beside her or speak to her. I followed at a distance, careful not to be noticed. When we came near the place where our ways separated, I walked faster and passed her. This happened morning after morning. We exchanged only a few ordinary words, but in my mind she was not ordinary at all.

Her name had a strange power over me. When I heard it or thought it, my

whole body seemed to answer. I did not understand what I felt, and I did not know what I wanted to do. I was still a boy, and my feelings were larger than my words. I could not explain them to anyone, and I could not explain them to myself.

The street, the dark lanes, the winter air, and the lighted doorway all became part of my feeling for her. I began to think of her even when she was not there. Her image came into my mind during the day and returned at night. The ordinary world around me seemed to change because of her. I still lived in the same house and walked through the same streets, but now everything seemed to lead back to the girl at Mangan's door.

Part 2

Her image came with me even into places where love did not seem to belong. On Saturday evenings, I had to go with my aunt to the market and help carry her parcels. The streets were bright, noisy, and crowded. Drunken men pushed past us, women argued over prices, and shop boys shouted to bring people to their stalls. The whole place was rough and busy, but even there I thought of Mangan's sister.

The noise of the market came together in my mind like one great sound. Men cursed, singers called out songs, and people moved heavily through the lighted streets. I walked beside my aunt with parcels in my arms, but inside I felt as if I were carrying something holy through a crowd of enemies. The girl's name rose to my lips at strange moments, almost like a prayer. Sometimes my eyes filled with tears, though I did not know why. My heart seemed too full for my body.

I did not think clearly about the future. I did not know whether I would ever speak to her in any real way. If I did speak, I did not know how I could tell her what I felt. My feeling was confused and strong, and it had no simple words. It was as if my whole body had become an instrument, and her small words and movements touched it like fingers touching strings.

One evening, I went into the back drawing-room where the old priest had died. It was raining, and the house was very quiet. Through a broken pane of glass, I

could hear the rain falling on the dark garden. The small drops struck the wet earth again and again, softly but without stopping. A faint light showed somewhere below me, but I was glad that the room itself was almost dark.

In that darkness, I felt as if I wanted to hide from everything. I wanted my eyes and ears to close, and I wanted the outside world to disappear. My feelings were too strong and too unclear. I pressed my hands together until they trembled. Again and again, I whispered, “Love, love,” though I hardly knew what the word meant for me.

At last, she spoke to me. When she said the first words, I was so confused that I did not know how to answer. She asked if I was going to Araby. I could not remember afterward whether I said yes or no. She said it would be a wonderful bazaar and that she would love to go. Her words made the name Araby sound rich and distant, like a place from a dream.

I asked her why she could not go. While she answered, she turned a silver bracelet round and round on her wrist. She said she could not go because there would be a religious retreat that week at her school. Her brother and two other boys were fighting for their caps nearby, but I was alone with her at the railings. She held one of the iron points and bent her head toward me. The light from the street lamp touched her neck, her hair, her hand, and the edge of her dress.

She said, “It is good for you that you can go.” I felt that I had to answer her with something important. So I said, “If I go, I will bring you something.” The words came out simply, but they filled my mind at once. I had made a promise. After that evening, Araby was no longer only a bazaar. It became a place I had to reach for her.

Many foolish thoughts filled my waking and sleeping hours after that. I wanted the slow days before Saturday to disappear. School became almost impossible to bear. At night in my bedroom and by day in the classroom, her image stood between me and the page I tried to read. The word Araby called to me in the silence, and it seemed to carry a warm light from the East.

I asked for permission to go to the bazaar on Saturday night. My aunt was surprised and asked questions, but I did not answer many of them. She hoped it

was not connected with some strange secret society. In class, I answered badly because my thoughts were far away. My teacher first looked kindly at me, then more seriously, and said he hoped I was not becoming lazy.

I could not bring my mind back to ordinary work. Lessons, books, and school rules seemed small and ugly because they stood between me and my wish. The serious duties of life seemed like a dull children's game. I had only one clear thought: Saturday night must come, and I must go to Araby. I believed that if I could go there and bring something back, my confused feeling would somehow become real.

On Saturday morning, I reminded my uncle that I wanted to go to the bazaar that evening. He was busy in the hall, looking for the hat brush, and he answered shortly, "Yes, boy, I know." Because he was in the hall, I could not go into the front parlour and watch Mangan's house as usual. I left home in a bad mood and walked slowly toward school. The air was cold and hard, and already I felt afraid that something might go wrong.

When I came home for dinner, my uncle had not yet returned. I told myself that it was still early. I sat and looked at the clock for a while, but its ticking began to trouble me. I left the room and went upstairs into the higher part of the house. The empty rooms were cold and dark, but they made me feel freer than the rooms below. I walked from room to room and sang to myself.

From the front window, I saw the other boys playing in the street. Their cries reached me weakly through the glass. I leaned my forehead against the cool window and looked across at the dark house where Mangan's sister lived. I may have stood there for a very long time. I saw almost nothing real. In my mind I saw only her brown figure, touched by lamplight at the neck, the hand, and the edge of the dress.

Part 3

When I came downstairs again, Mrs Mercer was sitting by the fire. She was an old woman who talked a great deal, and she had once been married to a

pawnbroker. She collected used stamps for some religious purpose, and my aunt knew her well. I had to sit through the talk at tea, though every minute felt heavy to me. The meal went on and on, and still my uncle did not come home.

Mrs Mercer at last stood up to leave. She said she was sorry that she could not stay longer, but it was already after eight o'clock. She did not like to be out late, because the night air was bad for her. When she had gone, I began to walk up and down the room. I closed my hands tightly, because I was angry and afraid that the evening was being lost.

My aunt looked at me and said she was afraid I might have to forget the bazaar for that night. Her words struck me hard, but I did not answer. I listened for every sound from the hall and the street. At nine o'clock, I heard my uncle's key in the front door. Then I heard him talking to himself, and I heard the hallstand shake when he put his coat on it.

I knew what those sounds meant. He had come home late, and he had probably been drinking. When he was halfway through his dinner, I asked him for the money to go to the bazaar. He looked as if he had forgotten everything. Then he said that the people at the bazaar would already be in bed after their first sleep. He seemed to think this was funny, but I did not smile.

My aunt spoke sharply to him. She said he should give me the money and let me go, because he had already kept me waiting too long. My uncle said he was sorry. Then he began to repeat an old saying about work and play. He asked me where I was going, though I had already told him. When I told him again, he asked if I knew an old poem about an Arab and his horse.

I left the kitchen while he was beginning to say the first lines of the poem to my aunt. I held the coin tightly in my hand and hurried down Buckingham Street toward the station. The streets were full of people buying things, and the gaslights shone brightly over them. Their noise reminded me of why I was going. I felt late, but I still believed that I might reach the bazaar in time.

I got into a third-class carriage on an almost empty train. The train did not move for what felt like a very long time. I sat alone, tense and silent, with my thoughts fixed on Araby. At last the train began to move slowly out of the station.

It passed poor-looking houses and crossed the dark river, where small lights shone on the water.

At Westland Row, many people came toward the doors of the carriage. But the porters stopped them and said this was a special train for the bazaar. I remained alone in the bare carriage. A few minutes later, the train stopped beside a rough wooden platform. I got out and saw from a lighted clock that it was ten minutes to ten.

In front of me stood a large building with the magical name on it. I could not find a cheap entrance, and I feared that the place would close before I entered. So I went quickly through a turnstile and gave a shilling to a tired-looking man. Then I found myself inside a great hall. There was a gallery halfway up the walls, but most of the stalls were already closed.

Much of the hall was in darkness. The silence there reminded me of a church after the service had ended. A few people stood near the stalls that were still open. In front of one curtain, where coloured lamps showed the words Café Chantant, two men were counting money on a plate. I listened to the small hard sound of the coins falling together.

For a moment, I almost forgot why I had come. Then I forced myself to walk to one of the open stalls. I looked at vases and tea sets with flowers painted on them. Near the entrance to the stall, a young woman was talking and laughing with two young men. I noticed that they had English accents, and I listened to their conversation without really wanting to.

They were arguing playfully about something one of them had said. The young woman laughed and denied it, and the young men said that she had said it. Their voices were light and careless. They seemed to belong to the place more than I did. I stood there feeling small, late, and foolish, looking at things I did not really want to buy.

At last the young woman noticed me and came over. She asked if I wished to buy anything. Her voice was polite, but it did not invite me. It sounded as if she asked only because it was her duty. I looked humbly at the large jars standing on each side of the dark entrance to the stall. They seemed like guards before a place

I could not enter.

I answered, “No, thank you.” The young woman moved one of the vases a little and went back to the two young men. They began again to talk about the same small matter as before. Once or twice she looked back at me over her shoulder. I stayed near the stall a little longer, though I knew there was no reason to stay.

I wanted my interest in the things for sale to look real. But it was useless. I had come too late, and I had no courage to choose anything. Slowly, I turned away and walked down the middle of the bazaar. In my pocket, the two pennies knocked softly against the sixpence. Their small sound seemed to tell me how little I had done.

Then I heard a voice from one end of the gallery call out that the light was out. The upper part of the hall became completely dark. I looked up into the darkness. At that moment, I saw myself clearly. I had been driven by pride, dreams, and foolish desire, and now they had all made fun of me. My eyes burned with pain and anger.

Eveline

Part 1

Eveline sat at the window and watched evening slowly fill the avenue. Her head rested against the curtains, and she could smell the dust in the old cloth. She was tired. She had been sitting there for some time, looking out but not really seeing much. The light outside was fading, and the street seemed to grow quieter with every minute.

Few people passed the house. A man from the last house in the avenue walked home, and Eveline heard his footsteps first on the hard pavement, then on the rough path near the new red houses. Once there had been a field there. When she was a child, she and the other children of the avenue had played in that field every evening. Now the field was gone, and bright brick houses with shining roofs stood in its place.

She remembered the children who had played there. There were the Devines, the Waters, the Dunns, little Keogh, and her own brothers and sisters. Her older brother Ernest did not play with them because he was already too grown up. The smaller children ran and shouted in the field until the adults called them home. Her father sometimes came after them with his black stick, and then little Keogh would keep watch and warn the others when he saw him coming.

Even so, those days had seemed happy. Her father had not been so bad then. Her mother had still been alive, and the house had not felt so heavy. That was a long time ago. Now she and her brothers and sisters were grown up, her mother was dead, and many of the old neighbours had gone away. Everything had changed, and now Eveline herself was going to leave too.

The thought of leaving home made her look around the room. She looked at the familiar things that she had dusted every week for years. She wondered where all the dust came from. The room was poor and old, but every object in it was known to her. She had never thought that one day she might look at these things for the last time.

On the wall there was a yellowing photograph of a priest. It hung above the broken harmonium, near a coloured religious picture. Eveline had looked at that photograph for years, but she still did not know the priest's name. He had been a school friend of her father's. When visitors asked about the picture, her father only said, "He is in Melbourne now."

She had agreed to go away. She had agreed to leave this room, this house, and this life. But now, sitting at the window, she asked herself whether it was wise. At home, at least, she had food and shelter. She had people around her whom she had known all her life. Even if her life was hard, it was not strange to her.

She thought of her work at the Stores. If she left, people there would talk about her. Perhaps they would say she had run away with a man and call her foolish. Her place would soon be filled by someone else. Miss Gavan, who was often sharp with her, would not be sorry to see her go. Eveline could almost hear her voice again, telling her to hurry because customers were waiting.

She would not cry much over leaving the Stores. The work was tiring, and Miss Gavan often spoke to her in a hard way, especially when other people were listening. But work was part of the life she knew. It had shape and order. She understood its rules, even when she disliked them. The unknown life before her had no such clear shape.

In that new life, far away in another country, things would be different. She would be married. People would call her Mrs Frank and treat her with respect. She would not be treated as her mother had been treated. That thought gave her a little strength, because her mother's life had been full of work, silence, and pain.

Yet fear came back to her. She was over nineteen, but she still sometimes felt in danger from her father. When she was younger, he had not attacked her as he had attacked Harry and Ernest, because she was a girl. But recently he had begun to threaten her. He said that only her dead mother's memory stopped him. Those words stayed in her mind and made her heart beat too fast.

Now she had almost no one to protect her. Ernest was dead. Harry worked in church decoration and was often away somewhere in the country. On Saturday nights there was always trouble about money. Eveline gave all her wages to the

house, and Harry sent what he could, but it was hard to get money from her father for food. He often said she wasted money and had no sense, especially when he had been drinking.

In the end, he usually gave her some money and asked whether she planned to buy Sunday's dinner. Then she had to hurry out to the shops with her black leather purse held tightly in her hand. She pushed through the crowds, bought food, and came home late carrying heavy parcels. She had to keep the house together and make sure the two young children in her care went to school and had their meals. It was a hard life, but now that she was about to leave it, she could not say that she hated every part of it.

Part 2

Eveline was going to begin another life with Frank. The thought was frightening, but it also had a warm light inside it. Frank was kind, strong, and open-hearted. He did not seem like the men who made her life heavy at home or at work. He had a way of speaking that made the world seem wider than the rooms and streets she knew.

She was to leave Dublin with him by the night boat. After that, she would become his wife and live with him in Buenos Aires. The name itself sounded distant and bright. Frank said he already had a home waiting there. When Eveline thought of that home, she imagined a place where people would not shout at her, where no one would make her afraid, and where her work might be for love rather than only duty.

She remembered clearly the first time she had seen him. He was staying in a house on the main road, where she sometimes visited. He had stood at the gate with his cap pushed back on his head. His hair had fallen forward over his sun-brown face. He looked different from the young men she knew in Dublin, as if sea air and far countries had marked him.

After that, they had come to know each other. Frank met her outside the Stores in the evening and walked home with her. Those walks became the best part of

her day. He took her to the theatre to see *The Bohemian Girl*, and she felt proud and happy sitting beside him in a part of the theatre that was new to her. He liked music very much and sang a little himself.

People knew that they were courting. When Frank sang a song about a girl who loved a sailor, Eveline felt shy and pleased. He sometimes called her "Poppens" for fun. At first, having a young man seemed like an exciting change in her life. Then, slowly, she began to like him in a deeper way. His kindness did not feel like a game to her.

Frank had many stories about far countries. He had first gone to sea as a young boy on a ship sailing to Canada. He told her the names of the ships he had worked on and the routes they had taken. He had sailed through the Straits of Magellan, and he told her stories about strange and dangerous places in South America. Eveline did not know those places, but when he spoke, she felt that life could be larger than Dublin.

He said he had done well in Buenos Aires. He had come back to the old country only for a holiday. This made him seem even more wonderful to her. He was not trapped in one narrow street or one hard job. He had gone away, made a life, and returned with stories. To Eveline, he seemed to carry escape with him.

Her father, of course, had found out about Frank. He did not like the affair at all. He forbade Eveline to have anything to do with him. "I know these sailor fellows," he said. His words were hard and suspicious. After that, Eveline could no longer meet Frank openly. She had to see him in secret, and this made the relationship both more dangerous and more precious.

One day her father quarrelled with Frank. Eveline did not forget that. It showed her that the two lives before her could not be joined together. If she stayed at home, she must give up Frank or hide him forever. If she went with Frank, she must leave her father, her house, and everything she had promised to hold together. There was no easy middle way.

The evening outside the window grew deeper. The room became darker, and the white shapes of the two letters in her lap became harder to see. One letter was for Harry, and the other was for her father. She had written them because she was

planning to go, but the sight of them made the leaving feel more real. They were not only pieces of paper. They were signs of a break.

She thought of her brothers. Ernest had been her favourite, but he was dead now. She liked Harry too, though he was often away. She thought also of her father, and this troubled her more than she expected. He was becoming old. If she left, he would miss her. She did not want to think kindly of him, but memories came to her against her will.

Sometimes her father could be nice. Not long before, when she had been ill for a day, he had read her a ghost story and made toast for her by the fire. Another memory came from the time when her mother was alive. The family had gone for a picnic to the Hill of Howth, and her father had put on her mother's bonnet to make the children laugh. That memory hurt Eveline because it showed that he had not always been only hard and frightening.

Her time was nearly gone, but still she sat at the window. Her head rested against the dusty curtain, and the room seemed to hold her in place. Far down the avenue, she heard a street organ playing. She knew the tune. It came through the evening air like a voice from the past. It was strange that this music should come on the very night when she had to choose.

The tune reminded her of the promise she had made to her mother. She had promised to keep the home together as long as she could. At once she remembered the last night of her mother's illness. She saw again the close, dark room across the hall. Outside, an organ had played a sad foreign tune, and someone had sent the player away with a coin.

Then she remembered her mother's voice near the end. Her mother's life had been full of small sacrifices, and it had closed in weakness and confusion. Eveline heard again the strange words her mother had repeated again and again. The memory filled her with terror. She did not want the same life. She did not want to work and suffer until her own mind broke.

Suddenly she stood up. Escape was necessary. She had to escape. Frank would save her from the house, from the hard work, from fear, and perhaps from becoming like her mother. He would give her life, and maybe he would give her

love too. She wanted to live. She had a right to happiness, and she told herself that Frank would hold her, protect her, and save her.

Part 3

Eveline stood among the moving crowd at the station by the North Wall. Everything around her seemed to sway and press close. Frank held her hand, and she knew he was speaking to her. He said something about the journey again and again, but the words did not reach her clearly. Her mind was full of noise, fear, and darkness.

The station was crowded with soldiers carrying brown bags. People moved past her, and voices rose and fell in the great shed. Through the wide doors, she saw the dark shape of the boat beside the quay wall. Its small round windows were lit, and the light made the ship look alive. It was waiting to carry people away from Dublin, away from the life she had always known.

Eveline did not answer Frank. Her face felt cold and pale. Inside her, distress moved like a thick fog. She prayed silently to God to show her what she should do. She did not ask for happiness now. She asked only for direction, because she no longer trusted her own heart.

The boat gave a long, sad whistle into the mist. The sound passed through her body and made the moment final. If she went with Frank, tomorrow she would be on the sea, moving toward Buenos Aires. Their passage had already been arranged. Frank had planned everything and had done so much for her. Could she still draw back now?

Her fear became almost physical. She felt sick, and her lips moved in silent prayer. The world around her seemed too large and too strong. The sea, the ship, the strange country, marriage, duty, promise, and escape all came together in her mind. What had seemed like freedom at the window now felt like being pulled into deep water.

A bell rang sharply, and the sound struck her heart. Frank took her hand more strongly and said, “Come.” The people were moving forward. The boat was ready.

The moment for choice had arrived, and there was no more time to sit and think. Frank tried to draw her with him toward the barrier.

Then fear filled her completely. All the seas of the world seemed to rise around her heart. She felt that Frank was not saving her, but pulling her into something that would drown her. She caught the iron railing with both hands. Her fingers closed around it with desperate strength, and she would not let go.

Frank said again, “Come.” But Eveline could not move. In her mind she cried no, no, no. It was impossible. Her hands held the iron as if it were the only solid thing left in the world. The crowd pressed and shifted around her, but she stayed fixed in place.

Frank crossed beyond the barrier and called back to her. He called her name and then called her by the softer name he used for her. People shouted at him to move on, but he still called to her. His voice came through the noise with pain and surprise. He could not understand why she did not follow.

Eveline looked at him with a white face. She did not speak. She did not wave. She did not give him a sign of love, farewell, or recognition. Her eyes were empty, like the eyes of a helpless animal. She had dreamed of escape, but at the final moment she could not leave.

After the Race

Part 1

The cars came quickly toward Dublin along the Naas Road. They ran smoothly, one after another, as if the road itself were carrying them home. At the top of the hill at Inchicore, groups of people had gathered to watch them pass. These people were poor and had little part in the world of rich men and fast machines. Still, when the cars came near, they cheered loudly.

The loudest cheers were for the blue cars. These were the cars of the French team, and the crowd felt that the French were their friends. The French cars had not won first place, but they had done very well. People said that the winning driver, though he drove a German car, was really Belgian. So the French seemed almost like winners, and every blue car received a warm welcome as it came over the hill.

In one of the blue cars sat four young men. They were in very high spirits. The owner of the car was Charles Ségouin, a young Frenchman. Beside him was his cousin André Rivière, a young man born in Canada who knew about electricity. In the back sat a large Hungarian named Villona and a neatly dressed young Irishman named Jimmy Doyle.

Ségouin was happy because his business plans were going well. He was going to open a motor business in Paris, and he had already received some orders. Rivière was happy because he expected to become manager of that business. The two cousins were also pleased because the French cars had done well in the race. Their laughter came back over their shoulders as the car moved quickly along the road.

Villona was happy for simpler reasons. He had eaten a very good lunch, and he was cheerful by nature. He had a deep voice and kept humming music as they drove. Jimmy Doyle, however, was not exactly happy in the same easy way. He was too excited to be calm. His mind was full of speed, money, pride, and the wish to belong to this bright foreign company.

Jimmy was about twenty-six years old. He had a light brown moustache and grey eyes that made him look rather innocent. His father had not always been rich. In youth, his father had been interested in Irish political ideas, but later he changed his way of thinking. He made money as a butcher in Kingstown, then opened more shops in Dublin and nearby places. In time, he became very rich and was spoken of in the newspapers as an important businessman.

Jimmy's father had paid for him to be educated well. First Jimmy was sent to a large Catholic school in England. Later he went to Dublin University to study law. But Jimmy did not study very seriously. He had money, many friends, and a taste for pleasure. For a time, his life moved between music, motor cars, and expensive company.

After that, his father sent him to Cambridge for a term so that he could see something of the world. Jimmy spent too much money there, but his father paid the bills. The father complained, but he was secretly proud too. It pleased him that his son could move among young men of class and style. At Cambridge, Jimmy had met Ségouin, though they did not yet know each other very deeply.

Jimmy liked Ségouin very much. Ségouin seemed to know the world, and people said he owned large hotels in France. A man like that was useful to know, and Jimmy's father thought so too. But Ségouin was not only useful. He was charming, easy, and full of confidence. Jimmy felt proud to be seen with him.

Villona was also pleasant company. He was a fine pianist and had a large, warm manner. But he was poor, and that made him different from Ségouin. Jimmy understood this difference without saying it clearly to himself. He admired talent, but he admired money and worldly success more. Around Ségouin, he felt close to a life that seemed bigger and brighter than his own.

The car ran on joyfully with its cargo of young men. Ségouin and Rivière sat in front, and Jimmy and Villona sat behind them. Villona hummed in his deep voice for miles. The Frenchmen laughed and spoke quickly, throwing words back over their shoulders. Jimmy often had to lean forward to hear them, then guess the meaning and shout back a suitable answer through the wind.

It was not always easy for him. The car was noisy, Villona was humming, and

the Frenchmen spoke fast. Still, Jimmy did not want to seem slow or outside the group. He wanted to answer at the right moment and laugh with the others. The speed of the car excited him. So did the attention of the crowd. So did the thought that he had money in his power.

Earlier that day, many of Jimmy's friends had seen him with these young men from the Continent. At one stopping place, Ségouin had introduced him to one of the French drivers. Jimmy had said a confused word of praise, and the driver had smiled with bright white teeth. After that, it had felt wonderful to return to the ordinary crowd and receive looks of notice from people he knew. He felt that he had crossed, for a moment, into a higher world.

Money also excited him, though it made him uneasy. He had a large sum under his control. Ségouin might not think it very large, but Jimmy knew it was serious money. His father had worked hard to make money, and Jimmy had enough business sense to understand that. In the past, this thought had sometimes kept him from spending too wildly. Now it mattered even more, because he was preparing to put much of his money into Ségouin's motor business.

Of course, everyone said the investment was good. Ségouin had made Jimmy feel that he was being allowed into the business as a friend. It seemed almost like a favour that Irish money could join this French plan. Jimmy trusted his father's sharp business mind, and his father had first suggested the investment. There was money to be made in motor cars, perhaps a great deal of money.

Ségouin also looked like wealth itself. The car in which Jimmy sat was smooth, strong, and grand. As it flew along the country roads, Jimmy tried to imagine how many days of work such a machine represented. But the thought did not make the car less magical. Its speed seemed to touch his nerves and make his whole body answer. Sitting there, among foreign friends, money, cheers, and motion, Jimmy felt that life itself was racing forward.

Part 2

The car came down into Dublin and entered Dame Street. The street was

unusually busy because of the race. Motor horns sounded, tram bells rang, and people moved about under the pale evening lights. Near the Bank, Ségouin stopped the car, and Jimmy and Villona got out. A small crowd gathered at once to look at the motor, as if it were some fine animal that had entered the city.

Jimmy and Villona pushed their way through the people. The car moved away slowly toward Grafton Street, and Jimmy watched it go with a small feeling of loss. It was strange to be on foot again after such speed. The city seemed slower and heavier around him. He and Villona walked northward, while the summer evening hung over Dublin in a soft haze of light.

The party was to dine together later at Ségouin's hotel. Before that, Jimmy and Villona went to Jimmy's house to dress. In Jimmy's family, the dinner had become an important event. His parents felt both proud and nervous. Great foreign names had power over them, and they were pleased that Jimmy could move among such people.

Jimmy looked well when he was dressed for dinner. He stood in the hall, carefully fixing his tie. His father watched him with quiet satisfaction. Perhaps he felt that his money had bought something useful after all. It had helped his son gain manners, confidence, and social chances that were not easy to buy directly.

Jimmy's father was especially polite to Villona. He treated the Hungarian's foreign talent with real respect. But Villona probably did not notice all the careful meaning in his host's behaviour. He was beginning to feel very hungry. Music, friendship, and society were good things, but at that moment dinner mattered more to him.

The dinner at Ségouin's hotel was excellent. Jimmy thought that Ségouin had very fine taste. The room was comfortable and private, and electric candle lamps gave it a soft, modern light. Another young man joined them there: an Englishman named Routh, whom Jimmy had seen before with Ségouin at Cambridge. Now there were five young men at the table.

They ate and drank well, and soon their talk became lively. Each man had his own kind of confidence. Ségouin guided the conversation like a careful host. Rivière spoke quickly and brightly. Villona's deep voice rose with energy

whenever music was mentioned. Routh was cooler and more controlled, as if English manners held him in place.

Jimmy listened and joined in whenever he could. His imagination was excited by the mixture of people around him. The Frenchmen seemed quick and graceful. The Englishman seemed firm and correct. Villona seemed large, warm, and full of feeling. Jimmy felt that he was sitting at the centre of a rich, international life, and he wanted very much to belong to it.

Villona began to speak about music to Routh. He talked with great respect about old English songs and old instruments. Routh listened with mild surprise, as if he had not expected a Hungarian to admire such things so strongly. At the same time, Rivière explained to Jimmy why the French motor makers had done so well. Jimmy listened carefully, though some of the quick technical talk passed beyond him.

The room became warmer as the talk continued. The young men's tongues were loosened by food, drink, and pride. Ségouin then turned the talk toward politics. This was dangerous ground, but it interested everyone. Jimmy felt something of his father's old political feeling wake inside him. He spoke more strongly than before, helped by the generous mood of the evening.

Routh, who had seemed rather sleepy in spirit, became more alert. The discussion grew sharper. Different nations, different histories, and different prides entered the room with them. For a moment, the talk came close to real anger. Ségouin saw the danger and worked to keep everyone friendly. He lifted his glass and offered a toast to humanity.

The word was large enough to cover them all. They drank the toast, and the sharp feeling passed. Then Ségouin opened a window, as if to let the heat and danger out of the room. Cool night air entered. The men laughed again, and the dinner moved back into pleasure. Jimmy felt relieved, but also proud that he had taken part in serious talk with such men.

That night, Dublin seemed to wear the face of a capital city. The five young men walked together along Stephen's Green, smoking and talking loudly. Their cloaks hung from their shoulders, and people made way for them as they passed.

Jimmy enjoyed this. He felt seen, important, and free. The ordinary city seemed to bend a little before their noise and confidence.

Yet beneath his pleasure, he was not completely at ease. He had to keep up with the others in speech, money, laughter, and courage. He did not want anyone to see doubt in him. He wanted to be one of them, not merely an Irish guest with money to invest. Every laugh and every bold word became part of his effort to stay inside their bright circle.

The evening continued to open before them. The lights of the city shone through the warm night, and the streets seemed full of promise. The men were not ready to stop. Food had led to drink, drink had led to talk, and talk now led them outward into the city. Jimmy walked with the others, excited and a little tired, while the night carried them toward whatever pleasure would come next.

Part 3

At the corner of Grafton Street, a short fat man was helping two handsome ladies into a car. Another fat man was taking charge of them, and the car soon drove away. Then the short fat man saw the group of young men. He called out to André Rivière, and Rivière at once called back his name. The man was Farley, an American, and his arrival brought a fresh rush of noise and greeting.

Everyone began talking at once. No one seemed to know exactly what the talk was about, but that did not matter. Villona and Rivière were the loudest, but all of them were excited. The evening had already become a chain of pleasures, and Farley was another bright link in it. Jimmy was carried along by the voices, the laughter, and the feeling that the night was still young.

They all climbed onto a car, pushing close together and laughing at their own crowding. The city moved past them in soft colours. Bells sounded, wheels turned, and the warm night air touched their faces. To Jimmy, everything seemed to happen more quickly than usual. One pleasure had hardly begun before another one appeared.

They took the train at Westland Row. To Jimmy it seemed only a moment

before they were walking out of Kingstown Station. The ticket collector knew him and greeted him respectfully. “Fine night, sir,” the old man said. Jimmy liked the greeting. It reminded him that he had a place in this world of money, travel, and public notice.

The harbour lay below them like a dark mirror. The summer night was calm, and the water held small pieces of light. The young men walked toward it with linked arms, singing a French song together. At parts of the song, they stamped their feet and cried out loudly. Their voices sounded bold in the night, as if the harbour and the quiet town belonged to them.

At the slip, they got into a small rowboat and went out toward Farley’s yacht. There would be more food, more music, and cards. Villona looked around him with deep pleasure and said that it was delightful. Jimmy agreed in his heart. The yacht seemed like another sign that he had entered a freer and richer life.

There was a piano in the cabin. Villona sat down and played a waltz. Farley and Rivière danced together for fun, one acting the man’s part and the other the woman’s. Then the others joined in a rough little dance, making up figures as they went along. Everyone laughed. Jimmy joined with energy, telling himself that this was really seeing life.

After a while, Farley became out of breath and cried for them to stop. A man brought in a light supper, and the young men sat down. They did not eat very seriously, but they drank. That seemed more important. They drank to Ireland, England, France, Hungary, and the United States. Every country seemed friendly when it was named with a glass in the hand.

Jimmy made a speech. It was a long speech, though later he could not have repeated much of it. Whenever he paused, Villona cried, “Hear, hear!” in a loud friendly voice. When Jimmy sat down, everyone clapped. He felt that the speech must have been good. Farley struck him on the back and laughed loudly, and Jimmy’s heart filled with pleasure.

What good company they were, he thought. What lively, generous fellows. Their laughter seemed to protect him from doubt. Their foreign names, easy manners, and careless spending made him feel that he was no longer an ordinary

young man from Dublin. He was one of them, or almost one of them. For the moment, that was enough.

Then someone called for cards. The table was cleared quickly. Villona went back to the piano and began to play quietly for them. The others sat down and played game after game. They threw themselves into the play boldly, as if losing money were only another kind of sport. They drank to the Queen of Hearts and the Queen of Diamonds, and the jokes flashed around the table.

Jimmy felt that something was missing because there was no audience. Their wit was bright, and he wanted people to hear it. The play grew higher and higher. Soon written promises of payment began to pass across the table. Jimmy did not know exactly who was winning. But he knew that he was losing.

It was partly his own fault. He often mistook his cards, and the others had to help count what he owed. They were wonderful fellows, he told himself, bold and clever and full of life. Yet he began to wish they would stop. It was very late, and the pleasure was becoming heavy. Still, when someone toasted Farley's yacht, *The Belle of Newport*, everyone drank again.

Then someone proposed one great final game. The piano had stopped, and Villona must have gone up on deck. The cabin felt closer without the music. The game was terrible to Jimmy because he knew he would lose, though he was still excited by it. Just before the end, they stopped to drink for luck. Jimmy understood that the real fight was between Routh and Ségouin.

The men stood up to play the last tricks. They talked, moved their hands, and leaned over the table. Jimmy watched them with a hot, confused mind. How much had he lost? How much had he written away? He could not hold the numbers clearly. Then Routh won, and the cabin shook with cheers.

The cards were gathered together, and the men began to collect what they had won. Farley and Jimmy were the greatest losers. Jimmy knew that in the morning he would regret everything. But for the moment he was glad that it was over. He welcomed the dark, dull tiredness that came over him, because it would cover his foolishness for a little while.

He leaned his elbows on the table and rested his head between his hands. His

temples beat heavily, and he counted the beats without meaning to. The laughter and heat of the night seemed far away now. Then the cabin door opened. Villona stood there in a shaft of grey light and said, “Daybreak, gentlemen!”

Two Gallants

Part 1

The warm grey evening of August had come down over Dublin. A soft air, like a last memory of summer, moved through the streets. It was Sunday, and many shops were closed for rest, but the streets were full of people. The lamps shone high above the crowd, and below them the moving colours of clothes and faces changed all the time. From the crowd rose one steady sound, a low murmur that filled the evening air.

Two young men came down the hill from Rutland Square. One of them had just finished a long story. The other walked at the edge of the path and sometimes had to step into the road because his friend took up too much room. He listened with an amused face. He was short, round, and red-faced, with a yachting cap pushed back from his forehead.

This man was Lenehan. As he listened, little waves of expression moved across his face. His eyes shone with sly pleasure, and he kept glancing at his friend to show that he was enjoying the story. He had a light raincoat thrown over one shoulder in a showy way. His clothes tried to make him look young and lively. But his body was growing thick at the waist, his hair was thin and grey, and when he stopped smiling his face looked worn.

When he was sure that Corley's story had ended, Lenehan laughed silently for a long time. Then he said, "Well, that is really something." He tried to make the answer sound clever and playful. But his voice had little strength left in it. He had been talking all afternoon in a public house, and his tongue was tired.

Many people thought of Lenehan as a man who lived on others. Still, he was clever enough not to be fully pushed away. He knew how to come near a group of friends in a bar and stand at the edge until someone included him in a round of drinks. He had many stories, jokes, and riddles ready. He could bear rude treatment if it gave him a chance to stay with people. No one knew exactly how he lived, though his name was sometimes connected with racing papers.

After a little silence, Lenehan asked, “Where did you meet her, Corley?” Corley quickly passed his tongue over his upper lip. Then he began to explain. One night, he said, he had been walking along Dame Street when he saw a good-looking young woman under a clock. He spoke to her, and they went for a walk near the canal. She told him that she worked as a servant in a house in Baggot Street.

Corley spoke of her as if she were something he had found and could use. He said that he met her again the next Sunday and took her out to Donnybrook. She had brought him cigarettes and had paid for their tram rides. Once, she had even brought him two fine cigars that belonged to the man of the house where she worked. Corley seemed proud of this. He did not speak with kindness, but with satisfaction.

Lenehan listened closely and laughed again. He asked whether perhaps the young woman thought Corley would marry her. Corley said he had told her that he had no job and that he worked in a shop, but she did not know his real name. He had been careful not to tell her too much. Still, she thought he was a gentleman, or at least a man above her. That pleased him very much.

Lenehan said that this was one of the best stories he had ever heard. Corley accepted the praise in his walk. He was a large, heavy young man, the son of a police inspector, and he had his father’s strong body and manner. He walked upright, with his hands at his sides and his head swinging a little from side to side. His way of walking forced Lenehan to skip now and then from the path to the road and back again.

Corley was not handsome, but he looked strong and sure of himself. His large head, heavy body, and slow movements gave him a kind of power. He seemed to enjoy making Lenehan follow him. Lenehan did follow him, half friend and half servant. He laughed, asked questions, and made Corley feel important.

They went on talking about women. Corley said he used to have chances with a housemaid in a fine house, and that he had lost that chance by not acting in time. He spoke as if women were tricks to be managed, not people with hearts of their own. Lenehan listened with interest and envy. He knew Corley was rough, but he

also admired his confidence.

Lenehan asked again about the girl they were going to meet. He wanted to know if Corley could really get what he wanted from her. Corley did not like being doubted. His face tightened for a moment, and he said he would manage it. Lenehan became careful at once. He did not want to anger Corley or lose his place beside him.

The two men passed along the railings of Trinity College. Lenehan looked up at the clock and said that it was twenty minutes past the hour. Corley said there was plenty of time. He liked to let the girl wait a little. Lenehan laughed softly and praised him again. He said Corley knew how to deal with women.

They turned into Kildare Street. Near a club porch, a harp player stood in the road, playing for a small group of listeners. His hands moved over the strings, but he looked tired and careless. The music was sad and deep, and it followed the two men as they walked away. For a short time they did not speak. The sound of the harp seemed to put a weight on them.

When they reached Stephen's Green, the noise of trams, lights, and people broke the silence. Corley suddenly said, "There she is." At the corner of Hume Street, a young woman was standing. She wore a blue dress and a white sailor hat, and she held a sunshade in one hand. Lenehan became lively at once. He wanted to have a look at her before Corley went to speak with her.

Corley looked at him with an unpleasant smile. He asked if Lenehan was trying to take her from him. Lenehan quickly said that he only wanted to see her. He did not want an introduction. Corley became easier and said he would go over and talk to her, while Lenehan could pass by and look. They agreed to meet later at half past ten, at the corner of Merrion Street.

Corley crossed the road slowly, moving his head from side to side. His heavy step and easy pace made him look like a man who expected to win. He did not greet the young woman politely, but began speaking to her at once. She swung her sunshade more quickly and turned a little on her heels as she listened. Once or twice, when he leaned close to speak, she laughed and bent her head. Lenehan watched them for a few minutes, then prepared to pass by and inspect her for

himself.

Part 2

Lenehan watched Corley and the young woman for a few minutes before he moved. He did not want to pass too soon, because he wished to see how the meeting began. Corley stood close to her and spoke with the easy manner of a man who felt sure of himself. The girl listened, turned a little on her heels, and swung her sunshade in her hand. When Corley bent nearer to speak, she laughed and lowered her head.

Then Lenehan began his little walk past them. He moved quickly beside the chains, keeping some distance at first. Then he crossed the road in a slanting line, as if he had some ordinary reason to pass the corner of Hume Street. But his eyes were busy. He looked at the young woman carefully and quickly, trying to take in everything before he had gone too far.

She was dressed in her Sunday clothes. Her blue skirt was held at the waist by a black leather belt with a large silver buckle. She wore a white blouse, a short black jacket, and a dark boa around her neck. Red flowers were pinned at her breast. She had clearly tried to make herself look fine for the evening. Lenehan noticed all this with approval.

He also noticed her body and face. She was short, strong-looking, and full of health. Her cheeks were red, and her blue eyes looked straight out at the world without shame. Her face was not delicate or soft. Her mouth was rather wide, and her front teeth stood forward a little. But to Lenehan, she looked lively, warm, and useful to Corley's plan.

As he passed, Lenehan took off his cap as if greeting them by chance. He did not stop. After a few seconds, Corley gave a careless answer to the greeting, lifting his hand in the air and changing the angle of his hat. It was not a real greeting to Lenehan. It was more like a sign that Corley had seen him and that everything was going as planned.

Lenehan walked on as far as the Shelbourne Hotel and stopped there. He

waited, keeping himself ready. After a little time, he saw Corley and the girl coming toward him. When they turned to the right, he followed them at a distance. His white shoes moved lightly along one side of Merrion Square. He walked slowly enough to keep behind them, but not so slowly that he would lose sight of them.

As he followed, he watched Corley's head. It turned again and again toward the young woman's face, like a large ball moving on a point. Corley seemed to be speaking all the time. The girl walked beside him, and from time to time her body moved with a small turn of interest or laughter. Lenehan could not hear their words, but he imagined the tone of Corley's voice. He knew the style of talk Corley would use: strong, easy, and full of false warmth.

Lenehan kept them in view until they reached the Donnybrook tram. He saw them climb the stairs to the upper part. Then the tram took them away from him. The plan had moved into its next stage, and now there was nothing for him to do but wait. He turned around and began to walk back by the way he had come.

Now that he was alone, his face changed. The lively look left it, and he seemed older. There was no friend beside him to impress, no one to make laugh, no one to flatter. His body still wore the clothes of a young man about town, but the evening air seemed to show the truth beneath them. He looked tired, poor, and a little empty.

As he walked by the railings of the Duke's Lawn, he let his hand run along the metal bars. The sad music of the harp player came back into his mind. Without thinking, his feet seemed to follow the tune, and his fingers moved along the railings as if they were playing another part of the music. The sound had followed him after he left the harpist, and now it seemed to guide his lonely steps.

He walked slowly around Stephen's Green and then down Grafton Street. The crowd was still there, but it no longer pleased him. His eyes noticed faces, clothes, movements, and chances for talk, yet he looked at them all with a sour feeling. Some women glanced at him in a way that might have invited boldness, but he did not answer their looks. For the moment, all the bright life of the street seemed thin and useless to him.

He had helped Corley toward his adventure, but he had none of his own. Corley was now riding away with the girl, trying to get what he wanted. Lenehan was left to walk the streets and wait for the result. He had played the clever friend, the watcher, and the helper. But when the pair disappeared on the tram, the part he had been playing ended, and the empty time before half past ten opened before him.

Part 3

Lenehan walked through the crowd with a tired and bitter face. The street was full of young men and girls, but their laughter did not please him now. He noticed them because that was his habit, but he felt no real interest. A little earlier, he had been lively beside Corley, asking questions and making jokes. Now he was alone, and the evening seemed long and empty before him.

He had to wait until half past ten before meeting Corley again. The problem troubled him more than he wished to admit. He could not go into company, because he would have to talk, invent stories, and make himself amusing. His brain felt dry, and his throat felt tired. He could think of no way to pass the time except to keep walking.

When he came near Rutland Square, he turned into a darker and quieter street. The shadow there suited his mood better than the bright crowd. He walked slowly, with no clear purpose, and then stopped before a poor-looking shop. White letters over the window said that it was a refreshment bar. On the glass were the words ginger beer and ginger ale.

Food was shown in the window. There was a cut ham on a large blue dish, and beside it lay a piece of very pale plum pudding. Lenehan looked at the food for some time. He was hungry, because he had eaten almost nothing since breakfast except a few biscuits. After looking up and down the street carefully, as if he did not want anyone to see him enter, he went quickly into the shop.

He sat down at a bare wooden table. Across from him were two working girls and a mechanic. A poorly dressed girl came to serve him. Lenehan asked how

much a plate of peas cost. When she told him the price, he ordered peas and a bottle of ginger beer. He spoke in a rough voice, because everyone had stopped talking when he came in, and he wanted to seem natural there.

His face was hot. He pushed his cap back on his head and put his elbows on the table. The mechanic and the two girls looked at him carefully, from one point to another, before they began their quiet talk again. Soon the girl brought him hot peas with pepper and vinegar, a fork, and his ginger beer. Lenehan began to eat quickly. The food tasted very good, and he made a note in his mind to remember the shop.

When he had finished the peas, he drank some of the ginger beer and sat for a while. His thoughts returned to Corley and the young woman. He imagined them walking together along some dark road. He imagined Corley speaking in his deep, strong voice, full of false kindness and easy lies. He saw again the young woman's wide smile and her bold face.

That picture made Lenehan feel his own poverty more sharply. He was poor not only in money, but also in spirit. He was tired of wandering about, finding small chances, and living by little tricks. He would be thirty-one in November. Was he never going to have a good job? Was he never going to have a home of his own?

He thought how pleasant it would be to sit beside a warm fire and eat a good dinner every day. He had walked the streets long enough with friends and women. He knew what those friends were worth, and he thought he knew women too. Life had made his heart hard. Yet hope had not fully left him. After eating, he felt a little stronger and less beaten.

Perhaps he could still settle down in some comfortable corner of life. Perhaps he could still be happy if he found a simple, kind girl with a little money. The thought was not noble, but it warmed him for a moment. He wanted comfort, food, fire, and safety. He wanted to stop moving from one small plan to another.

He paid the girl and went out of the shop. Then his wandering began again. He went into Capel Street and walked toward the City Hall. From there he turned into Dame Street. At the corner of George's Street, he met two friends and stopped to

talk with them. He was glad to rest from walking, even for a short time.

His friends asked whether he had seen Corley and what the latest news was. Lenehan said that he had spent the day with Corley. The friends did not say much. They looked blankly after people in the crowd and sometimes made small comments. One of them said he had seen Mac in Westmoreland Street an hour earlier. Lenehan said that he had been with Mac the night before in Egan's.

They talked about small matters, but there was no warmth in the talk. One man asked whether it was true that Mac had won some money over a billiard match. Lenehan did not know. He only said that Holohan had paid for drinks in Egan's. The words passed between them without much life. They were men who knew one another, but not men who gave one another real help.

Lenehan left them at a quarter to ten and walked up George's Street. He turned left near the City Markets and then went on toward Grafton Street. The crowd had become thinner now. Many young men and girls were saying good night to one another. The evening was beginning to end for other people, but for Lenehan the most important moment was still ahead.

He went as far as the clock at the College of Surgeons. It was striking ten. Then he started quickly along the north side of Stephen's Green, afraid that Corley might return early and not find him. When he reached the corner of Merrion Street, he stood in the shadow near a lamp. He took out one of the cigarettes he had saved and lit it.

Lenehan leaned against the lamp-post and watched the place from which Corley and the young woman should return. His waiting had become sharp and serious. The night air moved around him, and the street slowly lost its crowd. He thought of the girl, of Corley, and of the possible success of the plan. Then he stood still in the shadow, smoking and watching, while the rest of Dublin seemed to move past without him.

Part 4

Lenehan's mind became active again as he waited under the lamp. He

wondered whether Corley had succeeded. Had Corley already asked the young woman for what he wanted, or would he wait until the last possible moment? Lenehan felt the fear and excitement of the plan almost as if it were his own. Then he remembered Corley's slow, confident head and his heavy, sure walk. That memory calmed him a little, because Corley usually knew how to manage such things.

But then another thought struck him. What if Corley had taken the young woman home by another way and left him waiting there for nothing? Lenehan searched the street with worried eyes. There was no sign of them. Surely it had been half an hour since he had passed the clock at the College of Surgeons. Would Corley really play such a trick on him? He lit his last cigarette and began to smoke nervously.

Each time a tram stopped at the far corner of the square, Lenehan watched it closely. Perhaps they would appear from behind it. Perhaps they had already passed him. Perhaps the whole plan had failed. His cigarette paper broke, and he threw it into the road with an angry word. The waiting had become almost harder than the walking had been.

Suddenly he saw them coming toward him. He started with delight, but he kept close to the lamp-post and watched carefully. He tried to read the answer in their way of walking. They were moving quickly. The young woman took short, fast steps, while Corley kept beside her with his long stride. They did not seem to be speaking.

This silence troubled Lenehan. A sharp feeling passed through him, and he thought at once that Corley had failed. He knew it, or thought he knew it, from the way they walked. There was no easy laughter now, no close bending of heads, no sign of success. He felt the plan falling flat before it had even reached its end.

They turned down Baggot Street, and Lenehan followed at once on the other side of the road. When they stopped, he stopped too. He watched them talk for a few moments. Then the young woman went down the steps into the lower entrance of a house. Corley remained on the path, a little distance from the front steps, waiting.

Several minutes passed. The street seemed very quiet now. Then the hall door opened slowly and carefully. The young woman came running down the front steps and gave a small cough. Corley turned toward her. For a few seconds, his broad body hid her from Lenehan's view. Then she appeared again and ran back up the steps.

The door closed behind her. Corley turned away at once and began to walk quickly toward Stephen's Green. Lenehan hurried after him in the same direction. A few drops of light rain fell. Lenehan took them as a warning that the night was changing and that he must learn the result quickly.

He looked back once toward the house to make sure no one was watching him. Then he ran eagerly across the road. His worry and his quick running made him breathe hard. He called out, "Corley!" Corley turned his head for a moment to see who had called, but he did not stop. He only continued walking as before.

Lenehan ran after him and fixed his raincoat on his shoulders with one hand. He called again. At last he came level with his friend and looked closely into his face. Corley's face gave him no answer. It was calm, heavy, and closed. Lenehan could not tell whether this meant success or failure.

"Well?" Lenehan asked. "Did it work?" They had reached the corner of Ely Place. Corley still did not answer. He turned left and went up the side street. His face remained stern and quiet, as if he were carrying an important secret. Lenehan kept beside him, breathing unevenly and growing more anxious.

The silence began to anger him. "Can't you tell me?" he asked. "Did you ask her?" His voice had a sharp note in it now. He had waited too long, walked too far, and worried too much to be treated like this. He needed the answer. He needed to know whether Corley had won.

Corley stopped under the first lamp. He looked straight ahead for a moment with a serious face. Then, with a slow and grave movement, he stretched one hand toward the light. Lenehan stared at it. Corley smiled and opened his hand slowly, as if showing something holy to a follower.

A small gold coin shone in his palm. Lenehan looked at it, and the whole evening came together in that little circle of light. Corley had succeeded. The girl

had given him money, and the plan had worked. Nothing more needed to be said. The coin, bright in Corley's open hand, was the answer to all Lenehan's waiting.

The Boarding House

Part 1

Mrs Mooney was a butcher's daughter. She was a strong woman, and she knew how to keep her thoughts to herself until the right moment came. When she was younger, she had married her father's foreman, and together they opened a butcher's shop near Spring Gardens. At first, the marriage and the business may have seemed safe enough. But after her father died, Mr Mooney began to fall apart.

He drank too much, took money from the shop, and went deeply into debt. People tried to make him promise that he would stop drinking, but such promises did not last. After a few days, he always began again. He quarrelled with his wife in front of customers and bought bad meat for the shop. Little by little, he destroyed the business that should have supported his family.

One night, his violence became too dangerous to ignore. He went after his wife with the heavy knife used for cutting meat. Mrs Mooney had to leave the house and sleep in a neighbour's home. After that, she would not live with him again. She went to the priest, arranged a separation, and kept the children with her.

She gave her husband no money, no food, and no place in her house. So he had to take a poor, unpleasant job connected with court officers and debt collection. He became a shabby little drunkard with a white face, white moustache, and white eyebrows. His eyes were small and red-looking. All day, he sat waiting to be sent out on some disagreeable piece of work.

Mrs Mooney took what money she could save from the failed butcher business and opened a boarding house in Hardwicke Street. She was a large, impressive woman, and the house suited her power. Some people came and went: visitors from Liverpool and the Isle of Man, and sometimes singers or performers from music halls. But the steady residents were mostly clerks who worked in the city. Mrs Mooney ruled them carefully and firmly.

She knew when to give credit and when to be strict. She also knew when it was better to say nothing. The young men in the house called her "the Madam."

They paid fifteen shillings a week for room and board, though beer or stout at dinner was not included. They had many of the same interests and were friendly with one another. They talked about horse races, performers, and the small excitements of city life.

Mrs Mooney's son, Jack, was also part of this world. He worked as a clerk for a commission agent in Fleet Street, but he had a rough reputation. He liked soldiers' bad language and often came home very late. He could fight with his fists, sing comic songs, and tell stories that made the other young men laugh. People treated him carefully because they knew he could be dangerous if crossed.

On Sunday nights, there was often a gathering in Mrs Mooney's front drawing-room. Some of the music-hall people would perform if they were staying in the house. Sheridan played waltzes and polkas on the piano, and he could also play simple music to support a singer. The young men enjoyed these evenings. The room became full of songs, jokes, smoke, and easy talk.

Polly Mooney, the Madam's daughter, also sang at these gatherings. She was nineteen, slim, and lively, with soft fair hair and a small full mouth. Her eyes were grey with a little green in them, and when she spoke, she often looked upward. This gave her a strange innocent look, though she was not exactly innocent in manner. She knew how to attract attention without seeming too direct.

Mrs Mooney had first sent Polly to work as a typist in an office. But her father had begun to come there every few days, asking to speak to his daughter. He was not a respectable visitor, and Mrs Mooney did not want him near Polly's workplace. So she brought Polly back home and made her help with the housework. This also meant that Polly was often near the young men in the boarding house.

Mrs Mooney understood men well enough. Young men liked to feel that a young woman was not far away. Polly was lively, and she flirted with them. But Mrs Mooney watched everything with a sharp eye. She knew that most of the young men were only passing the time. They enjoyed Polly's smile and songs, but they did not intend anything serious.

For a long time, things continued in this way. Mrs Mooney even began to think

that perhaps she should send Polly back to office work. Then she noticed that something different was happening between Polly and one of the young men. She did not speak at once. She watched the pair and kept her thoughts to herself. Polly knew that her mother was watching, and the young man also began to look troubled.

People in the house started to talk. Still, Mrs Mooney waited. She did not openly help the affair, but she also did not stop it. Her silence had meaning, and Polly understood that meaning. At last, when Mrs Mooney judged that the right moment had come, she decided to act. She dealt with moral problems in a direct, hard way, like a butcher cutting meat, and in this case she had already made up her mind.

Part 2

It was a bright Sunday morning in early summer. The day promised heat, but a fresh wind still moved through the street. All the windows of the boarding house were open, and the lace curtains lifted softly toward the street. The bells of George's Church rang again and again. People crossed the little space before the church, walking quietly with prayer books in their gloved hands.

Breakfast was over in the boarding house. The breakfast-room table was covered with dirty plates, with yellow marks from eggs and small pieces of bacon left on them. Mrs Mooney sat in a straw armchair and watched Mary, the servant, clear the table. She told Mary to collect the pieces of broken bread so they could be used later for bread pudding. She also made sure that the sugar and butter were locked away safely.

When these small matters were finished, Mrs Mooney began to think again about her talk with Polly the night before. Things were just as she had suspected. She had asked plain questions, and Polly had given plain answers. The talk had been difficult for both of them. Mrs Mooney did not want to seem too easy about the matter, and Polly did not want her mother to think she had understood too clearly why her mother had stayed silent for so long.

Mrs Mooney looked at the small gold clock on the mantelpiece. The bells of George's Church had stopped, and it was seventeen minutes past eleven. She still had enough time to speak with Mr Doran and then go to the short twelve o'clock Mass in Marlborough Street. She felt sure she would win. In her mind, the case was simple. She was the wronged mother, and public opinion would be on her side.

She had allowed Mr Doran to live under her roof because she had believed he was an honourable man. Now, in her view, he had used that trust badly. He was not a very young man who could claim not to understand life. He was about thirty-four or thirty-five and had seen enough of the world. Polly was young, and Mrs Mooney could say that he had taken advantage of her.

Mrs Mooney thought that something had to be done. A man could walk away from such an affair and continue his life almost as before. A girl could not. The shame and talk would fall more heavily on her. Some mothers might accept money and hide the matter, but Mrs Mooney would not do that. For her, there was only one proper answer: marriage.

Before sending Mary up to Mr Doran's room, Mrs Mooney counted her chances again. She felt more and more certain. Mr Doran was a serious young man, not loud or careless like some of the other lodgers. If the man had been Sheridan, Meade, or Bantam Lyons, she knew the matter would have been harder. But Mr Doran would not want a public scandal.

Everyone in the house already knew something. Some people had added details of their own, as people always do when they gossip. Mr Doran had worked for thirteen years in a large Catholic wine merchant's office. If the story became public, his employer might hear of it, and he might lose his job. If he agreed to marry Polly, however, everything could be made respectable. Mrs Mooney also knew that he earned good money and probably had some savings.

It was nearly half past eleven. Mrs Mooney stood up and looked at herself in the tall mirror. Her large red face looked firm and decided, and this pleased her. She thought of other mothers who could not get their daughters married. She did not feel weak like them. She had waited, watched, and chosen her time, and now

she was ready to act.

In his room, Mr Doran was very anxious that Sunday morning. He had tried twice to shave, but his hand shook so much that he had to stop. A reddish beard of three days covered his jaw. Every few minutes, his glasses became misty, and he had to take them off and clean them with his handkerchief. He could not make his body quiet, because his mind would not rest.

He remembered his confession from the night before, and the memory gave him great pain. The priest had asked about every shameful detail of the affair. By the end, Mr Doran felt that his sin had been made larger and heavier before him. Still, the priest had shown him one way out: he could make things right by marrying Polly. The harm was already done. What could he do now except marry her or run away?

He knew he could not face the matter boldly and simply refuse. Dublin was too small a city. Everyone knew everyone else's business, and the story would surely be talked about. His employer would hear it. In his excited mind, he could almost hear old Mr Leonard's rough voice calling for him at the office. Thirteen years of careful work could be lost because of this one affair.

He thought of his past life. When he was younger, he had lived more freely and had boasted in public houses about not believing in God. But that time was mostly over. Now he usually lived a regular life and did his religious duties. He had enough money to settle down, so money was not the main problem. The problem was Polly herself, and the family he would have to join.

He feared that his own family would look down on Polly. Her father was a shameful drunkard, and her mother's boarding house had a name that was not fully respectable. Mr Doran felt that he had been trapped. He imagined his friends hearing the story and laughing at him. Polly was a little common in her speech too, and sometimes she used words and grammar that made him feel superior to her.

But then he asked himself whether such things mattered if he truly loved her. He could not decide whether he loved her, pitied her, or looked down on her. He knew that she had not acted alone. He had taken part in everything too. Yet a voice

inside him still told him to stay free. Marriage seemed to him like the end of freedom, and the thought frightened him.

While he sat helplessly on the side of his bed, wearing only his shirt and trousers, Polly tapped softly at his door and came in. She told him that she had told her mother everything. Her mother would speak with him that morning. Polly cried and put her arms around his neck. “Oh, Bob,” she said, “what am I going to do? What am I going to do?”

She said she could not live if things went badly. Mr Doran tried weakly to comfort her. He told her not to cry and said that everything would be all right. But he did not feel sure of his own words. He felt her shaking against him, and the closeness of her body brought back many memories. It was not, he told himself, completely his fault that things had happened.

He remembered the first small touches between them. He remembered her dress brushing him, her breath near him, and her fingers giving him quiet signs. One night, when he was undressing for bed, she had tapped at his door because her candle had gone out. She wanted to light it again from his candle. She had just had her bath, and the light, the open jacket, the slippers, and the faint smell from her skin and hands had stayed in his memory.

On nights when he came home late, Polly was often the one who warmed his dinner. The house was asleep, and they were alone together. He hardly knew what he was eating because she was beside him in the quiet room. If the night was cold, wet, or windy, she had a small hot drink ready for him. He remembered her care, her eyes, her hand, and their slow good nights on the stairs. Perhaps, he thought for a moment, they might be happy together.

Part 3

Mr Doran remembered how he and Polly used to go upstairs together at night. Each of them carried a candle, and they walked quietly because the house was asleep. On the third landing, they would stop and say good night, but the good night was never quick. They did not want to separate at once. They kissed there

in the half-dark, and now he remembered her eyes, her hand, and the wild feeling that had come over him.

But that wild feeling had passed. Now he was left with fear and duty. Polly had asked, “What am I going to do?” and the same question returned to him in another form. What was he going to do? His wish to stay free warned him to hold back. But his religious fear, his sense of honour, and the danger of public shame all pushed him toward marriage.

While he sat beside Polly on the bed, Mary came to the door. She said that Mrs Mooney wanted to see him in the parlour. Mr Doran stood up and began to put on his waistcoat and coat. He felt more helpless than before. When he was dressed, he went back to Polly and tried again to comfort her. He said that everything would be all right, though he himself was not sure of it.

He left her crying on the bed and speaking softly to God. As he went down the stairs, his glasses became wet with mist again, and he had to take them off and clean them. He wanted to rise through the roof and fly away to some country where he would never hear of this trouble again. But no such escape was possible. Step by step, something stronger than his will pushed him downstairs.

In his mind, he saw the hard faces of his employer and Mrs Mooney. Both faces seemed to watch his shame. On the last part of the stairs, he met Jack Mooney, who was coming up from the pantry with two bottles of beer. They greeted each other coldly. Mr Doran’s eyes rested for a moment on Jack’s thick strong face and short heavy arms. When Mr Doran reached the bottom of the stairs, he looked up and saw Jack watching him from a doorway.

Suddenly Mr Doran remembered another night in the boarding house. One of the music-hall men, a small fair-haired man from London, had made a rather free joke about Polly. The evening had almost ended in violence. Everyone had tried to calm Jack. The man from London kept smiling and saying that he had meant no harm, but Jack was furious. He shouted that if any man played such a game with his sister, he would knock his teeth down his throat.

The memory made Mr Doran feel even more trapped. Mrs Mooney waited below, and Jack’s anger stood behind him like a threat. His job, his religion, his

name, and his safety were all pressing on him at the same time. He could not move freely in any direction. So he went on toward the parlour, already feeling that the talk had been decided before it began.

Upstairs, Polly sat for a while on the side of the bed and cried. Then she dried her eyes and went to the looking glass. She dipped the end of a towel into the water jug and cooled her eyes with it. She looked at her face from the side and fixed a hairpin above her ear. Then she returned to the bed and sat at the foot of it.

She looked at the pillows for a long time. The sight of them brought quiet secret memories into her mind. She rested the back of her neck against the cool iron rail of the bed and fell into thought. The fear that had been visible on her face a few minutes before was gone now. She no longer looked like a girl in danger.

Polly waited patiently, almost cheerfully. Her memories slowly changed into hopes and pictures of the future. She thought so deeply about these hopes that she no longer saw the white pillows at which she was looking. She almost forgot that she was waiting for anything. The room was quiet, and her face stayed calm.

At last she heard her mother calling from below. Polly started up from the bed and ran to the banisters. Her mother called, “Polly! Polly!” Polly answered, “Yes, mamma?” Then Mrs Mooney called up, “Come down, dear. Mr Doran wants to speak to you.” At that moment Polly remembered fully what she had been waiting for.

A Little Cloud

Part 1

Eight years earlier, Little Chandler had gone to the North Wall to see his friend Gallaher leave Dublin. At that time, Gallaher had been poor and uncertain, but now he had succeeded. Little Chandler could tell this from the way people spoke of him, and from the way Gallaher now carried himself. He had travelled, he wore good clothes, and his voice had become bold. Few men had talent like his, Little Chandler thought, and fewer still could succeed without becoming false or proud.

Since lunchtime, Little Chandler had thought of almost nothing except his meeting with Gallaher. Gallaher had invited him to meet that evening, and the invitation filled his mind with excitement. Gallaher lived in London now, that great city of newspapers, theatres, lights, and strong life. To Little Chandler, London seemed far larger than Dublin, not only in size but in possibility. It was a place where a man might become someone different.

Little Chandler was called "Little Chandler" not because he was very short, but because everything about him seemed small and delicate. His hands were white and narrow, his body was slight, and his voice was soft. He was careful in his manners and always looked neat. He paid special attention to his fair hair and moustache. Even his smile seemed small and young, showing clean white teeth.

He sat at his desk in the King's Inns and thought about the changes of the last eight years. Gallaher had become an important man on the London newspapers. Little Chandler, meanwhile, still sat at a desk, doing dull office work. Again and again, he turned from his writing and looked out of the window. The late autumn sun lay warmly over the grass, the paths, the nurses, the old men on benches, and the children running and shouting.

The sight made him thoughtful and sad. Whenever Little Chandler thought about life, sadness came over him gently, almost as if it were an old friend. He felt that fortune was stronger than human effort. Some men went forward, while others stayed where they were. The thought seemed wise to him, but it did not

comfort him. It only made his own life feel small.

He remembered the poetry books on the shelves at home. He had bought them before his marriage, when he still liked to think of himself as a man of feeling. Many evenings, he had been tempted to take one of the books down and read a poem aloud to his wife. But he had always been too shy. So the books stayed in their places, quiet and unused, while he sometimes repeated lines silently to himself for comfort.

When the work hour ended, Little Chandler stood up from his desk. He said goodbye carefully to the other clerks, as he always did. Then he came out from under the old arch of the King's Inns, a neat and modest figure, and walked quickly down Henrietta Street. The sun was already fading, and the air had grown sharp. Dirty children filled the street, running, standing, sitting on steps, or playing near open doors.

Little Chandler did not think much about the children. He moved carefully through them and passed the old dark houses where noble people had once lived. The past of Dublin did not touch him at that moment. His mind was full of the present meeting and of the joy that waited before him. He was going to see Gallaher, the friend who had escaped and become successful.

He had never been inside Corless's, where they were to meet, but he knew its name. It was a place for people with money, people who went there after the theatre to eat oysters and drink special drinks. He had heard that the waiters there could speak French and German. Sometimes, when he passed it at night, he had seen cabs waiting outside and richly dressed ladies getting out quickly with men beside them. Their clothes made noise as they moved, and they seemed to belong to a world of danger and pleasure.

Little Chandler had always hurried past such places. Even in the daytime, he walked quickly in the city, and at night he walked even faster. Late streets made him both afraid and excited. Sometimes he almost looked for this fear. He chose dark, narrow streets and walked through them boldly, though the silence around his steps troubled him. If he heard low laughter somewhere in the dark, he trembled like a leaf.

Now he turned toward Capel Street, and his thoughts returned to Gallaher. Ignatius Gallaher on the London press! Who would have believed it eight years ago? Yet, when Little Chandler looked back, he could remember signs of greatness in his friend. People had called Gallaher wild, and it was true that he had drunk freely, borrowed money, and mixed with careless men. But no one had ever denied his talent.

Gallaher had always had something in him that impressed people. Even when he was poorly dressed and short of money, he kept a bold face. Little Chandler remembered one of his friend's old sayings when things were difficult. Gallaher would laugh and say it was only half time and that he needed his thinking cap. That was exactly like Gallaher: careless, clever, and brave. Little Chandler felt a small flush of pride because such a man had once been his friend.

He quickened his pace. For the first time in his life, he felt above the people he passed. Capel Street looked dull and ugly to him, and he disliked its rough shops and ordinary faces. He felt sure that a man had to leave Dublin if he wanted to succeed. Nothing great could be done there. Dublin held people down, made them small, and then taught them to call that smallness wisdom.

When he crossed Grattan Bridge, he looked down the river toward the lower quays. The houses along the river seemed poor and stunted, as if they too had failed to grow. He thought of London again, of wide streets, newspapers, theatres, and men who made names for themselves. His own life suddenly seemed like a room with low walls. He had lived quietly, married, worked, and kept his feelings hidden, while Gallaher had gone out into the world.

A new thought came to him, soft but exciting. Perhaps he himself was not without talent. Perhaps his sadness, his quiet feelings, and his love of poetry were signs of something deeper. He imagined poems written by himself, delicate and full of regret. His name might appear on the title page in a better form than "Little Chandler." Perhaps "Thomas Malone Chandler" would sound stronger, or even "T. Malone Chandler." He would ask Gallaher what he thought.

He followed this dream so eagerly that he passed the street he needed and had to turn back. As he came nearer to Corless's, his excitement changed into

nervousness. He slowed down before the door and stood there for a moment, unable to enter. Inside were light, noise, men of the world, and Gallaher himself. At last Little Chandler gathered his courage, opened the door, and went in.

Part 2

Inside Corless's, Little Chandler felt at once that he had entered a different world. The light, the mirrors, the soft seats, and the quiet movement of the waiters made him feel shy. He saw men sitting easily at tables, drinking and talking as if such places belonged to them. For a moment, he stood near the door and searched the room with nervous eyes. Then he saw Gallaher and felt a sudden rush of pleasure and fear.

Gallaher looked very different from the young man Little Chandler had known eight years before. His clothes were well made, and he wore them with careless confidence. His face was stronger and fuller, and his manner had become bold. He greeted Little Chandler warmly, but even his warmth seemed larger than Dublin warmth. It seemed to come from a man who had seen much and was not afraid of anyone.

"Well, Tommy," Gallaher said, taking his hand, "here you are at last." Little Chandler smiled and answered softly. He was glad that Gallaher still used the old friendly name, though it made him feel young and small. They sat down together, and Gallaher called to the waiter as if he came there every day. Little Chandler noticed the easy way he ordered drinks and envied it.

At first, they spoke of old times. Gallaher asked about people they had both known, and Little Chandler answered as well as he could. Some had married, some had gone away, and some had done very little. Gallaher laughed at several names and remembered stories from the past. But he did not seem to belong to those memories anymore. He spoke of old Dublin as if it were a small room he had once lived in and had now left behind.

Little Chandler asked him about London. Gallaher leaned back and began to talk with great energy. He spoke of newspapers, theatres, night streets, strong

drink, clever men, and famous people. London, in his words, was noisy, hard, and full of life. A man had to be quick there, he said. If he was slow, stronger men passed over him without looking back.

Little Chandler listened closely. He felt both excited and hurt. Gallaher's life seemed full of danger and movement, while his own life had been quiet and narrow. Gallaher had known men with power. He had worked in the world of news, where everything happened quickly and everyone fought for notice. Little Chandler imagined offices lit late at night, writers running in with stories, and men making their names in print.

Gallaher did not speak modestly. He told stories in a loud, confident way, and he enjoyed the effect they had on his friend. He had seen London from the inside, he said. He knew what people did after dark, what was hidden under fine clothes, and what stories never reached quiet Dublin homes. Sometimes he lowered his voice, as if he were sharing secrets. Then he laughed loudly, as if nothing in the world could shock him.

Little Chandler was not sure that he liked this new manner. Gallaher's accent and words sounded rougher than he remembered. There was something showy in him now, something almost common. But Little Chandler quickly forgave this in his mind. Perhaps London had made him speak that way. Perhaps a man had to become hard and bright if he wanted to live in such a place.

Gallaher ordered more drink and urged Little Chandler to finish his glass. Little Chandler tried to drink slowly, but Gallaher teased him gently. "Come on, Tommy," he said. "You are too careful." Little Chandler smiled weakly and drank more than he had meant to drink. The warmth of the drink went through him and made the room seem less frightening.

Then Gallaher began to speak of Paris. His eyes brightened as he described it. Paris, he said, was the place to enjoy life. People there knew how to eat, drink, talk, walk, and look at women. They liked the Irish too, he added, and had treated him very well when they learned where he came from. He spoke as if every foreign city had opened its doors to him.

Little Chandler asked, in a timid voice, whether Paris was really as morally

dangerous as people said. Gallaher made a wide movement with his hand, as if the question were too small. Every city was dangerous in that way, he said. Paris had its own kind of wildness, London had another, and Berlin had another. Dublin, by comparison, knew very little of the world.

Gallaher then told stories of foreign cities. He spoke about rich people, poor people, artists, students, women, hotels, and late-night parties. Some stories he said he had heard from friends, and some he claimed to know himself. Little Chandler listened with wide eyes. The stories shocked him, but they also drew him in. They made his quiet life feel smaller than ever.

At moments, Little Chandler felt disappointed in his friend. Gallaher seemed to enjoy talking about low and secret things too much. Yet at the same time, Little Chandler could not help admiring him. Gallaher had lived. He had seen London, Paris, and other cities. He could speak about the world in a way that made Dublin seem dull and sleepy.

Gallaher laughed and said that old Dublin was an easy place to rest after such cities. He still had some feeling for the old country, of course, but one could not compare it with the real centres of life. Little Chandler took a few more small drinks from his glass. He looked at his friend with envy and unease. The old charm was still there, but it now came wrapped in noise, smoke, and pride.

Part 3

Little Chandler was shocked by some of Gallaher's stories. His friend spoke of foreign cities as if he had looked behind every closed door. He talked about rich people, poor people, religious houses, great ladies, and secret wrongs, all in the same easy voice. Little Chandler did not know how much to believe. Still, he listened with wide eyes, because the stories came from the world outside Dublin.

Gallaher finished one story and laughed. Then he said that they were back in old Dublin, where people knew nothing of such things. Little Chandler said that Dublin must seem very dull after all the places Gallaher had seen. Gallaher answered that it was restful to come back for a short time. After all, it was the old

country, and a man could not help feeling something for it.

Then Gallaher turned the talk toward Little Chandler himself. He said he had heard that Little Chandler had tasted the happiness of married life. Little Chandler blushed and smiled. He said that he had been married a little over a year. Gallaher put out his hand and wished him and his family every happiness, with the loud friendly manner of a man making a public toast.

Little Chandler took his hand and thanked him. Gallaher asked if there were any children. Little Chandler blushed again and said that they had one child, a little boy. Gallaher struck him on the back and laughed with approval. Little Chandler smiled in confusion, looked down at his glass, and bit his lower lip.

He then invited Gallaher to come to his house before leaving Dublin. He said his wife would be very happy to meet him, and they could have a little music. Gallaher thanked him warmly but said he had to leave the next night. Little Chandler suggested that perhaps he could come that very evening. Gallaher said he was sorry, but he had already promised to go to a card party with another clever young man.

Little Chandler accepted this answer, but he felt something cold behind it. Gallaher spoke kindly, yet the kindness seemed to come from above. He promised that perhaps next year he would come again and then spend an evening with Little Chandler and his wife. Little Chandler agreed and held him to the promise. To seal the agreement, he suggested one more drink.

Gallaher looked at his gold watch and said that it must be the last, because he had another appointment. Little Chandler ordered the drinks. His face was warm now, and the colour that had risen there stayed. He had drunk more than usual, and Gallaher's strong cigar had confused his head. The noise and light of the bar, the meeting after eight years, and the stories of London and Paris had shaken his quiet nature.

He felt the difference between his life and Gallaher's very strongly. It seemed unfair to him. Gallaher was not better born than he was. Gallaher was not better educated. Yet Gallaher had escaped, travelled, made a name, and returned with the air of a successful man. Little Chandler felt that, if he had only had the chance,

he could have done something finer than newspaper work.

What had stopped him? He thought the answer was his own fear. He was too shy, too careful, too ready to stay in a small place. He wanted to prove himself in some way, to show that he too was a man. Behind Gallaher's friendly refusal of the invitation, he sensed quiet superiority. Gallaher was treating him kindly, but almost as one treats a child or a poor relation.

When the drinks came, Little Chandler pushed one glass toward Gallaher and lifted his own boldly. He said that perhaps, when Gallaher came next year, he himself would have the pleasure of wishing long life and happiness to Mr and Mrs Ignatius Gallaher. The words surprised him a little as he spoke them. They sounded more daring than his usual speech. He felt that he had at last touched his friend on equal ground.

Gallaher looked at him over the edge of the glass with one eye half closed. After drinking, he set the glass down and said there was no danger of that happening. He meant to enjoy himself first and see more of life before he put his head into the marriage bag, if he ever did. Little Chandler answered calmly that some day he would marry. If Gallaher found the right girl, he would put his head into the bag like everyone else.

Gallaher turned his bright tie and blue-grey eyes fully toward him. Little Chandler knew he had spoken with more force than usual, and he knew his colour had deepened. But he did not look away. For once, he wanted to stand by his words. Gallaher watched him for a few moments, then said that if he ever married, there would be no soft dreaming about it.

He would marry money, Gallaher said. The woman would need a good bank account, or she would not do for him. Little Chandler shook his head. Gallaher spoke more strongly then. He said he needed only to say the word, and he could have both the woman and the money. There were many rich women abroad, he said, and he knew how to play his cards.

Gallaher finished his drink and laughed loudly. Then his voice became calmer. He said that he was in no hurry. Women could wait. He did not like the idea of tying himself to one woman, because that life would surely become dull. His face

showed dislike at the thought. Little Chandler sat there silently, hearing those words and feeling his own life grow smaller around him.

Part 4

Little Chandler sat in the small room off the hall, holding his baby in his arms. The house was quiet, but it was not a peaceful quiet. To save money, he and Annie kept no servant. Annie's younger sister Monica came for a short time in the morning and again in the evening to help. But Monica had already gone home, and now Little Chandler was alone with the child.

It was a quarter to nine. Little Chandler had come home late for tea, and worse than that, he had forgotten to bring Annie the coffee she had asked him to buy at Bewley's. Annie had been in a bad temper when he came in. She had answered him shortly and said that she would do without tea. But when it was nearly time for the corner shop to close, she changed her mind and decided to go out herself for tea and sugar.

Before leaving, she put the sleeping child carefully into Little Chandler's arms. "Here," she said. "Do not wake him." Then she went out. Her words had been simple, but they had the sharpness of an order. Little Chandler sat still, holding the child against him and listening to the quiet house.

A small lamp with a white china shade stood on the table. Its light fell on a framed photograph of Annie. Little Chandler looked at the picture and stopped at the thin, tight line of her lips. In the photograph, she was wearing a pale blue summer blouse. He had bought that blouse for her one Saturday as a present, and it had cost him ten shillings and elevenpence.

He remembered how nervous he had been when he bought it. He had stood outside the shop until there were no other customers. Then he had gone in and tried to look calm while the shop girl showed him one woman's blouse after another. His face had grown hot, and he had felt ashamed without knowing exactly why. When he paid, he forgot to take one penny of his change and had to be called back by the cashier.

When he brought the blouse home, Annie kissed him and said it was very pretty and stylish. But when she heard the price, she threw it on the table and said that the shop had cheated him. At first, she wanted to take it back. Then she tried it on and became pleased with it, especially with the sleeves. She kissed him again and said he was good to think of her.

Now, looking at her photograph, Little Chandler felt no warmth from that memory. He looked coldly into the eyes in the picture, and they seemed to answer him coldly. They were pretty eyes, and her face was pretty too. But he found something small and mean in it. Its calm, neat look annoyed him. There was no strong feeling there, no deep passion, no wonderful light.

He remembered Gallaher's talk about rich foreign women and their dark eyes. Gallaher had spoken of them as full of fire and desire. Little Chandler thought of those eyes now and compared them with Annie's eyes in the photograph. Why had he married this calm, tidy face? The question frightened him as soon as it formed in his mind.

He looked quickly around the room, as if someone might have heard his thought. The furniture also seemed mean to him. He had bought it little by little, paying for it over time, and Annie had chosen it herself. Everything was pretty, proper, and small. The chairs, the table, the curtains, and the little decorations all seemed to belong to Annie's careful taste.

The room made him feel trapped. A dull anger against his life began to rise inside him. Was this all his life was to be? A small house, small payments, small worries, a careful wife, a child in his arms, and a job that gave him no glory? Only a few hours earlier, he had sat with Gallaher, who had seen London, Paris, and the world. Now he was back in this narrow room, unable even to drink tea because he had forgotten coffee.

He thought again of his dream of poetry. Perhaps it was not too late. He was thirty-two, not an old man. His heart still felt sadness, and perhaps sadness could become verse. He imagined a book with his name on it: T. Malone Chandler. He imagined a few careful readers praising the quiet feeling in his poems. He would not be famous like a man who shouted to the crowd, but he might be loved by a

small group of gentle minds.

Yet the room fought against this dream. The lamp, the photograph, the furniture, and the child's warm weight in his arms pulled him back. He could not see how a man could write poetry in such a place. He could not see how a man could rise when each day held him with small duties. The baby breathed softly against him. Its little body was helpless and heavy, and he held it awkwardly, afraid to move too much.

He looked again at Annie's photograph. The neat face seemed to judge him. He felt ashamed of his thoughts, but he could not stop them. He wanted a larger life, but he had chosen this one. He wanted beauty, passion, and freedom, but he sat in a small room with a sleeping child. The difference between his dream and his real life hurt him deeply.

On the table there was one of his poetry books. He managed to take it up carefully without waking the child. The cover and pages seemed to bring him back to the quiet hopes of his younger days. He opened the book and tried to read. The words were beautiful, but they did not free him. Instead, they made his own room seem poorer and his own life more closed.

He read a few lines softly to himself. The sadness in the poem pleased him and wounded him at the same time. He felt that he understood such sadness better than most people. But understanding it was not the same as making art from it. He wanted to believe that a poem was hidden somewhere inside him. He also feared that nothing was there except weakness, envy, and complaint.

The child moved a little in his arms. Little Chandler stopped reading and held himself still. He looked from the book to the photograph and then around the room again. The silence seemed thinner now, less safe than before. Outside, Annie was still away at the shop. Inside, the small room waited around him, and the baby's breathing began to change.

Part 5

Little Chandler held the poetry book carefully with one hand, because the child

was still in his arms. He turned the pages slowly, afraid that even the sound of paper might wake the baby. A poem by Byron lay before him. He began to read it softly in his mind. The poem spoke of a quiet evening, a grave, flowers, and love that had become sadness.

He stopped reading after a few lines. The sound of the poem seemed to fill the small room around him. How sad it was, and how beautiful. He asked himself whether he too could write in such a way. Perhaps he could give shape to the sadness inside him. Perhaps the dull weight in his heart was not only weakness, but the beginning of poetry.

He thought again of Grattan Bridge and the feeling he had had there earlier that evening. The river, the poor houses, the fading light, and the thought of life had moved him deeply. If he could return to that feeling and hold it, perhaps he could write something real. He did not want to write loudly or proudly. He wanted to write quiet poems, full of regret, and have gentle people understand them.

Then the child woke and began to cry. Little Chandler turned from the page at once and tried to hush it. He moved the baby in his arms and whispered soft words, but the crying did not stop. He began to rock the child gently from side to side. Still the cry grew sharper, cutting through the room and breaking the fragile world of the poem.

He tried to read the next lines, but it was useless. His eyes moved over the words, yet his mind could not enter them. The child's crying struck his ears again and again. The sound seemed to say that poetry, freedom, and dreams were impossible for him. He felt trapped by the room, the furniture, the child, the unpaid bills, and the life he had chosen.

His anger rose suddenly. He was no poet, he thought. He was a prisoner for life. The child's cry grew louder, and his arms began to tremble. Without thinking clearly, he bent his face close to the child and shouted, "Stop!" His own voice frightened him as soon as the word left his mouth.

For one instant, the child stopped. Then its small body shook with fear, and it began to scream. Little Chandler jumped up from the chair and walked quickly up and down the room with the child in his arms. He tried to calm it, but the baby

only sobbed harder. It lost its breath for a few seconds, then burst out crying again. The thin walls seemed to throw the sound back at him.

Now Little Chandler became afraid. He looked at the child's small twisted face and saw how deeply he had frightened it. He pressed the baby closer to his chest and tried to speak gently. But the crying came in hard waves. He counted several sobs, one after another, with no break. A terrible thought struck him: what if the child died?

At that moment, the door flew open. Annie ran into the room, breathing hard. "What is it? What is it?" she cried. As soon as the child heard its mother's voice, it cried even more wildly. Little Chandler tried to explain. "It is nothing, Annie," he said. "He began to cry. That is all."

Annie threw her parcels onto the floor and took the child from his arms. She looked at Little Chandler with angry, burning eyes. "What have you done to him?" she cried. For one moment, he met her look. His heart seemed to close inside him when he saw the hatred there. He began to stammer that he had done nothing, that the child had only started crying, and that he had not meant any harm.

Annie did not listen to him. She held the baby tightly and walked up and down the room. Her voice became soft and loving as she spoke to the child. She called it her little man, her little lamb, and told it that everything was all right. Her words were not for Little Chandler. They shut him out completely.

Little Chandler stepped back into the darker part of the room, away from the lamplight. Shame filled his face and body. He listened as the child's sobbing slowly became weaker and quieter in its mother's arms. A short time before, he had dreamed of poetry, travel, and a larger life. Now those dreams seemed selfish and foolish. Tears came to his eyes, and he stood there full of regret.

Counterparts

Part 1

The bell rang angrily in the office. Miss Parker went to the speaking tube, and a sharp voice came through it from upstairs. The voice called for Farrington. Miss Parker returned to her machine and told the large man at the desk that Mr Alleyne wanted him upstairs. Farrington muttered a curse under his breath and pushed back his chair.

When he stood up, his size became clear. He was a tall, heavy man, with a dark red face and fair eyebrows and moustache. His eyes stood out a little, and the white parts looked dull and dirty. He lifted the counter and passed by the clients in the office. Then he went out with a heavy step, already full of anger.

He climbed the stairs slowly and heavily. On the second landing, he stopped before the door with Mr Alleyne's name on it. He was breathing hard, partly from the stairs and partly from annoyance. He knocked. A high, sharp voice called, "Come in," and Farrington entered.

Mr Alleyne was a small man with glasses and a clean-shaven face. His head rose suddenly from a pile of papers. It was pink and smooth, with almost no hair, and Farrington looked at it with dislike. Mr Alleyne began at once. He asked why Farrington had not copied the contract between Bodley and Kirwan, though he had been told it must be ready by four o'clock.

Farrington tried to explain that Mr Shelley had given him other directions. But Mr Alleyne cut him off at once. He said Farrington should listen to him, not to Mr Shelley. He accused him of always having excuses and avoiding work. If the copy was not finished that evening, he said, Mr Crosbie would hear about it.

Farrington answered, "Yes, sir," because there was nothing else he could safely say. Mr Alleyne continued. He complained about Farrington taking too long for lunch. He said he was allowed half an hour, not an hour and a half. His voice was thin and hard, and each word seemed to push itself into Farrington's ears.

Mr Alleyne bent over his papers again, but Farrington remained standing there.

He stared at the smooth pink head before him and imagined how easily it might be hurt. For a moment, rage tightened his throat. Then the feeling passed and left behind a sharp thirst. Farrington knew that thirst well. It meant that he needed a strong night of drinking.

It was already past the middle of the month, and his money was low. If he could finish the copy in time, perhaps Mr Alleyne might give him a note for the cashier. Then he could have some money for the evening. He stood there thinking of drink, bars, gaslight, and glasses. Suddenly Mr Alleyne began moving papers about, looking for something, and then noticed that Farrington was still in the room.

"Are you going to stand there all day?" Mr Alleyne said. Farrington answered that he had been waiting to see if anything more was needed. Mr Alleyne told him there was nothing more and sent him downstairs. As Farrington went out, Mr Alleyne called after him again, saying that Mr Crosbie would hear about the matter if the contract was not copied by evening. The words followed Farrington down the stairs like a slap.

Back in the lower office, Farrington counted the sheets that still had to be copied. There were too many. He dipped his pen in the ink, but instead of writing, he stared at the last words on the page. The evening was falling, and soon they would light the gas. He told himself that perhaps he could write better then, but what he really felt was the thirst in his throat.

He stood up from his desk and passed out of the office again. Mr Shelley looked at him questioningly, but Farrington pointed as if he were going somewhere necessary. Mr Shelley looked toward the hat rack and saw that Farrington's hat was still there, so he said nothing. As soon as Farrington reached the landing, he pulled a cap from his pocket, put it on, and hurried down the weak stairs.

He slipped along the street and entered the dark private corner of O'Neill's shop. There, safe from the office for a moment, he put his large red face near the little window into the bar. He asked for a plain porter. When the glass came, he drank it almost at once. Then he paid, asked for a seed to take the taste, and slipped

out again as secretly as he had entered.

Darkness and thick fog were coming down over the February evening. The lamps in Eustace Street had already been lit when Farrington returned to the office. On the stairs, he smelled strong perfume. That meant Miss Delacour had come while he was away. He pushed the cap back into his pocket and entered the office with an air of careless innocence.

Mr Shelley said severely that Mr Alleyne had been calling for him. Farrington looked toward the clients at the counter, as if he could not answer properly while they were there. Since the clients were men, Mr Shelley laughed and said he understood that game. Then he told Farrington to get the Delacour papers and bring them to Mr Alleyne. Farrington felt confused by the public shame, the quick drink, and the run upstairs.

He took the papers and carried them up. He hoped Mr Alleyne would not notice that two letters were missing. The smell of Miss Delacour's perfume filled the way to the room. She was sitting beside Mr Alleyne's desk, touching the handle of her umbrella, with a large black feather on her hat. Mr Alleyne sat facing her in a pleased and easy way.

Farrington put the papers on the desk and bowed, but neither Mr Alleyne nor Miss Delacour gave him any real notice. Mr Alleyne only touched the papers and pushed them back, meaning that Farrington could go. Farrington returned downstairs and sat again at his desk. He looked at the unfinished line before him and noticed stupidly that several words began with the same letter. His mind would not stay with the work.

The typewriter clicked near him, and the office continued around him, but Farrington's thoughts went to the public house. He imagined hot drinks, gaslight, noise, and friends. He tried to work, but when the clock struck five, he still had many pages to copy. He became so angry that he wrote the wrong name and had to begin again on a clean sheet. He felt strong enough to break the whole office apart.

His anger grew from every small shame in his life. He thought of asking the cashier for an advance, then told himself it was useless. He knew where he would

meet the boys that evening: Leonard, O'Halloran, and Nosey Flynn. His whole nature was ready for noise and trouble. He was so lost in these thoughts that his name had to be called twice before he heard it.

Mr Alleyne and Miss Delacour were now outside the counter, and all the clerks had turned to look. Mr Alleyne was angry because two letters were missing from the papers. Farrington said he knew nothing about them and had made a faithful copy. Mr Alleyne's words became sharper and more insulting. Farrington could hardly stop himself from striking the small man before him.

At last Mr Alleyne asked, in front of everyone, whether Farrington took him for a fool. The clerks waited. Miss Delacour stood there with her perfume and her black feather. Farrington's anger, shame, and thirst joined together in one sudden answer. He said, "I do not think that is a fair question to ask me, sir." For a moment the office was still, and Farrington knew that he had gone too far.

Part 2

For one moment, the whole office seemed to stop breathing. Farrington himself was almost as surprised as the other clerks by what he had said. Miss Delacour began to smile broadly, because the answer had been quick and clever. But Mr Alleyne's face turned red with anger. His mouth moved with fury, and he shook his small fist close to Farrington's face.

Mr Alleyne called him rude and warned him that he would make him pay for the insult. He said Farrington must either apologize at once or leave the office. The words came fast and sharp, and everyone heard them. Farrington's brief feeling of victory disappeared. He had made the others laugh, but now he had to stand there under Mr Alleyne's anger.

Later, Farrington stood in a doorway across from the office and watched for the cashier. He wanted to see if the cashier would come out alone. If he could speak to him privately, perhaps he might get a little money. But all the clerks came out first, and then the cashier came out with the chief clerk. Farrington knew there was no use trying to speak to him then.

His position was bad. He had been forced to make a low apology to Mr Alleyne. He had said he was sorry, though every word had burned in his mouth. Now he knew the office would become a harder place for him. Mr Alleyne would remember the insult and would not let him rest.

Farrington thought of another clerk whom Mr Alleyne had driven out of the office. He feared the same slow cruelty would now begin against him. His anger returned, but it was mixed with shame. He cursed himself for not keeping quiet. Why had he not held his tongue? Why had he allowed one sharp answer to place him in Mr Alleyne's power?

He remembered when the trouble between them had truly begun. Once, Mr Alleyne had heard him making fun of his northern accent for the amusement of Higgins and Miss Parker. Since that day, the two men had never been easy with each other. Farrington thought he might ask Higgins for money, but then he dismissed the idea. Higgins had his own troubles and never had much money to spare.

Farrington's large body ached for the comfort of a public house. The fog had begun to chill him, and the cold made his thirst sharper. He thought about asking Pat at O'Neill's for a small loan, but that would not be enough. He had already spent his last penny on the quick drink earlier in the day. Soon it would be too late to find money anywhere.

As he touched his watch chain, an idea suddenly came to him. There was a pawn office in Fleet Street. He could pawn the chain and get enough money for the evening. The thought came like rescue. He wondered why he had not thought of it sooner, and his mood changed at once.

He went quickly through the narrow streets near Temple Bar. As he walked, he muttered angrily to himself that the office could go to the devil. He would have his night out, whatever happened tomorrow. At the pawn office, the clerk first offered him five shillings for the chain. Farrington held out for six, and in the end the clerk gave him the six shillings.

Farrington came out joyfully, rolling the coins between his thumb and fingers. The small hard feel of money changed the evening for him. Westmoreland Street

was crowded with young men and women coming home from work. Poor boys ran about shouting the names of the evening papers. Farrington pushed through the crowd with new pride.

The street sounds filled his head. Tram bells rang, wheels moved, and voices rose around him. He looked boldly at the office girls as he passed, as if the money in his pocket had made him stronger. Already he seemed to smell hot punch in the air. He began to plan how he would tell the story of his answer to Mr Alleyne.

In his mind, he improved the scene. He saw himself standing calmly before Mr Alleyne and Miss Delacour. He would say that he had looked first at the lady, then at Mr Alleyne, and then had spoken slowly and coolly. He would make the words sound even better than they had sounded in the office. He would be the hero of the story, not the man who had apologized afterward.

Nosey Flynn was sitting in his usual corner at Davy Byrne's when Farrington arrived. Farrington told him the story at once. Nosey Flynn was delighted and bought him a drink, saying that it was one of the smartest answers he had ever heard. Farrington then bought a drink in return. The warmth of the bar, the first drinks, and the praise began to repair his wounded pride.

After a while, O'Halloran and Paddy Leonard came in, and Farrington told the story again. This time he gave it more shape and colour. O'Halloran bought hot drinks for everyone and then told a story of his own about a clever answer he had once given to a chief clerk. But even he admitted that his answer had not been as good as Farrington's. This pleased Farrington deeply, and he told the others to finish their drinks and have another.

Just then Higgins came in, and of course he had to join them. The story was told once more, and Higgins acted out the scene with great energy. He showed how Mr Alleyne had shaken his fist in Farrington's face, and everyone laughed loudly. Then he acted the part of Farrington, calm and bold before the angry little boss. Farrington sat watching them with heavy pleased eyes, smiling and drawing drops of drink from his moustache with his lower lip.

When that round was finished, there was a pause. O'Halloran had money, but the others seemed to have little left. The group left the public house somewhat

sadly, because the first pleasure of the night was already thinning. At the corner of Duke Street, Higgins and Nosey Flynn went off in another direction. Farrington, O'Halloran, and Paddy Leonard turned back toward the city, while cold rain began to fall softly on the streets.

Part 3

When Farrington, O'Halloran, and Paddy Leonard reached the Ballast Office, Farrington suggested going into the Scotch House. The rain was falling softly on the cold streets, and the bright bar looked warm and inviting. Inside, it was full of men and loud with talk, glasses, and movement. Match sellers whined at the door, but the three men pushed past them and found a place at the corner of the counter.

They began to exchange stories at once. The first strong pleasure of the evening had passed, but there was still life in them. Paddy Leonard introduced Farrington and O'Halloran to a young man named Weathers. Weathers was performing at the Tivoli as an acrobat and comic stage man. He was young, light, and full of easy confidence.

Farrington bought a drink for everyone. Weathers asked for whiskey with sparkling water, and Farrington noticed the order with dislike because it cost more than a simple drink. Still, he paid. The men stood close together, drinking and talking. The bar was hot, and the drink soon began to soften their thoughts again.

Their talk turned toward theatres and performers. Weathers spoke as if he knew the world behind the stage very well. He promised that he could take them behind the scenes and introduce them to some pretty girls. O'Halloran said that he and Leonard would go, but Farrington could not go because he was a married man. The others laughed, and Farrington smiled with his heavy eyes to show that he understood the joke.

Weathers then insisted on buying them one small drink at his own expense. He promised to meet them later at Mulligan's in Poolbeg Street. Farrington was glad when the drink was smaller this time. His money was already going down quickly. He wanted to keep the night moving, but he also knew that each round took more

from his pocket. That knowledge made his pleasure less easy.

When the Scotch House closed, they went round to Mulligan's. They entered the back room, where the air was warmer and more private. O'Halloran ordered small hot drinks for all of them. By now, they were beginning to feel loose and friendly. Farrington was just ordering another round when Weathers came back.

To Farrington's relief, Weathers took only a glass of bitter this time. There was still just enough money to keep the evening alive. The men drank slowly, talked loudly, and leaned over the table. Their faces had become redder in the heat of the room. Farrington's anger from the office was not gone, but drink had changed it into a thick kind of pride.

After a while, two young women in large hats came in with a young man in a checked suit. They sat at a table nearby. Weathers greeted them and told the others that they were performers from the Tivoli. Farrington's eyes went again and again toward one of the young women. There was something striking about her, and once he had noticed her, he could not stop looking.

She wore a large blue scarf around her hat, tied in a great bow under her chin. Her gloves were bright yellow and reached up toward her elbows. Farrington admired her full arm as she moved it, and he admired even more her large dark eyes. They had a sideways look that held him. When she saw him watching, she looked back once or twice, and this filled him with sudden hope.

The young woman did not speak to him. But when her party left the room, she passed close to his chair. Her dress brushed him lightly, and she said, "Oh, sorry," in a London accent. Farrington watched her go, hoping she would look back at him. She did not. He felt the disappointment sharply.

At once, he cursed his lack of money. He cursed all the drinks he had bought, especially the expensive ones for Weathers. If he had more money, perhaps he could follow the young woman or offer something bold. Instead, he had only a few coins left and a heavy body full of drink. He began to dislike Weathers deeply. To Farrington, a man who let others pay too much was a man without honour.

His anger made him lose track of the conversation. When Paddy Leonard called his name, he realized that the others were talking about feats of strength.

Weathers was showing the muscles in his arm and boasting about them. O'Halloran and Leonard had called on Farrington to defend Irish strength. This pleased Farrington, because he liked to be seen as powerful.

Farrington pulled up his sleeve and showed his arm. The men examined both arms and compared them. Weathers was younger and lighter, but his arm was hard and trained. Farrington's arm was thick and large. After a little argument and laughter, they decided to test their strength on the table. The glasses were moved aside, and the two men sat facing each other.

They put their elbows on the table and held hands. Paddy Leonard was to give the word. Farrington looked serious and determined. He wanted to win, not only against Weathers but against the whole evening. He had been insulted at work, had wasted money, had failed with the young woman, and now he needed victory. His face darkened as he fixed his eyes on Weathers.

Paddy Leonard said, "Go!" For about thirty seconds, both men pushed hard. Farrington felt the strength of the younger man and was surprised by it. Then, slowly, Weathers forced his hand down toward the table. Farrington fought against it, but he could not stop the movement. At last his hand struck the table, and he had lost.

Farrington's dark red face became even darker. He was angry and ashamed. He said that Weathers had not played fairly and had used the weight of his body. The others laughed and argued. Weathers denied it and seemed pleased with himself. Farrington demanded another try, and the others agreed.

They set their elbows again on the table. This time Farrington prepared himself more carefully. He pressed his feet hard against the floor and told himself that he would crush the young performer. But when the trial began, Weathers held firm. The struggle lasted a little longer, then Farrington's arm again began to go down.

The second defeat was worse than the first. Farrington could feel the room watching him, and the laughter seemed to touch his skin. His strength, which had always been one of his comforts, had failed him before men he knew. He pulled his arm back and tried to laugh, but the laugh did not sound natural. Inside him, anger grew heavy and dangerous.

The others continued talking, but Farrington no longer enjoyed the talk. The drink in him had turned sour. He looked at Weathers with hatred, then looked away. He thought again of Mr Alleyne's pink head, of the girl who had not looked back, and of the money already spent. The whole night, which had begun as revenge against the office, now seemed to be turning against him.

Part 4

The men agreed to try again. It would be the best two out of three, and Farrington told himself that this time he would win. He set his elbow on the table and took Weathers's hand again. The others leaned in to watch. Farrington's face was dark and serious, and the veins stood out on his forehead.

Paddy Leonard gave the word, and the struggle began. Farrington pushed with all his strength. Weathers's pale face grew red, and both men's arms shook under the pressure. For a few seconds, Farrington hoped that his size would carry him through. Then, slowly and terribly, his hand began to move downward.

Weathers forced his hand onto the table again. A murmur of approval came from the men watching. One man nearby, a young priest, nodded his red head and said foolishly that Weathers knew the right trick. Farrington turned on him with sudden fury. He asked angrily what the man knew about it and why he had to speak at all.

O'Halloran saw the dangerous look on Farrington's face and quickly tried to calm things. He told the boys to pay up and said they would have one last small drink before going. But the night had changed for Farrington. The drink, the jokes, and the company no longer helped him. He felt beaten in front of everyone.

A short time later, Farrington stood at the corner of O'Connell Bridge, waiting for the little tram to Sandymount. His face was dark and sullen. Anger burned inside him, but it gave him no strength. He felt ashamed, unhappy, and cheated. Worse still, he did not even feel properly drunk, though he had spent almost all his money.

He had only two pennies left in his pocket. He had damaged his place in the

office, pawned his watch chain, and spent the money on drink. He had lost his name as a strong man by being beaten twice by a younger fellow. He thought of the woman with the large hat who had brushed against him and said sorry, then left without looking back. That memory almost choked him with rage.

The tram let him down at Shelbourne Road, and he walked home beside the dark wall of the barracks. His great body moved heavily through the shadow. He hated going home. Home meant a cold kitchen, poor food, children, and a wife who could answer him sharply when he was sober. But now he had no money and nowhere else to go.

He entered by the side door and found the kitchen empty. The fire was almost out. He shouted up the stairs for Ada, his wife. His voice filled the house roughly. A little boy came running down instead.

Farrington peered through the darkness and asked who it was. The boy said it was Tom. Farrington asked where his mother was, and Tom said she had gone to the chapel. Farrington repeated the words with a bitter kind of mockery, as if the answer itself insulted him. Then he asked whether she had thought to leave any dinner for him.

Tom said yes and began to explain, but Farrington cut him off. He ordered the boy to light the lamp and asked why the place had been left in darkness. He also asked whether the other children were in bed. Then he sat down heavily on a chair while the child lit the lamp. His anger was looking for somewhere to fall.

When the lamp was lit, Farrington struck the table with his fist and shouted for his dinner. Tom said that he was going to cook it. Farrington looked at the weak fire and became furious. The fire was too low to cook anything properly. In his mind, this small failure became the answer to all the shame of the day.

He jumped up and pointed to the fire. He shouted that he would teach Tom not to let the fire go out. Then he went to the door and took the walking stick that stood behind it. He rolled up his sleeve so that his arm could move freely. Tom watched him with terror.

The child cried out and begged him not to beat him. Farrington did not stop. His rage had passed beyond the office, the public house, Weathers, the lost money,

and the woman in the hat. It had found a weaker body, and now it poured itself there. The stick rose and fell while the boy cried and tried to escape.

Tom ran around the table, but Farrington followed him. The child's voice rose higher and higher in fear. He called out, "Please, pa! Do not beat me!" Then he tried to offer the only thing he could think of. He said that if his father did not beat him, he would say a prayer for him.

The words came out broken by crying. Tom promised again and again that he would say a Hail Mary for his father. He said he would pray for him if only the beating stopped. In the little kitchen, the almost dead fire gave little comfort, and the child's prayer sounded helpless in the air. Farrington's anger had found its counterpart at last, not in another man, but in his own frightened son.

Clay

Part 1

The matron had given Maria permission to go out after the women's tea was finished. Maria had been looking forward to the evening for a long time. The kitchen was clean and bright, and the cook said a person could almost see her face in the big copper boilers. The fire was burning well. On one of the side tables lay four very large Halloween cakes, ready for tea.

At first, the cakes looked whole. But if a person came nearer, she could see that they had already been cut into long, thick, even pieces. Maria had cut them herself. She was careful with such work, because she liked things to be neat and fair. Each woman would receive her proper share, and Maria felt pleased that everything was ready in good time.

Maria was a very small woman, with a very long nose and a very long chin. She spoke a little through her nose, but her voice was always gentle. She often said, "Yes, my dear," and "No, my dear," in a soft, calming way. When the women quarrelled over their washing tubs, people sent for Maria. She nearly always managed to make peace.

Once the matron had said that Maria was a true peace-maker. The sub-matron and two ladies from the Board had heard the compliment, and Maria had never forgotten it. Ginger Mooney, one of the women, often said that she would fight the poor simple girl who looked after the irons if Maria did not stop her. Everyone liked Maria. She was small, busy, useful, and kind.

The women's tea would be at six o'clock, and Maria hoped to leave before seven. She had planned the journey carefully. From Ballsbridge to the Pillar would take about twenty minutes, and from the Pillar to Drumcondra another twenty. She would also need some time to buy things for the children. If all went well, she would reach Joe's house before eight.

She took out her purse with the silver clasps and looked again at the words on it: *A Present from Belfast*. She loved that purse. Joe had brought it to her five years

earlier, when he and Alphy had gone to Belfast on a holiday trip. Inside the purse were two half-crowns and some small copper coins. After paying for the tram, she would still have five shillings to spend.

She imagined the evening at Joe's house. The children would sing, and there would be games and laughter because it was Halloween. She hoped only that Joe would not come home drunk. He was a good man, but he became very different when he had been drinking. That thought troubled her for a moment, but she pushed it aside and returned to her happy plans.

Joe had often asked Maria to come and live with his family. But Maria felt that she would be in the way, though Joe's wife was always very kind to her. Besides, she had become used to life at the laundry. Joe was a good fellow. Maria had looked after him and Alphy when they were boys, and Joe often said, "Mother is mother, but Maria is my real mother."

After the family home had broken up, the boys had helped Maria get her place at the Dublin by Lamplight laundry. She liked the place well enough. In the past, she had not thought well of Protestants, but now she thought they were very nice people. They were a little quiet and serious, but they were kind to live with. The matron, especially, was a pleasant and very proper lady.

Maria also liked her plants in the glass room. She had beautiful ferns and wax plants there, and she cared for them with great attention. When visitors came to see her, she often gave them one or two small pieces from her plants to take home and grow. There was only one thing she did not like about the place: the religious papers left on the paths. But because the matron was so kind and polite, Maria did not complain.

When the cook told her that everything was ready, Maria went into the women's room and rang the big bell. Soon the women came in by twos and threes. Their hands were red and steaming from the hot water, and they wiped them on their skirts while pulling down their sleeves. They sat before their huge mugs. The cook and the simple girl with the irons filled the mugs with hot tea already mixed with milk and sugar.

Maria watched over the giving out of the Halloween cake. She made sure that

every woman received four slices. There was much laughing and joking during the meal. Lizzie Fleming said Maria was sure to get the ring that night, as she had said on many Halloweens before. Maria laughed and said she did not want any ring or any man either. But when she laughed, her grey-green eyes shone with shy disappointment, and her little body shook.

Then Ginger Mooney lifted her mug of tea and said they should drink to Maria's health. The other women struck their mugs on the table and joined in. Ginger said she was sorry she had no beer to drink the toast properly. Maria laughed again, because she knew Ginger meant well, though Ginger was a common woman in her ways. The noisy kindness of the women pleased her, even when it made her shy.

Maria was glad when the tea was over and the dishes began to be cleared away. She went into her little bedroom to dress for the visit. Because the next morning was a morning for Mass, she changed the alarm from seven to six. Then she took off her work skirt and house boots. She laid her best skirt on the bed and placed her tiny good boots beside it.

She changed her blouse too and stood for a moment before the mirror. She remembered how she used to dress for Mass on Sunday mornings when she was a young girl. She looked with quiet affection at her small body, which she had dressed carefully for so many years. It was old now, but she still thought it was a nice, tidy little body. When she went outside, the streets were shining with rain, and she was glad to have her old brown raincoat.

Part 2

When Maria got outside, the streets were shining after the rain. She was glad that she had put on her old brown raincoat. The tram was full, and she had to sit on the little stool at the end of the car. She faced all the other people, and her small feet could hardly touch the floor. Still, she felt pleased because she was going out with her own money in her purse.

As the tram moved through the wet streets, Maria arranged all her plans in her

mind. She thought it was a fine thing to be independent and to have money of one's own. She hoped they would have a very happy evening at Joe's house. She was sure the children would enjoy the games and songs. Only one thought troubled her: it was a pity that Joe and Alphy were not speaking to each other.

Joe and Alphy had often quarrelled in later years. Maria thought sadly of this, because when they were boys they had been the best of friends. She had cared for both of them then, and in her memory they still seemed close to each other. But life changed people. Brothers could grow apart, and old love could become silence. Maria did not like to think too much about such things on a holiday night.

She got off the tram at the Pillar and moved quickly through the crowd. The streets were busy with people buying things for Halloween. She went into Downes's cake shop, but there were so many customers that she had to wait a long time before anyone served her. She was patient, though she held her purse carefully. At last she bought a dozen mixed penny cakes and came out with a large bag.

After that, she wondered what else she should buy. She wanted to bring something really nice to Joe's house. They would surely have plenty of apples and nuts already. It was hard to think of anything better than cake. So Maria decided to buy plumcake, because plumcake seemed richer and more special than ordinary cakes.

She looked first at the plumcake in Downes's shop, but it did not please her. There was not enough white almond icing on the top. She wanted something that would look fine when it was placed on the table. So she went across to a shop in Henry Street. This shop was larger, and the goods looked more stylish.

There, too, Maria took some time to choose. The young woman behind the counter was well dressed and serious. She seemed a little annoyed by Maria's careful looking. At last she asked Maria whether it was wedding cake she wanted. The question made Maria blush and smile shyly. But the young woman did not seem to mean it as a joke.

Finally, the shop girl cut a thick slice of plumcake and wrapped it up. Maria paid two shillings and fourpence for it. It was a large price, but she wanted to

bring something good. She put the parcel with her other bag and left the shop feeling both proud and a little nervous about having spent so much. The wet street lights shone around her as she went to take the Drumcondra tram.

She thought she would have to stand in the tram, because none of the young men made room for her. They looked straight ahead, as if they did not see her. Then an older gentleman moved and gave her a seat. He was a stout man with a hard brown hat, a square red face, and a grey moustache. Maria thought he looked like a colonel.

She felt that he was much more polite than the young men. The gentleman began to talk to her about Halloween and the rainy weather. He guessed that her bag was full of good things for children. He said that young people should enjoy themselves while they were young. Maria agreed with him and answered with little nods and soft sounds of approval.

He was very pleasant to her. Maria enjoyed the talk more than she expected. She did not often receive such polite attention from a gentleman in public. Perhaps he had been drinking a little, but that did not trouble her. She thought it was still easy to know a true gentleman by his manner, even if he had taken a drop.

When she got out at the Canal Bridge, she thanked him and bowed. He bowed back, lifted his hat, and smiled kindly. Maria walked up along the terrace with her small head bent under the rain. The parcels felt heavy, but she did not mind. Her heart was warm because the evening was beginning well.

When she reached Joe's house, everyone cried out, "Oh, here is Maria!" Joe had come home from business, and the children were all dressed in their Sunday clothes. Two big girls from next door were there too, and games had already begun. The house was bright and lively, full of voices, movement, and holiday excitement. Maria felt happy as soon as she entered.

Mrs Donnelly said that Maria must take off her wet things by the kitchen fire. Maria did so, and then she brought out the cakes she had bought at Downes's. The children looked at the bag with pleasure. Then she began to look for the plumcake. She searched among her things, then searched again, more carefully.

The plumcake was gone. Maria could not understand it at first. She looked in

her bag and in the places near her, but the parcel was not there. Then she remembered the tram and the polite gentleman. Perhaps she had left the plumcake on the seat beside her. She felt ashamed and disappointed, because she had wanted so much to bring something fine.

Mrs Donnelly said it did not matter at all, and the children still had plenty of things. Joe was kind too and told her not to trouble herself. But Maria felt sad for a little while. She had spent good money on the plumcake, and now it was lost before anyone had even seen it. Still, the house was warm, the children were merry, and everyone tried to make her forget the mistake.

Part 3

Joe made Maria sit down by the fire and told her not to worry about the lost plumcake. He was very kind to her, kinder than she had expected. He began to tell her about his office and repeated a clever answer he had given to his manager. Joe laughed a great deal while telling the story. Maria did not quite understand why the answer was so funny, but she said that the manager must be a very difficult man.

Joe said the manager was not so bad if a person knew how to deal with him. He was decent enough, Joe said, as long as no one rubbed him the wrong way. Maria listened with care and nodded at the right moments. She liked sitting near the fire in Joe's house, with voices around her and children moving in and out of the room. The lost cake still troubled her a little, but Joe's kindness warmed her heart.

Mrs Donnelly played the piano for the children, and they danced and sang. The two big girls from next door passed nuts around the room. Then everyone began to look for the nutcrackers. No one could find them, and Joe almost became cross. He asked how they expected Maria to crack nuts without nutcrackers. Maria quickly said that she did not like nuts and that they must not trouble themselves about her.

Then Joe asked whether she would take a bottle of stout. Mrs Donnelly said

there was also port wine in the house if Maria preferred that. Maria said she would rather they did not ask her to take anything. But Joe insisted, and at last Maria let him have his way. She sat by the fire with him, and they talked about old times. The house felt pleasant, safe, and full of family life.

While they talked, Maria thought she might say a good word for Alphy. She wanted Joe and his brother to become friends again. But as soon as she mentioned him, Joe became angry. He said he would rather be struck dead than speak another word to his brother. Maria was sorry at once and said she should not have mentioned it.

Mrs Donnelly told Joe that it was a shame to speak that way about his own flesh and blood. Joe answered that Alphy was no brother of his. For a moment, it seemed that a quarrel might begin. But Joe said he would not lose his temper on such a night. Then he asked his wife to open more stout, and the danger passed.

Soon the two girls from next door arranged the Halloween games, and everyone became cheerful again. Maria was delighted to see the children so merry. She was also glad to see Joe and his wife in good spirits. The girls placed saucers on the table and blindfolded the children one by one. The children put out their hands and touched one of the saucers to discover their fortune.

One child got the prayer book, and three others got water. Then one of the next-door girls got the ring. Mrs Donnelly shook her finger at her in a teasing way, as if she knew some secret about the girl's future. Everyone laughed. Then they insisted that Maria must play too. Maria laughed and laughed while they tied the cloth over her eyes.

They led her to the table among laughter and joking. Maria put out her hand, just as they told her to do. She moved it here and there in the air, then lowered it onto one of the saucers. Her fingers touched something soft and wet. She was surprised, because no one spoke and no one took off the cloth from her eyes.

There was a short silence. Then people began to move about quickly and whisper. Someone said something about the garden. Mrs Donnelly spoke sharply to one of the next-door girls and told her to throw it out at once. She said that was no proper game. Maria understood that something had gone wrong, though she

did not know exactly what it was.

They made her try again. This time Maria touched the prayer book. Everyone became cheerful once more. Mrs Donnelly said that Maria would enter a convent before the year was over because she had chosen the prayer book. Maria laughed and took the joke kindly. Still, the strange silence from the first choice stayed in the room for a little while, though no one explained it to her.

After that, Mrs Donnelly played a dance tune for the children. Joe made Maria take a glass of wine, and soon they were all merry again. Maria had never seen Joe so pleasant to her. He talked warmly about the past and remembered things from long ago. Maria said that they were all very good to her, and she truly felt it.

At last the children grew tired and sleepy. Joe asked Maria if she would sing a little song before she went. He wanted one of the old songs. Mrs Donnelly also asked her to sing, so Maria stood up beside the piano. Mrs Donnelly told the children to be quiet and listen. Then she played the opening notes and said, "Now, Maria."

Maria blushed deeply and began to sing in a small, shaking voice. She sang an old song about dreaming of living in grand halls, with servants and wealth and a high family name. When she reached the second verse, she made a mistake and sang the first verse again. No one corrected her. They let her continue gently, because they did not want to hurt her.

When the song ended, Joe was deeply moved. He said there was no time like the old days and no music like the old music. His eyes filled with tears. He tried to look for the corkscrew, but he could not find it because he was crying too much. At last he had to ask his wife where it was. Maria stood there quietly, small and shy, while the warm room held its laughter, its sadness, and its memories around her.

A Painful Case

Part 1

Mr James Duffy lived in Chapelizod because he wanted to be as far as possible from Dublin, though Dublin was his own city. He did not like the other suburbs. To him, they looked cheap, new, and proud in a false way. Chapelizod pleased him more because it was quieter and older. From his windows he could look at an unused distillery or along the shallow river on which the city was built.

His room was plain and serious. The high walls had no pictures on them, and there was no carpet on the floor. Every piece of furniture had been bought by Mr Duffy himself. There was a black iron bed, an iron washstand, four cane chairs, a clothes rack, a coal box, fire irons, and a square table with a double desk on it. Nothing in the room seemed chosen for pleasure. Everything seemed chosen for use.

In one corner, white wooden shelves had been fixed to make a bookcase. The books were arranged by size, from large books below to smaller books above. A complete Wordsworth stood on the lowest shelf, and a small religious book stood on the highest one. Writing things were always on his desk. In the desk were a translation he had made, and a small group of papers held together by a brass pin.

On those papers, Mr Duffy sometimes wrote short sentences. They were not quite diary entries and not quite thoughts for publication. They were cold little statements about life or about himself. Once, as a kind of bitter joke, he had pasted the headline of an advertisement onto the first page. When he opened the desk, a faint smell came out, perhaps from new pencils, glue, or an old apple that had been forgotten there.

Mr Duffy disliked disorder of every kind. He disliked disorder in rooms, in bodies, in feelings, and in minds. His face was brown, like the streets of Dublin, and it showed his years clearly. He had a long head, dry black hair, and a yellow-brown moustache that did not soften his hard mouth. His cheekbones made his face look severe, though his eyes were not exactly hard.

His eyes gave another impression. They seemed always ready to find something good in another person, but also ready to be disappointed. Mr Duffy lived a little away from his own body, as if he were watching himself from the outside. He often made sentences in his mind about himself, using “he” instead of “I.” It was as if he had already turned his own life into a small, finished record.

He did not give money to beggars. When he walked, he walked firmly, carrying a strong hazel stick. For many years, he had worked as a cashier in a private bank in Baggot Street. Every morning he took the tram from Chapelizod into the city. At midday he went to Dan Burke’s and had a very simple lunch: a bottle of lager beer and a small tray of plain biscuits.

At four o’clock, his workday ended. He ate dinner in a plain eating house in George’s Street, where he felt safe from rich, showy young Dublin men. He liked the simple honesty of the food and the bill. His evenings were quiet. Sometimes he sat at his landlady’s piano. Sometimes he walked around the outer parts of the city. His love of Mozart sometimes took him to an opera or a concert, but these were almost the only pleasures he allowed himself.

He had no close companions and no real friends. He belonged to no church and followed no clear belief. He lived his inner life alone, sharing it with no group and no family circle. He visited his relatives at Christmas, and when they died, he went with them to the cemetery. He did these things because old social duties still had some weight for him, but he gave society nothing more.

Sometimes he allowed himself to imagine doing something surprising. He thought that, under certain conditions, he might even rob the bank where he worked. But the conditions never came. His life continued in a straight, even line. There was no adventure in it. It was a life of order, habit, and distance.

One evening, he found himself sitting beside two ladies at the Rotunda. The hall was thinly filled, and the silence of the empty seats suggested that the performance might fail. The lady next to him looked around the poor audience once or twice. Then she spoke, not shyly but naturally. She said that it was a pity there were so few people, because it was hard for performers to sing to empty benches.

Mr Duffy understood her words as an invitation to speak. He was surprised that she did not seem awkward. While they talked, he tried to fix her face in his memory. When he learned that the young girl beside her was her daughter, he judged that the lady herself was only a little younger than he was. This surprised him too, because she still had a living force in her face.

Her face must once have been handsome. It was oval, with clear and strong features. Her dark blue eyes looked straight and steady. At first they seemed proud, almost challenging. But then, for a moment, they seemed to soften and show deep feeling. That softness disappeared quickly, as if her careful mind had called it back under control.

Mr Duffy was interested by this. He was not a man who usually became interested in women, and he did not usually enter easy conversation with strangers. But this woman's manner did not seem foolish or empty. She spoke simply, but there was thought behind her words. She did not force herself on him, yet she did not draw back either.

He saw her again a few weeks later at a concert in Earlsfort Terrace. Her daughter was with her again. When the daughter's attention moved elsewhere, Mr Duffy used the chance to speak more closely with the mother. She mentioned her husband once or twice, but not in a way that warned him to stay away. Her name was Mrs Sinico. Her husband was a captain on a trading boat that travelled between Dublin and Holland, and they had one child.

When Mr Duffy met her a third time by accident, he found the courage to ask for another meeting. She came. This was the beginning of many meetings, though neither of them yet understood where the friendship would lead. For Mr Duffy, whose life had been clean, cold, and lonely, the change was quiet but serious. A person had entered the ordered room of his life, and the order had begun, very softly, to move.

Part 2

Mr Duffy and Mrs Sinico began to meet in the evening. At first, they chose

quiet places for their walks, places where few people would notice them. Mr Duffy did not like doing anything in a hidden way, and these secret meetings soon troubled him. He felt that secrecy made the friendship seem lower than it was. So, after some time, he made her invite him to her house.

Captain Sinico did not object to Mr Duffy's visits. He even encouraged them, because he thought Mr Duffy might be interested in his daughter. The captain had pushed his wife so far out of his own life that he did not imagine another man could take an interest in her. He was often away with his ship, and the daughter was often out giving music lessons. Because of this, Mr Duffy and Mrs Sinico had many chances to spend time alone.

Neither of them had known such a friendship before. They did not feel, at first, that there was anything wrong or strange in it. Mr Duffy lent her books and gave her ideas. He shared the life of his mind with her, because that was the part of himself he valued most. Mrs Sinico listened to everything, and her listening made him feel seen and understood.

Little by little, their thoughts became joined. Sometimes, in return for his ideas, Mrs Sinico told him small facts about her own life. She listened to him with warm care, almost like a mother, and encouraged him to open his nature fully. In time, she became like a person to whom he could confess his inner life. This was new to him, and it gave him a quiet but deep pleasure.

Mr Duffy told her about his brief connection with an Irish Socialist Party. He had once gone to meetings where serious working men talked in a poor room lit by a weak oil lamp. But the group had divided into smaller groups, each with its own leader and its own poor room. Mr Duffy had stopped going. He thought the men were too narrow and too interested in wages.

He told Mrs Sinico that no great social change would come to Dublin for hundreds of years. She asked why he did not write out his thoughts. Mr Duffy answered with cold pride. Why should he write, he asked, only to be judged by people who could not think clearly for even one minute? Why should he offer his mind to a city that trusted police for morals and showmen for art?

He went often to her small cottage outside Dublin. Many evenings, they sat

alone together. Sometimes the room grew dark around them, and Mrs Sinico did not rise to light the lamp. The darkness, the quiet room, and the music still moving in their minds brought them closer. Their loneliness seemed to join them, though neither of them spoke of it directly at first.

This friendship changed Mr Duffy. It lifted him out of his hard, dry habits for a while. The sharp edges of his character became less sharp. His thoughts, which had once seemed cold even to himself, began to carry more feeling. Sometimes, as he spoke, he caught himself listening to his own voice. He imagined that, in Mrs Sinico's eyes, he became larger, finer, almost noble.

Yet even while he drew her closer to him, another voice spoke inside him. It was a cold, impersonal voice, and he knew it as his own. It said that the soul was always alone. It said that people could not truly give themselves to another person. Each person belonged finally to himself or herself. Mr Duffy spoke such thoughts to Mrs Sinico, not seeing how strongly they affected her.

One evening, Mrs Sinico was more moved than usual. She listened to him with unusual excitement, and his words seemed to pass deeply into her. Then suddenly she took his hand and pressed it against her cheek. The action was warm, direct, and full of feeling. Mr Duffy was greatly surprised. In that moment, he understood that she had taken his words in a way he had not intended.

Her gesture disappointed and frightened him. He had liked their friendship because it seemed spiritual and controlled. Now it seemed to him that feeling had entered it too openly. He did not visit her for a week. During that week, he returned to himself, and the old cold order of his mind began to close around the friendship.

After a week, he wrote to Mrs Sinico and asked her to meet him. He did not want their last talk to happen in the room that had become their private place. That room had held too much listening, too much music, and too much unspoken feeling. So they met instead in a small cake shop near Parkgate. It was autumn, and the air was cold.

In spite of the cold, they walked for almost three hours along the roads of the Park. Their talk was painful but calm on the surface. They agreed to end their meetings. Mr Duffy said that every human bond brought sorrow. He meant the

words as wisdom, but they also protected him from the danger of love.

When they came out of the Park, they walked in silence toward the tram. Mrs Sinico began to tremble strongly. Mr Duffy feared that she might break down completely, so he said goodbye quickly and left her. A few days later, a parcel came to him. Inside it were the books and music he had lent her. The friendship was over, and Mr Duffy returned to the quiet room of his own life.

Part 3

Four years passed after Mr Duffy and Mrs Sinico parted. Mr Duffy returned to his old, even way of living. His room still showed the order of his mind. A few new pieces of music lay on the music stand downstairs, and two books by Nietzsche now stood on his shelves. But the order itself had not changed.

He wrote only rarely on the papers in his desk. Two months after his last meeting with Mrs Sinico, he had written one cold sentence about love and friendship. It said that friendship between a man and a woman was impossible because the body would always trouble it. The sentence seemed to close the door on what had happened. It let him believe that he had acted wisely.

He kept away from concerts because he did not want to meet her. Life moved on without visible change. His father died. A younger partner at the bank retired. Still, every morning Mr Duffy took the tram into the city, and every evening he walked home after eating a moderate dinner in George’s Street. His life had returned to its straight line.

One evening in November, he was sitting in the eating house with his dinner before him. He was about to put a piece of corned beef and cabbage into his mouth when his hand stopped. His eyes had fallen on a paragraph in the evening paper, which he had set up against the water bottle. He put the food back on his plate. Then he leaned closer and read the paragraph carefully.

After reading it once, he drank a glass of water. Then he pushed his plate away and folded the paper down on the table before him. He read the paragraph again and again. The cabbage on his plate grew cold and left white grease behind. A girl

came to ask if there was something wrong with his dinner. He said it was very good, but he could eat only a few more mouthfuls.

He paid his bill and left the eating house. Outside, the November evening was dark and cheerless. He walked quickly at first, striking the ground with his strong hazel stick. The newspaper showed from the side pocket of his tight overcoat. But on the lonely road toward Chapelizod, his steps became slower. His breath came unevenly in the cold air, almost like sighs.

When he reached home, he went at once to his bedroom. He took the newspaper from his pocket and read the paragraph again by the weak light from the window. He did not read it aloud, but his lips moved as he read. The article said that Mrs Emily Sinico, aged forty-three, had been killed at Sydney Parade Station the evening before. She had tried to cross the railway line and had been struck by the engine of a slow train from Kingstown.

The article gave the facts in a dry public way. The train driver said he had started the train after hearing the guard's whistle. A moment later, he heard cries and stopped the engine. The train had been moving slowly. A railway porter said he had seen a woman trying to cross the line. He had run toward her and shouted, but before he reached her, the engine struck her and she fell.

A police officer said that, when he arrived, Mrs Sinico seemed already dead. Her body had been carried to the waiting room until the ambulance came. A doctor said that she had broken ribs and had been badly hurt on the shoulder and head. He added that these injuries might not have killed a strong person by themselves. In his opinion, her death had probably come from shock and sudden heart failure.

A man speaking for the railway company expressed sorrow for the accident. He said the company had taken care to stop people from crossing the lines except by proper bridges and gates. He also said that Mrs Sinico had often crossed the lines late at night. The words were careful and official. They did not blame the railway workers.

Captain Sinico also gave evidence. He said that Mrs Sinico had been his wife. They had been married for twenty-two years and had lived happily until about two years earlier. Then, he said, she had begun to drink too much. This part of the

article struck Mr Duffy in a different way from the account of the accident. It changed the dead woman in the paper into someone poorer, weaker, and more shameful.

Mary Sinico, the daughter, also spoke. She said that recently her mother had often gone out at night to buy spirits. She had tried to reason with her mother and had persuaded her to join a temperance group. But on the night of the accident, she was not at home until an hour after it happened. The jury decided that the death followed the medical evidence and that the train driver was not to blame.

The Deputy Coroner called it a most painful case. He expressed sympathy with Captain Sinico and his daughter. He also urged the railway company to take stronger steps to prevent such accidents in the future. The article ended by saying that no blame belonged to anyone. The words were calm, public, and final.

Mr Duffy raised his eyes from the paper and looked out of his window. The evening outside was cold and empty. The river lay quiet near the unused distillery, and now and then a light appeared in a house along the road. The article stayed in his mind with a hard, unpleasant weight. Mrs Sinico was dead, and the world had turned her death into a public report.

He looked back down at the newspaper. The words were plain, but they did not feel simple to him. They carried into his room the railway station, the train, the waiting room, the doctor, the husband, the daughter, and the careful voices of men explaining everything. He had not seen Mrs Sinico for four years, yet now her death had entered his ordered room without asking permission. He sat with the paper before him, feeling first shock, then disgust, and then something colder that he did not yet understand.

Part 4

Mr Duffy looked out of the window at the cold evening. The river lay quiet beside the empty distillery, and now and then a light showed in a house along the road. What an end, he thought. The whole report of Mrs Sinico's death filled him with disgust. It disgusted him to think that he had once spoken to her of the things

that were most serious to him.

The newspaper words seemed poor, worn, and empty. The official pity, the careful report, and the ordinary way in which the death was described made him feel sick. He told himself that she had not only lowered herself. She had lowered him too. She had been the companion of his mind, and now the paper had placed her among the sad, broken people who carried bottles to public houses at night.

He thought harshly of her. She must have been weak, he told himself. She must have had no strength of will. She had fallen into bad habits and had become one of life's wrecks. How could she have gone so low? Had he been completely wrong about her? He remembered the evening when she had pressed his hand to her cheek, and now he judged that moment more severely than before.

For a short time, this harsh judgment protected him. He told himself that he had done the right thing by ending the friendship. He had avoided shame and false feeling. He had kept his life clean and controlled. But as the light faded in the room, memory began to move in another way. He seemed to feel her hand touch his again.

That imagined touch troubled him deeply. The first shock of the newspaper had attacked his stomach. Now the shock moved into his nerves. He could not sit in the room any longer. He put on his overcoat and hat quickly and went out. The cold air met him at the door and slipped into the sleeves of his coat.

When he reached the public house at Chapelizod Bridge, he went inside and ordered a hot punch. The owner served him very politely but did not try to speak with him. Five or six working men were there, talking about the value of some gentleman's land in County Kildare. They drank from large glasses, smoked, and spat on the floor. Mr Duffy sat on his stool and looked at them without really seeing them.

After a while, the working men went out, and Mr Duffy ordered another punch. He sat for a long time over the glass. The place became very quiet. The owner leaned on the counter, read the newspaper, and yawned. Now and then, Mr Duffy heard a tram pass along the lonely road outside. The sound came and went, then left the room silent again.

As he sat there, he lived again through his friendship with Mrs Sinico. Two pictures of her moved before him. In one picture, she was the woman from the newspaper report, weak, lost, and dead after a shameful accident. In the other, she was the woman who had listened to him, understood him, and pressed his hand against her face. These two pictures could not easily live together in his mind.

Slowly, he understood that she was truly dead. She no longer existed in the world. She had become only a memory. This thought made him uneasy. He asked himself what else he could have done. He could not have continued a false and dangerous friendship. He could not have lived openly with her. He had done what had seemed best at the time.

Yet the answer no longer satisfied him. Now that she was gone, he understood how lonely her life must have been. Night after night, she must have sat alone in that room, with no one to receive the deeper life of her heart. His own life would be lonely too until he died. Then he too would stop existing and become a memory, if anyone remembered him at all.

It was after nine o'clock when he left the public house. The night was cold and dark. He entered the Park by the first gate and walked under the bare trees. He went through the empty paths where he and Mrs Sinico had walked four years before. In the darkness, she seemed near him again. At moments, he almost felt her voice touch his ear and her hand touch his hand.

He stopped and listened. Why had he kept life from her? Why had he pushed her away into loneliness? The questions came with a force he could not control. His old moral certainty began to break apart. He had believed that he had acted with order, honour, and strength. Now that belief seemed hard and poor.

When he reached the top of Magazine Hill, he stopped and looked along the river toward Dublin. The city lights burned red and warm in the cold night. Then he looked down the slope and saw some human figures lying near the wall of the Park. The sight filled him with despair. Even secret and shameful loves seemed to belong to life more than he did.

He felt that he had been shut out from the feast of life. One human being had seemed to love him, and he had refused her life and happiness. He had sent her

back into loneliness, shame, and death. He felt that even the people lying below by the wall wanted him to go away. No one wanted him. He was alone outside the circle of human warmth.

He turned his eyes toward the grey shining river. Beyond it, he saw a goods train moving slowly out of Kingsbridge Station. It looked like a dark worm with a fiery head, crawling with great effort through the night. The train passed slowly from sight, but he still heard the hard sound of its engine in his ears. The sound seemed to repeat her name again and again.

Mr Duffy turned back by the way he had come. The rhythm of the engine still beat in his mind. Then he began to doubt what memory had just given him. He stopped under a tree and waited for the sound to die away. He could no longer feel her near him in the darkness. He could no longer hear her voice or feel her hand. He listened for several minutes. The night was perfectly silent. He listened again, but there was nothing. He felt that he was alone.

Ivy Day in the Committee Room

Part 1

Old Jack bent over the small fire in the committee room. He used a piece of cardboard to gather the ashes and spread them carefully over the pale coals. When he leaned close, his face almost disappeared into the darkness. Then, as he began to fan the fire again, his shadow climbed the opposite wall. Slowly his old face came back into the light.

It was a thin, bony, hairy face. His blue eyes were wet and weak, and they blinked again and again at the fire. His mouth sometimes hung open, then closed with a small chewing movement, though he was eating nothing. When the ashes caught and the fire began to improve, he placed the cardboard against the wall. He sighed and said, “That is better now, Mr O’Connor.”

Mr O’Connor was sitting near him. He was a young man, but his hair was already grey, and his face was marked by spots and red patches. He had been rolling tobacco into a cigarette with careful fingers. When Old Jack spoke, he stopped, undid what he had made, and began to roll it again. After thinking for a moment, he licked the paper and finished the cigarette.

“Did Mr Tierney say when he would be back?” Mr O’Connor asked. His voice was thin and rough at the same time. Old Jack answered that Mr Tierney had said nothing. Mr O’Connor put the cigarette in his mouth and searched his pockets for something to light it with. Instead of matches, he pulled out a small packet of printed election cards.

Old Jack said he would get him a match, but Mr O’Connor said the card would do. He took one card and looked at the printed words before tearing it. The card asked the voters of the Royal Exchange Ward to support Mr Richard J. Tierney in the coming city election. It was the kind of card that the canvassers gave from door to door. Now one of those cards was going to be used only to light a cigarette.

Mr O’Connor had been hired by Tierney’s agent to ask voters for support in one part of the ward. But the weather was bad, and his boots let in water. Because

of that, he had spent much of the day by the fire with Old Jack instead of walking the streets. The room was in Wicklow Street, and it had been dark for some time. Outside, the sixth of October was cold, wet, and miserable.

Mr O'Connor tore a strip from the card and lit it. As the little flame rose, it lit the dark green ivy leaf fixed in his coat. Then he used the flame to light his cigarette. Old Jack watched him closely. After that, the old man took up the cardboard again and slowly fanned the fire while Mr O'Connor smoked.

Old Jack began to speak about children. He said it was hard to know how to bring them up. He had tried to raise his own son properly, but the boy had turned out badly. He had sent him to the Christian Brothers' school and had done what he could for him. But now, he said, the young man only drank and wasted his life.

Old Jack put the cardboard down again with a tired movement. He said that if he were not an old man now, he would still beat the boy and change his ways by force. He had done that many times before, he said. But the boy's mother spoiled him and protected him too much. Mr O'Connor agreed and said that such treatment ruined children.

Old Jack said that children gave little thanks. A father worked, worried, and tried to guide them, and in return he received rude words. His son, he said, became especially bold whenever he saw that his father had taken a little drink. The old man asked what the world was coming to when sons spoke that way to their fathers. His complaint filled the small room as heavily as the smoke.

Mr O'Connor asked how old the son was. Old Jack said he was nineteen. Mr O'Connor asked why he did not put him to work at something. Old Jack answered that he had tried again and again. He had told the boy that he would not keep him forever and that he must find a job for himself. But whenever the boy found work, he spent everything on drink.

Mr O'Connor shook his head in sympathy. The two men fell silent, and the old caretaker looked into the fire. The room was poor, cold, and dark except for the small light of the coals. Nothing much was happening there. They were supposed to be part of a political campaign, but the campaign room felt more like a place where tired men waited for something that might never come.

Then the door opened, and a voice called in from the dark. “Hello! Is this a secret meeting?” Old Jack asked who was there. The voice asked what they were doing in the dark. Mr O’Connor looked toward the door and asked, “Is that you, Hynes?” The man answered yes and came forward into the firelight.

Mr Hynes was a tall, thin young man with a light brown moustache. He wore his coat collar turned up because of the cold and rain outside. Like the others, he had come into the committee room more for warmth and company than for hard political work. The room received him quietly, with its weak fire, damp air, cigarette smoke, and the waiting mood of men who had little money and less energy. The election was outside in the streets, but inside the room the men were mostly waiting, smoking, and trying to keep warm.

Part 2

Mr Hynes came closer to the fire and stood near the mantelpiece. His coat was wet from the rain, and the ivy leaf in his coat showed dark green against the cloth. Mr O’Connor welcomed him without much warmth, and Old Jack looked at him with his weak eyes. Hynes asked whether Mr Tierney had come back yet. Mr O’Connor said he had not, and the answer seemed to please no one.

Hynes then asked what kind of man they thought they were working for. He said that Tierney did not really care about the people. He only wanted to get a good position for himself. In Hynes’s view, the real workers of Dublin needed a different kind of representative. They needed a man who understood labour, hardship, and poor men’s lives.

Old Jack said that working people should certainly be represented. Hynes grew warmer as he spoke. He said that working men did all the hard work and received very little in return. They did not want comfortable jobs for their sons, nephews, and cousins. They wanted fair treatment and honour. His voice had a sharp political feeling in it.

Then Hynes spoke about the coming visit of King Edward. He said some people wanted Dublin to give the king an address of welcome if he came the next

year. To Hynes, this was shameful. Why should Irishmen bow to a foreign king? The room was poor and cold, but his words tried to make it seem part of a larger national struggle.

Mr O'Connor answered that Tierney would not vote for such a welcome. He said Tierney was standing as a Nationalist. Hynes did not believe it. He said they should wait and see what "Tricky Dicky Tierney" would do when the time came. Mr O'Connor did not argue very strongly. He only said that, whatever Tierney did about politics, he wished the man would appear with the money he owed them.

The three men fell silent. Old Jack began to gather more small pieces of coal and ash together on the fire. Hynes took off his hat, shook the rain from it, and turned down his coat collar. As he did this, the ivy leaf in his coat became clearer. He pointed to it and said that if Parnell were alive, there would be no talk of welcoming a foreign king.

Mr O'Connor agreed. Old Jack also looked back to the older days with feeling. He said there had been some life in politics then. The room became silent again after that. The fire made small sounds, and the rain and cold seemed to press against the outside of the building.

Then the door opened quickly, and a small busy man entered. His nose made a wet sound as he breathed, and his ears looked very cold. He came straight to the fire, rubbing his hands fast as if he hoped to make sparks from them. This was Mr Henchy. Before anyone asked him anything, he said, "No money, boys."

Old Jack offered him his chair, but Mr Henchy told him not to move. Still, the old man got up, and Mr Henchy sat down near the fire. He nodded briefly to Hynes and then turned to Mr O'Connor. He asked whether O'Connor had worked Aungier Street. O'Connor said yes and began searching his pockets for his notes.

Mr Henchy asked especially about a voter named Grimes. O'Connor said he had called on him, but Grimes would not give a clear promise. He had said that he would not tell anyone how he intended to vote. Still, O'Connor thought he might support Tierney. Grimes had asked who had nominated Tierney, and O'Connor had mentioned Father Burke's name. That, O'Connor thought, had helped.

Mr Henchy rubbed his hands over the fire more quickly and asked Old Jack to bring a little more coal if any was left. Old Jack went out. Then Henchy began to complain about Tierney. He had asked the man for money, but Tierney had put him off with smooth words. Tierney had said the work must first be seen to be going well and that he would not forget them later.

Mr Henchy was disgusted by this. He called Tierney mean and tricky, though he used rougher words than that. Hynes said this was exactly what he had warned them about. Mr Henchy agreed and said that Tierney's small sharp eyes did not lie. A man with eyes like that, he said, was not likely to pay money openly and fairly.

Henchy then began talking about Tierney's family. He said that Tierney's father had once kept a second-hand clothes shop in Mary's Lane. Men used to go there on Sunday mornings to buy cheap clothes before the public houses opened. According to Henchy, the old man also kept a bottle hidden for special customers. O'Connor was surprised and asked if that was really true. Henchy said it was true and that this was where Tierney had first learned his tricks.

Old Jack came back with a few pieces of coal and placed them on the fire. O'Connor said it was a fine way to treat men who were working for him. How could Tierney expect them to continue if he would not pay? Henchy said he could not help it and expected to find debt collectors waiting for him when he reached home. Hynes laughed, pushed himself away from the mantelpiece, and said that everything would be all right when King Edward came. Then he said goodbye for the present and left the room slowly.

Part 3

Hynes went out of the room slowly. For a few moments, no one spoke. The door was almost closed when Mr O'Connor, who had been looking moodily into the fire, suddenly called after him. "Goodbye, Joe," he said. His voice sounded as if he was not sure whether he was being friendly or only polite.

Mr Henchy waited until the door was fully shut. Then he nodded toward it and

asked what Hynes really wanted there. He did not trust him. Mr O'Connor threw the end of his cigarette into the fire and said that poor Joe was hard up like the rest of them. But Mr Henchy was not satisfied with that answer.

He spat into the fire, almost putting it out, and said plainly what he thought. In his private opinion, Hynes was from the other side. He might be working for Colgan's group, he said, and had come only to learn how Tierney's campaign was going. He called him a spy. Mr O'Connor did not agree so quickly. He said that Joe was a decent fellow.

Mr Henchy admitted that Joe's father had been a decent and respectable man. The old Larry Hynes had done many good turns in his day. But the son, Mr Henchy said, was not made of the same good metal. He could understand a man being poor, but he could not understand a man living on others without shame. A man should have some pride, even when he had no money.

Old Jack also did not welcome Hynes. He said that Hynes should work for his own side and not come around their room to watch them. Mr O'Connor still tried to defend him. He said Joe Hynes was honest and clever with a pen. He began to remind them of something Hynes had once written, but Mr Henchy cut across the thought.

Mr Henchy said that some of the strong national men were too clever for his taste. In his opinion, half of them were being paid by the Castle, meaning the British authorities in Dublin. Old Jack said that no one could know such things for sure. Mr Henchy said he did know. He did not exactly say that Hynes himself was one of them. Hynes, he said, might be a little better than that. But there were men who would sell their country for a few coins and then thank God they had a country to sell.

There was a knock at the door. Mr Henchy called, "Come in." A strange-looking man appeared in the doorway. He looked a little like a poor priest and a little like a poor actor. His black clothes were tightly buttoned on his short body, and it was hard to tell whether he wore a priest's collar or not. His face was wet with rain and had a yellow look, except for two red spots on his cheeks.

Mr Henchy jumped up at once. "Father Keon!" he said. "Is that you? Come

in." Father Keon opened his long mouth and smiled with great politeness. He said no several times, softly and quickly, as if he did not want to trouble them. He was only looking for Mr Fanning, he said. Mr Henchy told him that Fanning was around at the Black Eagle and again asked him to come in and sit down.

Father Keon would not enter. He said it was only a little business matter and thanked them again and again. His voice was smooth and gentle, but there was something uncertain about his position. He stepped back from the door. Mr Henchy took one of the candles and went to light him down the dark stairs. Father Keon protested politely, but Mr Henchy went anyway.

When Mr Henchy returned, he put the candle on the table and sat down again by the fire. For a short time, no one spoke. Then Mr O'Connor asked what Father Keon really was. Mr Henchy said that was a difficult question. Mr O'Connor said that Father Keon and Fanning seemed very close and were often seen together in a public house. He asked whether Keon was truly a priest at all.

Mr Henchy said that he believed he was, though not the usual kind. He thought Father Keon was a sort of black sheep, an unlucky man who had somehow fallen away from proper church life. There were not many such men, he said, thank God, but there were a few. Mr O'Connor asked how he lived. Mr Henchy said that was another mystery.

Mr O'Connor asked whether Father Keon was connected with any church, chapel, or institution. Mr Henchy said he did not think so. He seemed to be travelling on his own business. Then Mr Henchy stopped himself and asked God to forgive him. He had thought Father Keon might be the drink they had been waiting for.

The mention of drink turned everyone's mind in that direction. Mr O'Connor asked if there was any chance of a drink itself. Old Jack said that he too was dry. Mr Henchy complained that he had asked the young man at the Black Eagle three times to send up a dozen bottles of stout. He had asked again only a little earlier, but the young man was talking at the counter and had probably forgotten.

Mr O'Connor asked why he had not reminded him more directly. Mr Henchy said he could not interrupt while the young man was speaking to Alderman

Cowley. He had only waited until he caught his eye and then mentioned the little matter again. The young man had said it would be all right. But Mr Henchy did not trust that promise. He thought the little fellow had forgotten all about it.

The talk then turned again toward city men and small political plans. Mr O'Connor said there seemed to be some private deal going on in that quarter. He had seen three of them talking hard the day before at a street corner. Mr Henchy said he thought he understood the game. In Dublin, he joked, a man had to owe the city money if he wanted to become Lord Mayor.

This joke made the room livelier for a moment. Mr Henchy said that perhaps he should become a city father himself. Mr O'Connor laughed and said that, at least when it came to owing money, Mr Henchy was ready for the job. Mr Henchy carried the joke further. He pictured himself driving out of the Mansion House in fine clothes, with Old Jack standing behind him in a powdered wig and Father Keon as his private chaplain. The men laughed, but the laughter was thin. The cold room, the weak fire, and the unpaid work still remained around them.

Part 4

Old Jack's story about the Lord Mayor's dinner made the men laugh for a little while. The idea of the great Mansion House sending out for a small piece of meat seemed poor and funny to them. Mr Henchy enjoyed the joke because it helped him forget the cold room and the unpaid money. For a moment, the men imagined themselves in high office, with fine clothes, servants, and important titles. But the room around them remained dark, smoky, and almost empty.

Then there was a knock at the door, and a boy put his head in. Old Jack asked what he wanted. The boy said he had come from the Black Eagle, and he entered sideways with a basket. The bottles inside made a good sound as he set it down on the floor. At once the mood in the room changed. Mr Henchy became cheerful and rubbed his hands with pleasure.

Old Jack helped the boy move the bottles from the basket to the table. He counted them carefully to make sure none were missing. Then the boy asked if

there were any empty bottles to take back. Old Jack looked at him as if the question were foolish. Mr Henchy laughed and said they should be allowed to drink the bottles first. Then he sent the boy across the street to borrow a corkscrew.

When the boy left, Mr Henchy said that Mr Tierney was not so bad after all. At least, he had kept his word about the drink. Old Jack pointed out that there were no glasses. Mr Henchy said this did not matter. Many good men had drunk from the bottle before. Mr O'Connor agreed that it was better than nothing, and no one argued with him.

The boy soon came back with the corkscrew. Old Jack opened three bottles and was about to give the corkscrew back when Mr Henchy stopped him. He asked the boy whether he would like a drink too. The boy answered politely that he would. Old Jack opened another bottle, though he did not like doing it, and handed it to him.

Old Jack asked the boy how old he was, and the boy said he was seventeen. No one said more. The boy lifted the bottle, gave Mr Henchy his respects, and drank it down. Then he wiped his mouth with his sleeve, took up the corkscrew, and went out sideways again with a muttered goodbye. Old Jack watched him go and said that this was how bad habits began. Mr Henchy agreed with a little phrase that meant a small beginning could lead to larger trouble.

Old Jack then gave out the three opened bottles. The men drank at the same time, and each man placed his bottle on the mantelpiece near his hand. They all drew a long breath of satisfaction. The room seemed warmer now, though the fire had not grown much. Drink gave the men a short feeling of comfort and importance.

After a pause, Mr Henchy said that he had done a good day's work. Mr O'Connor asked whether that was so. Mr Henchy said yes. He had secured one or two sure votes in Dawson Street with Crofton. Then he lowered his voice and said that Crofton was a decent man, of course, but useless as a canvasser. Crofton, he said, had no words in him. He simply stood there while Henchy did all the talking.

At that moment, two men entered the room. One was very fat, with blue clothes that seemed almost to slip from his large body. He had a broad face, pale blue

staring eyes, and a grey moustache. This was Crofton. The other man was younger and thinner, with a clean-shaven face, a very high collar, and a wide hat. This was Mr Lyons.

Mr Henchy greeted Crofton and joked that they had just been talking about him. Mr Lyons noticed the drink at once and asked where it had come from. Mr O'Connor laughed and said Lyons always saw drink first. Lyons complained that he and Crofton had been out in the cold rain looking for votes while the others were sitting inside with stout. Mr Henchy answered roughly that he could get more votes in five minutes than the two of them could get in a week.

Mr O'Connor told Old Jack to open two more bottles. But Old Jack said he could not because the corkscrew had gone back. Mr Henchy stood up quickly and said he knew a trick. He took two unopened bottles and placed them on the warm edge of the fire. Then he sat down again and took another drink from his own bottle. Mr Lyons sat on the edge of the table and swung his legs while waiting.

Crofton sat on a box and looked steadily at the second bottle near the fire. He said almost nothing. He was silent partly because he had nothing to say and partly because he thought himself above the men around him. He had first worked for the Conservative candidate. But when the Conservatives withdrew their man and supported Tierney as the less bad choice, Crofton had also been brought into Tierney's campaign.

After a few minutes, the cork flew out of Mr Lyons's bottle with a small pop. Lyons jumped down at once, took the bottle from the fire, and brought it back to the table. Mr Henchy returned to his earlier boast. He told Crofton that they had won several good votes that day. Lyons asked which votes they had won, and Henchy began to explain with great satisfaction.

Henchy said that he had got Parkes, Atkinson, and old Ward of Dawson Street. Ward, he said, was a fine old Conservative gentleman. Henchy had told him that Tierney was a respectable man and would support anything that helped the country. He had also said that Tierney owned much property and several businesses, so it was in his own interest to keep taxes low. That, Henchy said proudly, was the right way to talk to such voters.

Lyons then asked about the proposed welcome address to King Edward. At once the talk grew more political. Henchy said that Ireland needed money and that a royal visit would bring money into Dublin. Visitors would come, business would improve, and the empty factories near the quays might benefit. What the country needed, he said, was capital.

Mr O'Connor objected. He asked why Irishmen should welcome the King of England. He began to mention Parnell, but Henchy cut him off. Parnell was dead, Henchy said. King Edward was alive, and Henchy thought he was a decent man of the world. If the king came in friendship, he asked, why should Dublin insult him?

Crofton nodded in support, but Lyons was not satisfied. He said that Edward's life had not been very admirable. Henchy answered that old troubles should be forgotten. He admired the king personally because he seemed ordinary, sociable, and fond of sport. Lyons then brought the question back to ideals and to Parnell. If people judged Parnell for his private life, he asked, why should they welcome Edward?

Mr O'Connor tried to stop the argument from becoming bitter. He reminded them that this was Parnell's anniversary and said they should not stir up bad feeling. Everyone respected Parnell now that he was dead, even the Conservatives. At that moment, Crofton's bottle finally opened near the fire. He rose, took it, and came back with his prize.

Crofton then spoke in his deep voice. He said that his side respected Parnell because Parnell had been a gentleman. Mr Henchy seized on this at once. He said Parnell had been the only man who could keep the Irish political men under control. Then he saw Hynes at the doorway and called him in loudly. The cold, smoky room now had more drink, more men, and more talk than before, but still almost no real political work had been done.

Part 5

Hynes stood in the doorway with the rain still on his clothes. Mr Henchy called

to him warmly, as if the earlier talk against him had never happened. “Come in, Joe,” he said. “You are just in time.” Hynes came back into the room and looked at the bottles. The drink had changed the air of the place. The men were still cold and poor, but now they had something in their hands.

Old Jack found another bottle for Hynes and opened it by warming it near the fire. The men shifted a little to make room for him. Hynes sat on the table and took off his hat. His face was pale from the cold, but his eyes were alive. The ivy leaf in his coat showed clearly again. It reminded them all what day it was.

Someone mentioned Parnell once more. The name did not enter the room like an ordinary name. It carried old anger, old hope, and old defeat with it. The men had been joking, drinking, and complaining about small campaign matters. But when Parnell was named, the room became more serious for a moment. Even Crofton, who was not of their party, listened with respect.

Hynes said he had written something for the day. The men asked him to recite it. At first he seemed unwilling, but they urged him on. Mr Henchy said that a man should not hide good work from friends. Mr O’Connor settled himself near the fire and prepared to listen. Old Jack stood close by with his bottle, blinking softly in the firelight.

Hynes began his poem in a clear voice. It was a poem for Parnell, the dead leader whom many Irish people had once called their uncrowned king. The poem said that Ireland should mourn him because false men and cowards had brought him down. It spoke of his great hopes for Ireland, of the green flag, of freedom, and of the shame of those who had betrayed him. The words were grand and sorrowful, much larger than the poor room in which they were spoken.

As Hynes continued, the men listened without interrupting. The poem said that Parnell had dreamed of freedom, but betrayal had pulled him away from the thing he loved. It cursed the cowardly hands that had struck him and the false friends who had turned against him. It said that shame should remain on those who had tried to stain his great name. Even though the language was high and old-fashioned, the feeling behind it was simple: Ireland had lost its best man.

The poem then turned from anger to hope. It said that Parnell had fallen like a

great man and now rested with the heroes of Ireland's past. No more fighting, pain, or ambition could trouble him. But perhaps, the poem said, his spirit might rise again like a bird from fire when a new day came. On that day, Ireland might lift a cup to joy, but still keep one grief: the memory of Parnell.

When Hynes finished, he sat down again on the table. For a moment, there was silence. Then the men began to clap, and the clapping grew stronger. Even Mr Lyons clapped. The applause lasted for some time. When it ended, all the men drank quietly from their bottles, as if the drink itself had become part of the tribute.

Hynes's own bottle suddenly opened near the fire with a sharp pop. But Hynes did not move. He sat there flushed and bareheaded, as if he had not heard it. The others seemed touched by the poem, though some of them tried to hide it. Mr O'Connor took out his cigarette papers and tobacco, partly to cover his feeling. "Good man, Joe," he said.

Mr Henchy turned quickly to Crofton. He wanted praise from the man who came from another political side. "What do you think of that?" he asked. "Isn't it fine?" Crofton answered in his deep voice that it was a very fine piece of writing. His words were plain and short, but they carried weight because he was not one of Parnell's own followers.

The room fell into a quieter mood after that. The men still held their bottles, and the fire still gave only weak warmth. The political campaign had produced little real work that evening. They had complained about money, doubted one another, joked about office, and argued about the king. Yet for a few minutes, through Hynes's poem, they had remembered something larger than their small troubles.

Still, the larger feeling could not fully change them. Parnell's memory rose in the room, but the room remained the same poor committee room in Wicklow Street. The men were still tired, cold, and uncertain about being paid. Their politics were mixed with drink, gossip, and personal need. The poem gave them a moment of dignity, but only a moment.

Outside, the October night remained wet and dark. Inside, the ivy leaves on their coats marked a public memory that had become almost private sorrow. The

men drank again and sat near the small fire. No one made a grand speech after Hynes. There was nothing more to add. Parnell was dead, the campaign was weak, and Dublin’s political life seemed to have become a room full of tired men waiting for pay and warmth.

A Mother

Part 1

Mr Holohan was the assistant secretary of the Eire Abu Society. For nearly a month, he had been walking all over Dublin, trying to arrange a series of concerts. His pockets and hands were full of dirty little pieces of paper, notes, names, and plans. He had a bad leg, and because of this his friends called him Hoppy Holohan. He stood for long times at street corners, argued with people, wrote down details, and hurried from place to place as well as he could.

But although Mr Holohan did much walking and talking, it was really Mrs Kearney who arranged everything. She had a clear mind for such matters and liked to make things orderly. She knew how a programme should look and how people should be placed. She also knew how important it was for her daughter to appear in the right way before the public. When she entered a plan, she entered it fully, not halfway.

Before her marriage, Mrs Kearney had been Miss Devlin. She had become Mrs Kearney partly out of anger at life. As a girl, she had been educated at a good convent, where she learned French and music. She was pale and stiff in manner, and because of this she had made few close friends at school. People admired her training, but they did not easily come near her heart.

When she became old enough to marry, she was invited to many houses. There she played music and showed her careful manners. People praised her, and she sat among her accomplishments like a person waiting for a bright future to come and claim her. She wanted romance, distinction, and a life better than ordinary Dublin life. But the young men who came near her seemed plain and uninteresting.

She gave them little encouragement. While waiting for something better, she comforted herself in small secret ways. She liked sweet things and ate Turkish Delight when no one saw her. Time passed, and her friends began to speak more freely about her age and her chances. Mrs Kearney did not want to become an object of pity or gossip. So she silenced them by marrying Mr Kearney, a

bootmaker on Ormond Quay.

Mr Kearney was much older than she was. He was a serious man with a large brown beard, and his words seemed to come out slowly from inside it. He was not romantic, and he did not promise a shining life. But after the first year of marriage, Mrs Kearney saw that such a man would wear well. He was steady, careful with money, and religious. He was not exciting, but he was safe.

Mrs Kearney did not lose her own ideas after marriage. She remained firm in her religion and became a good wife to her husband. At parties, if she lifted her eyebrow even a little, Mr Kearney understood that it was time to leave. When he had a cough, she put a warm quilt over his feet and made him a strong hot drink. She managed him quietly, and he accepted her management.

Mr Kearney was also a model father. He paid a small amount every week into a society so that each of his daughters would have one hundred pounds when she reached the age of twenty-four. This was sensible and respectable. He sent his older daughter, Kathleen, to a good convent, where she learned French and music. Later, he paid her fees at the Academy so that her musical training could continue.

Mrs Kearney saw Kathleen not only as a daughter, but also as a chance. Kathleen was young, educated, musical, and well brought up. She could go into the world in a way Mrs Kearney herself had not done. Mrs Kearney wanted her daughter to be noticed by the right people. She wanted Kathleen's name to be spoken with approval in musical and national circles.

When the Irish Revival began to grow in Dublin, Mrs Kearney quickly saw its value. She decided to make use of Kathleen's Irish name and of the new public interest in Irish culture. She brought an Irish teacher to the house. Kathleen and her sister sent Irish picture postcards to friends, and their friends sent Irish picture postcards back. These small signs of national feeling became part of the family's social life.

On some Sundays, Mr Kearney went with his family to the pro-cathedral. After Mass, a little group of friends gathered near the corner of Cathedral Street. They were musical friends, nationalist friends, and people who liked to be seen in such company. They exchanged gossip, laughed, shook hands, and said goodbye to one

another in Irish. Mrs Kearney watched all this with satisfaction. It showed that her family was moving in the right circle.

Soon people began to speak often of Miss Kathleen Kearney. They said she was very clever at music. They said she was a nice girl. They also said that she supported the Irish language movement. Mrs Kearney was pleased by this public opinion. She had worked carefully to make such talk possible, and now it was beginning to bear fruit.

So she was not surprised when Mr Holohan came to ask for her help. His society was going to give four grand concerts at the Antient Concert Rooms, and he wanted Kathleen to be the accompanist. This was exactly the kind of chance Mrs Kearney had been preparing for. It would place Kathleen before musical people, nationalist people, and the public. It would also show that the Kearney family had taste, culture, and proper position.

Mrs Kearney received Mr Holohan in the drawing-room. She made him sit down and treated him with polite warmth. She brought out the decanter and the silver biscuit barrel, because such things helped business move smoothly. Mr Holohan may have thought he had come simply to make an arrangement. But Mrs Kearney understood that this was more than a small musical job. It was part of Kathleen's future.

From the beginning, Mrs Kearney gave herself completely to the matter. She asked questions, offered advice, and made suggestions. She knew that a public concert could succeed or fail because of many small details. The names on the programme, the order of the performers, the look of the notices, and the dignity of the whole event all mattered. Mr Holohan needed help, and Mrs Kearney was ready to provide it.

At this early stage, everything seemed promising. Mr Holohan had the society, the concerts, and the official position. Mrs Kearney had taste, order, ambition, and a musical daughter. Each side seemed to need the other. But beneath the polite talk in the drawing-room, there was already a difference between them. Mr Holohan was trying to arrange concerts; Mrs Kearney was trying to secure her daughter's proper place and proper reward.

Part 2

A clear contract was made for Kathleen's work. She was to play as accompanist at the four grand concerts, and she was to receive eight guineas for her services. Mrs Kearney liked the sound of a contract. It gave shape to the arrangement and made it more serious than a friendly promise. She did not intend to let her daughter's work become a casual favour for a careless society.

Mr Holohan needed help with many small matters. He did not know how to word the printed notices properly or how to arrange the items on the programme. Mrs Kearney understood such things better than he did. She knew which performers should have their names printed in large letters and which ones could appear in smaller letters. She also knew that certain singers would not like to come after comic or weaker items.

She used her judgment to arrange the programme in a clever way. The strongest items could carry the weaker ones. A doubtful piece could be placed between two popular performers, so the audience would not become too restless. Mr Holohan came to her house almost every day to ask advice on one point or another. Mrs Kearney was always friendly and helpful. She treated him warmly, but she also quietly guided the whole plan.

She often pushed the decanter toward him and invited him to take a drink. "Help yourself, Mr Holohan," she would say. Then, when he hesitated, she encouraged him again. This made the talks feel comfortable and homely. But behind the comfortable manner, Mrs Kearney was watching every detail. She wanted the concerts to succeed because Kathleen's name would be connected with them.

Everything seemed to go smoothly at first. Mrs Kearney bought a beautiful piece of blush-pink silk from Brown Thomas's to put into the front of Kathleen's dress. It cost a good deal of money, but she believed some occasions justified expense. A public musical appearance needed a proper look. Kathleen must not seem poorly prepared beside other performers.

Mrs Kearney also bought a dozen two-shilling tickets for the final concert. She sent them to friends who might not come unless they were directly pressed. This was practical work, not vanity. A final concert needed a good audience, and the Kearney circle had to be present. Mrs Kearney forgot nothing. Because of her, many things that might have been left loose were done in good time.

The concerts were arranged for Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. On Wednesday night, Mrs Kearney arrived at the Antient Concert Rooms with Kathleen. At once she disliked the look of things. A few young men with bright blue badges stood doing nothing in the entrance hall. None of them wore evening dress. They looked more like idle helpers than proper stewards for a grand event.

Mrs Kearney passed them with her daughter and looked quickly through the open door of the hall. Then she understood why the young men were idle. There was almost no audience. For a moment, she wondered whether she had mistaken the time. But no, it was twenty minutes to eight. The concert should soon begin, and the room was still sadly empty.

In the dressing room behind the stage, she was introduced to Mr Fitzpatrick, the secretary of the Society. He was a small man with a pale, empty-looking face. He wore his soft brown hat carelessly on one side of his head. He had a flat accent, and he held a programme in his hand, chewing one end of it until it became wet. Mrs Kearney smiled and shook his hand, but she did not like him.

Mr Fitzpatrick seemed to take disappointment lightly. This displeased Mrs Kearney even more. The performers in the dressing room talked nervously among themselves. They looked at the mirror, opened and closed their music, and waited. Mr Holohan came in and out every few minutes with reports from the box office. None of the reports made the situation better.

When it was nearly half past eight, the few people in the hall began to show that they wanted the concert to start. Mr Fitzpatrick entered the dressing room and smiled at everyone. He said, in his flat voice, that they might as well begin. Mrs Kearney looked at him with quick contempt. Then she turned to Kathleen and asked kindly whether she was ready.

When she had a chance, Mrs Kearney called Mr Holohan aside. She asked him

what the poor attendance meant. Mr Holohan did not know. He said that the Committee had made a mistake by arranging four concerts. Four concerts were too many. Mrs Kearney agreed that the situation was poor, but she also said that the performers were not good enough. Mr Holohan admitted that many of them were not good, but he said the Committee had decided to save the best talent for Saturday night.

Mrs Kearney listened to this with controlled anger. She had worked hard, bought material, sent tickets, and helped arrange everything. Yet now she saw that the Society had not prepared properly for the first night. Kathleen had to sit at the piano and support weaker performers before a thin audience. The grand series of concerts already looked smaller and cheaper than it had sounded in her drawing-room.

Still, she did not make a public scene that night. She allowed Kathleen to do her work. She watched, listened, and stored up her judgment. The first signs of trouble were now clear: bad planning, poor performers, weak attendance, and careless officials. Mrs Kearney did not yet know how far the trouble would go. But she already understood that if she did not protect Kathleen's interests, no one else would.

Part 3

As the first concert went on, Mrs Kearney watched everything closely. The performers came and went on the platform, but most of them were not strong enough to hold an audience. The few people in the hall became fewer as the evening passed. Some left quietly, and others sat with tired faces. Mrs Kearney began to regret the money she had spent on Kathleen's dress and tickets.

She did not speak openly, but she stored every detail in her mind. The blue-badged stewards did not look proper. Mr Fitzpatrick's empty smile annoyed her more each time she saw it. Mr Holohan seemed busy, but his busyness did not produce order. The whole concert had the air of something badly made and badly managed.

Kathleen did her duty at the piano. She played for one singer after another and supported items that did not deserve much support. Mrs Kearney watched her daughter with pride and anger mixed together. Kathleen was behaving correctly, but the Society was not giving her a proper occasion. It was unfair that a carefully trained young woman should be placed in such a weak public event.

The first concert ended a little before ten o'clock. It did not finish grandly. It simply died away. People went home quickly, as if they were glad to escape. Mrs Kearney said little as she left, but she had already become suspicious. Something in the look of the whole arrangement was wrong.

The concert on Thursday night was better attended. At first this seemed like an improvement. But Mrs Kearney soon saw that many of the seats had probably been filled with free tickets. The audience behaved too freely, almost as if they were watching a practice instead of a public concert. They talked, moved, and laughed in ways that did not show respect for the performers.

Mr Fitzpatrick seemed to enjoy himself during the evening. He stood near the screen at the side of the stage and often pushed his head out to look into the hall. From time to time, he laughed with two friends in the balcony. Mrs Kearney noticed all of this with growing anger. He did not seem to understand that his behaviour made the concert look cheap.

During the evening, Mrs Kearney heard more troubling news. The Friday concert was to be cancelled. The Committee had decided to put all its effort into making Saturday night a success. They hoped for a full house then. This news changed the matter in Mrs Kearney's mind from poor management into a question of money and contract.

She looked for Mr Holohan at once. She found him limping quickly through the passage with a glass of lemonade for a young lady. Mrs Kearney stopped him and asked whether the news was true. Mr Holohan said yes, it was true. He seemed to be in a hurry and did not want a long conversation.

Mrs Kearney said clearly that this did not change the contract. Kathleen had been engaged for four concerts, and the agreed payment was for four concerts. If the Society chose to give only three, that was its affair, not Kathleen's. Her

daughter had kept herself ready for all four nights. Therefore the original sum should still be paid.

Mr Holohan did not answer the point firmly. He told her that she should speak to Mr Fitzpatrick. This answer displeased her because it sounded like escape. Mr Holohan had come to her house every day when he needed advice, but now that there was trouble, he passed the matter to another man. Mrs Kearney saw that she would have to press the issue herself.

She called Mr Fitzpatrick away from the side of the stage. She explained the situation to him in a controlled voice. Kathleen had signed for four concerts, she said, and she expected the full payment written in the agreement. The Society's decision to cancel one night could not reduce the promised fee. The point was simple, but Mr Fitzpatrick did not seem to understand it quickly.

He looked blank and uncertain. Then he said he would bring the matter before the Committee. This answer did not satisfy Mrs Kearney at all. Her anger began to show in her cheek, but she controlled herself. She almost asked who exactly this Committee was, but she stopped because the question would not sound ladylike.

On Friday morning, small boys were sent through the main streets of Dublin with bundles of handbills. The Society also put special notices in the evening papers. These notices praised the concert planned for Saturday and urged music-loving people to attend. The Committee was clearly trying hard to repair the damage caused by the earlier poor nights. Mrs Kearney noticed this effort and felt a little calmer.

Still, she did not fully trust the situation. She decided to tell her husband part of her concern. Mr Kearney listened carefully. He was not quick or brilliant, but he was steady. After hearing her, he said that perhaps it would be better if he came with her on Saturday night.

Mrs Kearney agreed at once. She respected her husband as something large, safe, and fixed. He did not have many talents, but he had the public value of being a man. His presence would make her position stronger if trouble came. She was glad he had offered to come without being pushed.

The Saturday concert was meant to be the grand night of the series. Mrs Kearney thought over her plans carefully. Kathleen must play as promised, but Kathleen must also be paid as promised. Mrs Kearney was not going to let polite words, weak officials, or a hidden Committee take advantage of her daughter. The earlier concerts had shown her enough: on Saturday night, she would have to be ready.

Part 4

The night of the grand concert came. Mrs Kearney arrived at the Antient Concert Rooms with her husband and Kathleen three-quarters of an hour before the concert was to begin. It was raining, and the wet street outside looked sad and unfriendly. Mrs Kearney gave Kathleen's clothes and music to Mr Kearney to hold. Then she went through the building, looking for Mr Holohan or Mr Fitzpatrick.

She could not find either of them. This annoyed her at once. On the most important night of the series, the men who should have been ready were nowhere to be seen. She asked the stewards whether any member of the Committee was in the hall. After much trouble, one steward brought out a small woman named Miss Beirne.

Mrs Kearney explained that she wanted to see one of the secretaries. Miss Beirne said she expected them any minute and asked if she could do anything. Mrs Kearney looked carefully at her face. It was an older face, full of trust and effort, but it did not look useful to Mrs Kearney. "No, thank you," she said, and soon had to return to the dressing room.

The performers were beginning to arrive. Mr Duggan, the bass, had already come, and so had Mr Bell, one of the tenors. Mr Duggan was quiet and modest, though he had sung in opera and was proud of his voice. Mr Bell was small, fair-haired, nervous, and jealous of other singers. When he saw Mr Duggan, he joked with him as if they were both going into battle.

Mrs Kearney went to the side of the screen and looked out at the hall. To her

relief, the seats were filling quickly. A pleasant sound of talk moved through the room. She came back and spoke quietly with her husband. Their talk was clearly about Kathleen, because they both looked at her as she stood speaking with Miss Healy, the contralto.

Then a strange-looking woman came into the dressing room. She was pale and thin, and she wore a faded blue dress that looked too tight on her body. The other women watched her closely. Someone said that she was Madam Glynn, the soprano from London. Kathleen whispered to Miss Healy that she wondered where they had found her, because she had never heard of her.

Mr Holohan came limping into the room at that moment. The two young women asked him who Madam Glynn was, and he repeated that she was a singer from London. Madam Glynn stood in a corner, holding her music stiffly and looking around with frightened eyes. Soon the first tenor and the baritone arrived together. They were well dressed and comfortable-looking, and their entrance brought a richer air into the room.

Mrs Kearney brought Kathleen over to them and spoke pleasantly. She wanted to be on good terms with the better performers. But while she talked, her eyes followed Mr Holohan as he moved about the room. She was waiting for the right moment. As soon as she could excuse herself politely, she went out after him.

"Mr Holohan, I want to speak to you for a moment," she said. They went down the corridor to a quieter place. Mrs Kearney asked when her daughter was going to be paid. Mr Holohan answered that Mr Fitzpatrick had charge of that matter. Mrs Kearney said that she knew nothing about Mr Fitzpatrick. Kathleen had signed a contract for eight guineas, and she would have to be paid.

Mr Holohan said that it was not his business. Mrs Kearney's anger rose, but she kept her voice controlled. She asked why it was not his business when he himself had brought the contract to her. Then she said that, even if it was not his business, it was certainly her business. She intended to see that the contract was carried out.

Mr Holohan answered coldly that she should speak to Mr Fitzpatrick. Mrs Kearney repeated that she knew nothing about Mr Fitzpatrick. She had a contract,

and she meant to have it respected. When she returned to the dressing room, her cheeks were a little red. The room was lively, but she was no longer in a lively mood.

Two men in outdoor clothes had taken places near the fireplace. One was a newspaper man from the *Freeman*, and the other was Mr O'Madden Burke. The newspaper man said he could not stay for the concert because he had to report another event. Still, he remained for a while, talking with Miss Healy. Mr Holohan took him away to another room to offer him a drink.

While Mr Holohan was away, Mrs Kearney spoke so strongly to her husband that he had to ask her to lower her voice. The feeling in the dressing room changed. The others began to understand that something was wrong. Mr Bell, who was supposed to be the first singer, stood ready with his music. But Kathleen did not move toward the piano.

From the hall came clapping and stamping. The audience was waiting and growing impatient. The first tenor, the baritone, and Miss Healy stood calmly together, but Mr Bell became very nervous. He feared that the audience would think he himself was late. Mr Kearney looked straight before him and stroked his beard while Mrs Kearney spoke quietly but firmly into Kathleen's ear.

At last Mr Holohan came back with Mr O'Madden Burke. He saw the silence in the room at once and went quickly to Mrs Kearney. He spoke to her in a hurried, earnest way. The noise from the hall grew louder. Mr Holohan became red in the face and pointed toward the audience, as if the sound itself should settle the matter.

Mrs Kearney gave the same answer again and again. Kathleen would not go on. She must get her eight guineas. Mr Holohan appealed to Mr Kearney and then to Kathleen, but neither helped him. Mr Kearney only continued to stroke his beard. Kathleen looked down and moved the point of her new shoe on the floor. It was not her fault, and she did not speak.

Mrs Kearney repeated that her daughter would not go on without her money. After a quick struggle of words, Mr Holohan hurried out of the room. Everyone was silent. The silence soon became painful. Miss Healy tried to break it by asking the baritone whether he had seen a certain actress that week. The baritone had not

seen her, and the conversation died almost as soon as it began.

The noise in the hall grew into a real clamour. People clapped, stamped, and whistled. Then Mr Fitzpatrick burst into the room, followed by Mr Holohan, who was breathing hard. Mr Fitzpatrick held some banknotes in his hand. He counted four guineas into Mrs Kearney's hand and said she would receive the other half at the interval.

Mrs Kearney looked at the money and said that it was four shillings short. But Kathleen had already gathered up her skirt and turned to Mr Bell. She said, "Now, Mr Bell," and the poor nervous singer went out with her. The noise in the hall slowly died away. For a few seconds there was a pause. Then everyone heard the piano begin.

Part 5

The first part of the concert was successful, except for Madam Glynn's song. She sang in a thin, breathless voice and used old-fashioned ways of shaping her words. Some people in the cheaper seats made fun of her high notes. But the first tenor and the contralto pleased the audience very much. Kathleen also played a group of Irish tunes, and the audience clapped generously.

The first part ended with a strong patriotic recitation by a young woman who arranged amateur plays. It was the kind of piece that the audience wanted on such a night, and it was warmly received. When it was finished, the men in the audience went out for the interval in good spirits. From the hall, the concert seemed to be going well at last. Behind the scenes, however, the dressing room was full of anger and secret talk.

In one corner stood Mr Holohan, Mr Fitzpatrick, Miss Beirne, two stewards, the baritone, the bass, and Mr O'Madden Burke. They spoke quickly and sharply about what had happened before the concert began. Mr O'Madden Burke said it was the most shameful scene he had ever seen. In his opinion, Kathleen Kearney's musical future in Dublin was finished after that night.

The baritone was asked what he thought of Mrs Kearney's behaviour. He did

not want to say much. He had been paid his own money and wished to stay at peace with everyone. Still, he said that Mrs Kearney might have thought more about the other performers. The stewards and secretaries then argued hotly about what they should do when the interval came.

Mr O'Madden Burke agreed with Miss Beirne. He said they should pay Mrs Kearney nothing. In another corner of the room, Mrs Kearney stood with her husband, Mr Bell, Miss Healy, and the young woman who had given the patriotic recitation. Mrs Kearney said the Committee had treated her shamefully. She had given time, trouble, and money to the concerts, and this was her reward.

She said they thought they could treat her badly because they were dealing only with a girl. They would not have dared to behave in that way if Kathleen had been a man. But Mrs Kearney would show them their mistake. Her daughter had rights, and she would see that those rights were respected. If they did not pay every last coin, she would make the whole of Dublin hear about it.

She said she was sorry for the other performers, of course. But what else could she do? She asked the second tenor whether he did not think she had been badly treated. He said that he did think so. Then she asked Miss Healy. Miss Healy was uncomfortable. She wanted to move toward the other group, but she was Kathleen's friend and had often been invited to the Kearneys' house.

As soon as the first part ended, Mr Fitzpatrick and Mr Holohan came over to Mrs Kearney. They told her that the other four guineas would be paid after the Committee meeting on the following Tuesday. They also told her that if Kathleen did not play for the second part, the Committee would say the contract was broken and would pay nothing more. Their tone made it clear that they were no longer asking her politely.

Mrs Kearney became angry at once. She said that she had not seen any Committee. Her daughter had a contract, and that was enough. Kathleen must receive the full sum into her hand, or she would not put one foot on the platform. Her face was red with anger, and her body seemed ready to move forward against someone.

Mr Holohan said he was surprised at her. He had never thought she would treat

them in such a way. Mrs Kearney asked how they had treated her. She said she was only asking for her rights. Mr Holohan told her that she might have some sense of decency. Mrs Kearney threw the words back at him and said that when she asked when her daughter would be paid, she could not get a civil answer.

Then she tossed her head and copied the tone of the men who had avoided her questions. "You must speak to the secretary," she said mockingly. "It is not my business." Her voice was full of sharp contempt. Mr Holohan could bear no more. As he walked away from her, he said, "I thought you were a lady."

After that, nearly everyone condemned Mrs Kearney's behaviour. They approved of what the Committee had done. Mrs Kearney stood near the door, pale and angry, arguing with her husband and daughter. She moved her hands as she spoke, unable to hide her rage. Still, she waited until it was time for the second part to begin, hoping that the secretaries would come back to her with the money.

But they did not come. Miss Healy had kindly agreed to play one or two accompaniments. The baritone and his accompanist had to pass Mrs Kearney on their way to the platform, and she had to stand aside for them. For one moment she stood still like a stone figure made of anger. Then the first notes of the song came from the hall, and she understood that the concert was going on without Kathleen.

Mrs Kearney suddenly took up her daughter's cloak. She told her husband to get a cab. Mr Kearney went out at once. Mrs Kearney wrapped the cloak around Kathleen and prepared to leave. Kathleen followed quietly, saying nothing. The public musical evening that was meant to raise her name had now become a defeat.

As Mrs Kearney passed through the doorway, she stopped and looked hard into Mr Holohan's face. She told him that she was not finished with him yet. Mr Holohan answered that he was finished with her. Then she went out with her daughter. Mr Holohan began walking up and down the room to cool himself, because his skin felt hot with anger.

"That is a nice lady," he said bitterly. "Oh, she is a very nice lady." Mr O'Madden Burke stood balanced on his umbrella and approved of him. He said that Holohan had done the proper thing. In the room, the judgment had settled

against Mrs Kearney. The concert continued, but Kathleen’s chance had been damaged, and Mrs Kearney’s careful plan had ended in public failure.

Grace

Part 1

Two men who were in the lavatory tried to lift Mr Kernan from the floor, but he was almost helpless. He had fallen down the stairs and now lay curled at the bottom. His clothes were dirty, and his body seemed too heavy for the men to manage easily. They turned him over with some trouble. His hat had rolled away, and his face looked pale and foolish under the gaslight.

A small crowd gathered quickly. Some men came from the bar, and others looked down from the stairs. They stood close together, looking at the fallen man and speaking in low voices. Mr Kernan's collar had come loose, and blood showed near his mouth. He had bitten his tongue in the fall, and this made his speech thick and broken.

One man said they should send for a policeman. Another said the man was only drunk and would be all right after a few minutes. The manager of the place came and looked at the scene with worried eyes. A public accident was bad for business. It could bring trouble, questions, and official attention. Still, the man on the floor could not simply be left there.

A young man in a cycling suit had helped to turn Mr Kernan over. He seemed more useful than most of the watchers. He tried to speak kindly to the injured man and asked whether he could stand. Mr Kernan moved his lips, but the words came out badly. He tried to make light of the accident and said it was nothing, only a small fall. But his voice was thick, and blood made his mouth difficult to move.

A constable arrived and began to ask questions. He asked Mr Kernan where he lived. Mr Kernan did not answer clearly. He said instead that they should get him a cab. The constable repeated the question, but Mr Kernan only tried again to speak with dignity. He wanted to appear calm and respectable, though he was lying dirty and injured before a crowd of strangers.

While they were deciding what to do, a tall, quick-moving gentleman came from the far end of the bar. He had fair skin and wore a long yellow coat. When

he saw the injured man, he called out in surprise, “Hello, Tom, old man! What happened?” This was Mr Power, one of Mr Kernan’s friends. At once the scene changed, because now the fallen man was no longer only a drunk stranger. He was someone known.

Mr Kernan tried to answer him. He said again that it was nothing. Mr Power looked carefully at him, then turned to the constable. He said that everything was all right and that he would see his friend home. The constable knew Mr Power and accepted this at once. He touched his helmet and said that was all right. The official side of the matter ended almost as soon as Mr Power took charge.

Mr Power took Mr Kernan by one arm, and the young man in the cycling suit took him by the other. The crowd divided to let them pass. Mr Power asked how he had got himself into such a state. The young man said that the gentleman had fallen down the stairs. Mr Kernan turned with difficulty toward the young man and tried to thank him. He spoke so thickly that his words were almost broken pieces.

Even then, Mr Kernan wanted to offer him a drink. He began to ask whether they could have a little something together. Mr Power stopped him gently but firmly. “Not now,” he said. “Not now.” The three men left the bar, and the crowd slowly broke up. Some people returned to their drinks. The manager took the constable to look at the stairs, and they agreed that Mr Kernan must have missed his footing.

When they came out into Grafton Street, Mr Power called for a cab. Mr Kernan again thanked the young man as well as he could. He said he hoped they would meet again and gave his name. The shock of the accident and the pain in his mouth had made him a little more sober. He shook hands with the young man, still trying to behave like a gentleman after an unfortunate accident.

Mr Kernan was helped onto the cab. While Mr Power gave the driver directions, Mr Kernan continued to express his thanks. He also said he was sorry that he and the young man could not have a drink together. The young man answered politely that they might another time. Then the cab drove away toward Westmoreland Street, carrying Mr Kernan and Mr Power through the cold night.

As they passed the Ballast Office, the clock showed half past nine. A sharp east wind blew from the river and struck them hard. Mr Kernan pulled himself together in the cab, cold and miserable. Mr Power asked him to explain how the accident had happened. Mr Kernan answered that he could not, because his tongue was hurt. His words came out badly, and the injury made him sound more drunk than he perhaps now felt.

Mr Power asked to see the tongue. He leaned over and tried to look into Mr Kernan's mouth, but the light was poor. Then he struck a match and held it carefully in his hands against the wind. The cab moved as he looked, and the small flame shook before Mr Kernan's open mouth. Mr Power saw blood on the lower teeth and gums. A tiny piece of the tongue seemed to have been bitten off.

The match went out. Mr Power said that it looked ugly. Mr Kernan closed his mouth and pulled the dirty collar of his coat higher around his neck. He said again that it was nothing. He wanted to keep some dignity, even in pain. He had always believed in the dignity of his profession and of his appearance. In better days, he had never been seen in the city without a decent silk hat and proper gaiters.

Mr Kernan was an old-style commercial traveller. He believed that a man in his line of work needed a certain look and manner. A silk hat and good gaiters, he liked to say, could help a man pass anywhere. He had once had more success and better standing than he had now. Modern business had left him behind in some ways, but a few old friends still valued him as a character. Mr Power was one of those friends.

Mr Power was younger and was moving upward in life, while Mr Kernan was moving downward. Still, friendship and memory held them together. People knew that Mr Power had debts, but they also liked his cheerful manner. He knew how to take charge in a difficult moment. That night, this gift had helped Mr Kernan avoid the shame of being taken away by the police.

The cab stopped before a small house on the Glasnevin Road. Mr Kernan was helped inside and taken upstairs. His wife put him to bed, while Mr Power waited below in the kitchen. He spoke kindly to the children and asked them where they went to school and what books they were reading. Upstairs, Mr Kernan lay injured

and ashamed, though he still tried to treat the accident as a small matter. Downstairs, his friend sat with the family, already becoming part of the plan that would follow.

Part 2

Mr Power stayed downstairs in the kitchen while Mrs Kernan put her husband to bed. The three younger children were there, two girls and a boy, and they soon began to play roughly around him. They knew their father was helpless upstairs and their mother was busy, so they felt freer than usual. Mr Power watched them with some surprise. Their manners and their way of speaking made him thoughtful.

After a while, Mrs Kernan came into the kitchen. She was angry, tired, and ashamed. “What a sight!” she said. “One day he will finish himself, and that will be the end of it. He has been drinking since Friday.” Her words were sharp, but they were not surprised words. They came from a woman who had seen the same trouble many times before.

Mr Power was careful to explain that he was not to blame. He said he had found Mr Kernan only by chance and had brought him home as a friend. Mrs Kernan did not need this explanation. She knew Mr Power and remembered that he had helped the family before, both during quarrels and in smaller practical ways. So she said that she knew he was a true friend, not like some of the other men her husband drank with.

She asked who had been with him that night. Mr Power shook his head and said nothing. Mrs Kernan went on speaking. She said those other friends were happy enough to keep Mr Kernan out drinking while he had money in his pocket. They did not think of his wife or children waiting at home. Then she said she was sorry that she had nothing in the house to offer Mr Power.

Mr Power stood up to leave. Mrs Kernan said they had been waiting for her husband to come home with money. He never seemed to remember that he had a home, she said. Mr Power tried to comfort her. He said that they would make Mr Kernan turn over a new leaf. He would speak to Martin Cunningham, who was

the right man for such a case. They would come one night and talk things over.

Mrs Kernan went with him to the door. Outside, the cabman was stamping his feet and swinging his arms to keep warm. Mrs Kernan thanked Mr Power again for bringing her husband home. Mr Power said it was nothing. He climbed into the cab and lifted his hat to her cheerfully as it began to move away. “We will make a new man of him,” he called.

Mrs Kernan stood at the door and watched the cab until it disappeared. Her eyes looked puzzled, as if she did not know whether to hope or laugh at such a promise. Then she went back inside and emptied her husband’s pockets. This was practical work, and Mrs Kernan was a practical woman. She did what had to be done, even when she was angry.

She was middle-aged, active, and sharp in household matters. Not long before, she and Mr Kernan had celebrated twenty-five years of marriage. At the party, she had even danced with him again, while Mr Power played the music. In the days before their marriage, Mr Kernan had seemed to her a lively and attractive man. She still remembered walking out of the church on his arm after the wedding, when he was well dressed and full of good humour.

But after three weeks of married life, she had already found being a wife rather tiring. Later, when it was becoming almost too hard, she became a mother. Motherhood suited her better. For twenty-five years, she had kept the house going with care and good sense. Two older sons had already gone out into the world, one to Glasgow and the other to Belfast. They were good sons, wrote home, and sometimes sent money.

The younger children were still at school. Mrs Kernan had learned to accept her husband’s drinking as part of life, almost like bad weather. When he was sick, she looked after him. When he was foolish, she scolded him. There were worse husbands, she knew. Since the older boys had grown up, he had not been violent, and he would still walk a long way through the city to win even a small order for work.

The next day, Mr Kernan sent a letter to his office and stayed in bed. Mrs Kernan made beef tea for him and scolded him strongly. His tongue hurt him now

and then, and the pain made him irritable. Still, he was well enough to complain, and that was a good sign. He lay in bed with the injured dignity of a man who wanted people to understand that he had suffered an accident, not a disgrace.

Two nights later, his friends came to visit him. Mrs Kernan brought them upstairs to the bedroom and placed chairs near the fire. The room had the close smell of illness, sleep, and a man kept indoors too long. Mr Kernan was sitting up in bed, supported by pillows. There was a little colour in his swollen cheeks, so they looked like warm pieces of coal.

The pain in his tongue had made him cross during the day, but his manners improved when the visitors entered. He apologized for the disorder of the room. At the same time, he looked at the men with a small pride, almost like an old soldier receiving visitors after a battle. He wanted them to see that he had been badly hurt. He also wanted them to respect the way he bore it.

He did not know that he was the subject of a plan. Downstairs, before coming up, Mr Power, Mr Cunningham, and Mr M'Coy had already spoken with Mrs Kernan. Mr Power had first had the idea, but the real management of it had been placed in Mr Cunningham's hands. Mr Kernan had come from a Protestant family and had become Catholic when he married. But for many years he had not lived close to the Church.

He also liked making sharp little remarks about Catholicism. This made the case more difficult, but Mr Cunningham was thought to be exactly the man to handle it. He was older than Mr Power and knew how to speak with calm authority. His own family life was not happy, but he had a steady public manner and a reputation for good sense. He could guide other men even when his own house was troubled.

Mr M'Coy was there too, ready to agree, help, and talk when needed. The three friends sat around the bed, each with his own part in the coming effort. Mrs Kernan watched them with careful hope. Mr Kernan, sitting among his pillows, saw only friendly visitors. He did not yet understand that they had come not merely to comfort him, but to lead him toward a change.

Part 3

Mr Kernan did not know that his friends had already made a plan for him. Downstairs, before coming to his room, they had spoken with Mrs Kernan in the parlour. Mr Power had first thought of the plan, but Mr Cunningham was the man chosen to carry it out. This was natural, because Mr Cunningham had a calm manner and a serious face. Other men trusted him when a delicate matter had to be managed.

Mr Kernan had been born into a Protestant family. He had become Catholic when he married Mrs Kernan, but he had not lived very close to the Church for many years. He sometimes made sharp remarks about Catholic things, partly because he liked to seem independent. His friends knew this, so they could not push him too quickly. If they did, he might become proud and refuse everything.

Mr Cunningham was well suited to such work. He was older than Mr Power and had seen many sides of life. His own home life was not happy, and people felt sorry for him because his wife drank and caused him many troubles. Yet this did not make people respect him less. In fact, they respected him more because he bore his trouble with patience and good sense.

His friends thought he understood people. He had worked among cases and quarrels and had learned how men spoke when they were afraid, ashamed, or lying. He also read enough to give his judgments a serious sound. When he spoke, his words seemed to come from experience. Mrs Kernan knew this, so when the plan was explained to her, she said she would leave everything in Mr Cunningham's hands.

Mrs Kernan did not expect miracles. After twenty-five years of married life, she had very few false hopes left. Religion, to her, was a useful and proper habit. She believed in the main things the Church taught, and she approved of the sacraments. If the plan did her husband good, she would be glad. If it did not, at least it could do no harm.

Upstairs, the men began by talking about the accident. Mr Cunningham said that he had once known a man who had bitten his tongue badly during a fit. The

man had been seventy years old, but after some time the tongue had healed so well that no mark could be seen. Mr Kernan answered that he himself was not seventy. Mr Cunningham said quickly, “God forbid,” and the others accepted the remark with quiet smiles.

Mr M’Coy asked whether the tongue still hurt. Mr Kernan said that the pain was not the worst part. What troubled him most was the sick feeling in his throat. Mr Cunningham said firmly that this came from drink. Mr Kernan would not accept that. He said he thought he had caught cold in the cab and that something thick kept rising in his throat.

Mr M’Coy, who liked to sound professional, gave the thing a learned name. He had recently become secretary to the City Coroner, and this made him interested in injuries, deaths, and medical words. He spoke as if he understood the whole case. Mr Cunningham nodded quickly, and Mr Power said that all was well since the matter had ended safely. Mr Kernan thanked Mr Power again for bringing him home.

The talk then turned to the men who had been with Mr Kernan before his fall. Mr Cunningham asked who they were. Mr Kernan tried to remember. He mentioned one man whose name he could not find and then mentioned Harford. At the name Harford, Mr Cunningham made a short sound of judgment. The others understood it. Harford was not the kind of companion a man liked to name after a shameful accident.

Mr Kernan seemed to feel this too. He wanted the details to remain unclear. He wished his friends to believe that he and Harford had somehow missed each other by mistake. His friends knew enough about Harford’s drinking manners to doubt this, but they said nothing. Mr Power repeated that all was well since the end had not been worse.

Mr Kernan then praised the young man who had helped him in the bar. Mr Power agreed that without that young man the matter might have become much more serious. He joked that Mr Kernan might have spent seven days in trouble with the law. This led them to speak of the police. Mr Kernan became angry at the thought that a constable had questioned him like an ordinary drunk.

He said that citizens did not pay taxes in order to be ordered about by rough country policemen. Mr Cunningham laughed and told a comic story about young country men being trained at the police depot. He put on a thick country voice and acted out a sergeant throwing cabbage across a room for recruits to catch on their plates. The others laughed loudly. Mr Kernan was still a little angry, but even he began to enjoy the story.

Then Mrs Kernan came in with a tray. She placed it on the table and told the gentlemen to help themselves. Mr Power stood up politely to serve, but she would not sit down. She said she was ironing downstairs. Before she left, she exchanged a quick look with Mr Cunningham, so that he would know the proper moment was coming. Mr Kernan called after her in a playful voice and asked whether there was nothing for poor little husband.

Mrs Kernan answered him sharply, but not without humour. Her husband made such a comic face that the room became merry again. Bottles of stout were opened and passed around. The men drank, set their glasses down, and paused. Then Mr Cunningham turned to Mr Power and spoke as if he were only arranging an ordinary matter. “Thursday night, you said?”

Mr Power said yes, Thursday. Mr M’Coy suggested that they meet at M’Auley’s because it would be convenient. Mr Power said they must not be late, because the place would surely be crowded. They agreed to meet at half past seven. Mr Kernan listened and waited. He saw that something was being arranged, but no one had yet included him.

At last he asked what was going on. Mr Cunningham said lightly that it was only a small matter for Thursday. Mr Kernan asked whether they were going to the opera. Mr Cunningham said no, it was something more spiritual. Mr Power then spoke plainly. He said that they were going to make a retreat. Mr Cunningham added that he, Mr Power, and Mr M’Coy were all going to clean the pot, meaning that they were going to confess their sins.

Mr Cunningham made the plan sound friendly and humorous, not severe. He said they were all a fine group of sinners and might as well admit it together. Mr Power and Mr M’Coy agreed. Then Mr Cunningham turned suddenly to Mr

Kernan and said that he might join them too. “The four of us together,” Mr Power added. Mr Kernan did not answer at once. He did not fully understand what was being asked of him, but he understood that his friends were bringing religion toward him, and he felt that he must protect his dignity.

Part 4

Mr Kernan listened while his friends spoke about the retreat. He did not answer at once. The idea did not have a clear shape in his mind, but he understood enough to feel that religion was being brought near him. Because of that, he became a little stiff and proud. He did not want to seem like a weak man being led by others.

For a while, he sat back against his pillows and said nothing. His friends began to talk about the Jesuits, because the retreat was to be given by a Jesuit priest. At last Mr Kernan joined in. He said that he did not have a bad opinion of the Jesuits. They were educated men, he said, and he believed they meant well. This was as much approval as he was ready to give.

Mr Cunningham welcomed the remark warmly. He said the Jesuits were the finest order in the Church. The head of the Jesuits, he said, stood next to the Pope himself. Mr M’Coy agreed and said that if a man wanted something done well, he should go to the Jesuits. They had influence, he said, and they knew how to manage things. Mr Power also said that the Jesuits were a fine body of men.

Mr Cunningham added another fact with great seriousness. Every other order in the Church, he said, had needed reform at some time. But the Jesuits had never once fallen away and never needed such reform. Mr M’Coy asked whether that was really so. Mr Cunningham said it was a fact of history. The others accepted the statement because he spoke with complete confidence.

Mr Power mentioned the Jesuit church and the kind of people who went there. Mr M’Coy said the Jesuits served the upper classes. Mr Kernan liked this idea. He said that was why he had some feeling for them. Then he began to speak sharply about some ordinary priests, calling them ignorant and too proud. Mr Cunningham stopped him gently and said all priests were good men in their own

way.

The men drank again. Mr Kernan seemed to be thinking the matter over. He had a high opinion of Mr Cunningham as a man who could judge people. So he asked for more details. Mr Cunningham explained that it was only a retreat and that Father Purdon was giving it. It was meant for business men, he said. Mr Power added that Father Purdon would not be too hard on them.

Mr Kernan repeated the priest's name, trying to place him in memory. The others said he must know him. Father Purdon was a fine, cheerful man, they said, a man of the world like themselves. Mr Kernan then remembered him as a tall priest with a rather red face. He asked whether Father Purdon was a good preacher. Mr Cunningham answered carefully that it was not exactly a sermon. It was more like a friendly talk in a common-sense way.

This answer pleased Mr Kernan more than a severe religious promise would have done. The men then began talking about famous preachers. Mr M'Coy mentioned Father Tom Burke, and at once Mr Kernan became lively. He said he had heard Father Tom Burke himself. He could not remember every detail, but he remembered the power of the man's voice and style.

Mr Kernan said the sermon had been about the Pope. He remembered being deeply moved by it. He had gone afterward with a Protestant friend named Crofton, who had also been impressed. Crofton had said that they worshipped at different altars, but their belief was the same. Mr Kernan liked that sentence very much. It sounded broad, fair, and generous to him.

Mr Power said many Protestants had gone to hear Father Tom Burke preach. Mr M'Coy said there was not much difference between Catholics and Protestants. He tried to explain that both believed in the Redeemer, though Protestants did not believe in the Pope or in the Mother of God in the same way. Mr Cunningham then spoke quietly but firmly. He said that their religion was the old and original faith.

Mr Kernan agreed warmly. At that moment, Mrs Kernan came to the bedroom door and said another visitor had come. It was Mr Fogarty. He entered with polite smiles and a modest manner. He was a small grocer from the neighbourhood,

careful in speech and fond of good manners. He had brought a gift: a half-pint bottle of special whisky.

Mr Kernan welcomed the gift with real pleasure, especially because he knew he still owed Mr Fogarty a little money at the shop. Mr Power opened the bottle, rinsed the glasses, and poured five small drinks. The new whisky made the talk brighter. Mr Fogarty sat carefully on the edge of a chair and joined the company as an equal. Soon the men were speaking again about popes, church matters, and great minds.

Mr Cunningham said Pope Leo had been one of the great men of his age. His great wish, he said, was to bring the Latin and Greek Churches together. Mr Power said he had often heard that Pope Leo was one of the most intelligent men in Europe. Mr Fogarty corrected a Latin phrase about light and darkness, and the others followed the discussion with interest. Their knowledge was not always exact, but each man spoke as if he were taking part in a learned conversation.

They talked of Pope Leo as a scholar and a poet. Mr Cunningham said he wrote poems in Latin, and even wrote one about the invention of photography. Mr Kernan was surprised that a pope would write about such a modern thing. Mr M'Coy said that, when one thought about it, photography really was wonderful. Mr Power said great minds could see such things clearly. Mr Fogarty added a saying about great minds and madness, and then drank gravely.

After a while, Mr Kernan asked a difficult question. He wondered whether some old popes had been bad men. The room became silent for a moment. Mr Cunningham answered that, of course, some of them had been bad in their private lives. But the amazing thing, he said, was that none of them had ever taught false doctrine when speaking officially as Pope. Mr Fogarty explained that, in such a case, the Pope was infallible.

This led Mr Cunningham to tell a grand story about the declaration of papal infallibility. He said that almost all the cardinals and bishops had agreed, except two men. One was a German cardinal, whose name he was not sure about. The other, he said, was John MacHale of Tuam. Mr Kernan became excited at that name. He had once seen John MacHale and remembered his fierce eyes.

Mr Cunningham said that, when the Pope finally spoke, John MacHale submitted at once. “I believe,” he said, using the old church word. To the men, this sounded noble and powerful. His deep voice filled the room and made the Church seem huge and ancient in their minds. When Mrs Kernan entered again, drying her hands, she found the men sitting in a solemn silence.

Mr Power then spoke to Mrs Kernan cheerfully. He said they were going to make her husband a good Catholic. They would all make the retreat together and confess their sins, and God knew they needed it. Mr Kernan smiled a little nervously and said he did not mind. Mrs Kernan hid her satisfaction and joked that she pitied the poor priest who had to hear his story.

Mr Kernan at once became defensive. He said he would tell the priest his little story of trouble, and that he was not such a bad fellow. Mr Cunningham quickly turned the talk in a safer direction. He said they would all give up the devil together. Mr Fogarty laughed and made a joking religious phrase. Mr Power said nothing, but he looked pleased because the plan was working.

Then Mr Cunningham explained that they would have to stand with lighted candles and renew their baptismal promises. Mr M’Coy told Mr Kernan not to forget the candle. This alarmed Mr Kernan. “Must I have a candle?” he asked. When they said yes, he drew the line. He said he would do the retreat, the confession, and all that business, but no candles. Everyone laughed, and Mrs Kernan said this was a fine Catholic indeed. Mr Kernan shook his head with comic seriousness and repeated that candles were out of the question.

Part 5

On Thursday evening, the transept of the Jesuit church in Gardiner Street was almost full. Men were still coming in through the side door. A lay brother showed them where to go, and they walked carefully on the tips of their shoes until they found seats. The church was quiet, but not empty quiet. It was full of small movements, soft steps, and the low sound of men settling themselves.

The men were well dressed and orderly. Most of them wore dark clothes and

white collars, though here and there a tweed suit broke the black pattern. The church lamps shone on the green marble pillars and on the dark religious paintings along the walls. The whole place looked heavy and serious. The men sat back in the benches, pulled their trousers a little above their knees, and put their hats safely beside them or on their knees.

Far away before the high altar, a small red light burned. The men looked toward it in a formal way. They had come for a religious retreat, but many of them still looked like business men who had entered a serious public meeting. Their bodies were respectful, but their minds had not fully left the world outside. Their hats, coats, collars, and careful manners seemed to bring the city into the church with them.

Mr Cunningham and Mr Kernan sat together in one of the benches near the pulpit. Behind them sat Mr M'Coy alone. Behind Mr M'Coy sat Mr Power and Mr Fogarty. Mr M'Coy had tried to find a seat in the same bench as the others, but there had not been room. After they had all settled into their separate places, he had tried once or twice to make small jokes.

The jokes did not succeed. No one answered them warmly, and Mr M'Coy soon stopped. Even he began to feel the proper mood of the place. The church, the lamps, the full benches, and the silent men pressed him into quietness. He could still look around and notice people, but he no longer felt free to talk in his usual easy way.

Mr Cunningham leaned toward Mr Kernan and whispered the names of men he recognized. He pointed out Mr Harford, the moneylender, who sat some distance away. He also pointed out Mr Fanning, a political man who knew how to help make mayors. Mr Fanning sat directly under the pulpit beside one of the newly elected councillors of the ward. These names interested Mr Kernan because they belonged to the business and public world he understood.

To the right sat old Michael Grimes, who owned three pawn shops. Nearby was Dan Hogan's nephew, who hoped to get a job in the Town Clerk's office. Farther in front sat Mr Hendrick, the chief reporter of *The Freeman's Journal*. There was also poor O'Carroll, an old friend of Mr Kernan's, who had once been

an important commercial man. One by one, as Mr Kernan recognized familiar faces, he began to feel more comfortable.

This helped him greatly. The church no longer seemed only a place of prayer and judgment. It also seemed like a gathering of men from his own world. Moneylenders, reporters, business men, political helpers, shop owners, and office seekers were all around him. If such men could sit there seriously, then perhaps he could sit there too without losing his dignity.

His hat rested on his knees. His wife had carefully repaired it after the accident, and it now looked respectable again. Once or twice he pulled down his shirt cuffs with one hand while holding the brim of his hat with the other. The action was small, but it mattered to him. He wanted to look like a proper man among proper men.

The friends sat quietly and waited. The church grew fuller, and the air became warmer. More men entered from the side door and moved along the aisles. The lay brother guided them with silent gestures. Some men had to search carefully before finding seats, and each new arrival caused a small movement in the benches.

Then a strong-looking figure began to climb into the pulpit. The upper part of the figure was covered with a white church garment. At once the men in the benches began to move. Handkerchiefs were taken out and placed carefully on the floor or on the kneelers. The men knelt down with the same practical care they might have used in protecting a good pair of trousers.

Mr Kernan followed the others. He did not want to appear different. He knelt as they knelt and rose when they rose. The priest now stood upright in the pulpit. His large red face showed above the rail, and his body seemed powerful and heavy. This was Father Purdon.

Father Purdon knelt down and turned toward the small red light before the altar. He covered his face with his hands and prayed. The whole church waited. The men were silent, and even the small restless sounds of the benches faded. After a short time, the priest uncovered his face and stood up.

The men rose too and settled back into their seats. Mr Kernan put his hat back

carefully on his knee. He arranged himself and looked toward the pulpit with an attentive face. He was still Mr Kernan, still a man of business habits and worldly pride. But now he was seated among many other men like himself, ready to hear a priest who, they had been told, would speak to them in a practical and manly way.

Part 6

Father Purdon began with a passage from the Bible. The words were difficult, and the meaning was not simple at first hearing. They spoke about money, the world, and the wise use of what people had. In simpler words, the passage said that people should use worldly things in such a way that they might still be received into God's eternal home. The men listened carefully, because the passage seemed close to their own lives.

Father Purdon spoke with a strong and confident voice. He said that this passage was one of the hardest in Scripture to explain properly. A person who read it quickly might think it was strange, even almost different from the high moral teaching of Christ. But Father Purdon said this was not so. The passage was especially useful for men who had to live and work in the world.

He told them that not every man was called to a religious life. Most people had to live among business, money, family duties, and public work. They could not spend all day in prayer or leave the world behind. Christ understood this, Father Purdon said. Christ knew every corner of human nature and knew that most people had to live in the world, though they should not live only for the world.

This made the men in the church listen more closely. Father Purdon was not speaking to them as if they were monks or saints. He was speaking to them as business men, clerks, shopkeepers, officials, and professional men. His words did not ask them to leave their ordinary lives. Instead, he asked them to look at those lives with honesty.

He told them that he had not come that evening to frighten them. He had not come to speak in a wild or severe way. He had come, he said, as a man of the

world speaking to other men of the world. He would speak to business men in a business-like way. This phrase pleased the spirit of the gathering. It made religion sound practical, clear, and almost familiar.

Then he used a comparison that suited them well. He said that, if he might speak in that way, he was their spiritual accountant. He wanted each man to open the books of his spiritual life. A business man opened his account books to see whether the numbers were correct. In the same way, each man should open his conscience and see whether his life was in good order.

The men sat quietly under the pulpit. Mr Kernan listened with a serious face. This kind of talk did not offend his dignity. It did not make him feel small or childish. It gave religion the shape of accounts, debts, checks, and balances, and those things belonged to the world he understood. Around him were many other men who understood that world too.

Father Purdon said that Christ was not a hard master. Christ understood small human failures. He understood weakness, pressure, temptation, and the troubles of daily life. All men had temptations from time to time. All men had failings. The important thing was not to pretend that everything was perfect.

He asked only one thing of his hearers. They must be straight and manly with God. If a man looked into his spiritual accounts and found everything right, then he could say honestly, "I have checked my accounts, and all is well." But if he found mistakes, he must not hide them. He must admit them like a man.

Father Purdon gave them the words they should say in that case. A man should say, "I have looked into my accounts. I find this wrong and that wrong. But, with God's help, I will put this right and that right. I will set my accounts in order." These words made confession sound less like fear and more like honest business. A man did not have to be crushed by shame. He had to examine the books and correct them.

In this way, the sermon moved carefully toward its purpose. It did not ask for deep sorrow, tears, or violent change of heart. It asked for order, honesty, and a practical setting right of accounts. For Mr Kernan and the other men, this was religion in a form they could accept. It was serious, but not too strange. It entered

their world without breaking its rules.

Mr Kernan sat among his friends, listening. The church, the red lamp, the priest's voice, and the rows of business men all worked together on him. He had not been forced to crawl or beg. He had been invited to take his place among men like himself and to settle matters properly. That suited his pride. It also suited the plan his friends had made for him.

The retreat did not end in a sudden vision or a clear inner change. No great sign appeared in the church. Father Purdon's words did not lift the men far above their ordinary lives. Instead, the sermon brought religion down into the language of those lives. It spoke of conscience as an account book and sin as a mistake to be corrected.

In that sense, the evening was successful. Mr Kernan had come to the church, sat with respectable men, listened to the priest, and accepted the matter without rebellion. His friends had guided him safely through the first part of their plan. Whether his heart had truly changed was another question. The story leaves him there, in the church, among men who had brought business manners even into the work of saving the soul.

The Dead

Part 1

Lily, the caretaker's daughter, was very busy that night. As soon as she had taken one gentleman into the little room behind the office and helped him off with his coat, the front-door bell rang again. Then she had to hurry along the bare hall and open the door for another guest. It was lucky for her that she did not have to help the ladies too. Miss Kate and Miss Julia had turned the bathroom upstairs into a dressing room for them.

Miss Kate and Miss Julia were at the top of the house, talking, laughing, and worrying over everything. They kept walking to the head of the stairs and looking down over the rail. Again and again, they called to Lily to ask who had come. Their voices moved through the house with the sounds of steps, doors, and greetings. The party had begun, and the whole house was awake.

The Misses Morkan's annual dance was always an important event. Everyone who knew them came if possible: family, old family friends, members of Julia's choir, grown-up pupils of Kate, and even some of Mary Jane's pupils. The party had never failed. Year after year, people said it had gone beautifully. It had been part of Dublin's winter life for as long as many guests could remember.

The party had begun many years earlier, after the death of Patrick Morkan, the brother of Kate and Julia. The two sisters had left their old house in Stoney Batter and had taken their young niece Mary Jane to live with them. Their home now was the upper part of a dark, tall house on Usher's Island. A corn merchant had the lower part of the building. That move had taken place about thirty years before.

Mary Jane had been a little girl then, but now she was the main support of the household. She played the organ in a church in Haddington Road and had studied at the Academy. Every year she gave a pupils' concert in the Antient Concert Rooms. Many of her pupils came from good families living along the Kingstown and Dalkey line. She worked hard and was respected.

Her two aunts also did what they could. Aunt Julia was old and grey, but she

was still the leading soprano in the church called Adam and Eve's. Aunt Kate was too weak to go about much now, but she still gave music lessons to beginners on the old square piano in the back room. Lily helped with the housework. Their life was not rich, but they liked good food and drink, and Lily almost never made mistakes with the orders.

Tonight, however, Miss Kate and Miss Julia were anxious. They had one great worry: Gabriel and his wife had not yet come. Every year Gabriel came, and every year he carved the goose at supper. He also gave the speech after the meal. Without him, the evening did not feel safe. The two old women watched the stairs and listened for the bell with growing concern.

They were also worried about Freddy Malins. Freddy often drank too much, and they feared he might arrive in a bad state. His mother had made him promise not to drink, but promises did not always protect him. Aunt Kate wanted Gabriel there before Freddy came, because Gabriel could manage such things calmly. Gabriel's presence always made her feel easier.

At last the front-door bell rang again. Lily ran to the door and opened it. Gabriel Conroy and his wife Gretta had arrived. The cold air came in with them, and snow lay on their clothes. Gabriel was a broad, well-dressed man with glasses, and he spoke to Lily in a friendly, familiar way. Gretta stood beside him, smiling and cold from the weather.

Gabriel stamped the snow from his shoes and asked Lily whether his aunts were upstairs. Lily said they were and began helping him with his coat. Gabriel was in good spirits at first. He had known Lily since she was a child and tried to speak to her kindly. He told her that she was growing up quickly.

He asked whether she was still going to school. Lily answered that she was done with school for more than a year. Gabriel then smiled and said that they would soon be going to her wedding one of these days. He meant the words lightly, as a friendly joke. But Lily did not smile.

She answered sharply that men nowadays were only full of talk. Her words surprised Gabriel. He coloured with embarrassment and did not know what to say. He had meant to be pleasant, but he had touched something painful in her life. For

a moment, the friendly space between them closed, and he felt awkward in front of this young servant girl.

Gabriel tried to repair the moment. He searched in his pocket and gave her a coin as a Christmas gift. Lily resisted a little at first, but he pressed it into her hand. Then he went toward the stairs, still troubled by her answer. The money had covered the silence, but it had not removed his discomfort.

As he went upstairs, he began to think about the speech he would give later. He had prepared some lines carefully, but now he wondered whether they would sound too educated for the guests. Perhaps they would not understand the quotations. Perhaps they would think he was showing off. He feared that he might fail in front of people who expected him to speak well.

When he reached the upper landing, his aunts greeted him with relief. Aunt Kate and Aunt Julia were glad to see him at last, and Mary Jane was busy helping with the guests. Gretta took off her things and joined the women. For a few minutes, the house seemed to settle again into its proper order. Gabriel had arrived, the party could continue safely, and yet the small uneasiness from Lily's words still remained quietly inside him.

Part 2

Gabriel joined his aunts and Gretta on the landing, and for a little while they spoke about small family matters. Aunt Kate asked about the room he had taken for the night, and Gabriel said he had taken one at the Gresham Hotel. She approved of this at once. It was much better, she said, than going all the way home in the cold after the party. Gretta said she was not anxious about the children, because Bessie would look after them for one night.

The talk then turned to Gabriel's rubber overshoes. Gretta found the word funny, and this made Gabriel a little annoyed. Aunt Julia did not even know what the things were, and Aunt Kate had to explain that people wore them over their boots. Gretta said that Gabriel had bought a pair for each of them because he said everyone on the Continent wore them. Aunt Julia nodded slowly and repeated the

idea of the Continent, as if it belonged to a far and serious world.

Gabriel felt that they were all making too much of a simple thing. He said it was nothing wonderful, though Gretta laughed because the word sounded strange to her. Aunt Kate, with quick tact, changed the subject. She asked whether the room at the hotel was all right. Then she spoke of Lily and said that the girl had changed lately and was not the same as before.

Gabriel wanted to ask more about Lily, but Aunt Kate suddenly looked over the stairs. Aunt Julia had wandered halfway down one flight and was bending her neck over the banisters. Aunt Kate called to her, asking where she was going. Aunt Julia came back and said calmly that Freddy Malins had arrived. At the same moment, the piano music in the drawing-room ended, and people began coming out.

Aunt Kate drew Gabriel aside quickly. She whispered that he should go down and see whether Freddy was all right. She feared that Freddy had been drinking. She begged Gabriel not to let him come upstairs if he was in a bad state. Gabriel went to the stairs and listened. He heard voices in the pantry, and then he heard Freddy's laugh. So he went down heavily, making enough noise to announce himself.

While Gabriel was downstairs, the party continued above. Aunt Kate said to Gretta that it was a great comfort to have Gabriel there because she always felt safer when he was in the house. Then she turned at once to the guests. Miss Daly and Miss Power were to have refreshment, and Aunt Julia was sent to take them into the back room. Mr Browne and Miss Furlong came too, and Mr Browne at once made a cheerful show of himself.

Mr Browne was a tall, thin-faced man with a stiff grey moustache and dark skin. He liked to make jokes with ladies and to act as if every woman enjoyed his company. He led the young ladies into the back room, where the supper table was being prepared. Aunt Julia and the caretaker were smoothing a large cloth over two tables placed together. Plates, glasses, knives, forks, and spoons stood ready on the sideboard, and sweets and food were set on the closed piano.

Mr Browne offered the young ladies a strong hot drink as a joke. When they

said they never took anything strong, he opened bottles of lemonade for them. Then he poured himself a large glass of whisky. He smiled and said that he was taking it because the doctor had ordered it. The young women laughed politely at first, but when he made another joke in a rough Dublin voice, they fell silent and turned their talk away from him.

At that moment, a red-faced young woman came in, clapping her hands and calling for quadrilles. Aunt Kate followed, asking Mary Jane for more partners. Mary Jane began quickly arranging the dance, giving partners to Miss Power, Miss Furlong, and Miss Daly. She promised Miss Daly a good partner, Mr Bartell D'Arcy, the tenor, and said that all Dublin was speaking of his voice. Aunt Kate agreed warmly that he had a lovely voice.

The piano began the music for the dance twice before all the people were ready. Mary Jane led the new partners quickly from the room. They had hardly gone when Aunt Julia returned, carrying a pile of table napkins. When Aunt Kate asked what was happening, Aunt Julia said that it was only Freddy, and that Gabriel was with him. A moment later, Gabriel appeared, guiding Freddy Malins across the landing.

Freddy was about forty, broad like Gabriel, but round-shouldered and careless-looking. His face was pale and heavy, with red patches near his ears and nose. His eyes looked sleepy, and his thin hair was untidy. He was laughing in a high, broken way at a story he had been telling Gabriel on the stairs. At the same time, he rubbed one eye with the knuckles of his left hand.

Aunt Julia greeted him kindly. Freddy answered in his usual uneven voice and then saw Mr Browne smiling at him from near the sideboard. He crossed the room on rather uncertain legs and began to tell Mr Browne the same story he had just told Gabriel. Aunt Kate asked Gabriel quietly whether Freddy was very bad. Gabriel raised his eyebrows and said it was hardly noticeable. This answer comforted her a little, though she still called Freddy a terrible fellow.

Before Aunt Kate left the room with Gabriel, she warned Mr Browne with a look and a shaking finger. Mr Browne understood. He told Freddy that he would give him a fine glass of lemonade to help him. Freddy tried to wave the offer away

because he was near the best part of his story. But Mr Browne first pointed out that Freddy's clothes needed fixing, then placed the lemonade in his hand. Freddy accepted it without thinking, while still trying to finish his story through his loud laugh.

Later, Gabriel sat in the drawing-room while Mary Jane played a difficult piano piece from the Academy. He could not really listen to it. He liked music, but this piece had little melody for him. He wondered whether the other guests truly enjoyed it either, though they had asked her to play. Four young men had come to the door when the music began, but after a few minutes they quietly went away.

The only people who seemed to follow the music closely were Mary Jane herself and Aunt Kate. Mary Jane's hands ran quickly over the keys, then lifted at pauses as if she were doing something almost holy. Aunt Kate stood beside her to turn the pages. Gabriel's eyes moved away from the piano. The polished floor shone under the heavy chandelier, and its brightness annoyed him.

He looked at the wall above the piano. There was a picture from *Romeo and Juliet*, and beside it hung a wool picture Aunt Julia had made as a girl. These old things led his thoughts to his mother. She had not been musical, though Aunt Kate had once called her the clever one of the family. His mother had been serious and proud of family dignity. Because of her care, his brother Constantine had become a priest, and Gabriel himself had received a university degree.

Then a shadow crossed Gabriel's mind. He remembered that his mother had opposed his marriage. Some of her remarks about Gretta still hurt him, especially the suggestion that Gretta had a sly country cleverness. Gabriel knew this was unfair. Gretta had nursed his mother during her long final illness in their house at Monkstown. As Mary Jane's piece neared its end, his anger faded. The music finished with a bright rush of high notes and one deep final sound, and the room burst into applause.

Mary Jane blushed and quickly rolled up her music. The strongest clapping came from the same four young men who had left at the beginning and returned only when the music stopped. Gabriel noticed this, but said nothing. The room

was alive again with movement and praise. The difficult music had passed, the guests were pleased to clap, and the party moved naturally toward the next dance.

Part 3

After Mary Jane's music, the room became lively again. People began arranging the lancers, and chairs were pushed back to make more space. Gabriel found himself paired with Miss Ivors. She was a direct and talkative young woman, with freckles and bright brown eyes. She did not dress in the soft evening style of many women there. At her collar she wore a large brooch with an Irish design and words on it.

When they had taken their places for the dance, Miss Ivors looked at him with a serious face. "I have something to say to you," she said. Gabriel smiled because her manner seemed almost too solemn. "To me?" he asked. She nodded gravely. He asked what the matter was, still trying to keep the exchange light and friendly.

Miss Ivors then asked, "Who is G. C.?" Gabriel coloured at once. He understood what she meant, but he tried for a moment to look as if he did not. Then she spoke more plainly. She had found out that he wrote book reviews for *The Daily Express*. She asked him whether he was not ashamed to write for such a paper.

Gabriel blinked and tried to smile. He asked why he should be ashamed. Miss Ivors said frankly that she herself was ashamed of him. She had not thought he was the sort of Irishman who cared more for Britain than for Ireland. Her words struck Gabriel hard, though she spoke as if she were partly joking. He did not know how to answer without seeming foolish.

It was true that he wrote a literary column every Wednesday for the newspaper. He was paid fifteen shillings for it, but the money was not the only reason he liked the work. He loved receiving new books, touching their covers, and turning their clean pages. After teaching at the college, he often walked along the quays to visit second-hand booksellers. To him, books belonged to the world of the mind, not simply to politics.

He wanted to say that literature stood above politics. But he could not say this to Miss Ivors in such a grand way. They had known each other for years. They had both studied at the university and both become teachers. If he used a large phrase, she might laugh at him, and the others might hear. So he only said weakly that he saw nothing political in writing about books.

Their turn came to cross in the dance. Gabriel was still troubled and not paying full attention. Miss Ivors took his hand firmly and spoke in a softer, friendlier voice. She told him that she had only been joking. They crossed with the others, and for a short time the movement of the dance saved him from having to answer more.

When they came together again, she spoke of university matters, and Gabriel felt easier. Then she said that a friend had shown her his review of Browning's poems. That was how she had discovered the secret. She said she had liked the review very much. This praise should have comforted him, but he still felt watched and judged.

Suddenly Miss Ivors changed the subject. She asked whether he would come on a trip to the Aran Isles that summer. A group of them was going to stay there for a whole month. She said it would be wonderful out in the Atlantic. Mr Clancy, Mr Kilkelly, and Kathleen Kearney were going too. Gretta should come as well, she said, because Gretta's people were from Connacht.

Gabriel answered shortly that Gretta's people were from there. Miss Ivors pressed him warmly, putting her hand on his arm. She asked him to come. Gabriel began to explain that he had already arranged another trip. Miss Ivors asked where he was going. He said awkwardly that he usually went on a cycling tour with some friends. They often went to France, Belgium, or perhaps Germany.

Miss Ivors immediately asked why he went to France and Belgium instead of visiting his own country. Gabriel said it was partly to keep up his knowledge of languages and partly for a change. Miss Ivors then asked whether he did not have his own language to keep up, meaning Irish. Gabriel answered that Irish was not his language. The answer sounded colder than he had meant it to sound.

Some of the people near them had turned to listen. Gabriel looked from side

to side nervously and tried to keep smiling. But his face grew hot. Miss Ivors continued. She asked whether he did not have his own land to visit, his own people and his own country. Gabriel suddenly answered more sharply than he intended. He said that, to tell the truth, he was sick of his own country.

Miss Ivors asked why. Gabriel did not answer. His own words had heated him, and he knew that he had spoken too strongly. Miss Ivors repeated the question, but still he said nothing. The dance required them to move again, and she said warmly that of course he had no answer. Gabriel tried to cover his discomfort by dancing with great energy.

He avoided her eyes. He had seen a sour look on her face, and he felt that she had made him look foolish before other people. Yet when their hands met in the long chain of the dance, he was surprised to feel her press his hand firmly. She looked at him from under her brows, almost teasing him, until he smiled a little. Then, just before the chain began again, she stood on tiptoe and whispered into his ear, “West Briton!”

When the dance ended, Gabriel moved away to a far corner of the room. Freddy Malins’s mother was sitting there, a weak old woman with white hair. Gabriel asked politely about her journey from Glasgow. She said the crossing had been beautiful and that the captain had been very kind to her. She also spoke proudly of her married daughter’s house in Glasgow and of their many friends there.

Gabriel listened, but his mind was not with her. He tried to push away the memory of Miss Ivors’s words. Of course, she was full of national feeling, he told himself. People like that often spoke too strongly. Still, she had no right to call him a West Briton in front of others, even as a joke. She had questioned him, stared at him, and made him feel small.

Then he saw Gretta making her way toward him through the dancers. When she reached him, she spoke into his ear. Aunt Kate wanted to know whether he would carve the goose as usual. Gabriel welcomed the request almost with relief. It gave him a clear duty and a proper place again. He could leave the uncomfortable memory of Miss Ivors behind for the moment and return to the

safe work expected of him at the supper table.

Part 4

Aunt Kate soon became anxious again. The supper room was ready, the guests were waiting, and the goose had not yet been carved. “Where is Gabriel?” she cried. “Where is Gabriel? Everyone is waiting.” Gabriel came forward at once with new energy. The clear duty before him helped him forget the trouble with Miss Ivors.

The supper table was full and bright. At one end lay a brown roast goose. At the other end were a large ham and a round of spiced beef. Between them stood many side dishes: jelly, sweet white pudding, raisins, almonds, figs, custard, chocolates, sweets, celery, oranges, and apples. Bottles of stout, ale, and mineral water waited near the piano, and the whole table looked rich, crowded, and carefully prepared.

Gabriel took his seat at the head of the table. He felt comfortable now because he knew how to carve well. He tested the knife, fixed the fork firmly in the goose, and began his work. He asked each guest what piece he or she wanted. Miss Furlong asked for a small slice of breast, and another lady said that anything would do. Gabriel answered them easily and passed plates down the table.

Lily carried hot potatoes from guest to guest, wrapped in a white cloth. Mary Jane helped her pupils and made sure they received good pieces. Aunt Kate and Aunt Julia moved back and forth from the piano, bringing bottles for the guests. There was a great deal of noise: people asking for food, people passing plates, bottles opening, knives touching plates, and everyone laughing. The room was full of warmth and movement.

Gabriel served everyone before serving himself. When he had finished the first round, he began to carve second helpings at once. The guests protested loudly and told him to eat something himself. He laughed and took a long drink of stout because the carving had made him hot. Aunt Kate and Aunt Julia still moved around the table, getting in each other’s way and giving little orders no one obeyed.

At last Freddy Malins stood up, caught Aunt Kate gently, and put her into her chair. Everyone laughed, and she had to stay seated. When all had been served, Gabriel joked that anyone who wanted more stuffing should say so. A chorus of voices told him to begin his own supper. Lily then brought him three potatoes that she had kept for him, and he said good-humouredly that everyone should forget him for a few minutes.

While Gabriel ate, the talk moved around the table. They spoke of the opera company that was performing at the Theatre Royal. Bartell D'Arcy praised the leading woman singer very highly. Miss Furlong thought the singer's style was a little common. Freddy Malins then spoke of a Black singer in a music-hall show and said he had one of the finest tenor voices he had ever heard.

The remark brought a small silence. Freddy asked why such a man should not have a good voice too. No one answered clearly. Mary Jane quickly guided the talk back to serious opera. She did not want any uncomfortable discussion at the supper table. The guests were there to eat, drink, and enjoy the evening, not to argue.

Aunt Kate then spoke of singers from the past. She said that the old opera singers had been finer than singers now. Mr Browne challenged her gently, but Aunt Kate stood by her opinion. She began naming old famous singers she had heard or heard about. Aunt Julia and Mary Jane joined in, and for a while the talk became full of old musical names, lost voices, and memories of better days.

Gabriel listened and waited for the right time. He knew his speech was coming soon. The uneasiness from Miss Ivors had not fully left him, but the supper had restored his place in the house. At this table, he was useful, trusted, and expected. He was no longer the man being questioned about Ireland. He was the nephew who carved the goose and would speak for the family.

At last the moment came. Gabriel rose with his glass before him. The room quieted, and faces turned toward him. He began by saying that they had gathered there for another year in that friendly house. He spoke of hospitality, kindness, and the generous spirit of the older days. He said that perhaps the modern world had become too clever, too restless, and too full of doubt.

He did not want to be gloomy, he said. Still, gatherings like this made people think of the past. They remembered youth, change, absent faces, and people no longer with them. If people thought only of such sadness, they could not go on with their duties among the living. So he would not stay long among sad thoughts. Instead, he would speak of friendship and gratitude.

Then he turned the speech toward the three hostesses. He called Aunt Kate, Aunt Julia, and Mary Jane the three graces of Dublin's musical world. The table burst into laughter and applause. Aunt Julia did not understand at first and asked what Gabriel had said. Mary Jane explained it to her, and Aunt Julia looked up smiling, still not fully sure of the joke but pleased by the kindness in it.

Gabriel continued. He said he could not choose which of the three deserved the greatest praise. Aunt Kate was known for her good heart. Aunt Julia seemed still young in spirit, and her singing that night had surprised and delighted them all. Mary Jane was talented, cheerful, hard-working, and the best of nieces. Gabriel saw Aunt Julia's broad smile and Aunt Kate's eyes filling with tears, so he moved quickly toward the end.

He raised his glass and asked everyone to drink to the three ladies. He wished them health, wealth, long life, happiness, and honour. All the guests stood with their glasses in their hands. Then, led by Mr Browne, they began to sing a cheerful song of praise for the three hostesses. Freddy Malins beat time with his fork, as if he were leading a great public celebration.

Aunt Kate used her handkerchief openly, and even Aunt Julia looked moved. The song was repeated, and the applause spread beyond the supper-room door to other guests in the house. For a little while, the whole party became one warm voice of thanks. Gabriel had done his duty well. His speech had pleased the old women, pleased the guests, and brought the evening to its public height.

Part 5

After the song for the three ladies, the party began to loosen and break apart. People pushed back their chairs, laughed, looked for coats, and said that it was

time to go. Aunt Kate and Aunt Julia became busy again at once. Their happy tears had hardly dried before they were moving through the rooms, helping guests, calling to Lily, and asking whether everyone had enough wraps for the cold morning outside.

The house no longer had the full, settled warmth of supper. Doors opened and closed. Voices came from the drawing-room, the landing, and the stairs. Some guests were still laughing over the evening, while others were already serious with tiredness. The music had ended, the speech had been given, and the long night was passing into morning. Yet the house remained full of small movements, like a fire that still glows after the flames have gone down.

Mr Browne made himself useful, as he liked to do. He helped the ladies with their cloaks and joked with them as they prepared to leave. Freddy Malins was still in high spirits and laughed at almost everything. His mother was tired and confused by the noise, but people cared for her kindly. Gabriel moved among them with good manners, still feeling some of the public pleasure from his successful speech.

Outside the front door, there was confusion about the cab. Several people tried to explain to the driver where he should go, but the explanations only made the matter worse. Freddy put his head in and out of the cab window, laughing and calling to his mother. Mr Browne, half serious and half comic, finally shouted to the driver that he should go straight toward Trinity College first, and then they would tell him where to go next. Everyone laughed at this practical solution.

The cab moved away at last with more laughter and goodbyes. Voices called from the steps, and hands waved in the dark morning air. Then the sound of wheels faded along the quay. The door was closed, and the house seemed suddenly quieter. Aunt Kate, Aunt Julia, and Mary Jane came down the hall together, still smiling and talking about Freddy. They said he was terrible, but their voices showed affection as much as blame.

Gabriel had not gone all the way to the door with the others. He stood in a darker part of the hall and looked up the staircase. There, near the top of the first flight, a woman stood in shadow. He could not see her face clearly, but he knew

at once that it was Gretta. She was leaning on the banisters and listening to something above or beyond her. Her stillness surprised him.

Gabriel listened too. At first he could hear only the last noise from the guests outside, a few laughs, and the movement of people near the door. Then he heard a few notes from the piano and the faint sound of a man's voice singing. The song came from far away in the house. The voice was not strong. It sounded tired and uncertain, but distance made it sad and beautiful.

Gabriel looked up at his wife in the shadow. There was something graceful and mysterious in the way she stood there. She seemed to him like a picture or a symbol. He asked himself what a woman standing on the stairs in the dark, listening to distant music, could mean. If he had been a painter, he thought, he would paint her just as she was, with her hat dark against her hair and her dress partly hidden by shadow.

He imagined a title for the picture: *Distant Music*. The thought pleased him. Gretta seemed changed by the music, lifted away from the ordinary noise of the party and placed in a deeper silence. Gabriel felt tenderness rise in him as he watched her. The public duties of the evening were over now. Soon the guests would be gone, and he and Gretta would be alone.

Aunt Kate, Aunt Julia, and Mary Jane were still laughing when they came near him. Gabriel did not speak. He only pointed up the stairs toward Gretta and raised his hand to ask them to be quiet. Now that the front door was closed, they could hear the song more clearly. It had an old Irish sound, and the singer seemed unsure of both the words and his voice.

The words came faintly through the house. They spoke of rain falling on heavy hair, dew wetting the skin, and a child lying cold. The voice was hoarse, but the sadness of the song made it more moving. Mary Jane whispered that it was Bartell D'Arcy singing. He had refused to sing all night, and now he was singing when the party was almost over. She said she would ask him to sing a proper song before he left.

Aunt Kate encouraged her, and Mary Jane hurried toward the stairs. But before she reached them, the singing stopped. The piano closed suddenly. Mary Jane

cried out in disappointment. She called up to Gretta and asked whether Mr D'Arcy was coming down. Gabriel heard Gretta answer yes, and then he saw her begin to descend the stairs.

Gretta came down slowly. A few steps behind her came Mr Bartell D'Arcy and Miss O'Callaghan. D'Arcy looked shy and tired, as if he had been caught doing something private. Mary Jane asked him what song he had been singing. He said it was called "The Lass of Aughrim," but he added that he could not remember it properly. Gretta repeated the title softly, as if the name itself mattered to her.

Mary Jane said it was a very nice air and told Mr D'Arcy she was sorry he had not been in voice that night. Aunt Kate quickly told her not to trouble him. She would not have Mr D'Arcy annoyed, she said. The little group moved toward the door, and the last goodbyes began again. People thanked Aunt Kate and Aunt Julia for the pleasant evening. Names and farewells crossed one another in the hall.

At last they stepped out into the dark morning. A dull yellow light lay over the houses and the river, and the sky seemed low and heavy. The ground underfoot was wet and dirty with half-melted snow. Only thin lines and patches of snow remained on roofs, railings, and stone edges. The lamps still burned red in the thick air.

Gretta walked on ahead with Mr D'Arcy, holding her shoes in a brown parcel under one arm and lifting her skirt above the wet ground. She no longer had the mysterious stillness she had shown on the stairs. Yet Gabriel's eyes were still bright with happiness. His blood moved quickly, and tender memories of their life together came into his mind. He longed to be alone with her and to speak to her softly, as in the early days of their love.

Part 6

Gretta walked ahead lightly, though the ground was wet and difficult. Gabriel watched her from behind, and joy moved through him in quick warm waves. She seemed fragile to him, and he wanted to run after her, hold her by the shoulders, and whisper some foolish loving words into her ear. The cold morning, the river,

the dark houses, and the old song had all stirred his heart. He felt young again, as if he and Gretta were not tired parents returning from a party, but lovers beginning a secret adventure.

Memories of their life together came suddenly into his mind. He remembered a morning long ago when one of her letters lay beside his breakfast cup, and he could not eat because he was so happy. He remembered standing with her on a crowded station platform and putting a ticket into the warm palm of her gloved hand. He remembered another cold day when they had looked through a grated window at a man making bottles in a great furnace. Gretta's face had been close to his in the cold air, and he had called out jokingly to ask whether the fire was hot. The man had not heard him because of the noise, and Gabriel now felt glad of that.

These memories made his love grow stronger. He had almost forgotten how many such moments were hidden inside their married life. The years had covered them with ordinary duties, children, work, and social visits. But now they came back brightly, one after another. He felt that the past was not dead after all. It still lived in him, waiting for music, snow, and desire to wake it.

A cab was waiting near the hotel, and there was some talk about who should ride where. Mr Bartell D'Arcy and Miss O'Callaghan were also there, and the small group moved together through the cold morning. Gabriel pointed lightly to the statue in the street, where patches of snow lay on the stone. In a gay voice, he said good night to it, as if it were an old friend. His own good humour pleased him, and he felt generous toward everyone.

When the cab stopped before the hotel, Gabriel jumped out quickly. Mr D'Arcy protested, but Gabriel paid the driver himself. He even gave the man extra money. The driver saluted him and wished him a prosperous New Year. Gabriel answered warmly, still feeling rich in spirit, as if the whole night had filled him with kindness and strength.

Gretta leaned on Gabriel's arm as she got out of the cab and said good night to the others. Her touch was light, but it passed through him strongly. A few hours earlier, while dancing, he had felt proud of her grace and of the fact that she was

his wife. Now the same touch felt different. It was more secret, more urgent, and more full of desire. Under the cover of her silence, he pressed her arm close to his side.

As they stood at the hotel door, Gabriel felt as if they had escaped from their ordinary lives. For a moment, he imagined that they had run away from home, friends, children, duties, and all the fixed shapes of daily life. They were alone together, outside the usual order of things. The night seemed to promise a new beginning. His heart beat quickly with this thought.

Inside the hotel hall, an old porter was sleeping in a large chair. He woke slowly and lit a candle in the office. Then he went before them up the stairs. Gabriel and Gretta followed him in silence. Their steps made soft heavy sounds on the thick carpet, and the small candle flame moved unsteadily before them.

Gretta climbed behind the porter with her head bent. Her shoulders looked thin and tired, as if she were carrying some weight. Gabriel watched her body as she moved upward. Desire shook him so strongly that he had to press his nails into the palms of his hands. He wanted to catch her and hold her still, but he controlled himself.

The porter stopped on the stairs to fix the weak candle. Gabriel and Gretta stopped below him. In the silence, Gabriel heard the soft fall of melted wax into the candle tray. He also heard his own heart beating hard against his ribs. The whole moment seemed strange and close, as if the quiet stairs held only the three of them and Gabriel's hidden desire.

The porter led them along a corridor and opened the door of their room. He put the candle on the dressing table and asked what time they wished to be called in the morning. Gabriel said eight o'clock. The porter began to explain something about the electric light, but Gabriel stopped him. He said they did not need the light because enough light came from the street. Then he asked the porter to take the candle away too.

The porter seemed surprised, but he picked up the candle and wished them good night. Gabriel locked the door after him. A pale light from the street lamp entered through the window and lay across the room in a long shaft. Gabriel threw

his overcoat and hat on a couch. Then he went to the window and looked down into the street, trying to calm himself.

After a moment, he turned and leaned against a chest of drawers, with his back to the light. Gretta had taken off her hat and cloak. She stood before the large mirror, unfastening her dress. Gabriel watched her and waited. He wanted to speak, but he felt that he must not break the moment too soon.

At last he said her name. "Gretta." She turned slowly from the mirror and walked toward him through the pale line of light. Her face looked serious and tired. The words he had meant to say would not come. He saw that this was not the right moment. So he only said that she looked tired.

Gretta answered that she was a little tired. Gabriel asked whether she felt ill or weak. She said no, only tired. Then she went to the window and stood there looking out. Gabriel waited again, but her silence troubled him. He feared that his courage would leave him if he waited too long.

Suddenly he began to speak about Freddy Malins. He said that poor Freddy was not such a bad fellow after all. Freddy had returned the pound Gabriel had lent him, and Gabriel had not expected it. He added that it was a pity Freddy could not keep away from Mr Browne, because Freddy had a good heart. Gabriel knew his own voice sounded false, but he could not find a better way to begin.

Gretta did not answer quickly. After a pause, she asked when Gabriel had lent Freddy the pound. Gabriel had to control his irritation. He did not want to talk about Freddy, money, or little Christmas shops. He wanted Gretta to turn toward him with warmth in her eyes. Still, he answered that it had happened at Christmas, when Freddy had opened a small card shop in Henry Street.

He was burning with desire and annoyance, so he did not hear her move away from the window. Then suddenly she stood before him, looking at him in a strange way. She rose on the tips of her toes, put her hands lightly on his shoulders, and kissed him. "You are a very generous person, Gabriel," she said. The simple words filled him with happiness.

Gabriel touched her hair gently and began to smooth it back with his fingers. Her hair was bright and soft from washing. His heart overflowed. Just when he

had wished for her to come to him, she had come by herself. He thought perhaps her thoughts had been moving in the same direction as his. Perhaps she too had felt the desire that filled him.

He held her head between his hands. Then he quickly slipped one arm around her body and drew her closer. In a soft voice he asked what she was thinking about. She did not answer and did not fully yield to him. He asked again, gently, whether he knew what was troubling her. For a moment she was silent.

Then Gretta suddenly began to cry. She broke away from him and ran to the bed. She threw her arms across the rail of the bed and hid her face. Gabriel stood still in surprise, then followed her. He asked what was wrong. Gretta lifted her head and said through her tears that she was thinking about the song, "The Lass of Aughrim."

Part 7

Gabriel stood still for a moment in complete surprise. Gretta had broken away from him and run to the bed, and now she was crying with her face hidden against the bed rail. He followed her slowly. As he passed the large mirror, he caught sight of himself from head to foot. He saw his broad white shirt front, his glasses, and the puzzled face that always seemed strange to him when he saw it in a mirror.

He stopped a few steps away from her. His desire had been broken by her tears, and he did not know what to do with his hands or his voice. "What about the song?" he asked. "Why does it make you cry?" Gretta lifted her head from her arms and wiped her eyes with the back of her hand, almost like a child. Gabriel's voice became kinder than he had meant it to be, and he asked again, "Why, Gretta?"

She said that she was thinking of someone from long ago who used to sing that song. Gabriel asked who the person was. At first he smiled a little, as if the answer could not be very serious. But Gretta said it was someone she had known in Galway when she lived with her grandmother. At once the smile left his face, and a dull anger began to form in his mind.

He asked, with a cold tone, whether it was someone she had been in love with.

Gretta answered that it was a young boy she had known. His name was Michael Furey, and he used to sing "The Lass of Aughrim." She said he had been very delicate. Gabriel said nothing, because he did not want her to think that this dead boy interested him.

Gretta looked past him as if she could see the past clearly. She said she could still see Michael Furey's eyes. They were large and dark, and they had a special look in them. Gabriel asked again whether she had been in love with him. She did not answer directly. She only said that she used to go walking with him in Galway, as young people did in the country.

A bitter thought passed through Gabriel's mind. He remembered Miss Ivors and her invitation to Galway. In a cold voice, he asked whether that was why Gretta had wanted to go west with Miss Ivors. Gretta looked at him in surprise and asked why she would do that. Gabriel shrugged and said, "To see him, perhaps." The words sounded foolish as soon as he spoke them.

Gretta turned her eyes away toward the pale light from the window. After a silence, she said that Michael Furey was dead. He had died when he was only seventeen. She asked whether it was not terrible to die so young. Gabriel still tried to keep his cold tone and asked what the boy had been. Gretta said that he had worked in the gasworks.

Gabriel felt ashamed. His sharp words had failed because they had been directed at a dead boy, a poor boy from the gasworks. A few minutes before, Gabriel had been full of his own memories, his own desire, and his own idea of love. Now he understood that Gretta had been thinking of another man. He saw himself suddenly as foolish, proud, and small.

He turned his back more toward the light so that she would not see his shame. He tried to speak with the same cold manner, but his voice became softer and lower. He said, "I suppose you loved this Michael Furey, Gretta." She answered that she had cared for him very much at that time. Her voice was covered with sadness, and Gabriel understood that he could not bring her back to the mood he had wanted.

He took one of her hands and touched it gently. Then he asked what Michael

had died of so young. "Was it consumption?" he asked. Gretta answered, "I think he died for me." These words frightened Gabriel in a strange way. It was as if something from the world of the dead had entered the room and stood between him and his wife.

He tried to calm himself by reason. He continued to touch her hand, but her hand did not answer his touch. It was warm and damp with tears. Gabriel did not ask another question, because he felt that Gretta would tell the story herself now. He only stayed beside her, holding her hand lightly, while the pale light lay across the room.

Gretta said it had happened in winter, near the beginning of winter. She was about to leave her grandmother's house in Galway and come up to Dublin to the convent. Michael Furey was ill then and staying in his lodgings. His people in Oughterard had been written to, because he was in a serious decline. Gretta said she never really knew the exact illness.

She stopped for a moment and sighed. Then she said that poor Michael had been very fond of her and that he had been such a gentle boy. They used to walk together in the country way. He had wanted to study singing, if only his health had allowed it. He had a very good voice, she said, poor Michael Furey.

Gabriel asked quietly what had happened then. Gretta said that, when it was time for her to leave Galway, Michael had become worse. She was not allowed to see him, so she wrote him a letter. She told him that she was going up to Dublin and would come back in the summer. She hoped he would be better by then.

Gretta paused again to steady her voice. Then she went on. On the night before she left, she was in her grandmother's house on Nuns' Island, packing her things. She heard small stones thrown up against the window. The window was wet with rain, so she could not see clearly. She ran downstairs as she was and slipped out through the back into the garden.

There, at the end of the garden, she found Michael Furey. He was standing in the rain, near the wall where there was a tree. He was shaking with cold. Gabriel asked whether she told him to go home. Gretta said that she begged him to go home at once and told him the rain would kill him. But Michael said he did not

want to live.

As she spoke, Gretta seemed to see his eyes again. The hotel room had disappeared for her, and she was back in the wet garden in Galway. She said that she could see him as clearly as if he were standing before her. Gabriel asked whether he went home. She said yes, he went home. But when she had been only a week in the convent, he died and was buried in Oughterard, where his people came from.

Then Gretta could not go on. She cried out softly at the memory of the day when she heard that he was dead. Her body shook with sobs, and she threw herself face down on the bed. Gabriel held her hand for a moment longer, not knowing what to do. Then, because her grief seemed too private for him to touch, he let her hand fall gently and walked quietly to the window.

The room was still, except for her crying. Gabriel stood with his back to her and looked out into the pale morning light. His own feelings had changed so quickly that he could hardly understand them. Desire, anger, jealousy, shame, pity, and fear had all passed through him. Behind him, Gretta cried for a boy who had died many years before he himself had ever known her.

After some time, the sobs grew weaker. Gabriel turned from the window and looked toward the bed. Gretta lay there quietly now. Her hair was spread loosely, and her mouth was half open. She was fast asleep. Gabriel looked at her without anger, and the dead young man from Galway seemed to stand silently somewhere near them both.

Part 8

Gabriel leaned on one elbow and looked at Gretta as she slept. Her hair was loose and tangled, and her mouth was a little open. Her breathing was deep and even now, as if the storm of memory had passed through her and left her tired. He no longer looked at her with anger. He looked at her quietly, almost as if they had never been husband and wife.

So this was the secret romance that had lived inside her. A young man had

loved her so much that he had gone out into the rain when he was already ill. He had stood under a tree near her grandmother's garden and told her that he did not want to live. Gabriel thought of this and felt smaller than before. It hardly hurt him now to think that he, her husband, had played a poor part in that hidden story of her heart.

He watched her sleeping face and thought of what she must have been like then. She had been young, beautiful, and full of life in Galway. Michael Furey had loved that young girl, not the sleeping woman before Gabriel now. Gabriel did not want to say even to himself that Gretta was no longer beautiful. But he knew that the face beside him was not the same face for which the boy had walked into the rain.

Perhaps Gretta had not told him everything. His eyes moved to the chair where she had thrown some of her clothes. A string from one piece of clothing hung down to the floor. One boot stood upright, while the other lay on its side. These small ordinary things made the room feel strangely real again after the story of the dead boy.

Gabriel wondered at the wild feelings that had filled him an hour earlier. Where had they come from? From the supper at his aunts' house, from his own speech, from the wine, the dancing, and the laughter in the hall? From the walk by the river in the snow, from Gretta's figure on the stairs, from the old song? All those things had lifted him into desire and pride, and now they seemed far away and almost foolish.

Then he thought of poor Aunt Julia. She too would soon become a shadow like Patrick Morkan and the old horse in the family story. He remembered the tired look on her face when she had sung earlier that night. For one moment, while she sang, he had seen how old and weak she was. Soon, perhaps, he would be sitting in that same drawing-room dressed in black, with his silk hat on his knees.

He imagined the blinds pulled down and Aunt Kate sitting beside him. She would be crying and blowing her nose, telling him how Julia had died. He would search his mind for words to comfort her, but he would find only weak and useless words. Yes, that would happen soon. The party, the music, the food, and the warm

talk would pass, and another dead person would be added to memory.

The air of the room felt cold on his shoulders. Gabriel carefully slipped under the sheets and lay down beside his wife. One by one, he thought, they were all becoming shadows. It seemed better to pass into the other world with the full force of love, as Michael Furey had done, than to grow old slowly and fade away without passion. He thought of Gretta lying beside him, carrying for all these years the image of the boy's eyes when he said he did not want to live.

Tears filled Gabriel's eyes. They were not angry tears now. They were generous tears, because he understood that he himself had never felt such love for any woman. Yet he knew that Michael Furey's feeling must have been love. In the half-darkness, Gabriel imagined the young man standing under the wet tree, thin, ill, and shaking in the rain.

Other figures seemed to gather near that young man. Gabriel felt that his soul had come close to the great world of the dead. He could feel that they existed, though he could not clearly understand them. Their lives had once been solid and full, just as his life felt solid now. But now their world was grey, distant, and hard to touch.

His own self began to feel less firm. The clear world of the hotel room, the furniture, the clothes, and the sleeping body beside him seemed to grow softer and less certain. The living and the dead no longer felt completely separate. The dead had built houses, loved people, spoken words, and walked in rain and snow. Now the living were walking slowly toward the same silence.

A few light taps on the window made him turn his head. It had begun to snow again. He watched sleepily as the flakes fell across the light outside. Some looked silver, and some looked dark as they crossed the lamp glow. They moved slowly and slantwise through the cold morning air.

Gabriel thought that the newspapers had been right. Snow was falling everywhere over Ireland. It was falling on the dark central plain and on the bare hills. It was falling softly on the Bog of Allen and farther west on the dark waves of the Shannon. It was falling in the lonely churchyard on the hill where Michael Furey lay buried.

The snow lay thick on the crooked crosses and gravestones. It lay on the small gate and on the bare thorn bushes. Gabriel listened in his mind to the faint fall of the snow across the whole country. It seemed to fall through the whole universe, quietly and endlessly. It was falling softly upon all the living and all the dead.