

The Rogue of Connemara

An Original TV Pilot Screenplay by

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BLACK SCREEN

SUPER: INSPIRED BY TRUE EVENTS

FADE IN:

EXT. IRISH WEST COAST - DAY

Grand views of green-topped coastal cliffs, ocean waves crashing against them. Gray windjammer clouds. Birds soaring.

SUPER: 1847, WESTERN IRELAND

Gorgeous Irish scenes: Mountains. Purple heather-carpeted hillsides. A bubbling brook in a shady glen. A herd of WILD CONNEMARA PONIES running freely on the moor, etc....

Remnants of ancient human activity: Stone fences--some collapsed, some still standing. Long-forgotten stone building foundations hidden in tufts of long, green grasses.

A peat bog swale. Lumpy coffin-shaped mounds of turned sod tell of recent human activity. SEAGULLS stir over them.

Some eroded coffin-mounds reveal human bones; desiccated meat, rotting cloth still clinging to them.

The RUMBLING SOUND OF GALLOPING HOOVES approaches o.s.

A GULL pulls on a meaty fibular bone. Flies off with it.

We stay on an exposed human skull sticking out from a mound. Its jaw, missing some teeth, yawns in frozen horror.

The SOUND OF HOOVES grows thunderous. The legs of a horse fly over the skull. Seconds later, a stampede of pounding hooves obliterate it. Dirt and bone explode into the air.

A dishevelled, bearded BRITISH SOLDIER on a WHITE CONNEMARA PONY races far ahead, leading a scattered PLATOON OF BLUE-JACKETED BRITISH CAVALRY, trying to keep up.

The soldier, MICHAEL MURPHY (26), rides gaily, confidently, as one with his speeding steed.

MICHAEL

Ye-ow! Fly, Pegasus.

The dashing pony's hooves beat rhythmically against the turf. His extra-long mane and tail flow like flames in a wind. He's in love with his speed.

They gain distance as they race over the land swells.

BLAM! BLAM! Two soldiers fire their pistols at Michael.

A chance bullet slams into Michael's butt.

MICHAEL

Oomph! Shite!

He falls forward against the pony's neck, the mane whipping past his pained face as he looks back, then forward, and SEES

a 7-foot-high stone wall stretching for hundreds of meters in both directions--essentially, a dead end.

He looks back. The soldiers see his predicament, too--*no way he can leap it*. They spread out. They know he must run his pony along the wall to escape. They got him.

Michael reins in. The pony rears up on his hind legs, pawing the air with his hooves. He settles down, still tense on the reins, amped to go.

Michael leans forward and strokes the pony's neck. The pony cants his head to listen.

MICHAEL

Show 'em what you got, Pegasus.

Leap that fuckin' wall.

Michael grabs a fistful of mane. Pegasus nods, jerks his head forward. He rears up, as if on starting blocks; then, in a rocket-like burst of energy, charges at the wall.

Pegasus' POV approaching the stone wall. We hear the blasts of his MUSCULAR BREATHS, sense supreme confidence. END POV.

His spring-loaded hooves take off from the ground. Michael and Pegasus catapult into the air. They soar over the wall, clearing it by centimeters.

Soldiers pull back hard on their reins, horses sliding to a halt on their haunches at the foot of the wall. The soldiers stare at it, then at each other, gobsmacked.

We see a green, treeless hill beyond the wall. Michael and Pegasus race up it and disappear over it.

EXT. WET BOG - DAY

Michael on Pegasus splash into the bog. He reins in and jumps off--wincing from the wound as he lands. He pulls out a nail pullout pliers from his saddle bag.

He kneels on one knee, picks up Pegasus' leg and rests it on his other knee and quickly pries out the horseshoe nails. He tosses the shoe into the bog and limps to the other leg, kneels and raises it onto his knee...

MINUTES LATER

He tosses the final horseshoe and the pliers into the bog, leaps back on Pegasus, and splashes out of the bog.

EXT. COASTAL TRAIL - LATER - SAME DAY

Michael winces as he adjusts himself on the bouncy saddle. He finally reins in, looks back where he came from. Satisfied, he quickly unbuttons his jacket and shirt, loosens his belt, and peeks in at his hip wound. A gash is oozing blood.

He hurriedly takes off his jacket and shirt and stuffs the shirt between his pants and wound, then puts his jacket back on and buttons it up. He looks around, then rides off.

EXT. WET BOG - DAY

Cavalry men trot along the bog's perimeter, their eyes glued to the ground, searching for something.

A SOLDIER stops and observes Pegasus' horseshoed tracks going into the bog. They stand out amongst the multitude of shoeless tracks entering and exiting the bog--a well-used watering hole.

A CORPORAL meets up with a SERGEANT BEALE (30).

CORPORAL

No sign that he came out, Sarge.
Just wild pony tracks. What do we
do?

BEALE

Widen the perimeter. He didn't just
evaporate.

EXT. COASTAL TRAIL - DAY

A mare grazes along the side of the trail. Oddly, a saddle hangs upside down from her belly. Michael approaches on Pegasus, reins in, glances around.

He carefully dismounts and limps up to the horse and pats her as he pulls on the saddle cinch--obviously too loose.

MICHAEL

You're a fine lookin' mare to be
left alone. Where's your rider, eh?

He looks around. SEES a wide-brimmed black hat next to a boulder. A booted foot juts out from behind the rock. He limps over to it and cautiously peeks over.

A CATHOLIC PRIEST lies there, his head resting on a blood-covered rock, his eyes locked into infinity.

Michael stares at him for a moment, his mind forming an idea. He looks off, checks all directions.

LATER - SAME DAY

Michael dusts off the black hat and dons it. He's wearing the dead priest's black clothes now.

He eyes the ground around him, picks up a rock of choice.

He goes over to the corpse, now dressed in Michael's military uniform, and kneels beside it. He gazes into the dead man's eyes. They stare back, daring him. Michael closes them.

He hammers the rock on the corpse's face. The MEATY THUDS drive him into a hammering frenzy and CRIES OF REVULSION with every blow.

Michael jumps up, out of breath. Flings the rock away and shoves the corpse over the cliff's edge.

He looks over after it, turns away and gags.

LATER - SAME DAY

Michael rifles through the priest's saddle bag. Draws out priest garments, a Bible, reading glasses. Crams them back in. He opens the second bag. Food rations and bottles of red wine. He removes a bottle and holds it out before him.

MICHAEL

A man after me own heart.

He puts it on the ground, closes the bag. Looks around.

He opens the priest's satchel, pulls out a string-bound folder. Opens it. Removes a letter and reads. He stares at it incredulously for a moment, then ponders its significance.

MICHAEL

Of all the dumb luck.

He slips the letter back into the folder, re-ties it, and puts it back into the satchel.

He reaches over to his military saddlebag. Pulls out a TOME entitled, "The Complete Works of William Shakespeare," and a FLUTE. He stuffs the tome into the satchel.

He drags his military saddle and saddlebags to the edge of the cliff and heaves them over.

He gimps over to Pegasus, standing free of saddle and bridle, waiting patiently for his master's orders.

Michael PLAYS SOME FAMILIAR NOTES ON THE FLUTE. Pegasus reacts, shifts his head back and forth and prances with his legs in place.

Michael leans his head against the pony's head. They connect spiritually for a minute. He breaks away and strokes the pony's head as he speaks:

MICHAEL

It breaks my heart that I have to let you go, my noble Pegasus. I must leave this cursed land and I can't take you with me...It would be damned offensive to see an English arse astride your back if I were to be caught and hanged. Now, wouldn't it?

Pegasus WHICKERS, nods his head, butts it against Michael. Michael strokes him, then slaps him on the flank.

MICHAEL

We agree. Now, GO, Pegasus. You're free. Run with your own kind.

Pegasus dances before him. Michael waves his arms and SHOOS him. The pony stops, looks at him, then gets it. He rears up and takes off, bounding, kicking across the turf. Michael pauses to watch the run of freedom, then turns away.

Something on the ground catches his eye. He picks it up. A four-leaf clover. His eyebrows rise at a thought: *A portent of good fortune?*

He goes over and puts the clover between the pages of his Shakespeare book. Crams the flute and book into the satchel and cinches it.

He picks up the wine bottle. Mounts the priest's horse. Pops the cork off the bottle and drinks. Looks off. SEES Pegasus join a herd of WILD PONIES. Pegasus seems to dominate them as they surround him, accept him.

Michael turns away satisfied; pats the mare and trots off.

EXT. COUNTY ROAD - DAY

The countryside is filling up with small stone cottages nestled in the hills and valleys. Some don't have roofs.

Scattered along the roadside, listless PEASANTS huddle silently in the openings of makeshift shelters of turf and sticks and stone. Rags and shawls drape skeletal bodies. Their eyes large and bright with hunger.

Michael stares at them with unease as he trots by. A COUPLE beckons him with out-reached arms as they approach the road.

PEASANT WOMAN

Might ye spare some bread, Father?

Michael looks away.

PEASANT MAN

Give us thy blessin' in passin',
then, Father...Pray For us.

Michael spurs his horse and gallops onward.

EXT. COUNTY ROAD - SAME DAY

A shepherd, ANDY GANNON (50s), walks alongside his SHEEP.

A SHETLAND SHEEPDOG dashes after a straying sheep. Moves it back into the group, then squats on its haunches, ever alert.

Michael trots up and rides along side Andy.

MICHAEL

Hello there, my friend.

Andy looks up, surprised; does a double-take.

ANDY

Oh...Hello, Father. I'll have
Prince make a way for you.

He WHISTLES at Prince. The dog leaps up, guides the sheep closer to the side of the road.

Michael surreptitiously takes a slug of wine, then hides the bottle inside his coat flap. He's had a few and feeling it.

MICHAEL

Smart dog.

ANDY

They don't get any smarter than
Prince, without bein' human.

MICHAEL

Aye. They only lack words...
I say, you seem to be the most
prosperous man about.

ANDY

Looks are deceivin', Father.
Tomorrow I could be poundin' rock
like the rest...Might you be that
new priest they're expectin' at St.
Brendan's?

Michael looks bewildered for a second.

MICHAEL

St. Brendan's?
(what the hell)
Why, yes; yes, I am.

ANDY

Father Murphy, is it?

MICHAEL

(genuine surprise)
My name precedes me, I see.

They shake hands.

ANDY

Andy Gannon. Were you acquainted
with the late Father Joseph, God
rest his soul?

MICHAEL

Never met the man. Perhaps you
could tell me a little about him so
I know whose shoes I'm fillin'.

ANDY

Well, to be honest, Father Joseph
was not a very likeable character.
He was a stern, snooty man. He was
feared more than respected. Parish
rumor had it that he was havin' an
affair, which was borne out by the
morbid manner of his death, I might
add.

MICHAEL

Oh? How's that?

ANDY

A bull gored him to death crossin'
Jimmy McCartney's paddock in the
wee hours of a dewy, spring
mornin'. Jimmy's wife, Mary,
witnessed it and never recovered
from the sight. She was sent away.
Went mad, I hear.

MICHAEL

Poor woman...Poor Father Joe.
(beat)
Gored, huh?

ANDY

Yup. In his nether region. Pulled
out twenty foot of plump intestine,
it did. No hunger there.

This peculiar image tickles Michael's fancy.

MICHAEL

Ouch.
(guffaws)
Sorry. Not to disrespect the man.
It's the image: What are the odds
of a bull pulling your intestines
out with its horn. A priest wavin'
his tunic at a bull...like a
matador...to protect his lover
while she confesses her sins...
Twenty feet? Hmm!

Michael bursts out LAUGHING. Andy regards him a moment, then
LAUGHS along, too, adding to the image:

ANDY

(chuckling throughout)
Yup. Turns out the hogs ate on him.
Saved a precious feedin', it did.

They both CRACK UP heartily.

Wiping away laugh tears, Michael pulls out his bottle of wine
and offers it to Andy, who gladly takes it.

ANDY

Ta. That was some good craic,
Father. Never saw the irony of it
before, 'til now. To your success.

He toasts, drinks long, and hands the bottle back. Michael is
about to take a swig when he SEES something off:

A CAVALRY SQUAD emerges from around the bend ahead.

ANDY

(off Michael)

Blasted English. They're everywhere these days helpin' the landlords evict their poor tenants. So far, I've been able to keep up with me rents by handin' over a sheep now and then. Other poor souls don't have a pot to piss in. They took that, too, they did.

The sound of RUNNING HOOVES behind them. Michael double-takes on a glance back.

A BRITISH SOLDIER gallops towards them. Michael feels the noose tightening--*what to do?*

The soldier races by. Michael relaxes his reins, watches the soldiers.

ANDY

Looks like the troubles for some poor bugger.

The soldier meets up with the cavalry squad. The soldier points back toward Michael and rides onward.

The squad canters towards Michael and halts beside him.

The LIEUTENANT (30s) gestures for Michael to stop.

MICHAEL

Good day to you, Lieutenant.

The lieutenant draws his pistol on him. Michael stares at it.

MICHAEL

That's a fine way to greet the clergy.

LIEUTENANT

Show me your other hand.

Michael withdraws the bottle from under his coat.

MICHAEL

Would you be wantin' a tip?

The lieutenant gives him a contemptuous look as he holsters his gun.

MICHAEL

Just bein' cordial to our English
guests.

LIEUTENANT

Have you seen a wounded quest
soldier on a white horse in this
vicinity in, say, the last couple
hours, or so?

Michael thinks for a moment.

MICHAEL

Now that you mention it, a few
miles back me eyes did behold a man
on such a steed out-runnin' the
wind, headed north. Thought it odd.
Nobody else around. Could have been
your soldier. Too far off to tell.

The lieutenant stares blankly at Michael as he considers
whether or not to trust the priest's observation. Then:

LIEUTENANT

(gestures to the squad)
At full gallop!

Michael looks after them as they gallop off.

ANDY

(at the soldiers)
Wankers.
(gives Michael a look)
Did you lay eyes on such a man,
Father, if you don't mind me
askin'?

MICHAEL

I have to confess, me eyes are weak
and have been known to deceive me.

ANDY

Good on ya, Father! You might have
saved the poor bugger's life...
Well, this is me croft.

He WHISTLES to Prince. The dog turns the sheep into the open
gate in the hedge. Michael looks off. It's decision time.

MICHAEL

(to Andy)
Might you direct me to St.
Brendan's, then?

EXT. ESTATE LAND - DAY

Michael clomping along on his horse. He reins in, gazes off.

WHAT HE SEES: A panoramic view of a huge estate: A central manse, a barn, outbuildings, and corrals surrounded by rich fields of rye, oats; pastures with grazing cows, sheep, etc.

He takes a long teetering drink; then pats his horse's neck.

MICHAEL

(slurring; to horse)

What do you think, me friend? HIC!
I'll betcha a bag of oats it's a
thievin' English Protestant what
resides there. HIC!

He spits in disgust, pitches the empty bottle, and rides off.

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY - APPROACHING

The horse clomps languidly along the road. Michael's head nods with every clomp as he snoozes in the saddle.

In the distance, rows of two-story, stone shops, residences line both sides of a cobbled street. A church steeple dominates. The land approaching it is a patchwork quilt of tiny crofts, each with its own thatched roof cottage.

EXT. ROSE'S LODGING HOUSE - DAY

In front of the stone lodge two ragged kids, CLEMMY (14), and SARA (12), watch LORCAN (30s)--a repossessing agent--and the WIDOW ROSE (50s) in a tug-o-war with a COW--he, pulling on a tether leash; she, on the tail.

ROSE

It's me damn cow, you feckin'
bastard. Let go of her.

ON MICHAEL as he awakens with a start; blurry-eyed, confused.

LORCAN (O.S.)

It's the landlord's cow now, you
crazy cunt. Let go of her tail.

Lorcan comes around, rips her hand from the tail and throws her to the ground. He brandishes his club at her.

ROSE

I dare ya.

LORCAN

Grab that cow again and I'll split
your...

A boot slams into his face. He sprawls to the ground. Michael turns his horse sharply and teeters off his saddle. He slams to the ground onto his back.

GASPING for precious air, he tries to sit up.

Lorcan wipes his bloody mouth and marches over to Michael.

LORCAN

Papist fuck.

THWACK! He bats Michael in the head. Michael collapses, out.

Rose dashes over to Michael. Drops down beside him. Raises his bloody head. Glowers at Lorcan.

ROSE

You senseless brute. You struck
down a priest. Have you no respect
for anyone?

LORCAN

Not really. And I'll clobber him
again if he wakes up.

He spits blood and walks away, pulling the cow along.

ROSE

I'll be havin' me cow back.
(to Clem and Sara)
Come, children. Give us a hand.
Let's get him inside.

INT. ROSE'S LODGING HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Michael lies unconscious in bed under a blanket. The crown of his head is wrapped in a white blood-stained head wrap.

KITCHEN

Rose stands over a washbasin. She unravels the bloody "bandage" shirt, shakes it out and holds it out in front of her. She notes the Corporal patch on the sleeve.

BEDROOM

Rose walks in, takes a moment to observe Michael sleeping. She goes over to his satchel hanging from a hook on the wall.

She raises the flap and pulls out the corded folder. Opens it. Finds the letter from the Bishop. Reads it.

ROSE

Hmm.

She puts it away, turns, and stares suspiciously at Michael.

INT. BRITISH GARRISON - DAY

Sergeant Beale stands subdued before his stormy-faced commander, CAPTAIN HOLT (60).

HOLT

...You shot him in the back and he got away? How's that possible on the open moors?

SERGEANT BEALE

He has a very fast horse, Captain.

Holt shoots him an exasperated look.

HOLT

Alright, then...We'll divide up into squads and enlist the local constabulary. We're going to knock on every bloody door in the county. He's wounded and won't get far without help.

(looks out window)

Assuming he's smart, he'll change clothes as soon as he can and blend in with the papists, which makes our job harder, but not impossible. If he's here, I'll find him.

(turns to Beale)

Get my horse ready.

SERGEANT BEALE

Yes, Sir.

Beale leaves.

EXT. ROSE'S COWSHED - DAY

PHILLIP (35), a somewhat-effeminate Irish constable, strokes Michael's horse as he looks it over.

EXT. ROSE'S LODGING HOUSE - DAY

Phillip KNOCKS on the front door. After a moment, Rose opens it. A clay smoking pipe juts from the corner of her mouth.

PHILLIP
May I come in, Rose?

ROSE
Stay. I'm comin' out. Need some
fresh air.

She closes the door behind her.

ROSE
So, you got word Daisy was stolen
from me last evenin', did you?

PHILLIP
Again?

Rose strikes a match. Lights her pipe.

ROSE
This time the wanker knocked me to
the ground and threatened to kill
me, he did. Are you gonna arrest
him this time and get me cow back?

PHILLIP
We've been through this before,
Rose. Master Hodgkin has a legal
claim to your cow in lieu of rents
you owe him. It's the law.

ROSE
Bollocks! The law favors the
absentee land owner. This landlord
raises the rents on a whim to cover
his gamblin' debts, and you call
that lawful? It's a mockery is what
it is. Daisy's me only cow.

PHILLIP
He could evict you, you know, and
there is nothin' I could do about
it, except be compelled to help.

Rose air-jabs the stem of her pipe at him.

ROSE
You should be ashamed of yourself,
an Irishman, doin' the English
biddin'.

PHILLIP
If it wasn't me, it would be
somebody else...It pays the rent.

Rose gives him the stink eye.

PHILLIP

I'm here on another matter, Rose. I got an urgent message from District Militia Headquarters that an escaped murderer is in the area. He was shot in the back and may be lookin' for help. He is considered desperate and dangerous. We're checkin' every house in the county.

(beat)

Um, I noticed a horse out back in the shed. Do you have a guest?

ROSE

I do.

PHILLIP

May I see him?

Rose puffs on her pipe.

ROSE

The gentleman is bone weary from his travels and wishes not to be disturbed. I respect his wishes.

Phillip squints skeptically.

PHILLIP

You okay?

ROSE

I'm grand. Thanks for the heads-up. Now go about your business. I got work to do.

PHILLIP

You sure?

(Rose looks exasperated)

Right, then. In the meantime, eyes open.

ROSE

I got me gun. I kin care for meself. And you kin tell Hodgkin's hired man I'll use it next time.

PHILLIP

Careful, Rose...Good day, then.

Rose lights her pipe as she watches Phillip leave. After a moment, she turns and goes inside.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Rose closes the door behind her. SEES Michael standing in the bedroom doorway in her husband's nightshirt scratching his bandaged head, looking slightly bewildered.

ROSE

Ah! So we're up, are we? How are you feelin'?...You look lost. Come. Sit. I'll fetch you a cuppa cha.

She goes to the stove. Michael hesitates, then gimps over to the table, pulls out a chair and grimaces as he sits. Rose pours hot tea into two cups.

ROSE

Know why you're here, Father?

MICHAEL

Father?

(then remembers)

Oh. Yes...Ah, no...not sure. My memory is a wee foggy at the moment. Have I been here long?

ROSE

Since last evenin'.

MICHAEL

Last evenin', eh?

ROSE

I'm Rose O'Conner. You're in me lodgin' house. Do you remember you're name?

MICHAEL

Michael...Ah, Father Michael Murphy. What happened to me?

Rose brings the tea cups over to the table, sets one in front of Michael, then sits across from him. She strikes a match, lights her pipe, blows out a cloud of smoke.

ROSE

Last evenin', you got clubbed by a thief who stole me cow. Recall that?

Michael feels the bump on his head.

MICHAEL

Vaguely. I remember fallin' and tryin' to catch my breath.

He raises a shaky teacup to his lips and blows on it.

MICHAEL

Who was that at the door, if I
might ask?

ROSE

Phillip, the local constable.

Michael takes a nervous gulp of tea.

MICHAEL

Ah, did he get your cow back?

Rose puffs on her pipe. A cagey twinkle in her eye.

ROSE

He stopped by to inform me the
militia is lookin' for an escaped
murderer, who they suspect might be
in the vicinity. He was shot in the
back escapin' gaol, he tells me.

(gives Michael a look)

What a coincidence that me clerical
guest has a similar backside wound.

Michael shrugs innocently.

MICHAEL

Hmm. Coincidences happen, I guess.

ROSE

They do. That's why I didn't allow
him in. I thought he might draw the
wrong conclusion--it bein' a
coincidence--and take you, a holy
servant of God--and me guest--into
custody.

They lock eyes as Rose casually relights her pipe.

MICHAEL

You did the right thing. One should
respect a guest's privacy. I
appreciate the uninterrupted rest.

(adjusts himself; winces)

Might you have somethin' a wee bit
stronger--for the pain?

Rose gets up and walks over to the cupboard. She pulls out an
unlabelled bottle of whiskey. Grabs a couple of glasses.
Returns to the table, plops them down, and sits.

ROSE

Guaranteed to rid your pain and
restore your memory. Made it
meself.

She pops the cork and pours whiskey into both glasses.
Michael grabs his up and tosses it down his throat.

ROSE

Have another.
(she pours)
So, who shot you?

He sips; savors it as he thinks.

MICHAEL

Can't say. I recall confusin' bits
and pieces, but can't put them
together yet, not knowin' if they
be real or not.

(indicates bottle)

I dare say, this is a brilliant
whiskey. Mind?

ROSE

I appreciate discernin' taste.
There's more where that come from.

Michael fills his glass with a steadier hand.

ROSE

You were lucky the bullet grazed
your arse, Father, and didn't hit
any vitals.

Michael feels the warm, relaxing effects of the whiskey.

MICHAEL

Luck of the Irish, you might say.
Thanks for patchin' me up, Rose.
I'm indebted to you.

He tips his glass to her and takes a sip.

ROSE

You owe me nothin'. You got the
bashin' meant for me. That's
payment enough.

(pours herself a drink)

I fetched water for you to shave
and wash. And, I washed your
clothes. They're on the line,
dryin'. I got other clothes you kin
wear for now, hangin' on the chair.

MICHAEL

I noticed. Thanks.

ROSE

You are welcome to stay here until you are right again, Father. I'll let Marie, the housekeeper over at the rectory, know you're here.

MICHAEL

That's kind of you Rose, but no need. I'll be movin' on from here.

ROSE

Perhaps you're still confused, Father. I took the liberty to look at your papers to find out who you were. They say you're the new priest here at Saint Brendan's.

Michael is speechless for a sec.

MICHAEL

Really?

ROSE

Go on. Have some more whiskey and keep workin' on that memory of yours while I make us tea. You must be hungry.

Michael regards her as she gets up and walks away.

INT. MO'S COTTAGE - NIGHT

It's a utilitarian one-room--just the essentials: Table, chairs, hearth, cabinet, bunk bed, sundry items.

MO MALLOY (60) lies in the lower bunk fingering rosary beads.

KATHLEEN O'SHAY (24) sits on the bed beside her. She places a damp cloth over Mo's forehead.

KATHLEEN

You still have a wee fever, Auntie.

Mo stares up at her niece's uncertain smile.

MO

Bless you, dear Kathleen. Won't be long before the maggots be feastin' on me and you can go on about your life as God planned.

KATHLEEN

Don't talk like that, Auntie, or
the Divil will have his way.

MO

Phoo. We all know The Sickness is a
death sentence for us.

(coughs)

The Lord will take me up soon.

Kathleen looks exasperated at her.

KATHLEEN

He'll take you soon enough with
that attitude, Auntie.

MO

I look forward to seein' me
William, your mum and dad, little
Sean and Pauly and Alice. I kin see
them now waitin' for me to be freed
from this cursed clay.

A KNOCK at the door.

MO

(coughs)

Go on, then.

Kathleen glides over to the door. Opens it. It's Constable
Phillip. He doffs his hat. He's shyly fond of her.

PHILLIP

I'm not intrudin', am I?

KATHLEEN

No, no. Come in.

He enters. Looks past her to Mo, who's mumbling her rosary.

PHILLIP

She any better?

KATHLEEN

She's bein' contrary, but there is
some improvement, despite lack of
proper medicine and her obstinate
wish to leave this earthy realm.

Mo has a HACKING FIT. Kathleen turns. Calls to her.

KATHLEEN

You all right, Auntie?

Mo waves her off. Kathleen turns back to Phillip.

KATHLEEN

I hate bein' gone durin' the day. I should be here...Want some cha?

PHILLIP

Wish I could do, but I've been ordered by the Queen's Militia to alert residents to an escaped, wounded soldier who they believe is in the vicinity and may seek succor from people he may know in the area.

KATHLEEN

Should I be worried?

He hesitates, there's more.

PHILLIP

He's from Moycullen--your home village.

KATHLEEN

Don't keep me in suspense, Phillip. Who is it?

PHILLIP

Michael Murphy.

Kathleen gasps.

PHILLIP

You know him, then?

KATHLEEN

Well, yes. We grew up together. What's he done?

PHILLIP

Don't know the details, just that that he murdered somebody and is considered dangerous. There's a countrywide search for him. My guess he killed somebody important.

KATHLEEN

Michael? A murderer? I don't believe it for one second. He's too gentle for such horrid behavior.

She turns aside in thought.

KATHLEEN

On the other hand, if he did do it,
he must have had a good, moral
reason. He's too clever to just...
murder.

PHILLIP

People change; sometimes for the
worse.

Kathleen sinks onto a chair.

KATHLEEN

Poor Michael. Hunted like a wounded
fox.

PHILLIP

Do you think he might look you up;
you know, bein' old friends-like?

KATHLEEN

It's been what...seven years? He
would have no clue of me
whereabouts.

(looks up, defiant)

And, if he did find me, I would
help him, I would.

Phillip is taken aback and hurt by that. Kathleen reacts.

KATHLEEN

You know, get his side of the
story, like...Promise me, if you
catch him, you will let me see him.

PHILLIP

Well, sure, but...

Mo goes into a COUGHING FIT.

KATHLEEN

I'd better tend to her.

PHILLIP

And I need to finish me rounds.
'Nite then.

He leaves. Kathleen goes over and raises Mo upright in the
bed. Mo's COUGHING FIT subsides.

MO

I'm ready to meet me Maker.

Kathleen SHUSHES her. Her mind elsewhere.

INT. ROSE'S LODGING HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Rose sits at the table, a whiskey bottle and two empty glasses set before her, smoking her pipe. She appraises Michael posing in the bedroom doorway. He's clean-shaven and wears a white shirt and brown slacks and shoes.

ROSE

Look at you without that fuzz on your map. Me husband's clothes fits you well. Come. Sit. Time for a heart to heart.

Michael gimps over, eyes her as he sits, wondering.

ROSE

I have something to show you.

Rose lifts the bloodstained military shirt from her lap and spreads it out on the table.

He stares at it. Rose gathers it up and examines it.

ROSE

You know, I could use some new teat rags. Me others are gettin' old and worn. Besides, you won't be needin' it if you're gonna masquerade as a priest. Do you mind?

Michael sits stunned for a sec; *he's found out.*

MICHAEL

Oh, no, no, no. Please. Take it.

ROSE

(puts the shirt aside)
So, now the laundry's aired, did you murder somebody?

MICHAEL

Depends. They have their version and I have mine. The only man who can vouch for me is dead...If you suspected me, why didn't you turn me over to the constable?

ROSE

I don't trust the damned English,
or their Irish lackeys. Five year
ago, me husband, who was a good
Englishman, went to Dublin to argue
for relief from the Catholic Penal
Laws and disappeared into thin air.

She tops their drinks.

ROSE

He had enemies in the British
government who considered him a
traitor for wantin' to give tenants
rights. One day I'll find the truth
of what happened to him.

MICHAEL

A rare Englishman, indeed.

ROSE

He loved Ireland. He was the
landlord here when we married.
After he disappeared, I continued
to run the place, but the absentee
owner in London thought it best to
replace me with the current
landlord and I was forced to live
as a tenant.

(lights her pipe)

Until me husband is officially
declared dead, his will is
unenforceable. So, here I be,
nearly destitute, waitin'.

(pauses; sips)

Do you have family nearby?

MICHAEL

I have a brother in Moycullen.

ROSE

They'll certainly be keepin' an eye
on him for your return...
So, how is it you come by the
priest garb?

MICHAEL

I took them from a dead priest I
found off the road. Evidently, he
was killed when he fell from his
horse...As luck would have it, he
had papers from the Bishop. And his
name was the same as mine.

ROSE

You must have a guardian angel
lookin' out for you.

MICHAEL

Luck, I reckon. As a priest with
papers to prove his identity, I can
move about and emigrate to North
America without raisin' eyebrows.

ROSE

You might want to think on that.
Those papers only put you here--at
St. Brendan's, not as a missionary.

She pulls her shotgun off her lap from under the table. Gets
up and puts it by the hearth. Michael's jaw drops.

ROSE

Hungry?

INT. CONSTABULARY HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Captain Holt and Phillip argue.

PHILLIP

...I have already been to every
home. He's apparently not here.

HOLT

Did you go inside every house?
(off Phillip's blush)
I didn't think so. You wouldn't
know if he was hiding inside with a
gun to their heads, would you? So,
here's what we're going to do:
We're going to sweep the entire
area again with my men. Every home.
No rock unturned. Put some fear
into them, by gawd. Let's go.

Phillip shakes his head in frustration and follows.

EXT. THE POWERS FAMILY COTTAGE - DAY

The father, SHAMUS (42), and three thin children--SEAN (16),
Clemmy, and Sara, sit at the kitchen table, empty bowls
before them. A table lantern lights grim faces.

The mother, MARY (33), ladles out a gruel of milk and
potatoes into the bowls and sits down. They bow their heads.

SHAMUS

Bless us O God as we sit together.
Bless the food we eat today. Bless
the hands that made the food. Bless
us O God...and bless the widow Rose
for her kind generosity. Amen.

They make the Sign of the Cross and start eating.

BANG, BANG, BANG! A POUNDING on the door.

Shamus gets up. Goes over and cracks the door open. Phillip
and Holt are standing there.

SHAMUS

Whadaya want?

HOLT

We are looking for an escaped
murderer. We think he may be in the
vicinity.

SHAMUS

He's not here.

Shamus goes to shut the door on them. Holt pushes it wide
open, forcing Shamus back. He scans the one-room home, seems
satisfied. He turns to Shamus, who's seething.

HOLT

Have you seen any strangers in the
area in the last day or so?

SHAMUS

Nope.

SARA

I saw a stranger.

Shamus gives Sara a stern look. She shrinks.

SHAMUS

Sara. Speak when you are spoken to.

HOLT

Let me remind you, sir, that
withholding critical information in
an investigation could make you an
accomplice to murder.

SHAMUS

This is the first I've heard of
this.

HOLT
 (to Sara)
 Was he wounded?

Sara remains chastised.

SHAMUS
 (to Sara)
 Go on then, Sara. Tell them.

Sara shyly nods her head.

HOLT
 Where did you see this man?

Sara looks up at Shamus. Shamus nods.

SARA
 Widow Rose's house.

HOLT
 Where does this widow live?

PHILLIP
 She runs an inn just down the road.
 I stopped by there earlier to alert
 her to the escaped murderer.

HOLT
 What about the guests?

PHILLIP
 (hesitates)
 She said she had one guest and he
 didn't want to be disturbed.

HOLT
 Didn't want to be disturbed? For
 all we know, she's a hostage, or,
 she's harboring a fugitive. One of
 the two. Why didn't you tell me
 this earlier?

Phillip glares at him, chagrined, pissed.

PHILLIP
 I believed her.

HOLT
 Believed her? We don't believe
 anybody. Remember that.
 (turns to Sara)
 Except you, young lady. You've been
 very helpful.

Holt turns to leave.

HOLT
 (to Shamus)
 We'll be off then.

Shamus' POV as he stares contemptuously after them.

HOLT
 (to Phillip)
 Let's get the men together.

They mount their horses and race off.

END POV as Shamus closes the door. He turns to Sara.

SHAMUS
 What did the stranger look like?

SARA
 He was a priest. A man hit him with
 a stick.

SHAMUS
 Is that what you meant by his bein'
 wounded?

SARA
 Uh-huh.

SHAMUS
 (scratches her head)
 You did good, Sara. Sorry I was
 short with you.
 (to Sean)
 Sean, go warn the widow.

Sean runs out.

EXT. ROSE'S LODGING HOUSE - BACKDOOR - DAY

Sean RAPS on the back door. Rose opens it.

SEAN
 The police are comin'.

INT./EXT. ROSE'S LODGING HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Michael splits a window curtain; peeks out.

WHAT HE SEES: A cavalry squad, led by Holt and Phillip,
 gallops up to the inn and surrounds it.

Michael turns to Rose with an anxious look on his face.

MICHAEL

Shite!

EXT. ROSE'S LODGING HOUSE - DAY

Holt's men get in position behind him and draw their guns as he POUNDS on the door with his fist.

HOLT

Open up, in the name of the Queen!

INT. ROSE'S LODGING HOUSE - DAY

Rose casually grabs her shotgun. Strolls over to the door.

SHARP, METALIC POUNDING on the door.

HOLT (O.S.)

Open up, or we'll break the door down.

ROSE

I'm comin'. Hold your damn horses.

EXT. ROSE'S LODGING HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Holt readies to pound with his pistol butt when the door swings open and Rose rams the shotgun barrel into his gut. She forces him back as she closes the door behind her.

ROSE

(to the soldiers)

Holster your guns or I'll blow a hole in him I kin sight through.

Holt seethes. He knows he will certainly be blown away even if he does shoot her.

HOLT

(to his entourage)

Put 'em away.

He and the others holster their weapons.

ROSE

Why the ruckus? Did ya find me cow?

HOLT

What?

PHILLIP

She lost her cow earlier.

ROSE
It was stolen.

PHILLIP
We're here on that other matter I
told you about, Rose.

HOLT
Ma'am, we have reason to believe
you may have a fugitive in your
inn. Put the gun down and step
aside, or you'll be charged with
obstruction.

ROSE
You can't just barge in here
without a warrant.

HOLT
We don't need a warrant if we
suspect a fugitive is inside, which
we do.

ROSE
If I did have such a guest, do you
think I would be standin' here
jammin' a loaded shotgun into your
bowels? Hmm?

She nudges him with the barrel. Holt glares at her,
begrudgingly seeing her point, but duty prevails.

HOLT
We must see for ourselves to
eliminate suspects.

Rose demurs for a moment.

ROSE
Alright, then. Ask me nicely like
and I'll introduce you to him.

Holt's bulldog face glowers, can hardly say the words:

HOLT
May. We. Please. Come. In.

ROSE
That's better. Now, keep your guns
on your hips. Understand?

No answer. She pokes him with the shotgun barrel.

ROSE
Understand?

Holt nods rigidly.

ROSE
Follow me, then. Please watch your
language as me guest is a man of
the cloth.

She lowers her shotgun. Slowly opens the door.

INT. ROSE'S LODGING HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Holt, Phillip, and Sergeant Beale crowd in. They freeze at
what they see. Rose stands the shotgun by the hearth.

ROSE
This is me guest--Father Michael.

Michael rises up from the table. He's dressed in a priest's
cassock. His hair is slicked back and wire-rimmed glasses
rest on his nose, presenting a studious, clueless demeanor.

MICHAEL
Gentlemen. Are you in need of my
services?

Holt is befuddled for a moment.

HOLT
Some identification, please.

MICHAEL
Of course. Excuse me while I get my
papers from the bedroom.

Michael goes into the bedroom. Holt nods at Beale, then
glances at Rose snarling at him as she lights her pipe.

Sergeant Beale follows and observes from the open bedroom
door. He moves aside as Michael reenters with the letter.
Michael hands it to Holt, who snatches it away and reads.

ON LETTER: [The Bishop's letterhead over text introducing
"Michael Murphy" as St. Brendan's new pastor....]

MICHAEL
I'm the new priest here.

Holt looks up. Scrutinizes Michael. He notes the whiskey
bottle and glasses on the table.

HOLT

Michael Murphy, is it? Funny, we are looking for a murdering sot with the same name, about your age.

Michael CHUCKLES with feigned confidence.

MICHAEL

A mere coincidence, I assure you. It's a common name in these parts.

HOLT

Where did you get that wound on your head?

MICHAEL

I was clubbed by a sinner, I'm told.

ROSE

The good Father here was knocked senseless tryin' to stop a thief from stealin' me cow. I've been mendin' him. He saved me life.

HOLT

(to Michael)

Let's have a look at you. Unbutton your dress and shirt, and drop them to your waist. You can leave the collar on.

MICHAEL

Is this necessary, or appropriate?

HOLT

It is if I say it is. Do it.

Michael unbuttons the cassock and shirt down to the waist.

ROSE

(to Holt)

You've a lot of nerve bargin' into me home and forcin' a guest, a humble priest, for chrissakes, to strip in front of us like this. It's sacrilegious, is what it is.

HOLT

(to Michael)

Turn around then.

(to Rose)

Please keep your gob shut until asked.

She blows smoke at his face. He takes it.

Michael shrugs the clothes off his shoulders. Let's them fall. He catches them just above his wounded hip.

HOLT

Turn around. Let's see your back.

Michael hesitates: *Does the bandage show on my back?*

HOLT

Go on.

Rose faintly nods and winks. Michael slowly turns around, exposing a clear back as he does so. Holt deflates: *Shit!*

HOLT

Alright. You can button up now.

Michael shrugs on his shirt and cassock and buttons up.

HOLT

(trying to save face)

Understand that we must check all strangers. We are pursuing a desperate man. Desperate men do desperate things when running from the noose--they kill people that get in their way.

MICHAEL

Then I'll say a Mass that you arrest the right man. How's that?

They lock eyes as Michael buttons up.

HOLT

You do that.

PHILLIP

(to Michael)

Does the name Kathleen O'Shay mean anythin' to you?

Michael pauses buttoning, forces a nonchalant face.

MICHAEL

No...I don't think so. Should it?

Phillip studies him for a beat as Michael resumes buttoning.

PHILLIP

Just curious.

Holt gives Phillip a look, then turns to Rose.

HOLT
I apologise, ma'am, for the
intrusion on your privacy.

ROSE
Next time, keep your own gob shut
and take me word for it.

HOLT
(to his men)
Let's go.

EXT. ROSE'S LODGING HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Phillip and Holt stroll to their horses.

HOLT
I really hate that woman...
Who's this Kathleen O'Shay?

PHILLIP
Somebody our killer once knew.

HOLT
And how do you know this?

PHILLIP
She's a lass I'm sweet on. They
grew up together. I questioned her.
She hasn't seen him in years.

Holt climbs onto his horse, gets an idea.

HOLT
Maybe our murderer wasn't shot
after all. Take me to this
Kathleen.

Phillip gets a dreaded look on his face.

INT. ROSE'S LODGING HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Michael and Rose watch them leave from the open doorway.

ROSE
They kin all go to Hell and suckle
the Divil's horn.
(turns to Michael)
This calls for a totty. Whadaya
say, Father?

MICHAEL

A totty would be wonderfully in order, Rose.

(stretches his neck)

I need to get out of this noose.

He removes his Roman collar as they step back inside.

EXT. HODGKIN'S MANSE - DAY

Phillip reluctantly RAPS on the front door, Holt beside him. It opens. It's Kathleen, wearing a stained frontal apron.

KATHLEEN

Phillip?

She glances suspiciously at Holt.

KATHLEEN

Master Hodgkin's not here at the moment.

HOLT

Actually, we've come to see you.

KATHLEEN

Me?

HOLT

We need you to come with us to help us identify a possible fugitive.

Kathleen's heart jumps. It's about Michael, she's sure of it. She fires a dirty look at Phillip: *How dare you get me involved!* Phillip hangs his head.

KATHLEEN

I don't know any fugitives.

HOLT

You might know this one. You grew up with him in Moycullen. Michael Murphy?...That ring a bell?...Just a minute of your time.

KATHLEEN

And if I identify him, then what?

HOLT

He'll be brought back to gaol and you can go back to work.

KATHLEEN

That's comfortin' to know. What if I don't want to?

HOLT

Then you will be detained for obstructing our investigation.

KATHLEEN

I'll have to ask me mistress.

REBECCA (25) comes up beside Kathleen.

REBECCA

(to Holt)

Ask me what?

HOLT

Your charwoman here would like your permission to come with us and help us identify somebody she might know.

Kathleen bristles at Holt's characterisation of her.

KATHLEEN

I said no such thing.

REBECCA

Of course she can go.

(indirect to Kathleen)

I'll have to dock her wages for her time away, is all.

Kathleen glares at her; Rebecca smirks back.

KATHLEEN

(to Holt)

Let's get it over with, then.

INT./EXT. ROSE'S LODGING HOUSE - DAY

Michael, back in civilian clothes, sits at the table across from Rose. He picks up his filled whiskey glass.

MICHAEL

Slainte.

ROSE

(clicking glasses)

Slainte. To your new life.

MICHAEL

In North America.

They toss their drinks back. Michael glances at her as he refills the glasses. She quietly observes him.

MICHAEL

What?

ROSE

Forget North America, for now. You need to move into the rectory and maintain your cover before you lose it. Besides, the parishioners are expectin' you.

MICHAEL

I don't even believe in God, for chrissakes. This priest garb is my one-way ticket to freedom.

ROSE

You will only confirm the captain's suspicion, if you leave. And there will be no more hidin' in plain sight. Your face is now known. You're safer here than anywhere right now. You can't always depend on Irish luck.

A tiny KNOCK at the door. Rose gets up, peeks through the window curtains.

ROSE

It's little Clemmy.

She steps over to the door and opens it.

CLEMMY

Sorry, Rose. They made me do it.

Holt sidesteps into the doorway. Clemmy runs off.

ROSE

You again?

HOLT

(snarky)

May I come in, please?

Rose swings the door to close it. Holt's boot stops it. He forces it open and steps in. Michael throws on his glasses and stands with a little effort, trying not to wince.

ROSE

Get out of my home.

HOLT
 This will only take a minute. I
 promise you.
 (calls back)
 Bring her here.

With Phillip behind her, Kathleen enters the doorway, chokes
 back a gasp and freezes, stone-faced.

Under Holt's suspicious glare, Michael quickly modifies the
 stunned look on his face to one of confusion.

HOLT
 (to Kathleen)
 Do you recognise him?...Take a good
 look, now.

Michael stands like a un-blindfolded man awaiting the bullet.

KATHLEEN
 No. Are you done with me?

Holt glances at Phillip, who makes a face and shrugs. Michael
 breathes a sigh of relief.

HOLT
 Are you sure? Lying to law
 enforcement is a crime that will
 get you a long time behind bars.

KATHLEEN
 I'm sure. May I go now?

HOLT
 (frustrated)
 You can go.

She turns and brushes past Phillip.

PHILLIP
 Kathleen, I...

She marches off.

Holt snarls into Michael's face.

HOLT
 I will be seeing you at Mass on
 Sunday, then, Father. How's that?

MICHAEL
 Are you converted?

Holt glares at him for a second, then turns to Rose.

HOLT
I won't be disturbing you again.

ROSE
Out with you! Shoo!

Holt turns and quickly leaves. Rose slams the door after him and turns to a stunned Michael, who slowly sits down.

ROSE
A ghost from the past?

MICHAEL
How could they have known? It's been years.

ROSE
My guess: Phillip. He's been courtin' her since she arrived here a few months back to care for her sick auntie.

MICHAEL
She's here. It must be fate.

ROSE
Fate or not, if you value your freedom, stay away from her.

MICHAEL
What?

ROSE
You two weren't that convincin' to me, and I doubt you were to the captain...Want him off your back? Prove to him you're a priest. Say Mass. He threw down the gauntlet. It's up to you to pick it up.

Michael slumps in his chair; winces.

MICHAEL
I left the Church ten years ago and have never been back. I wouldn't know how to perform a Mass if you prodded me with a pitchfork.

ROSE
You were an altar boy, weren't you? Sure you were. Every good Catholic boy was. So you're familiar with the Latin ritual.

MICHAEL

I remember two words: kyrie
eleison. I can't fool a
congregation with two words.

ROSE

Don't worry. Just read the printed
words in the altar prayer book,
like all priests do. They won't
suspect a thing.

Michael miserably reflects on his dilemma. Rose TAPS the
ashes out of the pipe on the table edge.

ROSE

Simply pretend you have the faith.
That's what you're good at, ain't
it--pretendin'? And what's faith
but a belief in somethin' unproven
and pretendin' it's true, eh?

Michael raises an eyebrow on that point. Rose stands.

ROSE

Well, I'm done preachin'. Time for
chores. You go to the rectory first
thing in the mornin', if you're
stayin'. I'll have warm milk and
praties to tuck into your tummy
before you leave.

Michael looks up in gloomy resignation.

MICHAEL

Milk? You have another cow?

ROSE

Get some rest.

EXT - WOODS - NIGHT

Moonlit fog. The yellow smudge from a lantern's light bobs
its way toward us. It's Rose, also carrying her shotgun.

EXT. HODGKIN'S BARN - NIGHT

Rose sidles along the side of the barn. A cow LOWS within.

She rounds the corner to the main door, quietly draws it
open, peeks in, then goes in.

INT. HODGKIN'S BARN - CONTINUOUS

A HALF-DOZEN MILK COWS chewing their cuds.

Rose steps in amongst them with her lantern held out. She spots her cow, steps over to it.

ROSE

Let's get you home, Daisy.

She slides a looped lead over the cow's head.

EXT. HODGKIN'S BARN - CONTINUOUS

Rose peeks out, then swings the door wide open and leads Daisy out. She sets the lantern down and walks the huge door back to close it, revealing a DARK FIGURE behind it.

The figure runs at her back, grabs her in a bear hug. It's MANDY (30), the landlord's dimwitted son.

MANDY

Gotcha!

Rose struggles to get both hands on the gun barrel, then moves her head aside and rams the shotgun butt over her shoulder into the Mandy's triumphant face. Mandy falls away SCREAMING, cupping his face.

MANDY

Ooh! Jesus! You crazy cunt! You broke my nose. I'll kill you.

ROSE

Try it and I'll use the other end of me gun. Daisy belongs to me.

She grabs the lantern and hurriedly leads the cow away.

EXT. MANSE VERANDA - NIGHT

Mandy runs up to it, his lower face smudged in blood.

MANDY

Da! Da!

CECIL HODGKIN (60) opens the front door and steps onto the veranda holding a lantern out to see.

CECIL

Mandy? What happened to you?

MANDY

The widow attacked me and took the cow again. Hurry, Da. Get Lorcan. We can catch her and get it back.

CECIL

That damn cow is getting to be more trouble than she's worth.

MANDY

Aren't you going after her?

CECIL

What good is it going to do tonight? We know who stole it. We'll get it back tomorrow.

(notes Mandy's nose)

Come in and get yourself cleaned up. Have Rebecca look at your nose.

He turns, goes back in. A disappointed Mandy follows.

MANDY

She never hit me like that before.

INT. MANSE - CONTINUOUS

The mid-19th century decor is rich and tasteful. A fire burns in the fireplace. Fronting it are two stuffed settees and high-back chairs, separated by a tea table.

Rebecca and a guest, JONATHAN GRANGER (40), sit on a settee drinking wine. Lorcan sits slumped in a chair with a whiskey.

Cecil and Mandy enter; Mandy pinching his nose to staunch blood dripping onto his shirt. Rebecca stares at Mandy.

REBECCA

What happened to you?

MANDY

(high nasal pitch)

None of your bloody business.

CECIL

The widow took the cow again.

LORCAN

She's got nerve, that one.

REBECCA

(to Mandy)

The widow did that to you?

MANDY

She hit me in the face with her shotgun and threatened to shoot me the next time.

REBECCA

(turns to Cecil)

That woman is daft, father. She's going to kill somebody, someday, over that stupid cow. How many times are you going to let her get away with this?

Cecil pours himself a drink at the side table by the wall. Mandy leaves the scene pinching his bleeding nose.

CECIL

I've got more important matters to think about. Lorcan, you're the land agent. You take care of it.

LORCAN

Don't worry, I will. This time there'll be no stealin' it back.

CECIL

(irritated; to Lorcan)

I don't like what you're implying.

REBECCA

But, father, it's not hers anymore. We have a lien on her property for back rents and are entitled to it.

Cecil strolls to a chair and sits. He gazes at the fire.

CECIL

Her potato crop is about ready to harvest. We'll take a bigger share of that.

REBECCA

What if it gets blighted? Then what? You're too soft on her, father.

GRANGER

She's right, Cecil. I evicted all my tenants, paying and non-paying. Opened up more land for crops. No more head taxes. I remember when the widow and her husband were landlords here. They allowed the tenants to pay what they could and didn't force the issue. Anyway, you know the rest of the story. You don't want that to be your story.

REBECCA

Why pay taxes on lazy papists squatting on our land? It doesn't make sense, father, when we can easily be free of them and open up more land like Jonathan here did.

CECIL

They've been on this land for generations. I just can't kick them out with no place to go, even if they are papists.

GRANGER

Cecil, do you hear yourself?

Cecil glares at him.

GRANGER

The owner expects his estate land to generate money. If you don't satisfy his needs, he will find somebody else to manage this place for him and you'll lose your landlord status--like the widow.

REBECCA

We can never let that happen. Tell me I'm right, father?

Cecil tosses his drink back and sets the empty glass on the table as he gets up.

CECIL

Alright, enough. We're not going to lose this place. I'm going to bed.

He walks away, then stops and turns to face Lorcan.

CECIL

On second thought, Lorcan, I'll handle the widow.

He leaves. Lorcan glares defiantly after him and snorts. Rebecca shakes her head in frustration.

GRANGER

(to Rebecca)

Did you know he's betting the horses again?

REBECCA

What? Since when?

GRANGER

I've seen him at the track lately.

REBECCA

The fool. He's gambling away my future security.

INT. MO'S COTTAGE - NIGHT

Kathleen tucks the blanket around her sleeping auntie.

A LIGHT RAP at the door. Kathleen goes over and opens it. Phillip stands there, sheepish. She gives him a stern look, like a nun would cast to a naughty boy.

PHILLIP

I want to apologize for gettin' you involved earlier. I had mentioned to the captain that you once knew a Michael Murphy when you were kids. He insisted you come and identify him. I had no choice. Can you forgive me?

KATHLEEN

(thinks about it)
Come in, then.

Phillip enters, closes the door. Kathleen turns to him.

KATHLEEN

I don't appreciate bein' dragged from work against me will to partake in police shenanigans. It's hard enough dealin' with me wicked mistress as it is.

(beat; teasing)

I don't know if I can forgive you.

PHILLIP

The captain wanted to make sure he's not the man we're lookin' for. Surely, you can see that.

KATHLEEN

So, he's not a suspect anymore?

PHILLIP

The Captain still has his doubts.

KATHLEEN

What about you? Do you believe me?

The question stuns him for a long second.

PHILLIP
I believe you.

KATHLEEN
Then I suppose I can forgive
you,...this time.

Phillip grabs hold of both her hands. Kneels down on one
knee. Looks up into her eyes.

KATHLEEN
Phillip. What are you doing?

He raises a finger to her lips. Reaches into his breast
pocket and pulls out a gold ring. He presents it to her.

PHILLIP
I would never intentionally hurt
you, Kathleen. You are everything
I've ever wanted: beauty, brains,
talent, even your contrariness I
find endearin'. And I could listen
to you play your fiddle all night
long. I would be the happiest man
in Ireland if you would become my
wife.

He starts to put it on her finger. She withdraws her hand and
stands him up with both hands. He's suddenly confused.

KATHLEEN
I'm very flattered, Phillip. I had
no idea. This is so...sudden-
like...and unexpected. I'm just...

PHILLIP
Just say, Yes.

Kathleen gazes into his pleading eyes for a long beat.

KATHLEEN
I can't, Phillip.

Phillip sags with embarrassed disappointment.

PHILLIP
I'm sorry. I-I thought you felt the
same way I did.

KATHLEEN
I didn't mean to mislead you,
Phillip. I'm very fond of you. It's
not you. It's me. I like me
independence.

She looks deep into his eyes searching for understanding.

KATHLEEN

Besides, you know little about me,
really. You would end up regrettin'
your haste.

PHILLIP

Never.

KATHLEEN

Marriage is so...so life changin',
and I'm not ready for that kind of
change right now. I hope you can
understand.

PHILLIP

I respect your honesty, Kathleen,
and I apologize for being hasty. I
can be regretfully impulsive at
times...Can I hope, at least?

KATHLEEN

Give me time, okay?

Phillip's eyes glimmer with hope.

PHILLIP

I'll be waitin'.

EXT. RECTORY STABLE - DAY

Michael removes the saddle bags and satchel from his horse.
Takes a deep breath. Heads out with them.

EXT. RECTORY - DAY

Michael stands before it, feeling small, mustering the nerve
to enter. A small GROUP OF PEOPLE approach him.

CLIVE O'RORK (60s), displaying a mischievous smirk and a
twinkle in his eyes, steps from them and doffs his hat.

CLIVE

Would you be the new priest
replacin' the late Father Joseph,
God rest his soul?

MICHAEL

I am. Michael Murphy. You can call
me Father Michael, if you wish.

CLIVE

Welcome to the St. Brendan's,
Father Michael. Me name's Clive
O'Rork.

(indicating)

And these are some of your faithful
sinners.

They shake hands. The eager group reacts.

GROUP

Father...Welcome, Father
Michael...[Ad lib]

CLIVE

I set the altar for Father Joseph
on Sundays. Would you be needin' me
to do the same for you, Father
Michael?

MICHAEL

Yes. Please do. Your services would
be most welcome.

CLIVE

Bless you, Father. I won't let you
down. Would you be hearin'
confessions soon then, Father?

MICHAEL

Hadn't given it much thought.
(expectant faces want an
answer)
When would you like me to hear
them?

CLIVE

Father Joseph heard confessions on
Saturday mornin's.

MICHAEL

I see. I'll consider that. I need
time to settle in, first.

CLIVE

Pardon me, Father, but there's us
who might like to unload our burden
of sins before Mass on Sunday, if
you get me meanin'. It's been a
dreadful long time.

Michael considers this.

MICHAEL

Then Saturday it is.

Nodding, murmuring approval from the small gathering.

CLIVE

Bless you, Father. Kin I be of assistance with your bags there?

MICHAEL

No, thank you. I can manage.

CLIVE

Very good, then. God be with you, Father.

Micheal makes for the front door of the rectory.

INT. RECTORY - DAY

Michael closes the door behind him. Looks around. A Cross of the crucified Christ hangs on the wall. A candle sconce. A credenza with a vase of fresh flowers on it. A hat-tree.

A clock TICK-TOCKS somewhere in the living room, straight ahead. It's tomb quiet otherwise. Then...

The approaching sound of CLACKING HEELS. The rosy-cheeked housekeeper, MARIE O'KEEFE (60), enters from the living room wiping her hands on her apron. She thrusts her arm straight out and beams up at him.

They shake hands.

MARIE

You must be Father Murphy. I'm Marie O'Keefe, your housekeeper. Heard you fell from your horse helpin' the widow out of a fix.

MICHAEL

Word gets around.

MARIE

Aye, but folks keep hush about private matters, mind you, until it's brought up amongst them, of course. Please, follow me, I'll show you to your room.

BEDROOM

Marie leads him in. She goes to the window, opens it. Breathes in the fresh air.

MARIE

Been closed since the passin' of
Father Joseph, God rest his soul.

She walks over to the bed and fluffs up the pillows.

MARIE

There you be. Put your bags down,
Father. I'll show you your office.

Michael sets his bags on the bed. Follows her out.

RECTORY STUDY

They enter a comfortable office: Books on holy subjects fill the bookcases. A large black safe. Religious pictures on the wall. Desk. Chair. Area rug. Sofa.

MARIE

I 'spect you'll be spendin' most of
your time here, like Father Joseph
did...The church funds are kept in
the safe there.

(indicates safe))

Father Joseph was very strict about
tithin'. We never go hungry here,
Father. And here...

She opens a desk drawer. Lifts out a ledger book.

MARIE

...is the church ledger. The
combination to the safe is
scratched into the drawer under the
ledger here.

She drops the ledger back in and slides the drawer closed.

MARIE

Me room is just down the hall, if
you need me for anythin'. Most of
the time I'm putterin' around the
rectory or out buyin' food, which
reminds me: Breakfast is at eight
in the mornin', dinner at noon, tea
at four, and supper at seven. Of
course, you kin eat whenever you
wish. Just let me know ahead of
time. Father Joseph often skipped
supper. Each his own, I say. I'm
here to serve you. Let me know if
you have a favorite food dish.
Let's see, anythin' else...

She looks around.

MARIE

Oh, I'll set out clean Mass clothes
for you on Saturday evenin's.

Her cherub face smiles up at him.

MARIE

Any questions, Father? I do run on
at times.

MICHAEL

Well, yes. I'm relatively new to
the priesthood, so I'm a bit rusty
on conductin' special Masses.

MARIE

Not to worry, Father. It's all in
the book Father reads from on the
altar. He has a copy around here
somewhere. Let's see now....

She pulls out a book from the bookcase; plops it on the desk.

MARIE

There you be, Father. Everythin'
you need to know about celebratin'
the sacraments. Anythin' else?

MICHAEL

No, I don't think so. Thank you,
Marie.

MARIE

It's gonna be interestin' havin' a
priest around here again. I'll
leave you to it, then.

She leaves. Michael looks around bewildered.

INT. RECTORY STUDY - NIGHT

Michael, book in hand, recites aloud as he paces the room.

MICHAEL

(weak chants)

In principio erat Verbum, et Verbum
erat apud Deum...

(repeats; more robust)

In principio erat Verbum, et Verbum
erat apud Deum, et Deus erat
Verbum. Hoc erat in principio apud
Deum...

He snaps the book closed and flings it onto the desk; eases himself into the chair and scratches his head in frustration, then pours himself a glass of whiskey and tosses it down.

MICHAEL

Bloody hell. What the fuck am I
doin' here?

He pours another whiskey.

Suddenly, the emotive violin strains of "Pachelbel's Cannon in D" drift through the open window from far away.

Michael, captivated, gets up, walks to the window.

EXT. HILLTOP - SAME

Kathleen sways lithely, bowing her violin.

INT. RECTORY STUDY - CONTINUOUS

The tune ends. Michael stares longingly out the window.

MICHAEL

Kathleen.

He limps back to the desk, sits and pours another whiskey.

He reaches for his Shakespeare tome and casually flips it open. It opens to the page with the four-leaf clover. He lifts it out and stares at it as he sips on his whiskey.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

PARISIONERS scattered about church. Some in pews praying. A few stand before carved figurines of the Stations of the Cross displayed on the side walls of the church. They genuflect as they move on to the next station.

In the rear of the church, a confessional. A PENITENT exits. Clive O'Rork enters. Closes the door behind him.

Kathleen enters the church, goes to a pew, kneels in prayer.

INT. CONFESSIONAL BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

Michael sits with his head tilted toward the scrim window. He takes a tug from a whiskey bottle. He's been doing this all morning. He's feeling his oats.

CLIVE (O.S.)

(from behind the scrim)

Bless me Father, for I have sinned--
again. It's been four month since
me last confession.

(beat)

Um, I'm embarrassed-like to tell me
sin to a new priest, Father. Father
Joseph was used to it, but still
give me stiff penance, he did.

MICHAEL

(chuckling to himself;
flippant)

Do not be afraid, my child. There's
nothin' in the universe that God
does not know about which can only
be redundant in your tellin' of it
here. So spill your guts to Him.

INTERCUT: MICHAEL/CLIVE

CLIVE

Well, okay, then, Father. You see,
I've been playin' with meself--in
private-like, mind you. It says in
the bible that the Lord strikes men
dead for spillin' their own seed on
the ground. I fear God's short
temper, Father. His lightnin' bolt
ain't found me yet, so I be here
confessin' to it before it does.
Four month is stretchin' it for a
mortal sin. It would be such a
relief to be forgiven, Father.

Michael nearly chokes on a swig as he chuckles to himself.

CLIVE

Father? I haven't stumped ye, have
I?

MICHAEL

(recovering)

No, no, not at all...So happens the
Lord understands the sexual drive
of man and the temptations of the
flesh that go along with it and has
equipped man with ingenuity to
gratify those urges before he does
something to a colleen he would
regret or get himself hanged for.

Pleased with his profound narrative, he takes a sip.

MICHAEL

It's God's way of providin' relief
to sufferin' man. He created you
that way; so how can it be wrong?

CLIVE

Never thought of it that way.
Father Joseph, he never explained
it to me.

MICHAEL

As long as you don't act further on
those kinds of thoughts by
committin' rape or...

CLIVE

Oh, heavens, no! I would never do
such a thing.

MICHAEL

Then you haven't committed a mortal
sin. Venial, maybe.

CLIVE

Is that a fact, Father? I've been
livin' me whole life in constant
fear of bein' struck down by a
vengeful God and cast into the
Divil's hearth like dry kindlin'.
You're sayin' He's more a common
sense-like God, then?

MICHAEL

Like a wise uncle.

CLIVE

Father, you have opened me eyes
like a bairn new to the world--and
at me old age. Imagine that? Better
late than never, eh? Bless you,
Father, bless you...Ah, do I have
any penance then?

MICHAEL

Until you have done bad things to
another person or animal, you have
committed no sin in my...in God's
eyes.

CLIVE

But, Father, don't you think I should say some penance, you know, for appearance sake, like?

MICHAEL

Of course. Say some Hail Marys for the soul of Ireland.

CLIVE

That I kin do, Father.

EXT. CONFESSION BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

Clive exits, beaming. Kathleen enters, closes the door behind her.

INT. CONFESSION BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

Kathleen kneels.

INTERCUT: MICHAEL/KATHLEEN

Michael chuckles to himself and tips a drink. Spills some on his stole. *Shit!* He tipsily brushes it off with his hand.

He takes a deep breath and slides open the wood scrim cover.

KATHLEEN

Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been a terrible long time since me last confession... Yesterday, I broke the law and I need to talk to somebody. I would go to gaol for lyin', I would, if the truth be known.

Michael sits up, alert. *That voice!* He nervously adjusts his collar and LOWERS HIS VOICE.

MICHAEL

Ahem. Go on, my child.

He winces at his choice of words.

KATHLEEN

I lied to the guarda. They wanted me to identify a murder suspect who used to be me boyfriend. I told them I didn't know him. I can't tell them the truth, Father, or they will hang him.

Michael can hardly contain himself.

MICHAEL
So...you recognized him, then?

KATHLEEN
I did, but I have a naggin' fear my
denial wasn't convincin'.

Michael clears his throat.

MICHAEL.
Th-that was noble of you.

KATHLEEN
It was?

MICHAEL
I mean...you know...he might be
innocent.

KATHLEEN
Even if he is innocent, the English
will find some excuse to hang him.
I just know it.

Michael leans forward. Treads carefully.

MICHAEL
You...still have feelin's for him?

KATHLEEN
He was me first love. How could I
not?

Michael squirms, fighting the impulse to leap through the
scrim and grab onto her.

KATHLEEN
Honestly, I hope to never lay eyes
on him again knowin' he could be
captured because of me and hanged.
I couldn't bear it. The sooner he
leaves and stays safe, the better--
as much as it breaks me heart.

Michael sits numb, flabbergasted.

KATHLEEN
Father?

MICHAEL

Yes. I'm here. Um...I was just thinkin' about your predicament. What if he were to escape to North America, for instance, and send for you? Would you go?

KATHLEEN

I have to be realistic. It's most likely chance that brought him here--being chased and all. It's been years. He might not have the same feelin's for me anymore. And there's me ailin' auntie to consider.

(beat)

Me friend, who's a constable, says he believes me, but I know he's sayin' that because he loves me.

(miserable)

I feel just awful usin' his heart to deceive him so. Then, I lied to him again when he proposed to me. I told him I would think about it.

MICHAEL

Um...How is that a lie?

KATHLEEN

I know what true love feels like, and I'm not feelin' it with him--at least, not yet. I don't want to be a woman who marries because of somebody else's need. I'd rather never marry at all.

Michael reacts with a long blink of relief.

KATHLEEN

I'm a no-good, rotten liar and deceiver, Father, the two qualities I most despise in others.

Michael winces at the liar and deceiver part.

KATHLEEN

Is it wrong to keep deceivin' him so? I mean no harm. And maybe someday I will love him; but, right now, I want to be by meself.

Michael takes a swig as he frantically processes a response.

MICHAEL

One can never truly know the heart of another. When tested, we often speak in deceptions to protect it from hurt. Your concerns bespeak a good heart--and are not damnable.

KATHLEEN

Thanks for that, Father. It feels good to tell somebody me troubles and not be judged or condemned. I could never be so frank with another. That's the one thing I like about the Church: The sanctity of the confessional.

Michael pounds his forehead with a closed fist. His deception is now tormenting him. He needs to end this--quickly.

MICHAEL

Is there anythin' else?

KATHLEEN

Just one more thing. Ah...I've been pinchin' bread from me master. Am I wrong, considerin', mind you, that it might make the difference between livin' or starvin'?

Michael's relieved for the change of subject. He ponders.

MICHAEL

Unfortunately, we can't multiply fish and loaves like The Christ. You are stealin' out of extreme necessity. Therefore, it's not a sin.

KATHLEEN

That's such a relief, Father. I thought everythin' in the Church was a sin.

MICHAEL

Not everythin', especially in matters of the heart and stomach.

KATHLEEN

Thank you, Father. You have refreshed me spirit.

MICHAEL

Say some Hail Marys that your
master continues to have a surplus
of the Lord's bounty...and that
your true love sends for you soon.
Go in peace. May God be with you.

KATHLEEN

And you, as well, Father.

INT./EXT. CONFESSION BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

Michael slides the cover over the scrim window. Sinks back
and closes his eyes, disgusted with himself. Suddenly, he
jumps up and cracks open the booth door.

He watches wistfully as Kathleen kneels in a pew and makes
the Sign of the Cross, bows her head with angelic grace.

Michael steps out of the booth and stops the next-in-line
PENITENT from entering. He speaks hushed.

MICHAEL

I must leave. Come back tomorrow.

He hurries out.

PENITENT

But tomorrow's the Sabbath, Father.

INT. RECTORY FOYER - DAY

Michael walks in, his bearing bent and depressed. Marie walks
by carrying folded priest clothes.

MARIE

How did confessions go, Father?

Michael stops and turns to her.

MICHAEL

I think I'll skip dinner tonight,
Marie.

MARIE

You look poorly, Father. Kin I get
you anythin'?

MICHAEL

(loses it)
No! I just want to be left alone.

MARIE

(startled, hurt)

As you wish, Father. I'll leave you to it, then...You needn't snap at me so.

MICHAEL

I'm sorry, Marie. I didn't mean to. I have a lot on my mind right now.

MARIE

(brushes it off)

Phoo! I understand. Father Joseph was the same way, only he didn't apologize. Okay, then. I'll get on with me chores.

He watches her climb the stairs, then heads to the study.

INT./EXT. STUDY - DAY

Micheal stares out the open window, his spirit tormented.

WHAT HE SEES: Kathleen strolling pensively towards her auntie's cottage.

INT. STUDY - NIGHT

Michael, slouched in his chair, stares glassy-eyed at the safe. Saddle bags, satchel, a whiskey bottle and drink sit on the desk before him.

He abruptly slides his chair back, opens the desk drawer and removes the ledger. He MUMBLES the numbers carved in the bottom of the drawer.

He staggers over to the safe with the lantern and drops to his knees. He drunkenly turns the dial, MUMBLING numbers. Fumbles. CURSES. Starts over. Concentrates harder. Pushes down on the door lever. CLICK. He opens it.

He pulls out two fat money bags. Brings them over to the desk. Stuffs them and the whiskey bottle into the saddle bag. Downs his drink. Grabs bags and lantern, and staggers out.

MICHAEL'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Michael crams the folded priest outfit into the saddle bag. Stuffs in his Shakespeare book and glasses, cinches it.

RECTORY SCULLERY - CONTINUOUS

He grabs a hanging mutton leg. Bread from the pantry.

FOYER - CONTINUOUS

He scribbles a note on a paper pad on the credenza.

NOTE READS: "Won't be returning. Sorry. F. Michael."

EXT. CHURCH STABLE - NIGHT

Michael totters as he cinches the saddle onto the horse and ties the bags to the saddle. He puts his foot in the stirrup and stumbles backwards to the ground. He staggers up.

INT. RECTORY - MARIE'S ROOM - SAME

Marie watches Michael from her window.

EXT. CHURCH STABLE - CONTINUOUS

Little Clemmy runs up to Michael, SOBBING hysterically. It gets Michael's attention. He turns to the boy, concerned.

MICHAEL

What is it, Clemmy? Why are you so upset?

CLEMMY

The widow Rose...She...she...

He BAWLS. A part of Michael sobers. He grasps him gently by the shoulders and looks into his eyes.

MICHAEL

What? What about Rose?

CLEMMY

She's dead. S-somebody kilt her.

Michael drops to his knees.

FADE OUT

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