The Playboy of the Western World — Act I

J.M. Synge (1907)

Irish Literature Collective · Session Six reading · Sunday, March 14, 2027

PERSONS

CHRISTOPHER MAHON.
OLD MAHON, his father, a squatter.
MICHAEL JAMES FLAHERTY (called MICHAEL JAMES), a publican.
MARGARET FLAHERTY (called PEGEEN MIKE), his daughter.
SHAWN KEOUGH, her cousin, a young farmer.
WIDOW QUIN, a woman of about thirty.
PHILLY CULLEN and JIMMY FARRELL, small farmers.
SARA TANSEY, SUSAN BRADY, and HONOR BLAKE, village girls.
A BELLMAN.
SOME PEASANTS.

The action takes place near a village, on a wild coast of Mayo. The first Act passes on an evening of autumn, the other two Acts on the following day.

ACT I.

SCENE: Country public-house or shebeen, very rough and untidy. There is a sort of counter on the right with shelves, holding many bottles and jugs, just seen above it. Empty barrels stand near the counter. At back, a little to left of counter, there is a door into the open air, then, more to the left, there is a settle with shelves above it, with more jugs, and a table beneath a window. At the left there is a large open fire-place, with turf fire, and a small door into inner room. Pegeen, a wild-looking but fine girl, of about twenty, is writing at table. She is dressed in the usual peasant dress.

PEGEEN.
slowly as she writes.—Six yards of stuff for to make a yellow gown. A pair of lace boots with lengthy heels on them and brassy eyes. A hat is suited for a wedding-day. A fine tooth comb. To be sent with three barrels of porter in Jimmy Farrell’s creel cart on the evening of the coming Fair to Mister Michael James Flaherty. With the best compliments of this season. Margaret Flaherty.

SHAWN KEOGH.
a fat and fair young man comes in as she signs, looks round awkwardly, when he sees she is alone.—Where’s himself?

PEGEEN.
without looking at him.—He’s coming. (She directs the letter.) To Mister Sheamus Mulroy, Wine and Spirit Dealer, Castlebar.

SHAWN.
uneasily.—I didn’t see him on the road.

PEGEEN.
How would you see him (licks stamp and puts it on letter) and it dark night this half hour gone by?

SHAWN.
turning towards the door again.—I stood a while outside wondering would I have a right to pass on or to walk in and see you, Pegeen Mike (comes to fire), and I could hear the cows breathing, and sighing in the stillness of the air, and not a step moving any place from this gate to the bridge.

PEGEEN.
putting letter in envelope.—It’s above at the cross-roads he is, meeting Philly Cullen; and a couple more are going along with him to Kate Cassidy’s wake.

SHAWN.
looking at her blankly.—And he’s going that length in the dark night?

PEGEEN.
impatiently.—He is surely, and leaving me lonesome on the scruff of the hill. (_She gets up and puts envelope on dresser, then winds the clock._) Isn’t it long the nights are now, Shawn Keogh, to be leaving a poor girl with her own self counting the hours to the dawn of day?

SHAWN.
with awkward humour.—If it is, when we’re wedded in a short while you’ll have no call to complain, for I’ve little will to be walking off to wakes or weddings in the darkness of the night.

PEGEEN.
with rather scornful good humour.—You’re making mighty certain, Shaneen, that I’ll wed you now.

SHAWN.
Aren’t we after making a good bargain, the way we’re only waiting these days on Father Reilly’s dispensation from the bishops, or the Court of Rome.

PEGEEN.
looking at him teasingly, washing up at dresser.—It’s a wonder, Shaneen, the Holy Father’d be taking notice of the likes of you; for if

I was him I wouldn’t bother with this place where you’ll meet none but Red Linahan, has a squint in his eye, and Patcheen is lame in his heel, or the mad Mulrannies were driven from California and they lost in their wits. We’re a queer lot these times to go troubling the Holy Father on his sacred seat.

SHAWN.
scandalized.—If we are, we’re as good this place as another, maybe, and as good these times as we were for ever.

PEGEEN.
with scorn.—As good, is it? Where now will you meet the like of Daneen Sullivan knocked the eye from a peeler, or Marcus Quin, God rest him, got six months for maiming ewes, and he a great warrant to tell stories of holy Ireland till he’d have the old women shedding down tears about their feet. Where will you find the like of them, I’m saying?

SHAWN.
timidly.—If you don’t it’s a good job, maybe; for (_with peculiar emphasis on the words_) Father Reilly has small conceit to have that kind walking around and talking to the girls.

PEGEEN.
impatiently, throwing water from basin out of the door.—Stop tormenting me with Father Reilly (imitating his voice) when I’m asking only what way I’ll pass these twelve hours of dark, and not take my death with the fear. (Looking out of door.)

SHAWN.
timidly.—Would I fetch you the widow Quin, maybe?

PEGEEN.
Is it the like of that murderer? You’ll not, surely.

SHAWN.
going to her, soothingly.—Then I’m thinking himself will stop along with you when he sees you taking on, for it’ll be a long night-time with great darkness, and I’m after feeling a kind of fellow above in the furzy ditch, groaning wicked like a maddening dog, the way it’s good cause you have, maybe, to be fearing now.

PEGEEN.
turning on him sharply.—What’s that? Is it a man you seen?

SHAWN.
retreating.—I couldn’t see him at all; but I heard him groaning out, and breaking his heart. It should have been a young man from his words

speaking.

PEGEEN.
going after him.—And you never went near to see was he hurted or what ailed him at all?

SHAWN.
I did not, Pegeen Mike. It was a dark, lonesome place to be hearing the like of him.

PEGEEN.
Well, you're a daring fellow, and if they find his corpse stretched above in the dews of dawn, what'll you say then to the peelers, or the Justice of the Peace?

SHAWN.
thunderstruck.—I wasn't thinking of that. For the love of God, Pegeen Mike, don't let on I was speaking of him. Don't tell your father and the men is coming above; for if they heard that story, they'd have great blabbing this night at the wake.

PEGEEN.
I'll maybe tell them, and I'll maybe not.

SHAWN.
They are coming at the door, Will you whisht, I'm saying?

PEGEEN.
Whisht yourself.

[_She goes behind counter. Michael James, fat jovial publican, comes in followed by Philly Cullen, who is thin and mistrusting, and Jimmy Farrell, who is fat and amorous, about forty-five._]

MEN.
together.—God bless you. The blessing of God on this place.

PEGEEN.
God bless you kindly.

MICHAEL.
to men who go to the counter.—Sit down now, and take your rest. (Crosses to Shawn at the fire.) And how is it you are, Shawn Keogh? Are you coming over the sands to Kate Cassidy's wake?

SHAWN.
I am not, Michael James. I'm going home the short cut to my bed.

PEGEEN.
speaking across the counter.—He's right too, and have you no shame,

Michael James, to be quitting off for the whole night, and leaving myself lonesome in the shop?

MICHAEL.
good-humouredly.—Isn't it the same whether I go for the whole night or a part only? and I'm thinking it's a queer daughter you are if you'd have me crossing backward through the Stooks of the Dead Women, with a drop taken.

PEGEEN.
If I am a queer daughter, it's a queer father'd be leaving me lonesome these twelve hours of dark, and I piling the turf with the dogs barking, and the calves mooing, and my own teeth rattling with the fear.

JIMMY.
flatteringly.—What is there to hurt you, and you a fine, hardy girl would knock the head of any two men in the place?

PEGEEN.
working herself up.—Isn't there the harvest boys with their tongues red for drink, and the ten tinkers is camped in the east glen, and the thousand militia—bad cess to them!—walking idle through the land. There's lots surely to hurt me, and I won't stop alone in it, let himself do what he will.

MICHAEL.
If you're that afeard, let Shawn Keogh stop along with you. It's the will of God, I'm thinking, himself should be seeing to you now. [_They all turn on Shawn._]

SHAWN.
in horrified confusion.—I would and welcome, Michael James, but I'm afeard of Father Reilly; and what at all would the Holy Father and the Cardinals of Rome be saying if they heard I did the like of that?

MICHAEL.
with contempt.—God help you! Can't you sit in by the hearth with the light lit and herself beyond in the room? You'll do that surely, for I've heard tell there's a queer fellow above, going mad or getting his death, maybe, in the gripe of the ditch, so she'd be safer this night with a person here.

SHAWN.
with plaintive despair.—I'm afeard of Father Reilly, I'm saying. Let you not be tempting me, and we near married itself.

PHILLY.

with cold contempt.—Lock him in the west room. He'll stay then and have no sin to be telling to the priest.

MICHAEL.
to Shawn, getting between him and the door.—Go up now.

SHAWN.
at the top of his voice.—Don't stop me, Michael James. Let me out of the door, I'm saying, for the love of the Almighty God. Let me out (trying to dodge past him). Let me out of it, and may God grant you His indulgence in the hour of need.

MICHAEL.
loudly.—Stop your noising, and sit down by the hearth. [_Gives him a push and goes to counter laughing._]

SHAWN.
turning back, wringing his hands.—Oh, Father Reilly and the saints of God, where will I hide myself to-day? Oh, St. Joseph and St. Patrick and St. Brigid, and St. James, have mercy on me now! [_Shawn turns round, sees door clear, and makes a rush for it._]

MICHAEL.
catching him by the coattail.—You'd be going, is it?

SHAWN.
screaming.—Leave me go, Michael James, leave me go, you old Pagan, leave me go, or I'll get the curse of the priests on you, and of the scarlet-coated bishops of the courts of Rome. [_With a sudden movement he pulls himself out of his coat, and disappears out of the door, leaving his coat in Michael's hands._]

MICHAEL.
turning round, and holding up coat.—Well, there's the coat of a Christian man. Oh, there's sainted glory this day in the lonesome west; and by the will of God I've got you a decent man, Pegeen, you'll have no call to be spying after if you've a score of young girls, maybe, weeding in your fields.

PEGEEN.
taking up the defence of her property.—What right have you to be making game of a poor fellow for minding the priest, when it's your own the fault is, not paying a penny pot-boy to stand along with me and give me courage in the doing of my work? [_She snaps the coat away from him, and goes behind counter with it._]

MICHAEL.
taken aback.—Where would I get a pot-boy? Would you have me send the

bell-man screaming in the streets of Castlebar?

SHAWN.
opening the door a chink and putting in his head, in a small voice.—Michael James!

MICHAEL.
imitating him.—What ails you?

SHAWN.
The queer dying fellow’s beyond looking over the ditch. He’s come up, I’m thinking, stealing your hens. (Looks over his shoulder.) God help me, he’s following me now (he runs into room), and if he’s heard what I said, he’ll be having my life, and I going home lonesome in the darkness of the night. (_For a perceptible moment they watch the door with curiosity. Some one coughs outside. Then Christy Mahon, a slight young man, comes in very tired and frightened and dirty._)

CHRISTY.
in a small voice.—God save all here!

MEN.
God save you kindly.

CHRISTY.
going to the counter.—I’d trouble you for a glass of porter, woman of the house. [He puts down coin.]

PEGEEN.
serving him.—You’re one of the tinkers, young fellow, is beyond camped in the glen?

CHRISTY.
I am not; but I’m destroyed walking.

MICHAEL.
patronizingly.—Let you come up then to the fire. You’re looking famished with the cold.

CHRISTY.
God reward you. (_He takes up his glass and goes a little way across to the left, then stops and looks about him._) Is it often the police do be coming into this place, master of the house?

MICHAEL.
If you’d come in better hours, you’d have seen “Licensed for the sale of Beer and Spirits, to be consumed on the premises,” written in white letters above the door, and what would the polis want spying on me, and not a decent house within four miles, the way every living Christian is

a bona fide, saving one widow alone?

CHRISTY.
with relief.—It's a safe house, so. [_He goes over to the fire, sighing and moaning. Then he sits down, putting his glass beside him and begins gnawing a turnip, too miserable to feel the others staring at him with curiosity._]

MICHAEL.
going after him.—Is it yourself fearing the polis? You're wanting, maybe?

CHRISTY.
There's many wanting.

MICHAEL.
Many surely, with the broken harvest and the ended wars. (_He picks up some stockings, etc., that are near the fire, and carries them away furtively._) It should be larceny, I'm thinking?

CHRISTY.
dolefully.—I had it in my mind it was a different word and a bigger.

PEGEEN.
There's a queer lad. Were you never slapped in school, young fellow, that you don't know the name of your deed?

CHRISTY.
bashfully.—I'm slow at learning, a middling scholar only.

MICHAEL.
If you're a dunce itself, you'd have a right to know that larceny's robbing and stealing. Is it for the like of that you're wanting?

CHRISTY.
with a flash of family pride.—And I the son of a strong farmer (_with a sudden qualm_), God rest his soul, could have bought up the whole of your old house a while since, from the butt of his tailpocket, and not have missed the weight of it gone.

MICHAEL.
impressed.—If it's not stealing, it's maybe something big.

CHRISTY.
flattered.—Aye; it's maybe something big.

JIMMY.
He's a wicked-looking young fellow. Maybe he followed after a young woman on a lonesome night.

CHRISTY.
shocked.—Oh, the saints forbid, mister; I was all times a decent lad.

PHILLY.
turning on Jimmy.—You're a silly man, Jimmy Farrell. He said his father was a farmer a while since, and there's himself now in a poor state. Maybe the land was grabbed from him, and he did what any decent man would do.

MICHAEL.
to Christy, mysteriously.—Was it bailiffs?

CHRISTY.
The divil a one.

MICHAEL.
Agents?

CHRISTY.
The divil a one.

MICHAEL.
Landlords?

CHRISTY.
peevishly.—Ah, not at all, I'm saying. You'd see the like of them stories on any little paper of a Munster town. But I'm not calling to mind any person, gentle, simple, judge or jury, did the like of me.
[They all draw nearer with delighted curiosity.]

PHILLY.
Well, that lad's a puzzle—the world.

JIMMY.
He'd beat Dan Davies' circus, or the holy missioners making sermons on the villainy of man. Try him again, Philly.

PHILLY.
Did you strike golden guineas out of solder, young fellow, or shilling coins itself?

CHRISTY.
I did not, mister, not sixpence nor a farthing coin.

JIMMY.
Did you marry three wives maybe? I'm told there's a sprinkling have done that among the holy Luthers of the preaching north.

CHRISTY.
shyly.—I never married with one, let alone with a couple or three.

PHILLY.
Maybe he went fighting for the Boers, the like of the man beyond, was judged to be hanged, quartered and drawn. Were you off east, young fellow, fighting bloody wars for Kruger and the freedom of the Boers?

CHRISTY.
I never left my own parish till Tuesday was a week.

PEGEEN.
coming from counter.—He's done nothing, so. (To Christy.) If you didn't commit murder or a bad, nasty thing, or false coining, or robbery, or butchery, or the like of them, there isn't anything that would be worth your troubling for to run from now. You did nothing at all.

CHRISTY.
his feelings hurt.—That's an unkindly thing to be saying to a poor orphaned traveller, has a prison behind him, and hanging before, and hell's gap gaping below.

PEGEEN.
with a sign to the men to be quiet.—You're only saying it. You did nothing at all. A soft lad the like of you wouldn't slit the windpipe of a screeching sow.

CHRISTY.
offended.—You're not speaking the truth.

PEGEEN.
in mock rage.—Not speaking the truth, is it? Would you have me knock the head of you with the butt of the broom?

CHRISTY.
twisting round on her with a sharp cry of horror.—Don't strike me. I killed my poor father, Tuesday was a week, for doing the like of that.

PEGEEN.
with blank amazement.—Is it killed your father?

CHRISTY.
subsiding.—With the help of God I did surely, and that the Holy Immaculate Mother may intercede for his soul.

PHILLY.
retreating with Jimmy.—There's a daring fellow.

JIMMY.
Oh, glory be to God!

MICHAEL.

with great respect.—That was a hanging crime, mister honey. You should have had good reason for doing the like of that.

CHRISTY.
in a very reasonable tone.—He was a dirty man, God forgive him, and he getting old and crusty, the way I couldn't put up with him at all.

PEGEEN.
And you shot him dead?

CHRISTY.
shaking his head.—I never used weapons. I've no license, and I'm a law-fearing man.

MICHAEL.
It was with a hilted knife maybe? I'm told, in the big world it's bloody knives they use.

CHRISTY.
loudly, scandalized.—Do you take me for a slaughter-boy?

PEGEEN.
You never hanged him, the way Jimmy Farrell hanged his dog from the license, and had it screeching and wriggling three hours at the butt of a string, and himself swearing it was a dead dog, and the peelers swearing it had life?

CHRISTY.
I did not then. I just riz the loy and let fall the edge of it on the ridge of his skull, and he went down at my feet like an empty sack, and never let a grunt or groan from him at all.

MICHAEL.
making a sign to Pegeen to fill Christy's glass.—And what way weren't you hanged, mister? Did you bury him then?

CHRISTY.
considering.—Aye. I buried him then. Wasn't I digging spuds in the field?

MICHAEL.
And the peelers never followed after you the eleven days that you're out?

CHRISTY.
shaking his head.—Never a one of them, and I walking forward facing hog, dog, or divil on the highway of the road.

PHILLY.
nodding wisely.—It's only with a common week-day kind of a murderer

them lads would be trusting their carcase, and that man should be a great terror when his temper's roused.

MICHAEL.
He should then. (To Christy.) And where was it, mister honey, that you did the deed?

CHRISTY.
looking at him with suspicion.—Oh, a distant place, master of the house, a windy corner of high, distant hills.

PHILLY.
nodding with approval.—He's a close man, and he's right, surely.

PEGEEN.
That'd be a lad with the sense of Solomon to have for a pot-boy, Michael James, if it's the truth you're seeking one at all.

PHILLY.
The peelers is fearing him, and if you'd that lad in the house there isn't one of them would come smelling around if the dogs itself were lapping poteen from the dungpit of the yard.

JIMMY.
Bravery's a treasure in a lonesome place, and a lad would kill his father, I'm thinking, would face a foxy divil with a pitchpike on the flags of hell.

PEGEEN.
It's the truth they're saying, and if I'd that lad in the house, I wouldn't be fearing the loosed kharki cut-throats, or the walking dead.

CHRISTY.
swelling with surprise and triumph.—Well, glory be to God!

MICHAEL.
with deference.—Would you think well to stop here and be pot-boy, mister honey, if we gave you good wages, and didn't destroy you with the weight of work?

SHAWN.
coming forward uneasily.—That'd be a queer kind to bring into a decent quiet household with the like of Pegeen Mike.

PEGEEN.
very sharply.—Will you whisht? Who's speaking to you?

SHAWN.
retreating.—A bloody-handed murderer the like of....

PEGEEN.
snapping at him.—Whisht I am saying; we'll take no fooling from your like at all. (To Christy with a honeyed voice.) And you, young fellow, you'd have a right to stop, I'm thinking, for we'd do our all and utmost to content your needs.

CHRISTY.
overcome with wonder.—And I'd be safe in this place from the searching law?

MICHAEL.
You would, surely. If they're not fearing you, itself, the peelers in this place is decent droughty poor fellows, wouldn't touch a cur dog and not give warning in the dead of night.

PEGEEN.
very kindly and persuasively.—Let you stop a short while anyhow. Aren't you destroyed walking with your feet in bleeding blisters, and your whole skin needing washing like a Wicklow sheep.

CHRISTY.
looking round with satisfaction.—It's a nice room, and if it's not humbugging me you are, I'm thinking that I'll surely stay.

JIMMY.
jumps up.—Now, by the grace of God, herself will be safe this night, with a man killed his father holding danger from the door, and let you come on, Michael James, or they'll have the best stuff drunk at the wake.

MICHAEL.
going to the door with men.—And begging your pardon, mister, what name will we call you, for we'd like to know?

CHRISTY.
Christopher Mahon.

MICHAEL.
Well, God bless you, Christy, and a good rest till we meet again when the sun'll be rising to the noon of day.

CHRISTY.
God bless you all.

MEN.
God bless you. [They go out except Shawn, who lingers at door.]

SHAWN.
to Pegeen.—Are you wanting me to stop along with you and keep you

from harm?

PEGEEN.
gruffly.—Didn’t you say you were fearing Father Reilly?

SHAWN.
There’d be no harm staying now, I’m thinking, and himself in it too.

PEGEEN.
You wouldn’t stay when there was need for you, and let you step off nimble this time when there’s none.

SHAWN.
Didn’t I say it was Father Reilly....

PEGEEN.
Go on, then, to Father Reilly (in a jeering tone), and let him put you in the holy brotherhoods, and leave that lad to me.

SHAWN.
If I meet the Widow Quin....

PEGEEN.
Go on, I’m saying, and don’t be waking this place with your noise. (She hustles him out and bolts the door.) That lad would wear the spirits from the saints of peace. (_Bustles about, then takes off her apron and pins it up in the window as a blind. Christy watching her timidly. Then she comes to him and speaks with bland good-humour._) Let you stretch out now by the fire, young fellow. You should be destroyed travelling.

CHRISTY.
shyly again, drawing off his boots.—I’m tired, surely, walking wild eleven days, and waking fearful in the night. [_He holds up one of his feet, feeling his blisters, and looking at them with compassion._]

PEGEEN.
standing beside him, watching him with delight.—You should have had great people in your family, I’m thinking, with the little, small feet you have, and you with a kind of a quality name, the like of what you’d find on the great powers and potentates of France and Spain.

CHRISTY.
with pride.—We were great surely, with wide and windy acres of rich Munster land.

PEGEEN.
Wasn’t I telling you, and you a fine, handsome young fellow with a noble brow?

CHRISTY.
with a flash of delighted surprise.—Is it me?

PEGEEN.
Aye. Did you never hear that from the young girls where you come from in the west or south?

CHRISTY.
with venom.—I did not then. Oh, they're bloody liars in the naked parish where I grew a man.

PEGEEN.
If they are itself, you've heard it these days, I'm thinking, and you walking the world telling out your story to young girls or old.

CHRISTY.
I've told my story no place till this night, Pegeen Mike, and it's foolish I was here, maybe, to be talking free, but you're decent people, I'm thinking, and yourself a kindly woman, the way I wasn't fearing you at all.

PEGEEN.
filling a sack with straw.—You've said the like of that, maybe, in every cot and cabin where you've met a young girl on your way.

CHRISTY.
going over to her, gradually raising his voice.—I've said it nowhere till this night, I'm telling you, for I've seen none the like of you the eleven long days I am walking the world, looking over a low ditch or a high ditch on my north or my south, into stony scattered fields, or scribes of bog, where you'd see young, limber girls, and fine prancing women making laughter with the men.

PEGEEN.
If you weren't destroyed travelling, you'd have as much talk and streeleen, I'm thinking, as Owen Roe O'Sullivan or the poets of the Dingle Bay, and I've heard all times it's the poets are your like, fine fiery fellows with great rages when their temper's roused.

CHRISTY.
drawing a little nearer to her.—You've a power of rings, God bless you, and would there be any offence if I was asking are you single now?

PEGEEN.
What would I want wedding so young?

CHRISTY.
with relief.—We're alike, so.

PEGEEN.
she puts sack on settle and beats it up.—I never killed my father. I'd be afeard to do that, except I was the like of yourself with blind rages tearing me within, for I'm thinking you should have had great tussling when the end was come.

CHRISTY.
expanding with delight at the first confidential talk he has ever had with a woman.—We had not then. It was a hard woman was come over the hill, and if he was always a crusty kind when he'd a hard woman setting him on, not the divil himself or his four fathers could put up with him at all.

PEGEEN.
with curiosity.—And isn't it a great wonder that one wasn't fearing you?

CHRISTY.
very confidentially.—Up to the day I killed my father, there wasn't a person in Ireland knew the kind I was, and I there drinking, waking, eating, sleeping, a quiet, simple poor fellow with no man giving me heed.

PEGEEN.
getting a quilt out of the cupboard and putting it on the sack.—It was the girls were giving you heed maybe, and I'm thinking it's most conceit you'd have to be gaming with their like.

CHRISTY.
shaking his head, with simplicity.—Not the girls itself, and I won't tell you a lie. There wasn't anyone heeding me in that place saving only the dumb beasts of the field. [He sits down at fire.]

PEGEEN.
with disappointment.—And I thinking you should have been living the like of a king of Norway or the Eastern world. [_She comes and sits beside him after placing bread and mug of milk on the table._]

CHRISTY.
laughing piteously.—The like of a king, is it? And I after toiling, moiling, digging, dodging from the dawn till dusk with never a sight of joy or sport saving only when I'd be abroad in the dark night poaching rabbits on hills, for I was a divil to poach, God forgive me, (_very naïvely_) and I near got six months for going with a dung fork and stabbing a fish.

PEGEEN.
And it's that you'd call sport, is it, to be abroad in the darkness

with yourself alone?

CHRISTY.
I did, God help me, and there I'd be as happy as the sunshine of St. Martin's Day, watching the light passing the north or the patches of fog, till I'd hear a rabbit starting to screech and I'd go running in the furze. Then when I'd my full share I'd come walking down where you'd see the ducks and geese stretched sleeping on the highway of the road, and before I'd pass the dunghill, I'd hear himself snoring out, a loud lonesome snore he'd be making all times, the while he was sleeping, and he a man 'd be raging all times, the while he was waking, like a gaudy officer you'd hear cursing and damning and swearing oaths.

PEGEEN.
Providence and Mercy, spare us all!

CHRISTY.
It's that you'd say surely if you seen him and he after drinking for weeks, rising up in the red dawn, or before it maybe, and going out into the yard as naked as an ash tree in the moon of May, and shying clods against the visage of the stars till he'd put the fear of death into the banbhs and the screeching sows.

PEGEEN.
I'd be well-nigh afeard of that lad myself, I'm thinking. And there was no one in it but the two of you alone?

CHRISTY.
The divil a one, though he'd sons and daughters walking all great states and territories of the world, and not a one of them, to this day, but would say their seven curses on him, and they rousing up to let a cough or sneeze, maybe, in the deadness of the night.

PEGEEN.
nodding her head.—Well, you should have been a queer lot. I never cursed my father the like of that, though I'm twenty and more years of age.

CHRISTY.
Then you'd have cursed mine, I'm telling you, and he a man never gave peace to any, saving when he'd get two months or three, or be locked in the asylums for battering peelers or assaulting men (with depression) the way it was a bitter life he led me till I did up a Tuesday and halve his skull.

PEGEEN.
putting her hand on his shoulder.—Well, you'll have peace in this place, Christy Mahon, and none to trouble you, and it's near time a

fine lad like you should have your good share of the earth.

CHRISTY.
It’s time surely, and I a seemly fellow with great strength in me and bravery of.... [Someone knocks.]

CHRISTY.
clinging to Pegeen.—Oh, glory! it’s late for knocking, and this last while I’m in terror of the peelers, and the walking dead. [_Knocking again._]

PEGEEN.
Who’s there?

VOICE.
outside. Me.

PEGEEN.
Who’s me?

VOICE.
The Widow Quin.

PEGEEN.
jumping up and giving him the bread and milk.—Go on now with your supper, and let on to be sleepy, for if she found you were such a warrant to talk, she’d be stringing gabble till the dawn of day. [_He takes bread and sits shyly with his back to the door._]

PEGEEN.
opening door, with temper.—What ails you, or what is it you’re wanting at this hour of the night?

WIDOW QUIN.
coming in a step and peering at Christy.—I’m after meeting Shawn Keogh and Father Reilly below, who told me of your curiosity man, and they fearing by this time he was maybe roaring, romping on your hands with drink.

PEGEEN.
pointing to Christy.—Look now is he roaring, and he stretched away drowsy with his supper and his mug of milk. Walk down and tell that to Father Reilly and to Shaneen Keogh.

WIDOW QUIN.
coming forward.—I’ll not see them again, for I’ve their word to lead that lad forward for to lodge with me.

PEGEEN.
in blank amazement.—This night, is it?

WIDOW QUIN.
going over.—This night. “It isn’t fitting,” says the priesteen, “to have his likeness lodging with an orphaned girl.” (To Christy.) God save you, mister!

CHRISTY.
shyly.—God save you kindly.

WIDOW QUIN.
looking at him with half-amazed curiosity.—Well, aren’t you a little smiling fellow? It should have been great and bitter torments did rouse your spirits to a deed of blood.

CHRISTY.
doubtfully.—It should, maybe.

WIDOW QUIN.
It’s more than “maybe” I’m saying, and it’d soften my heart to see you sitting so simple with your cup and cake, and you fitter to be saying your catechism than slaying your da.

PEGEEN.
at counter, washing glasses.—There’s talking when any’d see he’s fit to be holding his head high with the wonders of the world. Walk on from this, for I’ll not have him tormented and he destroyed travelling since Tuesday was a week.

WIDOW QUIN.
peaceably.—We’ll be walking surely when his supper’s done, and you’ll find we’re great company, young fellow, when it’s of the like of you and me you’d hear the penny poets singing in an August Fair.

CHRISTY.
innocently.—Did you kill your father?

PEGEEN.
contemptuously.—She did not. She hit himself with a worn pick, and the rusted poison did corrode his blood the way he never overed it, and died after. That was a sneaky kind of murder did win small glory with the boys itself. [She crosses to Christy’s left.]

WIDOW QUIN.
with good-humour.—If it didn’t, maybe all knows a widow woman has buried her children and destroyed her man is a wiser comrade for a young lad than a girl, the like of you, who’d go helter-skeltering after any man would let you a wink upon the road.

PEGEEN.
breaking out into wild rage.—And you’ll say that, Widow Quin, and you

gasping with the rage you had racing the hill beyond to look on his face.

WIDOW QUIN.
laughing derisively.—Me, is it? Well, Father Reilly has cuteness to divide you now. (She pulls Christy up.) There's great temptation in a man did slay his da, and we'd best be going, young fellow; so rise up and come with me.

PEGEEN.
seizing his arm.—He'll not stir. He's pot-boy in this place, and I'll not have him stolen off and kidnapped while himself's abroad.

WIDOW QUIN.
It'd be a crazy pot-boy'd lodge him in the shebeen where he works by day, so you'd have a right to come on, young fellow, till you see my little houseen, a perch off on the rising hill.

PEGEEN.
Wait till morning, Christy Mahon. Wait till you lay eyes on her leaky thatch is growing more pasture for her buck goat than her square of fields, and she without a tramp itself to keep in order her place at all.

WIDOW QUIN.
When you see me contriving in my little gardens, Christy Mahon, you'll swear the Lord God formed me to be living lone, and that there isn't my match in Mayo for thatching, or mowing, or shearing a sheep.

PEGEEN.
with noisy scorn.—It's true the Lord God formed you to contrive indeed. Doesn't the world know you reared a black lamb at your own breast, so that the Lord Bishop of Connaught felt the elements of a Christian, and he eating it after in a kidney stew? Doesn't the world know you've been seen shaving the foxy skipper from France for a threepenny bit and a sop of grass tobacco would wring the liver from a mountain goat you'd meet leaping the hills?

WIDOW QUIN.
with amusement.—Do you hear her now, young fellow? Do you hear the way she'll be rating at your own self when a week is by?

PEGEEN.
to Christy.—Don't heed her. Tell her to go into her pigsty and not plague us here.

WIDOW QUIN.
I'm going; but he'll come with me.

PEGEEN.
shaking him.—Are you dumb, young fellow?

CHRISTY.
timidly, to Widow Quin.—God increase you; but I'm pot-boy in this place, and it's here I'd liefer stay.

PEGEEN.
triumphantly.—Now you have heard him, and go on from this.

WIDOW QUIN.
looking round the room.—It's lonesome this hour crossing the hill, and if he won't come along with me, I'd have a right maybe to stop this night with yourselves. Let me stretch out on the settle, Pegeen Mike; and himself can lie by the hearth.

PEGEEN.
short and fiercely.—Faith, I won't. Quit off or I will send you now.

WIDOW QUIN.
gathering her shawl up.—Well, it's a terror to be aged a score. (_To Christy._) God bless you now, young fellow, and let you be wary, or there's right torment will await you here if you go romancing with her like, and she waiting only, as they bade me say, on a sheepskin parchment to be wed with Shawn Keogh of Killakeen.

CHRISTY.
going to Pegeen as she bolts the door.—What's that she's after saying?

PEGEEN.
Lies and blather, you've no call to mind. Well, isn't Shawn Keogh an impudent fellow to send up spying on me? Wait till I lay hands on him. Let him wait, I'm saying.

CHRISTY.
And you're not wedding him at all?

PEGEEN.
I wouldn't wed him if a bishop came walking for to join us here.

CHRISTY.
That God in glory may be thanked for that.

PEGEEN.
There's your bed now. I've put a quilt upon you I'm after quilting a while since with my own two hands, and you'd best stretch out now for your sleep, and may God give you a good rest till I call you in the morning when the cocks will crow.

CHRISTY.
as she goes to inner room.—May God and Mary and St. Patrick bless you and reward you, for your kindly talk. (_She shuts the door behind her. He settles his bed slowly, feeling the quilt with immense satisfaction._)—Well, it’s a clean bed and soft with it, and it’s great luck and company I’ve won me in the end of time—two fine women fighting for the likes of me—till I’m thinking this night wasn’t I a foolish fellow not to kill my father in the years gone by.

CURTAIN.