

THE BURNING

by

Kevin Doyle

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A NOTE ON THE HISTORICAL RECORD

Captain Jack White was born in 1879 in Broughshane, Co. Antrim and died there in 1946. The only son of British war hero, Sir Geroge Stuard White, he wa active for most of his adult life in radical left wing politics in Ireland and Britain. This work draws on the current historical record of White's life, but it remains, in its entirety, a work of fiction.

CHARACTERS

NOREEN	<i>Captain Jack White's wife, early 30s</i>
GLADYS/ MRS NAPIER	<i>White's sister, late 60s</i>
LILY	<i>White family friend, early 40s</i>
MATT KAVANAGH	<i>Comrade of White's, early 70s</i>

TIME AND PLACE

February 1946, immediately after Captain Jack White's funeral. Whitehall, the family home of the White family, just outside Broughshane, Co. Antrim.

SET

A large reception/dining room in a Georgian house. Though well appointed, it is showing signs of age and disrepair. There are two doors - 'Inside' door leads to the interior of the house/kitchen; 'Outside' door leads to the hall/front door. The main features are: a large window with a view of Slemish mountain, Co. Antrim; there is an armchair near the window. A large marble fireplace; above the fireplace there's a portrait of Field Marshal Sir George Stuart White, a British war hero; on either side there are two comfortable sitting chairs. A writing bureau with chair; on the bureau there's a reading lamp, a typewriter, two neat bundles of letters, a stack of bound documents and a stack of seven irregular-sized hardback diaries; beside the typewriter there's a manuscript; at the side of the bureau, on the floor, there are two boxes of documents and a number of framed pictures; above the bureau, on the wall, is a large framed picture of the islands of Ireland and England. A hat stand near Outside door.

MUSIC

The Foggy Dew, Land of Hope and Glory, The International

ACT I

SCENE 1

Around noon, after the funeral of CAPTAIN JACK WHITE. The action opens with two women entering the room by Outside door. The first woman to enter is NOREEN, wife of the deceased; she is followed by GLADYS, also known as LADY NAPIER, sister of the deceased. NOREEN is in her early 30s and is dressed in black. She is a cultured middle-class woman of south-County Dublin background. She is stricken with grief about her loss and predicament. GLADYS is in her late 60s and is also dressed in black. Though born in Antrim, GLADYS is an aristocratic English woman by upbringing and marriage; she speaks with a strong upper class accent. Despite the death of her brother she appears to be in good spirits; she is imperious in behaviour and somewhat disdainful of NOREEN, her deceased brother's young wife and of the general scene at Whitehall, her former family home.

NOREEN: *(Taking off her hat and coat)* It's good to be back inside.

What an awful day. And that wind. It comes down over the Glens this time of year and cuts through you.

GLADYS: *(Following)* I was sure the Vicar would join us. Jack was barely in the ground when he left. What's wrong with him?

NOREEN: There's another funeral to be done, out near Coreen. He was off to that, he said. At least that is what he told me... the few words that he did say.

GLADYS: *(Taking off her coat but then changing her mind)* It is as cold in here as outside. *(Goes over to the fireplace.)* Is no one looking after the fire? It's barely alive.

NOREEN: *(Goes to the Inside door, opens it and calls)* Lily, are you there? Are there any more blocks for the fire?

LILY: *(Off stage; strong Belfast working-class accent)* Aye I'm with the boys, give me a minute. *(Fading sound of children's voices; Lily calling to them.)*

NOREEN: *(Puts her coat and scarf on the hat stand; sits by the fire)* I need to rest.

(GLADYS takes off her hat carefully. She places it on the hat stand. Offstage there's a ruffling noise. Wooden blocks fall on the ground. Then there's more ruffling noise and LILY enters. LILY is in her early 40s. Although sensitive to the occasion, she is in positive spirits. She is well attired in a black dress and cardigan, white blouse.)

LILY: *(Goes towards the fireplace, but stops away from the hearth)* These are all I could find. *(Puts the wooden blocks at her feet, side steps them and goes to NOREEN. Puts a hand on NOREEN's hand.)* What an awful time this is, so it is. *(Looks to GLADYS for support, but GLADYS has wandered over to the window and is looking out.)* You rest there Noreen and I'll see about a wee bite to eat.

NOREEN: I'm not hungry...but thanks. *(LILY is about to leave again, but NOREEN reaches out and holds onto her hand.)* Lily I don't know what I'd do without you.

LILY: *(Pats NOREEN's hand)* Now, now.

NOREEN: Are the boys okay?

LILY: As well as any children could be on the day that their beloved father is buried.

NOREEN: *(Looks towards GLADYS but GLADYS is deliberately paying no attention)* The children have no idea. When I took Anthony to see his father at the hospital for the last time, Anthony asked me when his father would be coming home... I didn't have the courage to tell him. Poor boy...

(NOREEN cries and LILY consoles her.)

GLADYS: *(At the window)* They should've been at the funeral. They would've made up the numbers at least.

NOREEN: *(Confused)* Numbers, what numbers? *(To LILY.)* What does she mean?

LILY: No matter now. It is over and done with, so it is.

NOREEN: *(Pathetically)* You understand don't you Lily? You understand why I didn't want them... *(Voice tails off.)*

GLADYS: *(Coming to the fireplace; to NOREEN)* I am turning into ice. *(Looks at where the blocks are lying)* What are they doing there? Is anyone going to put those blocks on the fire?

LILY: *(Not moving)* Help yourself, your ladyship.

NOREEN: I'll do it. *(NOREEN rises from her chair)*

GLADYS: *(To LILY)* What's wrong with you?

NOREEN: *(Exchanges glances with LILY)* It's okay. I'll do it. *(She picks up two blocks and fixes them in the fire. She puts the other two near the hearth and sits again.)*

LILY: *(To NOREEN)* How was Jack's funeral? Was it okay?

NOREEN: As well as could be expected. *(Pauses.)* I'm glad it's over with. Jack is laid to rest now.

GLADYS: *(To LILY)* It was small, a small funeral. I counted seven that were present or was it six? Six, if you don't include that vagabond, whoever he was?

NOREEN: Ah, he lives on the hill over there, on Slemish. He's a lost soul. Thinks he's St Patrick.

GLADYS: *(Indignantly)* St Patrick?

LILY: *(Proudly)* Yes. Patrick is said to have minded sheep on Slemish Mountain there. They say God spoke to him and then later when Patrick escaped back to England...

NOREEN: Wales.

LILY: Yes, Wales! ... He had a dream there that he had to convert Ireland to Christianity. So he came back and he did just that!

GLADYS: There was a most terrible smell from him. I never came across anything like it. Worse than horse manure. Terrible. I had to hold my nose. Trust my brother Jack to have someone like him around – even at his funeral.

NOREEN: *(Absentmindedly)* Jack got on well with that ol' devil. But then that was Jack – he got on well with anyone who didn't fit in.

GLADYS: You needn't tell me! I know all about Jack and the sorts of people he befriended. Every oddball there was. And worse.

NOREEN: *(Continuing in something of a trance)* They were of like mind about the church and God and religion too. Jack would say the only hope for Christianity was that the people would rise up and take it back from the priests, and Cadey there, the vagabond, he would swoon around like an old druid saying the message of St Patrick had been corrupted, and he was Patrick come back to Ireland to save us all. God knows what else... *(To LILY.)* I had to hunt him from the house a few times. He would say the most awful things to the children, telling them stories about the Glens and smuggling, and every other type of trickery.

(Offstage, there is the shrill sound of a boy shouting.)

LILY: *(To NOREEN)* I'll see what it is. *(Leaves by Inside door.)*

(GLADYS removes her coat and joins NOREEN by the fire.)

GLADYS: What's wrong with that Lily? Dropping the blocks in the middle of the floor. In my house, a servant wouldn't dare.

NOREEN: Lily is not a servant. She came here to help. She knows Jack from way back. She's a friend.

GLADYS: Nevertheless, it was only a few steps to put into the fire.

NOREEN: *(Determinedly)* It doesn't matter.

(They sit quietly by the fire again for a moment.)

GLADYS: Have you thought about what you will do with the boys?

NOREEN: *(Alert)* What do you mean?

GLADYS: How can you raise three young boys and manage this place... on your own. The boys could be sent to boarding school. It would make things easier on you.

NOREEN: *(Shakes her head adamantly)* We'll stay together.

GLADYS: *(Surprised)* But...

NOREEN: I intend to sell the house Gladys and go back to Dublin.

GLADYS: *(In shock)* Sell the house?

NOREEN: What choice do I have?

(GLADYS is upset by the news. She stands and goes to the bureau. She sits at the bureau seat and pushes aside some papers that are on the table. Pages flutter onto the floor. She leaves them there.)

GLADYS: The White family has lived here in Antrim for nearly three hundred years. *(Enigmatically.)* It is coming to an end.

NOREEN: You are welcome to buy this house Gladys and I'd put it your way. Jack would want that. He would want one of you sisters to have it. But you must realise I need the money. I have young children to support and what means do I have?

GLADYS: (*Ignoring NOREEN, speaks at audience*) I blame Jack! I blame him. He thought of no one but himself... just look at how he's left you all here. With hardly a farthing. And now... this! The family home and all that we had – to be sold off ... to whom? To strangers probably.

NOREEN: (*Diplomatically*) Is it out of the question that you would buy it? Surely one of you would consider it...

(GLADYS goes stage front, near Outside door. Looks at the audience.)

GLADYS: I lived in this house as a young girl. The grounds of the estate were kept as well as the gardens at Hampton Court. (*Points.*) Just there was a fine sloping lawn and from this window you could see down as far as the lake, and sometimes there were swans and moorhens at the edges. I loved this view. (*Happily.*) We had such fine times here. All of us. And whenever Father came home, from whatever far-flung part of the world he was soldiering in, there would be such festivity. One summer we had the most fabulous garden party here. He brought fireworks from China. No one had ever seen fireworks in these parts; it was the first time. Some of the men from Father's regiment came to fire them off. And we were all lined up along the front there; a beautiful summer's evening I remember it so well. So beautiful. And Mother and Father's friends. Kitchener, you know Kitchener don't you, and Buller, who had been in South Africa with Father, and there was a Russian prince too...(*Voice tails away.*) I have such fond memories. (*Her hand moves up to where a piece of wallpaper has separated itself from the wall and is dropping. She fingers it.*) I loved this place... (*She walks a few steps at stage front; she is still looking at the audience.*) But look at the grounds now. (*Angrily.*) Just look at them. Overgrown grass and nettles and cows threading their way back and forth without a care in the world. It is just a bog field now. (*Turns to look at NOREEN.*) You want me to buy this? Why would I? Now it's just a run down house and a bit of a farm.

(Looks over at NOREEN. Bitterly.) There is nothing here to be proud of...anymore.

(Just then there's a knock on the door and LILY enters. She has a tray of tea. She comes over near the fire and puts the tray down on the small serving table. She moves the table near NOREEN.)

LILY: *(About the fire)* That's a lot better now. *(To GLADYS, nodding at the free seat by the fire.)* Sit in there Mrs Napier. Warm your cockles.

(Puts a hand on NOREEN's.) Oh but you're still cold. Sit in, sit in close.

(NOREEN moves closer a little; she seems dejected. GLADYS comes over and sits opposite NOREEN. LILY ministers to the tea and leaves again.)

GLADYS: The Prince of Wales had tea in this room. It was different then of course...*(Points towards the bureau area.)* There were portraits of all the kings and queens and of Queen Victoria, of course – wherever they've gone, I don't know. *(Thinks.)* In those days we had lots of servants. It seemed warmer, though maybe that's my imagination? Jack was there that day. It was before Jack became difficult. He was just a boy then, a spoiled cocksure boy. All the men went hunting along the Braid valley. Do you know the Braid Valley? It's beautiful.

(NOREEN nods.)

They call it the breadbasket of Ulster. They would all go off and we girls would wait around until they returned. The boys would talk about everything and we'd be expected to listen. Oh I used to hate Jack then. He was such a loud mouth. He just wanted to hear his own voice. We listened but it was the Prince we were there to see. *(Takes a teacup and saucer in her hand. Sips in an over-delicate performance.)*

NOREEN: I won't be sorry to be leaving here Gladys. Jack loved this old place, but to me it's cold. *(Pauses.)* They don't like me here. They've made that plain enough. I'm tolerated only because I'm Jack White's wife...and Jack was tolerated only because of who he was – the son of a famous general, the Hero of Ladysmith. *(To GLADYS, more directly.)* But all that is over with now. Jack is dead and I cannot remain on here, for whatever worth a name has...

GLADYS: *(Stirred by the mention of her father's name)* Father was buried on a day like this - a wintry wet day, but even so there were crowds everywhere. Between here and Ballymena, the people were two and three deep on either side of the road. It took four rail carriages to carry the wreaths and flowers that came from all over the Empire. India, Burma, Aden and South Africa - all the places where Father had served. The prettiest, I needn't remind you, from the King and Queen themselves. There was even one from the German Kaiser! I still remember a line of the sermon. *(Loudly.)* "He will be a beautiful likeness of the God that gave Him work to do, that he did so well." *(Thoughtful for a long moment.)*

NOREEN: You remember it well.

GLADYS: No, I had forgotten. I haven't thought of that day in so many years. *(She puts her tea down, and reaches over to where there's a poker. She stokes the fire roughly.)* But coming to this funeral of my brother has made me remember how different things were - once. *(Pauses.)* If the numbers at a funeral say anything, what do they say about my father and my brother? Six and a vagabond for Jack's last performance versus tens of thousands for Father.

NOREEN: Jack is hardly cold in the ground, Gladys...

GLADYS: *(Bitterly)* Your Jack broke his father's heart. The only son, heir to the estate and the name. We all expected Jack to carry on the tradition. Father sent him to Sandhurst for that very reason, and then Jack served in India and afterwards in South Africa, with distinction too. And it all seemed to be going well... but then he changed. Overnight it seemed. Jack came home one time and he was talking all sorts of nonsense. About how he hated the army and all the officers were idiots, and how it wasn't right what we were doing in India. When he told Father he was throwing in his commission in the army, Father didn't leave his office for days. They argued bitterly... I don't think Father ever recovered from the shock. *(Looks at NOREEN.)* Do you know what Jack said, do you know what reason he gave for wanting to end his career in the army?

NOREEN: *(Quietly)* No.

GLADYS: (*Parodies*) ‘I don’t believe in invading other people’s countries’ – that’s what he said. It was like a slap in the face to Father, Father who had risked his life all over the world.

NOREEN: (*In a conciliatory tone*) Please Gladys. I don’t...

GLADYS: I cannot forgive Jack...

STAGE GOES TO DARK

SCENE 2

A short while later. NOREEN is alone in the room. She is standing by the window, looking out at Slemish Mountain. LILY comes in.

LILY: Mrs Napier, Gladys I mean, has gone to see the Vicar.

NOREEN: I'm glad. I need time, I need some time to be on my own.

LILY: She's very anxious to talk to that Vicar, whatever it is?

NOREEN: It's the headstone. She's concerned about the inscription for Jack. The Vicar is looking after it.

(LILY joins NOREEN. She looks out the window but then tires of the view and sits on the arm of the nearby chair. She picks up a newspaper that is on the windowsill. She reads the front page.)

LILY: *(Quietly)* Isn't that awful?

NOREEN: What?

LILY: Oh I'm sorry Noreen. What is wrong with me... on a day like this?

NOREEN: No, no tell me, what is it?

LILY: It says here, three young American soldiers were killed outside Belfast yesterday. The jeep they were driving went out of control and upturned. They were going home in a few days... back to California or maybe it was New York or one of those places anyway.

NOREEN: That is sad.

LILY: *(Puts down the paper)* What must it be like to die in a foreign country? *(Thinks.)* I imagine I'd think of home, no matter how sudden the event. I'd be thinking of my loved ones, so I would...I'd like to think that anyway.

(Both women are silent for a moment.)

NOREEN: It is a sad time for us all. *(Still looking out window, but then turns to LILY.)* You've been such a help Lily...and a friend, especially these last few weeks when I thought I'd go mad and I thought there's

wasn't one here who I could trust or talk to. At least Jack was right about you, at least about that. *(Puts her hand out to LILY. They hold hands.)* But I can't presume on it, not a moment longer. I can't pay you Lily. I don't have a penny to spare.

LILY: You know the money is not why I'm here. I came to help Jack and you and the children. I'll stay as long as you need me, as long as I can.

NOREEN: *(Begins to weep)* What am I going to do?

(LILY stands and goes closer. NOREEN rests her head on her shoulder)

LILY: Today is not the day to worry about the future. Jack is only buried and you need to rest... Things will be clearer in a few days.

NOREEN: *(Angrily)* But I can't put off what's on my mind and has been on my mind for months now, since the day I first heard Jack was sick.

LILY: Noreen, don't...

NOREEN: Damn Jack! Oh I shouldn't say it. God forgive me on the day I buried him...but look at how he's left me. But for this run down house, I'm penniless. And I have three children and bills that I can't pay.

(LILY looks sympathetically.)

LILY: Did you say to Gladys about selling the house?

NOREEN: Yes.

LILY: And what did she say?

NOREEN: She's not happy that I'm here at all. I'm like some cuckoo in the nest to her. They think I trapped Jack into this marriage, they think I got myself pregnant so that I could get all this. *(Throws her hand at the room)* This! This bloody place. I never wanted to come here, I never wanted to have anything to do with it. *(Directly at LILY.)* I was happy on my own. I loved being in London. I had my own job. I was learning Italian and Greek, and now look at me. God help me, how did I end up here? In Co. Antrim, on my own, with three young children.

LILY: Still no matter what they think, this place is yours now. You sell it if you want to!

NOREEN: *(In a resigned tone)* Yes, I'm Jack's wife lawfully... *(Looks at LILY.)* But I don't want to fall out with Gladys or any of the Whites,

Lily. With Jack gone, they're all that I have. Their name at least means something... (*Bitterly.*) More than Jack's that's for sure.

LILY: Did Gladys say she would buy the place?

NOREEN: No.

LILY: (*Surprised*) Will any of them buy it?

NOREEN: No... I don't think so. But Gladys is bothered by it.

(*Looking directly at LILY.*) There was something about how she looked at me... she blames Jack of course.

LILY: You'll get a good price for it anyway. It'll tide you over until you can find your feet again. (*Puts hand to NOREEN's shoulder.*) And you will find your feet Noreen, you will! You're a strong woman.

NOREEN: (*After a pause. Looking out the window again*) My people call this place Black Protestant Ulster. When they heard I was coming up here to live with Jack, they were fearful for me. I laughed at them. I said how different could it be? It's Ireland isn't it, just a different part? But I was wrong, Lily, I was wrong. I was only here a few days when I realised how wrong I was. I wasn't welcome. They were suspicious of Jack anyhow, but me, a Catholic, coming into the big house, they didn't like that and they made sure I knew it. I just wanted us to live quietly here, Lily. It could've been okay, and with a bit of work and money it could've been made tolerable. But not Jack. Jack couldn't be quiet. Jack had to speak up and speak out. Jack had to take them all on, single-handed if need be.

LILY: I have admiration for your Jack, Lord rest his soul. He helped William and me when we needed help... I won't ever forget that.

NOREEN: (*Wearily*) He went too far. (*Looks at LILY.*) Even in the hospital, as he was dying he took time out to remind the doctors that there were some Protestants in Ulster who supported a united Ireland!

LILY: Jack had no fear. But you know sometimes I wonder if that had more to do with who he was. You know, the son of the big house, the famous military background. His father's reputation. In some way it rubbed off on Jack, made him arrogant to the powers that be. He had no fear of the police, the RUC or the B-Specials - he'd run at 'em like a bull!

NOREEN: I suppose I was lonely, I suppose I wanted someone of my own... but when I met Jack I didn't bank on getting pregnant. I didn't bank on being here on my own in Antrim, just 9 years later, with three children to raise and hardly a friend in the world.

LILY: The boys are a gift Noreen. In time they'll stand to you.

NOREEN: Yes, I know that.

(NOREEN's gaze returns to the window. LILY wanders over to bureau table. There is a page in the typewriter. She scrutinises it. Then examines a bundle of papers.)

LILY: There's so much stuff here, what will you do with it all?

NOREEN: *(Looking)* With all that? What will I do with it? What can I do? It's rubbish, all of it.

(LILY continues with her examination. Then she notices a portrait at the side of table. She holds it up. It's of Jack White with James Connolly when they were in the Citizen Army together.)

NOREEN: *(Coming over, sees the portrait in LILY's hands)* Jack loved that picture.

LILY: What's it doing on the floor then?

NOREEN: Like everything, it just got left somewhere and no one bothered with it anymore.

LILY: You should hang it up Noreen – for the boys. They should have a picture of their father to look at now that he's gone. Something to remember him by. *(She looks over at the picture of Sir George Stuart White above the mantelpiece.)* Or else they'll think that old codger is their father. Don't fancy him at all.

NOREEN: *(Coming alongside NOREEN, looks at the Connolly-White picture)* Jack loved that picture for one reason and one reason only. Because he's standing next to Connolly, his hero.

LILY: James Connolly! Is that James Connolly?

NOREEN: That's him. Co-founder with Jack of the Irish Citizen Army. Leader of the 1916 rebellion. Republican, socialist. Shot by a British Army firing squad as he sat in his wheelchair.

LILY: Fine looking man too.

NOREEN: Oh Jack had all the stories on them. You know I used to like listening to them once. The Countess Markievicz. Sheehy-Skeffington. Pearse and so on. But I tired of it. I tired of it when I saw this place and I saw what it would mean to go on talking about James Connolly. Lily, you don't talk about James Connolly around here and you certainly don't talk about a united Ireland, not in this part of Antrim, not if you want to have friends... any friends.

LILY: (*Matter-of-factly*) Some things have to be said Noreen.

NOREEN: Not those things.

LILY: Oh they do. They have to be said! Say them! Aye, say them! I've had it with keeping shut, so I've had. Here in Northern Ireland, a Catholic is a second class citizen, is even worse than a second class citizen, he's a dog. You know that too Noreen. You've felt it since you came here, tell me you haven't?

NOREEN: There's so much hatred, I don't understand this place.

LILY: You see the thing about Jack, the great thing about your Jack, was that he knew things could be different. He knew Protestants and Catholics could live together – it's what he fought for all his life and I say fair dues.

NOREEN: He didn't have much success!

LILY: It's easy to stir people to hatred when they have nothing and they're looking for a way out. What has the Protestant worker got here, not a blessed thing? I know, my own William, Lord rest his soul, was a Protestant and a worker. And we struggled all our lives in Belfast for just scraps. The workers are set against one another.... that is how it is.

NOREEN: (*Wearily*) Ah, you remind me of Jack. But it's just all talk. Where has it got any of us? (*Looks at the portrait.*) And you forget Lily, Jack hated our church – Jack hated the Catholic religion and what it stood for. Scratch the surface with our Jack and you found a Protestant underneath, a real Protestant too. 'There's no Roman bishop is going to tell me how to talk with God,' that's what he used to say.

LILY: Aye, the Protestants are right about some things - the bishops particularly.

NOREEN: Lily!

LILY: Aye. God forgive me but I have no love for the bishops, for any bishop. They never came to us poor people. When we asked for more, they told us to be quiet. And when we walked together, they said stay in your place!

NOREEN: You must have faith Lily.

LILY: Faith I have, aye. But I'm not a sheep... I'll not do what I don't see sense in doing. Not anymore. I'll not. I'm done with it.

(Abruptly, LILY puts down the portrait of Connolly and White. Takes NOREEN's hand. Determinedly.)

Let's say a prayer, Noreen, you and me together. A Catholic prayer.

Let's say it for Jack.

NOREEN: That's a good idea. It would make me feel better.

(NOREEN takes a set of Rosary beads from her cardigan pocket and holds them.)

LILY: It'll be a first for this house, so it will – a Catholic prayer.

NOREEN: I dare say.

(The two women kneel close together and bless themselves. NOREEN leads.)

Noreen and LILY: Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou amongst women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of...

(Suddenly, there's a loud knocking off stage. Both women look surprised. LILY blesses herself quickly and gets up. She tidies herself and goes to Outside door and offstage. Again a loud knocking is heard.)

NOREEN: *(Blesses herself too and stands up)* Who could it be? *(She goes to the window to see.)*

KAVANAGH: *(Off stage; in an anxious tone)* My name is Matt Kavanagh. I'm an old friend of Jack's. I came for the funeral, but I was delayed. There was no sailing on the Irish Sea... because of the bad weather.

LILY: *(Offstage)* Come in! Mrs White is inside. Come in. You poor man, you're drenched.

KAVANAGH: *(Offstage)* To the bone and that was only during the last hike up here. *(Lily and Kavanagh enter by Outside door)* A good man gave me a lift all the ways from Larne. Only for that...

(On seeing NOREEN by the window, KAVANAGH quietens immediately. LILY sidles ahead and goes to the centre of the room, between NOREEN and KAVANAGH. She beckons to KAVANAGH to proceed. KAVANAGH is an elderly grey-haired man, nimble of manner and touch; he has a very slight limp and uses a walking stick. Though well attired, his clothes are those of a working man. He speaks with a Liverpool accent.)

LILY: *(Unsure, to Noreen)* This man was a friend of Jack's. Matt Kavanagh, is it you said your name was...?

(KAVANAGH goes to NOREEN.)

KAVANAGH: *(Puts hand out to NOREEN to shake, but NOREEN is reluctant)* I was very sorry to hear of your loss Mrs White. Dear Jack, he was such a fine man, a gem... *(Half turns to LILY to address her also.)* I so wanted to make it to the funeral. But there were heavy seas and I didn't think the boat would sail at all at one point. Look, I have this... *(Fumbles in his inside jack coat pocket; his walking stick falls with a clatter. Retrieves a small yellow envelope)* This came all the way from Spain, well the south of France to be correct. It's a message of condolence from the comrades there. Please, it is for you.

(KAVANAGH holds the envelope out to NOREEN. She takes it but then moves away back across the room to the fireplace.

KAVANAGH looks at LILY.)

LILY: Let me take your coat Mr Kavanagh.

KAVANAGH: Please, Matt.

LILY: I'll have it dried in the kitchen.

(KAVANAGH undoes his coat and scarf and takes them off. He hands them to LILY. He picks up his walking stick and ambles over near the fire, but NOREEN commands the area. KAVANAGH rubs his hands together.)

KAVANAGH: A fire's the thing. I'm not able to take the cold like when I was a lad. *(To NOREEN.)* Before I came up, I looked around the

village to see where Jack was being buried, but there was no one who could tell...

NOREEN: (*Officiously*) It was a private ceremony. Jack was buried in the family plot by the Presbyterian Service Hall.

KAVANAGH: (*Surprised*) Oh. (*Looks at LILY and then at NOREEN.*) Was that his wish? I thought Jack had said...

NOREEN: (*Coldly*) That is where he's buried – it's over and done with now.

LILY: (*Quickly*) I'll bring tea.

(LILY leaves. There's an uncertain silence.)

KAVANAGH: You don't remember me, do you Mrs White?

NOREEN: I can't say that I do.

KAVANAGH: We met! Just before you and Jack were married, in London, in the summer of 1937. Remember? We met a few times. Once at the theatre. I would often be there with Alfred Rosenbaum, the Jewish man – he was a tailor and general repairer of things – (*Off-handedly*) Alfred would repair anything.

NOREEN: I don't recall, I'm afraid. It's a long time ago.

KAVANAGH: (*Thinks about this*) Only nine years! Nothing, nothing at all. Jack was only just back from Spain then... He was all fired up about the revolution. (*Morosely.*) Weren't we all? We thought this was it, we thought the Spanish workers were finally going to do it... (*Wistfully.*) The Revolution! That was all Jack could talk about... apart from you that is! (*Laughs gaily.*) Jack was in love with you for sure. You were the last run of his luck, that was how he described you to me.

NOREEN: "Oh how this spring of love resembleth/ the uncertain glory of an April day."

KAVANAGH: (*Smiles*) Shakespeare! (*With passion.*) Do you still love the theatre, Noreen? Jack said you adored it.

NOREEN: It has been many years since I was to anything. I listen on the radio sometimes.

KAVANAGH: I was to see Julius Caesar last month. At Covent Garden. A fine performance but I do not like Gerard Mailer – he was a very poor Caesar. Played him like an oaf! Caesar is not an oaf or a bumpkin.

Caesar had a gift for power, for administration... *(With a wave of a hand.)* I hate a bad Caesar!

NOREEN: We are far removed from such matters here in Antrim, Mr Kavanagh.

KAVANAGH: *(Matter-of-factly)* Yes, it does seem bleak.

NOREEN: Bleak is not the word I would use, Mr Kavanagh. I would use dour. And black. *(With venom.)* A dour, black place full of hatred.

(KAVANAGH stares at NOREEN for a moment, taken aback by the tone of her description.)

KAVANAGH: *(Nods to the portrait over the fireplace. Attempts to lighten the mood)* That is not Jack?

NOREEN: That is Jack's father, the war hero.

KAVANAGH: Is it then. *(Goes closer to scrutinise the portrait; reads with feigned gravitas.)* "Field Marshall Sir George Stuart White, 1835-1912, Hero of Ladysmith." *(Suddenly roots in his pocket for a pair of glasses. Pulls them out. They are held together with tape.)* What does that say? *(Puts on the specs. Scrutinises. Quotes.)* "Thank God I kept the Flag Flying. June 1901". *(Looking at NOREEN.)* What does that mean?

NOREEN: It was what he said when the siege of Ladysmith was relieved. During the Boer War! That date is Ladysmith Day.

KAVANAGH: Is it now? *(Steps back and looks at the portrait again.)* I can't say I see a likeness to Jack.

NOREEN: Then you must be blind, Mr Kavanagh.

KAVANAGH: Well he's a bit bald like Jack was. *(Takes off his specs carefully.)* My sight isn't what it used to be.

(LILY enters with tea. She puts the tray on the small table.)

NOREEN: *(To LILY)* You shouldn't have.

KAVANAGH: *(Mock-seriously)* Such fine service. *(Bows.)* This is indeed what I need – a fire and some tea.

LILY: It must've been a hard journey for you, Mr Kavanagh, so it must. At your age and all?

(LILY pours the tea and hands a cup to NOREEN and then to KAVANAGH.)

KAVANAGH: It wasn't so much hard as sad. Poor Jack. Gone from us... and to where? No, I'm glad I could get here. I'm glad I'm still able. And I'm glad to finally see where it is Jack came from. I heard about this house many times. (*Looks around.*) A fine house and many fine things inside it too. (*To NOREEN.*) Did you read that note?

NOREEN: (*Nods to the mantelpiece*) It's there.

KAVANAGH: But aren't you going to read it? (*To LILY, sensing he needs support.*) It is from the Spanish comrades, from the Confederación Nacional del Trabajo, the anarchist union of workers that fought against Franco during the Civil War. Jack was a member for a while. (*To NOREEN.*) It was something your husband was very proud of, that he could help the comrades in Spain. (*Suddenly in a sad tone.*) But that was another time. So many of the comrades are now dead. And those that aren't are languishing in the awful refugee camps in the south of France. (*Looks at NOREEN but she doesn't seem interested. To LILY.*) Jack ran guns for the comrades in Spain, you know. Damn fine guns too. German guns. The best... (*Morosely.*) As we've found to our cost.

LILY: (*To NOREEN*) Is that true? (*To KAVANAGH.*) How did Jack do that? I never knew that.

KAVANAGH: A fine trick it was. (*In a secretive tone.*) An order for rifles, machine-guns, and ammunition, was placed with a Czech arms company... by (*emphasis*) a very respectable arms agent in Soho in London – that was Jack, masquerading, acting pompous and terribly, terribly proper. (*Emphasis.*) The Nazis never suspected. The deal went through without a hitch and the order was shipped to Hamburg, from where it went by boat to Alicante in Spain. There was a British warship outside the harbour at the time, enforcing the blockade against the revolutionaries, but Jack had all the papers in order, and the fact that the arms had been shipped from Germany, inclined the British captain to believe they weren't going to the revolutionaries! Sure that blockade was only against our side! Anyway the British warship could not hold them up and the arms went through to Spain and the anarchists. A fine bit of work! (*Laughs loudly and shouts, putting a fist in the air.*) Viva la Revolución!

LILY: Very smart of Jack.

KAVANAGH: Masterful.

NOREEN: *(Sullenly)* Where is it you're from Mr Kavanagh?

KAVANAGH: Please, Matt.

NOREEN: There's a familiarity to the accent, but I can't place it.

KAVANAGH: I was born in Dublin, in Irishtown, but raised in Liverpool.

NOREEN: Well Mr Kavanagh, Jack's exploits are fine stories indeed but it's a pity that you couldn't have been at the funeral... Because you would've seen for yourself how many people around here want to remember Jack. Apart from close family, there were only a few others... Oh, I mention the RUC, of course, checking to see who else might turn up.

KAVANAGH: *(Melodramatically. Looking around as if he was a fly-by-night)* The RUC! I better watch out. Anarchist on the loose! *(To LILY. Pleading tone.)* You won't give me away, will you?

LILY: *(Laughing)* You're safe with us, you brigand!

KAVANAGH: *(Goes to LILY. Puts a hand to each of her shoulders)* I knew I could rely on you, I knew that right away. *(With a swing of one hand to an imaginary troop of comrades following at his rear.)* On to the republic, the workers republic, I mean! On! On! On comrades.

LILY: You're half-mad, Matt Kavanagh... *(Noticing NOREEN's displeasure, discontinues.)*

KAVANAGH: *(Noticing NOREEN, as well)* You buried Jack in an awful hurry Mrs White. Perhaps there would've been more here if more notice had been given. I myself tried my damndest to get here but I was too late...

NOREEN: *(Shakes her head sourly)* If we had waited a year there wouldn't have been any more, apart from you that is.

KAVANAGH: I know of plenty in Belfast and Dublin and London who would've come... *(To LILY, unsure.)* Do you mind me asking, but why was it a private ceremony?

LILY: Oh that was Gladys...

NOREEN: *(Sternly)* Lily!

(LILY steps back. She has broken a confidence. NOREEN is annoyed.)

KAVANAGH: Who is Gladys?

LILY: *(Going over to the window, looks out)* The rain has stopped. Maybe I'll take the boys outside for awhile. We'll collect some kindling; they'd like that.

NOREEN: Wrap them well, Lily, or they'll catch their death.

(LILY leaves, shooting a quick smile to KAVANAGH as she exits by Inside door.)

KAVANAGH: Mrs White, I'm sorry, I've upset you. I didn't mean that.

NOREEN: We're all upset Mr Kavanagh.

KAVANAGH: It's a terrible blow. And with the children and all.

(Delicately.) Do you think they understand?

NOREEN: Maybe Anthony, he's old enough, but the other two...

(NOREEN turns away to keep her composure.)

KAVANAGH: Jack was so happy to have children again, so late in his life. He wrote me many times about them, what a joy they were. *(After a brief silence.)* Perhaps I shouldn't ask Mrs White, I know it's a difficult time, but do you have means, did Jack leave you something?

NOREEN: *(A brief silence)* The house and the land, nothing else.

KAVANAGH: The land is good.

NOREEN: I don't know anything about land, I'm a city woman.

KAVANAGH: Well you must get help then, you must get someone who knows about these things.

NOREEN: You don't understand Mr Kavanagh. There's isn't anyone who'll help me. I'm Jack White's wife. Jack White, republican and anarchist. And I'm a Dublin woman, and a Catholic to boot. I have nothing going for me. There's no one who'll help. Not around here.

KAVANAGH: There must be someone?

(KAVANAGH sips at his tea.)

NOREEN: *(Shaking her head)* I don't know if you know anything about this part of Ireland, Mr Kavanagh, but this is a place apart from Dublin. I'm a Dublin woman... but this is Antrim, Northern Ireland and here Jack had very few friends. *(Pauses.)* Do you know why, Mr Kavanagh?

KAVANAGH: I can guess.

NOREEN: *(Severely)* Because Jack couldn't live here but for berating his neighbours about who and what they stood for. It's that simple.

KAVANAGH: If Jack made enemies because of who he was and what he stood for, then he's no different to any of us.

NOREEN: There's a time and a place Mr Kavanagh. But Jack never seemed to realise that. He never knew when to shut up.

KAVANAGH: *(Thoughtfully, looking at the fire)* Perhaps I am odd, but that's what I loved about Jack. He was just plain outspoken, wasn't he, and in the right sort of way too. Maybe too headstrong for his own good sometimes. No patience, I mean, but he could tell between right and wrong...

NOREEN: *(Bitterly)* Damn your right and wrong.

(KAVANAGH is taken aback. Looks at NOREEN and gets up. He ambles around the room looking at the wall pictures.)

KAVANAGH: They led a squire's life, didn't they? I often said it to Jack, it's never the same making your way in the world once you have connections. *(Looks at NOREEN.)* When I first met Jack, it was... *(Thinks.)* 1933, I think. At an anti-fascist meeting in London. Jack was in the audience and he got up and made this fiery speech about fighting fascism... I couldn't get over the accent for a while. *(Mimics a toffee-type British accent, quotes.)* "We'll have to fight them hand to hand." In our circle there were many who didn't believe it: someone with Jack's background and privilege – what was he doing with us, hapless revolutionaries?

NOREEN: I couldn't have put it better myself, Mr Kavanagh.

(KAVANAGH moves further along the room. He is now at the bureau. He stops.)

KAVANAGH: Jack's papers. *(Looks to read the page that is sitting in the typewriter. Then looks at the manuscript that's lying to one side. Sits at the desk and examines the stack of diary books at other side. Then the letters.)* Jack wrote that he had finished the remaining part of his autobiography. *(Turns to look at NOREEN.)* Was that so?

NOREEN: Yes. *(Disinterestedly)* I think so. I never paid much attention. *(Indicates cursorily to the desk where KAVANAGH is.)* When he started to

feel unwell, he spent a lot of time there.

KAVANAGH: *(Pounces on an old worn official document, laughs loudly)*

Aagh. Look at this! *(Turns to NOREEN with a page in his hand. Reads piously.)*

“ORDER

CIVIL AUTHORITIES (SPECIAL POWERS) ACT (NORTHERN
IRELAND)

WHEREAS CAPTAIN JAMES ROBERT WHITE, DSO of Dublin is suspected of being about to act in a manner prejudicial to the preservation of the peace and the maintenance of order in Northern Ireland:

I, THE RIGHT HONOURABLE SIR RICHARD DAWSON BATES, Minister of Home Affairs for Northern Ireland, by virtue of the powers vested in me, as Civil Authority, by the CIVIL AUTHORITIES (SPECIAL POWERS) ACT (NORTHERN IRELAND), 1922...”

La-di-da-da-da

“...do hereby prohibit the aforesaid James White from residing in or entering the following area, that is to say, the Counties of Armagh, Down, Fermanagh, Tyrone, Antrim, the County of the City of Belfast, the County of the City of Londonderry.”

(Thinks. Looks over at NOREEN.) That’s the whole damn area of Northern Ireland.

NOREEN: *(Looking up from the fire)* What was that Mr Kavanagh?

KAVANAGH: Have you not seen it Mrs White? It’s the Order, the exclusion order that was served on Jack. It is here, the document itself. Signed by Sir Richard Dawson-Bates, none other. Date 1931. Prohibited Jack from residing in any part of Northern Ireland. *(Puts a finger to his head as if he’s thinking.)* 1931, 1931...that was the time of the unemployed riots, wasn’t it?

NOREEN: I have no idea really Mr Kavanagh.

KAVANAGH: They cut the relief payment to the unemployed forcing them into the poor houses. But the workers in Belfast fought back. Catholics and Protestants fighting together... for once. And Jack was in the thick of it...

(KAVANAGH goes to the front of the stage with his walking stick. Holding it about his head as if it is a flagstaff, he waves it back and forth.)

Can you imagine? The workers of Belfast, Catholics and Protestants all, marching up the Newtownards Road, the cranes of the shipyards in the background. Red banner unfurled. Up the workers republic. Get rid of capitalism. Solidarity forever. *(Stares distantly out over the audience. Begins to hum The International. Stops after a verse. Holds up the Order document.)* That is what all this is about.

(NOREEN continues to look into the fire.)

KAVANAGH: *(Continues reading from page piously)*

“AND IF the aforesaid Captain White subsequently to the service of this order upon him, resides in or enters the area hereinbefore specified, he shall be guilty of an offence against the said Regulations.

Given under my hand at Belfast this

6TH. Day of OCTOBER, 1931

(KAVANAGH POUNDS ON THE TABLE FOR EFFECT.)

R. DAWSON-BATES

Minister of Home Affairs for Northern Ireland

CIVIL AUTHORITY”

(KAVANAGH puts the page down.)

KAVANAGH: I can still hear Jack. *(Speaks in a mildly upper class British accent.)* Exiled from own country, how dare they! Those Unionist bigots.

NOREEN: *(Suddenly)* Who is this Dawson-Bates?

KAVANAGH: *(Dramatically)* Famous! The first Minister for Home Affairs in Northern Ireland. Responsible for the Special Powers act... One of most draconian pieces of legislation known. Reputed to have said once that he didn't even want the most menial jobs in his Ministry given to Catholics lest it give the Papacy a toe-hold in the Government of Northern Ireland.

(KAVANAGH moves his seat closer to the bureau and begins to look through more stuff. Turns to NOREEN.) Is it okay if I look, Mrs White?

NOREEN: Yes, do as you wish. I have no interest.

(NOREEN gets up and goes to the window and looks out.)

KAVANAGH: *(Picks up the diaries)* These are Jack's diaries. *(Sifts through*

the books.) From Spain and before that. *(Examines a diary, then put it down and picks up a bunch of letters. Sift through the letters.)* Here's one from me, September 1935. *(After a while, excitedly.)* There's a letter here from Roger Casement. *(Holds it up.)* It's on prison notepaper. Pentoville Prison, June 6th 1916...*(Turns to look at NOREEN; she is still looking out the window.)*

Written just before Casement was executed.

(KAVANAGH begins to read. In the background, the Foggy Dew is heard, playing at a slow tempo.)

“Dear Jack, You cannot imagine my surprise when I heard you were here in the same prison as I. What an odd and fitting coincidence? Sadly it doesn't seem as if we will get the opportunity to meet. Time is running out for me, as I'm sure you know. The British Government is determined to execute me and I have long lost any hope in the idea of a reprieve. This despite the fact that I know that many people out there are trying to help me, doing all they can.

Jack, it seems such a long time since we spoke together at that meeting in Ballymoney. October 1913, wasn't it? We were so hopeful that night, that we could fight Carson. Little did either of us know what was ahead? Little did either of us know about the passions and anger that there are in Ulster and about the great dilemma it is for our beloved Ireland. But we did the right thing Jack. Not all the Protestants of Ulster are against Home Rule, and Carson and his lot had better realise that. We spoke out and that is a good thing.

They find it strange here Jack, that I, a Protestant by birth, should ally myself with Ireland and the cause of freedom. But the Protestant was first to say no to Papal authority and the corruption of absolute power. I am a lover of freedom and that if anything is the explanation for why I am in this awful predicament. But enough of me and of that, Jack. About you, I hear that you have taken up with the workers' cause. That it was to help poor James Connolly that you ended up in your cell. They won't tell much else, Jack, about what you are trying to do except to say that you are a belligerent prisoner. Well, what can I say about that, dear Jack, except that no man should be in prison! It is the most cruel of places. Go on rebelling Jack and when I'm gone,

think of me.

Yours sincerely.

Roger Casement.”

(As the letter is being read, NOREEN goes to Inside door and leaves the room to KAVANAGH. As KAVANAGH finishes the letter, the stage goes to dark.)

ACT II

Later the same day.

SCENE 1

Dusk. The room is poorly lit, as there are only candles and oil lamps for light. The fire is blazing.

LILY is alone, tidying the bureau. She notices the portrait of Jack White and James Connolly. She examines it again, standing it on the table. She goes over to the mantelpiece with the portrait and leans it in front of that of Sir George. There is a knock on Outside door; KAVANAGH looks in. Seeing LILY, he enters.

KAVANAGH: *(Rubbing his hands together)* It's bitter. *(Goes to the fire and stands as near as possible. Puts walking stick to one side and rubs his hands together.)* Where's Mrs White?

LILY: She went into Broughshane with the boys. There was some business...

KAVANAGH: It's not a day to be out with young children, poor things.

LILY: She needed to get out, so she did, if only to be away from the memories – for a while anyway.

(KAVANAGH removes his coat and scarf, and puts them across one of the fireside chairs.)

KAVANAGH: At least it has stopped raining.

LILY: *(Nodding to the portrait of White and Connolly)* What d'ye think?

KAVANAGH: Spot on! *(Stands back to look)* An improvement on the old fella, I'd say.

(LILY backs away to obtain a better perspective on the portrait.)

LILY: I like it.

KAVANAGH: *(After a pause)* I was to the grave... Poor Jack, buried in the family plot. That wasn't his wish.

LILY: *(Quietly, in something of a whisper)* Gladys insisted.

KAVANAGH: Gladys?

LILY: Jack's sister, Lady Napier, Lord Napier's wife. She's here. She was the only one of *them* to come for the funeral.

KAVANAGH: Jack never mentioned her.

LILY: They weren't close. Like chalk and cheese I'd say. But she came anyway. **KAVANAGH:** Jack did not want to be buried in the family plot. He wrote me about it.

LILY: At least he's with his own kin.

KAVANAGH: His own kin indeed! They did everything they could to silence him. You know he told me once that his family tried to put him in a mental hospital. After he resigned his commission in the army. They just couldn't conceive of the idea that maybe, just maybe, there was something not quite right about the British Army and what it was doing in the world. They thought Jack was mad, mad to be giving up his grand future in the officer's corps, mad to be saying what he was saying about Britain and its Empire. Oh they had it all arranged – a doctor on standby and a hospital for him to go to, just sign there Jack! A period of convalescence and rest so he could *reconsider* his decision. Oh they were a fine family in that way, and now they're back ordaining where and with whom he should be buried. I thought Noreen would be better than that. I thought she, at least, would respect his wishes.

LILY: Noreen's in no state to be taking on Gladys... poor thing. And there's the issue of money too... I don't know if Noreen could afford an alternative.

KAVANAGH: Of course she could. She's sitting on a fortune. This place and all the land, make no mistake. A lot of people would be plenty glad of what she has.

LILY: She doesn't see it like that.

KAVANAGH: She was born with a silver spoon in her mouth.

(KAVANAGH goes to a chair and sits. He looks into the fire.)

LILY: *(LILY puts a pillow behind him.)* You must be tired after all your gallivanting. Rest for a while.

KAVANAGH: *(Looking into the fire)* "Of what a quality is courage made/That he who gently walked our city streets/Talking of poetry or philosophy /Spinoza, Keats. / Should lie like any martyred soldier/ His brave

and fertile brain dried quite away/And the limbs that carried him from cradle to death's outpost/ Growing down into a foreign soil.”

LILY: Who is that now you're talking about?

KAVANAGH: Charlie Donnelly, it was written for. An International Brigader. Jack knew him well. A young lad, died in Spain fighting the Franco and the fascists.

LILY: Death and dying is all I hear about these days. Are you a man of letters then Mr Kavanagh?

KAVANAGH: (*Touching LILY's knee*) No, a working man. Can't you tell? (*Winks.*) I know some love poetry too, if that interests you?

LILY: Oh go on now.

KAVANAGH: I'm beyond it all, sadly. My own time won't be long now. (*Leans over and knocks his stick against the foot of LILY's chair.*) Can you guess my age?

LILY: Late 30s!

KAVANAGH: Double it and add eleven.

LILY: You're well maintained!

KAVANAGH: “So we'll go no more a roving/ So late into the night, /Though heart be still as loving, / And the moon be still as bright. /For the sword outwears its sheath, /And the sheath wears out the breast, /And the heart must pause to breathe, /And love itself have rest.”

LILY: You have a verse for every occasion.

KAVANAGH: (*Knocks on his knee with his fist*) Before this happened, I spent my life on the building sites of Liverpool and London ... And there seemed nothing better for it sometimes but to recite poetry. I know some bawdy ones as well?

LILY: I've heard them all. I worked the bars of Belfast and I heard one or two there, so I did. (*Indicates to KAVANAGH's bad leg.*) What was it that happened?

KAVANAGH: I fell from a roof. Badly. Broke my leg in a hundred different places. It was never right since. And they had no use for me after that. The worker's no good if he can't make his boss a shilling... I was thrown to the knacker's yard.

LILY: What did you do?

KAVANAGH: A comrade helped me. He was a hairdresser and he convinced me to come and work with him. *(Puts his hand on LILY's knee.)* On a co-operative basis of course. The exploitation of labour is wrong!

LILY: You're right there.

KAVANAGH: So if you want a haircut? I'm good value. But why would you, you have beautiful hair Lily.

LILY: Aaght not anymore. *(Feels her hair. Laughs.)* But maybe I'll do just that, for a change.

(They sit in silence for a moment.)

KAVANAGH: I only did it a bit... the haircutting I mean. The truth is, I am interested in letters and that sort. I collect information now. I don't like things to be forgotten. *(Pauses.)* If you don't mind me asking, how is it you knew Jack?

LILY: My husband Billy, the Lord have mercy on his soul, was a radical too, like Jack. *(Laughs a little.)* I suppose I was too. Around the time the Outdoor Relief Strike, 1931 that was, Billy was threatened a number of times. Billy used to think it was because of his politics, because he was a union man, but I'll tell you why he was threatened – it was because of me, because he was married to a Catholic... mind you my Billy never saw it like that, he didn't even see himself as a Protestant anymore. He was an atheist when anyone asked. He was on the side of the workers, Billy was, no matter what their background or religion, that was all that mattered to him. Well anyway things got serious, so they did. *(Stops, holds her crook arm subconsciously, like she was cradling a baby.)* They tried to force us out of our home.

KAVANAGH: Who did?

LILY: The Orangemen. They came for us. They weren't having any of this Catholics and Protestants getting together across the Falls and Shankill... *(Gets upset.)* They were drunk with hatred.

KAVANAGH: I'm sorry... I've upset you now with my questions ... I didn't realise.

LILY: *(Puts her hand out to touch KAVANAGH's)* No, no. It's not that. It's just, it all reminds me of my Billy, so it does. *(Regains her composure. Continues in a more optimistic tone.)* See that night, after what happened, after what they did, Billy made a vow to me... that we'd be together always.

And we were too, Matt, we were, but Billy went off to the war, I suppose he had to. *(Resigned.)* He wanted to. Billy was killed on D-day. *(LILY stares into the fire. There's a long pause.)* Anyway, after they attacked the house, I wanted to go away, go anywhere, but we couldn't, could we? What did we have? Nothing, we were just working people. We hadn't a penny, just what Billy could earn on the boats some morning. We had to stay put! To help us over the worst of the period, Billy got some of the men from the strike to come and stay in the house with us... and one of those men was Jack. That's how I came to meet Jack White. Of course the word went around quickly. *(Speaks in a whisper, secretive tone.)* "That's *the* Jack White, of the Citizen Army, son of the big war hero." But Jack was a lovely man, I thought, a straight talker that's true, but strong, sure of where he stood. The sort of man you needed when you were in trouble... that's what I always thought. I admired Jack. And the Orangemen, they hated him. Something about Jack and his background, you see he was one them in a way – he unnerved them.

KAVANAGH: He was a figure of a man, wasn't he, our Jack. Not many would take him on, one on one.

LILY: When Jack knew he was dying he wanted someone to come here to help Noreen, just for a few weeks or so, and he asked me if I'd be able. As I'm on my own now, I thought why not? It's a way of repaying a debt.

KAVANAGH: Noreen is glad of you.

LILY: Aye she is. And we've got on fine. But she's bitter, more than I can understand. And she's found it hard, here. They haven't taken to her and it isn't only because of Jack. She's a Catholic...

KAVANAGH: What was it about Jack and Catholics! He had a thing for Catholics. His first wife was a Catholic too. Seems to me he was trying to make up for all the divisions in this country, single-handed.

LILY: *(Smiles)* A man would look at it like that.

KAVANAGH: But it was a mistake to come back here, to Antrim, into the thick of it all.

LILY: Jack loved this old place, Antrim and Slemish and the Glens of course. He loved it - like a mother's lap he called it. But I suppose he was being practical too. With a new wife and young Anthony on the way, they needed a house and roof over their heads. Somewhere to raise the children.

KAVANAGH: But here!

(Inside door opens and GLADYS enters. She is holding a fancy display box, like a jewellery box. She's surprised to see LILY, and then KAVANAGH cosy by the fire.)

GLADYS: *(In a pained, imperious tone.)* Where is Noreen?

(KAVANAGH stands, supporting himself with his stick; waits to be introduced.)

LILY: *(Standing too)* Lady Napier, this is Matt Kavanagh, an old friend of Jack's. He came for the funeral but was delayed because of the weather. He only got here this afternoon.

KAVANAGH: *(Goes forward stiffly and puts his hand out)* My condolences, Mrs Napier. Your brother was such a fine...

GLADYS: Yes, yes. *(Avoids shaking KAVANAGH's hand. To LILY.)* Where is Noreen?

LILY: She went into Broughshane. She'll be back soon, any minute.

(GLADYS goes to the bureau table. She pushes the papers to one side, along with the typewriter. She sets the box down and opens it carefully.)

GLADYS: *(Proudly)* Father's war medals. I found them. I knew they were here somewhere.

LILY: *(Coming over. Looks closely)* Oh they're lovely.

GLADYS: Father left the medals to all his children, but as the only son, Jack was left the best ones. I feared he might have sold these on – they're quite valuable you know... *(Picking out one of the medals, delicately. Proudly holds it up.)* The Victoria Cross!

LILY: *(Excited)* I've never seen a Victoria Cross before.

(KAVANAGH also moves nearer but does not join them at the table. He looks distastefully at the scene.)

GLADYS: *(Holding up another medal)* And this is the Knight Commander of the Order of Bath. It is a beautiful medal, isn't it? Father won this for the Burma campaign. It was one of his most successful commands.

KAVANAGH: And the most brutal too from what I have read.

GLADYS: *(Turns, looks at KAVANAGH)* I beg your pardon.

KAVANAGH: *(Coming nearer)* If my memory serves me right, the Burma

campaign was one of the more brutal in the annals of British history. Isn't that true?

GLADYS: What do you mean, brutal? Father was a soldier, an officer in Her Majesty's service.

KAVANAGH: *(In a school-mannerish tone; he is clearly talking about something he knows a lot about.)* The Burma Campaign... properly speaking, the annexation of upper Burma by Britain, am I not right? *(To LILY.)* The British manufactured a simple way of humiliating the Burmese Royal Family. When the Burmese reacted defiantly, the British marched their troops in and took over the whole country. They banished the Royal Family and conducted a five year campaign of terror on the natives. For that they gave medals. For that George Stuart White was made a Knight Commander of the Order of Bath.

GLADYS: How dare you! Father was a gallant soldier, in the best traditions of the British Army.

KAVANAGH: Mam, I was in the British army. I fought in the First World War and I saw the best traditions of the British Army all around me, dead!

GLADYS: That is hardly the point Mr Kavanagh. My father was a good man and he saw great advantage in bringing the benefits of a prosperous empire to a backward and uncivilised territory. The Burmese Royal Family were despots. And heathens. They murdered one another and their people without second thought. They had to be civilised.

KAVANAGH: Reminds me of what they say about us. *(To LILY.)* Do you know the British came here to civilise the Irish?

LILY: *(LILY smiles)* Now Mr Kavanagh. *(To GLADYS.)* Where were the medals, where did you find them?

GLADYS: They were on top of the wardrobe, in the children's room. *(Examines the medals anew.)*

KAVANAGH: *(Leaning on his stick. Recites in a melancholy, droll way)*

By the old Moulmein Pagoda, lookin' lazy at the sea,
 There's a Burma girl a-settin', and I know she thinks o' me;
 For the wind is in the palm-trees, and the temple-bells they say;
 "Come you back, you British Soldier; come you back to Mandalay!"
 Come you back to Mandalay,

Where the old Flotilla lay;
 Can't you 'ear their paddles clunkin' from Rangoon to Mandalay?
 On the road to Mandalay,
 Where the flyin'-fishes play,
 An' the dawn comes up like thunder outer China 'crost the Bay!
(GLADYS and LILY are drawn to KAVANAGH's rendition – they both watch and listen.)

Ship me somewheres east of Suez, where the best is like the worst,
 Where there ain't no Ten Commandments an' a man can raise a thirst;
 For the temple-bells are callin', and it's there that I would be
 By the old Moulmein Pagoda, looking lazy at the sea;
 On the road to Mandalay,
 Where the old Flotilla lay,
 With our sick beneath the awnings when we went to Mandalay!
 O the road to Mandalay,
 Where the flyin'-fishes play,
 An' the dawn comes up like thunder outer China 'crost the Bay!

GLADYS: You like Kipling, do you Mr Kavanagh?

KAVANAGH: Rudyard Kipling, yes. *(To LILY in pious tone.)* Eighteen sixty five to nineteen thirty six, English writer and Nobel laureate. Wrote novels, poems, and short stories, most of them set in India and Burma. Glorified the Empire and British rule. Coined the phrase, “The White Man’s Burden.”

GLADYS: Thank you for the history lesson, Mr Kavanagh.

KAVANAGH: *(Bowing)* My pleasure. *(Comes closer to the box of medals.)* And the Victoria Cross, Mrs Napier, what did your dear father do to earn that?

GLADYS: *(Proudly again)* The Battle of Charasia. The Afghan War, 1879. Father led a platoon of troops into the Sang-I-mawishta gorge, infested with natives, and cleared the way for the advance of the main army. Father was commended for his great personal gallantry.

KAVANAGH: I see. *(Thinks.)* The gorge you say was infested with natives. *(Parodies.)* How dreadful of them? In their own country too, what? The blighters! And how brave of Sir George too, to root them out. The ungrateful wretches. Resisting the advance of the Great Empire. *(To LILY.)* I imagine a

fair share of them were slaughtered in the process... but what of it?

(There is the loud sound of a door banging.)

GLADYS: Who is that?

LILY: *(Goes to Outside door)* It must be Mrs White. *(To GLADYS.)* I'm going to see about getting dinner ready. *(To KAVANAGH.)* Mr Kavanagh will you be staying for something to eat?

KAVANAGH: Thank you, no. I want to speak to Mrs White, but I'll be on my way then. I am going into Ballymena, if I can find someone to take me.

(LILY leaves. KAVANAGH goes over near the window while GLADYS continues to examine the other medals in the box.)

KAVANAGH: What is that strange looking rock, that outcrop?

GLADYS: *(Looking up)* What was that?

KAVANAGH: *(Points)* There, that mountain... what is it called?

GLADYS: That is Slemish mountain, Mr Kavanagh. Legend has it that St Patrick herded sheep and spoke to God up there.

KAVANAGH: *(Derisively)* The mountain that brought religion to Ireland. *(Laughs.)* It has a lot to answer for. *(Turns to look at GLADYS.)* Are you a religious woman, Mrs Napier?

GLADYS: I believe in God and an afterlife, if that's what you mean?

KAVANAGH: And your father, Sir George, he was religious too, I suppose?

GLADYS: The first Whites to have settled in these parts were preachers – they fled the persecution of Charles 1. And our mother, Lady White, was the daughter of the Archdeacon of Bombay. Father met her when he was stationed in India. Father always said if he hadn't been a military man he would've liked to serve God.

KAVANAGH: He had a lofty disposition.

GLADYS: That's what we're like here, Mr Kavanagh. The White name is revered in these parts and not without good reason. At one time we owned all the land between here and the coast. The estate was one of the biggest and most important in this part of Ireland. On the other hand, Jack, my brother and your friend, was the undoing of all that. In the span of his own lifetime he undid generations of achievement.

KAVANAGH: I don't think Jack saw it quite like that. He was happy with his life, or so he told me when he wrote. He would've wanted to see more

change here in Ireland – who wouldn't? – but he always maintained, he had done what he could.

GLADYS: Jack was a damn fool, Mr Kavanagh, and no more to it. He threw up a great future, a chance to be someone... like his father. And all because of oddness, something he was hardly able to explain himself. I asked him once, you know, I asked him, why are you doing what you are doing Jack, bringing the family and all what my father stood for into such disrepute? Do you know what he answered?

KAVANAGH: I'm intrigued.

GLADYS: He said, "Because I'm Irish".

KAVANAGH: Jack was proud of where he came from.

GLADYS: What does that mean? I am Irish. (*Dismissively.*) What does it mean?

KAVANAGH: You're Irish yourself, Mrs Napier, aren't you? You were born here in Antrim? You answer the question.

GLADYS: Yes, I was born here...but I'm British, Mr Kavanagh, first and foremost. When I was born Antrim was part of the Empire, and it still is.

KAVANAGH: And I was born in Dublin when it was part of the Empire. But I have lived most of my life in Liverpool.

GLADYS: And what does that make you?

KAVANAGH: (*Thinks*) I'm Irish. I've always felt Irish, I suppose. (*Looks at GLADYS.*) Though to be truthful it doesn't matter a great deal to me anymore. What is nationality anyway when it comes to putting food on your table? (*Hits his stick against his knee.*) This crook leg of mine was given to me on a building site...why? Because there was no proper protection, because my safety cost money, because the man who exploited me was greedy. (*Pauses.*) What nationality do you think he was Mrs Napier?

GLADYS: I have no idea.

KAVANAGH: And neither do I. Why? Because it doesn't matter. He was a businessman, an employer, that is all I need to know. (*Sighs. Sit down at the chair by the window.*) But going back to what you say about Jack, I think I know why he said to you *I am Irish*.

GLADYS: (*Cynically*) At last I will have an explanation!

KAVANAGH: Ireland's history is something you can draw upon Mrs Napier.

It is energy. And it helped Jack to be able to pull away from you, from who and what your family represented – the very best of the British Empire is that not right? Is that not what the Whites are?

GLADYS: If you say so.

KAVANAGH: Nationality, family - these are elemental forces and it is difficult to leave them behind. But sometimes you can use one against the other.

(There is silence for a moment.)

Jack told me once that he had paid a high price for being himself. When I asked him, what he meant, he said “I have no family anymore... they have disowned me.”

GLADYS: There was nothing else that we could do. We had to disown Jack. He was at war... the truth is he went to war against his own family.

KAVANAGH: No, I don't believe that. *(Looks at GLADYS.)* He went to war against what you stood for... the Empire, privilege, injustice. He held a mirror up to all of you ... you could've looked too, Gladys, but I think you decided not to...

GLADYS: I don't need to look in any mirrors Mr Kavanagh. You forget that our family have served royalty in one way or another for hundreds of years. Do you honestly think that Jack, as the dissenter, was going to turn all that on its head. *(Pauses.)* He was silly boy, that's all. I'll pray for him...but no more.

KAVANAGH: *(Looks out at Slemish again)* Slemish is such an odd looking mountain isn't it? *(Turns to GLADYS.)* The man who brought me here today from Larne wanted to know if I knew anything about the Atom Bomb. He said the end of the world was coming, that it was foretold in the bible. What do you think of the Atom Bomb Mrs Napier?

GLADYS: I am glad we have it. It is something to hold over Mr Stalin. God knows he would march on Whitehall itself...

KAVANAGH: They say the Americans have enough atom bombs to wipe out the whole of Russia... And the world. What a world we've become.

(A pause.)

GLADYS: How is it you knew my brother, Mr Kavanagh?

KAVANAGH: The Spanish Civil War. We were both helping the anarchist

workers union – the Confederación Nacional del Trabajo.

GLADYS: Is that what Jack became then – an anarchist?

KAVANAGH: Yes I suppose that is what he *became*. I'm sure he always had sympathies in that direction, but when he went to Spain in '36 he saw something real for the very first time (*Looks at GLADYS.*) – a society run by workers for workers. That's what the Spanish Civil War was about, you know – whether that ideal would live or die.

GLADYS: A society of workers, run by workers! That must've been something indeed. How long did it last, Mr Kavanagh? Five minutes?

KAVANAGH: Despite what you might imagine Mrs Napier, it was quite successful. Of course the likes of you can't imagine workers doing anything else other than working, and taking orders. But we anarchists see things different. We are workers, and we know what we're capable of. We have a new world in our hearts.

GLADYS: A new world in your hearts. Poppycock!

(NOREEN enters. She looks as if she's been crying. GLADYS goes to NOREEN.)

Look Noreen, I found some of Father's medals, the one's Jack had. They were above the wardrobe in the back room. (*Shows NOREEN the medals before NOREEN can do anything else.*) That one there is the Victoria Cross. (*Holds up the medal.*) You don't want these, do you Noreen? Because I'd like to bring them back with me to London and put them with the others that we have. We have decided to gather all of the medals and memorabilia of Father's life in one place, in honour of his achievements and so he can be remembered. We have his uniforms and his sword of honour... (*Pauses.*) But these medals are the most important.

NOREEN: You take them Gladys, they're rightfully yours anyway. (*Looks at KAVANAGH. He is ignoring proceedings.*) You are still here, Mr Kavanagh?

KAVANAGH: I went to see the grave... (*Long Pause.*) And then when I was there it occurred to me, there's something I want to ask you.

NOREEN: What is that?

(KAVANAGH looks at GLADYS. He goes over near the fireplace to where NOREEN is.)

GLADYS: (*Suddenly noticing the portrait of Connolly and White above the*

mantelpiece. Points.) Who put that there?

NOREEN: *(Surprised)* I have no idea. *(Looks at KAVANAGH.)*

KAVANAGH: *(Feigns shock)* It's hardly me Mrs White, I'm only a visitor and in any case I've only just arrived. *(To GLADYS.)* Maybe it was Jack's ghost!

GLADYS: Father's picture has always had pride of place in this house. Even Jack accepted that. *(Moving closer.)* Who is that anyway?

NOREEN: That is Jack on the left.

GLADYS: But who is the other man?

KAVANAGH: That Mrs Napier is a gentleman called James Connolly. He's dead now. Don't you know the British shot him when he was sitting in his wheelchair. No doubt another one of those grand traditions that you were talking about earlier Mrs Napier.

(NOREEN goes to the mantelpiece and lifts the picture of Jack and Connolly.)

NOREEN: We will find some place else for it. *(Puts the portrait on the ground at the side of fireplace.)*

KAVANAGH: *(Loudly)* Briefly in the limelight - that's the story of Jack's life.

NOREEN: You wanted to ask me something, Mr Kavanagh?

KAVANAGH: *(In a level business like tone)* The papers Mrs White. What's to become of Jack's papers? *(Looks at the bureau.)* Have you thought about it, what you'll do with them?

NOREEN: I've had other things on my mind. The truth is I haven't thought about it at all.

KAVANAGH: It's just... when I looked through them earlier, I only realised for the first time myself that there's a wealth of material there.

NOREEN: Well, I don't know about that Mr Kavanagh. I didn't spend a lot of time talking to Jack about what he was writing about. There were the children to look after and plenty of other things besides.

KAVANAGH: I understand Mrs White, and please I don't wish to cause offence... *(Looks at GLADYS. She is listening attentively to the exchange.)* But what is there is valuable, you know that, don't you?

NOREEN: Valuable! *(Laughs.)* You're deluding yourself Mr Kavanagh.

KAVANAGH: I don't mean in terms of money. Don't misunderstand me.

It's just they're a record of your husband's life, but also of the period...

NOREEN: My husband's life...*(Laughs.)* The man was an outcast, can't you see that? Who would ever be interested in him?

KAVANAGH: No, I'm serious. I've looked at the material that is there, very quickly mind, but there's quite a number of letters between Jack and a variety of people, some of them quite prominent now. And there're his diaries, very meticulous they are too. *(Hesitates.)* And of course there's the manuscript of his autobiography. *(Goes to the table. Picks up a thick bundle.)* It's finished. I've looked through it...

GLADYS: So have I, Mr Kavanagh.

KAVANAGH: *(Ignores GLADYS)* It's just... I'm interested to know what is to become of all this material?

NOREEN: *(Unsure, glances quickly at GLADYS)* I'll have to think about it Mr Kavanagh. I don't know.

GLADYS: What would you do with it, Mr Kavanagh?

KAVANAGH: Keep it safe.

GLADYS: *(Surprised)* That is all?

KAVANAGH: Yes.

GLADYS: And what about the autobiography... have you ideas for it?

KAVANAGH: Ideas? What do you mean, ideas?'

GLADYS: Could it be published, I'm asking?

KAVANAGH: Who's to say? There was interest in the first part of Jack's autobiography, I don't see why there wouldn't be something similar with this.

(KAVANAGH and GLADYS look at one another for a long moment.)

GLADYS: *(Walking away towards the window)* I too am concerned about Jack's papers, Mr Kavanagh. I have looked through them...and I do not like what I have read.

KAVANAGH: *(Irrked)* Surely this is not a matter of liking or disliking what Jack had to say... *(To NOREEN.)* These are *Jack's* papers. They're what he collected over a long period of time. They represent him now, as does the autobiography... he worked on that even when he was quite sick. *(Indicates to the bureau.)* In honour of Jack we must look after these papers... surely that is a reasonable course?

GLADYS: (*Mockingly*) You are high minded.

(*LILY enters.*)

LILY: Excuse me, Mr Kavanagh, did you say you want to go to Ballymena tonight?

KAVANAGH: That's right.

LILY: There's a fella, he's drawing wood outside. He will be going by there shortly. You could go with him.

KAVANAGH: That would be excellent. Thank you Lily.

LILY: (*Leaving by Inside door*) I will call you when he right.

KAVANAGH: (*To GLADYS*) Where was I?

GLADYS: We were saying how high-minded you were... but never mind that. Jack is dead now, Mr Kavanagh, and these... (*Indicates cursorily to the bureau*) musings now belong to Noreen. Just as this house and its contents are hers.

KAVANAGH: (*After a pause*) Yes... I accept that of course. But (*Looks at NOREEN.*)... Noreen is only the custodian of these records, surely. (*Goes to the bureau, takes up some sheets.*) Surely you accept that.

(*GLADYS doesn't reply.*)

Mrs Napier, your brother like it or not led an extraordinary life, and he saw many things. I don't hesitate to say he had an unusual outlook on it all. Certainly, it is an outlook I shared and that does make me predisposed to value these writings. But that aside, surely you would agree that he is entitled to his viewpoint... even in death.

GLADYS: It is as simple as that, is it?

KAVANAGH: To me, yes. (*To NOREEN.*) Mrs White... Noreen, I only came here to ask and to raise my concerns, that is all. If the papers will be kept intact and minded here by you, then that is perfectly fine with me.

Perhaps at some time in the future I might be able to come and look through them more thoroughly... that's if I still have the strength!

(*NOREEN turns away and looks at the fire.*)

On the other hand, if you have no interest in them, and they're a burden, why not give them to me? (*Goes to the fireplace to where NOREEN is standing.*) I'll make you this promise: I'll look after the papers and put them into some sort of order. But if you ever wish to have them returned at some later stage,

then I give you my word, you can have them. They'll remain your property.

NOREEN: *(Flustered)* It is not something I can decide on right now, Mr Kavanagh...

LILY: *(At Outside door)* The fella is going now, Mr Kavanagh. If you want to go to Ballymena, please come.

(KAVANAGH looks at GLADYS and then NOREEN. He doesn't want to leave at that moment. Reluctantly he puts on his coat and scarf. Picks up his walking stick.)

KAVANAGH: *(Going to NOREEN. Takes hand)* You will think about it Mrs White? *(Waits for an answer.)*

GLADYS: *(Sternly)* Good night Mr Kavanagh.

(KAVANAGH continues to hold NOREEN's hand.)

LILY: He is waiting Mr Kavanagh.

NOREEN: Goodnight Mr Kavanagh.

(KAVANAGH leaves by Outside door. NOREEN sits immediately on the fireside chair and looks at the fire. GLADYS goes to the window and looks out.)

KAVANAGH: *(Calls)* Good night, good night!

(The front door bangs shut. Stage goes dark.)

SCENE 2

Later the same evening. The room lighting is as before, low set. There is the sound of heavy rain on the windows. GLADYS and NOREEN are alone, sitting on either side of the dying fire. There is a knock on the door and LILY enters.

LILY: I'm off to bed. *(Looks at the two women and then at the table.)* Why don't I take the tray as I'm here?

(Goes to fireside table. Picks up cups and saucers.)

Poor Mr Kavanagh. I hope they made it to Ballymena before that downpour started. The poor fellas would be sodden, so they would. *(As there's no response from the two women, LILY goes closer to where they are sitting.)* Have you fallen asleep?

GLADYS: *(Coldly)* We have not!

LILY: Oh. *(As she leaves, to NOREEN)* You should be going to bed too, Noreen. It's been a hard day and you need to get your rest.

NOREEN: *(Quietly)* I won't be long now.

LILY: Good night then. Good night Mrs Napier.

GLADYS: Goodnight.

NOREEN: Goodnight Lily.

(After the Inside door closes, GLADYS get up and walks over to the bureau. She sits there and looks through the material on the table.)

GLADYS: *(Reading from a page, flatly)* India will have its independence soon.

NOREEN: *(Abruptly)* Do you think so?

GLADYS: *(Annoyed)* No, of course not. That is what Jack has written here! "India will have its independence soon." *(Flutters a page.)* Of course it is not what *I* think. I think India could not survive without British rule. That is plain to see. How could India survive? We have made India what it is today.

(Examines more of the material on the table. Then pushes it away roughly and returns to the fireplace. Stands by the mantelpiece and

appears to examine the portrait of her father, Sir George.)

I was with Father when he came home from the Boer War. *(Remembering.)* He was a hero – a great hero. We all came in a special train from Larne. *(Triumphant.)* The carriages were dressed in long flowing bunting – red, white and blue. And from the engine, on one side, the Union Jack was flying; on the other the flag of Ulster. A beautiful handmade banner on one side proclaimed: *Hero of Ladysmith – Welcome Home To Ireland.* All us girls, May, Rose, Constance and I – Jack wasn't there – were at the windows waving to the crowds of people. At every rail-crossing, at every bridge, crowds gathered to cheer. When the train would slow down, farm hands and labourers and women and children would come forward – out of nowhere. They'd come quite close to the train, to see Father, but then they would always stop a little bit off as if they didn't want to be too forward. It was a beautiful day. I was so proud of Father.

And then at Ballymena, a huge crowd, such a crowd Noreen – I've never seen anything like it. Like a tide, banners unfurled, flags waving – a sea of hats and handkerchiefs went into the air when we arrived. And such a cry. The people were mad with happiness. 'God Save The King! God Save The King!' they shouted. It took us nearly one full hour to complete the short journey from the rail station to the Showgrounds, not five hundred yards. Such happy faces, everywhere. And I remember the crowd became so excited that Father had to stand outside on the carriage steps and wave to calm them. And mother was worried; she was worried they'd get carried away with their passions... *(Pauses.)* Father spoke, I can't remember what he said, but he said something and the place went quiet, you could hear a pin drop. Then out of nowhere, it seemed to me, *(Looks at NOREEN passionately.)* this young woman, a poor woman by the look of her clothes, stepped forward and handed me a white carnation. A beautiful white carnation, cut that morning. God Save the Empire she said, and there were tears in her eyes as she said those words, God Save The Empire. *(Looks at NOREEN.)* Do you know, she was so taken with emotion she had lost control of herself.

(In the background, low at first, Land of Hope and Glory is heard.)

At the Showgrounds, Father spoke of those dark days during the siege, when he was surrounded by the Boer, lacking food and ammunition, unsure of

when or how or *if* the relief would come. And then he said something that set the people ablaze. He spoke of the great resolve of the Irish and particularly of the Antrim men, and that he had never forgotten even in his darkest moments that he was first and foremost an Antrim man. How could he go back to Antrim and hold up his head if he gave in to the Boer? This, he said, was what carried him on, gave him the resolve to never give in. When the siege was finally lifted, he thanked God. He had kept the flag flying. I noticed then that the entire area and crowd had gone still, as still as it now. (*Looks at NOREEN. The music has stopped.*) Listen... imagine it now, everywhere you look, a sea of people and flags and bunting! And then slowly, I could hear them sing, God Save Our Gracious King.

(GLADYS leans forward so that her head rests against the portrait of Sir George.)

Later, we were here in this very room. Father, mother, all us girls. No sign of Jack, of course. Father was quiet. He seemed very tired. Mother was shooining us away, but he would put out his hand for one of us in his turn. I went to him. He held me, the first time in nearly five years, he held me, and I asked him, I wanted to know, I wanted to know what it was like, how he had done it, but he never told. I wanted to know...

STAGE FADES TO DARK

ACT III

The next day, about noon. The same room, but more brightly lit and fresh looking; it is sunny outside. The arrangement of the room is as it was the previous day, however the bureau table is now bare; the boxes of documents that were nearby are also missing. Around the fireplace, the marble is black.

Scene 1

LILY is clearing around the fireplace. She is digging ash from the fireplace and gathering it into a bucket that's beside her. She brushes the rug in front of the fireplace, collecting more ash; she adds this to the bucket. Suddenly, there's a loud knock and LILY goes to Outside door.

KAVANAGH: *(At Outside door)* Ah, it's you Lily. Good morning. How are you?

LILY: Oh Matt!

(KAVANAGH and LILY come in.)

KAVANAGH: *(Happily)* I came up by the lake, you know, down below? *(He gestures to the window. LILY nods.)* Jack often talked about it, Jack and his lake. He must've been the first anarchist to ever own a lake. I didn't lose the opportunity to tell him off about it either. A bloody lake Jack, what do you want with a lake? That used to get Jack going... *(Looks at LILY. She is subdued; there is none of her usual mirth.)* There were two swans under the willow tree and I was able to get up close. I don't know how long it is since I saw a pair of swans? *(Thinks.)*... must've been before the war.

(LILY turns away abruptly. Goes over to the window and looks out.)

KAVANAGH: Is something wrong?

(Follows her, puts his hand on her shoulder but she won't look at him.)

LILY: Oh Matt! Something terrible has happened.

KAVANAGH: What is it?

(LILY shakes her head.)

KAVANAGH: Has something been said to you, Lily? What is it? Is it Gladys?

LILY: Gladys is gone, Matt.

KAVANAGH: Gone! So soon. Where has she gone?

(NOREEN enters quietly by Inside door. She is in different clothes. Still in black, but her appearance is more youthful and fresh looking. She listens to the exchange. Neither KAVANAGH nor LILY notice her.)

LILY: She went early this morning to Belfast. In a big hurry.

KAVANAGH: But why?

LILY: Business, she said. *(Turns to face KAVANAGH.)* I don't know how to tell you.

KAVANAGH: Tell me? Tell me what?

(LILY shakes her head.)

NOREEN: *(Coming forward into their view)* I'll tell him.

(LILY and KAVANAGH look at NOREEN. They are both surprised to see her.)

KAVANAGH: Oh Mrs White, you're there. I didn't realise. How are you today?

NOREEN: You go Lily. This is a matter between Mr Kavanagh and I.

KAVANAGH: What is? *(Looks at LILY and then at NOREEN.)* You're confusing me.

(LILY is unsure. She walks hesitantly to Inside door. She looks at the bureau. At that moment KAVANAGH sees that the papers are missing.)

Where are Jack things? *(Goes to the bureau. Looks in surprise at LILY and then at NOREEN. LILY, avoiding his stare, exits by Inside door.)* Where are the papers, where's everything?

NOREEN: They're gone.

KAVANAGH: Gone? What do you mean gone? Gone where?

NOREEN: They're gone Mr Kavanagh. Gone means you cannot have them, they're finished with.

(NOREEN goes over by the window and half looks out/ half observes KAVANAGH; she is composed.)

KAVANAGH: They can't be gone. They were here yesterday. I saw them myself. Where have you put them?

(KAVANAGH comes forward, stops just behind NOREEN.)

Please, don't say you gave them to Gladys.

NOREEN: I didn't.

KAVANAGH: I didn't want to say it to you. It's not my position to interfere, not in what are family matters, but Gladys cannot be trusted with any of Jack's things. They never saw eye-to-eye. Surely you see that Mrs White?

NOREEN: I *didn't* give them to Gladys.

KAVANAGH: Then where are they?

NOREEN: They've been destroyed.

KAVANAGH: *(Quiet but alarmed voice)* Destroyed. What do you mean, destroyed? They can't've been. *(Goes alongside NOREEN.)* What are you saying?

NOREEN: *(Quietly, with determination)* I mean they've been destroyed. They're *gone* Mr Kavanagh. Look... *(Indicates to the bureau.)* Don't you see?

(KAVANAGH backs away. He isn't sure if he believes NOREEN, but he is afraid. He stumbles towards the fireplace and sits on one of the chairs. Meanwhile LILY has re-entered by Inside door. She has listened to the exchange between NOREEN and KAVANAGH.)

LILY: It's true Matt.

(KAVANAGH cocks his ear as he hears LILY's voice, but he doesn't turn to look at LILY. LILY goes to the fireplace and picks up the bucket of ashes. She shows the bucket to KAVANAGH.)

LILY: This is all that remains. I gathered them myself, this morning.

(LILY thrusts the bucket towards KAVANAGH. He looks at it and puts his hand slowly into the contents. NOREEN and LILY watch. KAVANAGH appears to feel the ashes, then he withdraws his blackened hand again.)

KAVANAGH: It isn't true. *(Puts his head in his hands.)* NO!

STAGE GOES DARK

Scene 2

Later. KAVANAGH is sitting alone at the bureau. He rubs his hand across the table in one long sweep. LILY comes in by Inside door. She goes to where he is sitting. He doesn't look up.

LILY: I'm so sorry Matt...

(KAVANAGH looks at her. His hand sweeps along the surface of the table again. LILY sits at the side of the bureau. KAVANAGH reaches out to take her hand.)

KAVANAGH: It's not your fault.

LILY: I didn't know anything about it, I swear Matt.

KAVANAGH: I know that.

(There is silence for a moment.)

LILY: *(Speaks slowly in a measured voice)* I left them together in the room last night. It was after ten and I wanted to go to bed. Noreen and Mrs Napier were sitting there by the fire. I thought they had fallen asleep. I came in and tidied up, and left again.

(LILY stands. She goes to stage front, facing the audience.)

It must've been after midnight, I woke with a start. I was sweating, sweating all over. *(Looks at KAVANAGH.)* I got the smell right away, it was the smell woke me, Matt.

KAVANAGH: *(Gets up, goes to LILY)* What do you mean the smell?

LILY: The smell of burning in the house. It woke me. *(Turns to look at KAVANAGH. Holds her bad arm up awkwardly.)* I told you...

KAVANAGH: Told me, told me what?

LILY: The night they attacked Billy and me in our house in Belfast – they used fire. I'll never forget it. The middle of the night, in the pitch black... and I could smell this burning in the house, in our own home. I could hear it too. I could hear the crackling of fire.

(LILY takes off her cardigan.)

I just woke up – that’s what saved us. The front of the house was ablaze. I ran out and I threw one of my old coats across the flames. I was able to put out the fire, but I got this for my sins.

(LILY rolls up the sleeve of her blouse on her left arm. The skin on her arm is rash-red and deformed from a bad burn.)

KAVANAGH: *(Drawing back in shock)* Oh Lily.

LILY: Ever since... the smell, I can’t abide the smell of fire in a house.

(Covers her arm again, somewhat frantically. Speaks in an agitated tone.)

Last night... I thought it was happening again Matt... I forgot where I was, so I did. *(LILY appears panicked by the recollection. KAVANAGH holds her and she calms.)* I forgot. I forgot I was here in Jack White’s house. *(Breathless.)* I thought I was back in Belfast. I ran from the room in just my nightdress. I was down the stairs before I realised...

(The stage has begun to darken. KAVANAGH and LILY are Stage Left near the table and remain visible under a spotlight; meanwhile NOREEN and GLADYS have entered by Inside door as darkened figures and are standing quietly near the fireplace.)

I could hear them. The door was ajar. Gladys was talking. I pushed the door open and I could see Noreen and Gladys inside... *(At this point a texture of light associated with a blazing fire – bright orange light - emanates from the fireplace, illuminating the darkened stage.)* They were burning Jack’s things... I could see it. *(LILY looks at KAVANAGH full face-on.)* Page by page, Matt. The fire there was raging. *(Points to fireplace and then buries her head in KAVANAGH’s chest.)* I shouted at them to stop. They both looked at me. ‘Get out of here you,’ Gladys ordered. And then in a fit of pique she threw all the diaries and letters in one lot into the blaze. The fire rose up, Matt. I never saw anything happen like it. The flames licked up high, over the mantelpiece. *(LILY points over at the portrait of George Stuart White.)* I thought the old fella himself would get it – it rose right up. I ran Matt. I ran away. I’m sorry. It frightened me terrible and I ran. I ran away.

(LILY cries. The stage returns to normal lighting. After a moment, KAVANAGH breaks away and goes to the window. He looks out.)

KAVANAGH: It’s not your fault Lily. You’re not to blame.

LILY: *(Following)* But Jack... I wanted to help Jack. I wanted to be

someone who stood by him. As he stood by me. (*Cries.*) And I couldn't. I was too afraid.

KAVANAGH: (*Turns to LILY*) It's okay Lily. It's okay... look at me, (*Knocks his crook leg.*) with all that happened to me, I'm afraid too. You know I can't climb a high stairs not without thinking I'm going to fall down... (*Laughs uneasily.*) All because I fell down once.

LILY: (*Not consoled*) It not the same Matt, it's not. (*Dries her eyes. Looks at KAVANAGH.*) When they use fire on you, when they try to burn you out... (*Appears to think for a moment.*) The time we were attacked, in Belfast this is, there was a woman so there was. They poured benzene on her and set her ablaze, on Newtownards Road. She was a Catholic. Her remains lay on the road for a few hours – burned out... just a cinder. People went to look...

(*LILY weakens.*)

I must sit down. I don't feel well.

(*LILY goes to the fireside and sits. She closes her eyes for a moment.*)

KAVANAGH follows. He sits too.)

I've often wondered about the men who tried to burn out my Billy and me. Who were they? What went through their minds when they poured the benzene in under the door – what were they thinking? (*Cries out desperately.*) In the name of God what were they thinking?

KAVANAGH: (*Puts hand into the bucket of ashes and lifts out some, and then lets them fall again. He stands suddenly and goes over to the portrait of Sir George, facing it in an accusatory pose*) There was a scandal during Sir George's term in Burma. A British colonel, a fella by the name of Hooper got it into his head that he would photograph the captured Burmese rebels as they were being executed. Hooper wanted to make a photographic study of how someone dies, so he made himself a witness to the executions. He would photograph the rebels – facial shots in particular – as the executioner's bullets hit home. He was particularly interested in recording the death throes; the changes in facial expression as death took hold. Hooper was a meticulous photographer, the practitioner of an art form or so he claimed. (*Looks at LILY.*) Sometimes he would admonish the executioner and his firing squads for ruining his photographic subjects. Hooper liked clean shots – he wanted to record the expressions of death most of all.

(Pauses.)

There are not two histories, Lily, but three. There is the official history of the British Empire, the story that we've all heard – the story of victories, of gallantry and great British schemes. And there is of course, a second history – the history of that Empire's crimes, of its brutality, the destruction that went with conquest. But I have always been interested in the third history – the story of those who fought back. *(Turns to the bucket and lifts it by the handle. Swings it.)* This is our third history. *(Props it onto the mantelpiece.)* This is all that remains of the work and life of the only son of British War Hero, Sir George Stuart White. *(Scoops a load of ashes.)* These are the remnants of the letters and words that celebrated another existence – from below, from the voices we never hear, the voices of resistance and struggle, the voice of workers aspiring to another life. And this other history must be silenced. It must not be heard, it must not raise its head. *(Leaves the ashes down into bucket.)* The veneer of tolerance is thin. Between the powerful and the dispossessed, there is an unrelenting war – and this family knows it.

(Runs the flat of his blackened hand down the portraiture of Sir George, marking it.)

Why am I surprised that this has happened to Jack? When you think of it...what better way to forget him, what better way to silence his life?

LILY: There was one thing. *(Fumbles in pocket.)* I found it this morning on the mantelpiece. It's the message, the one you brought from Spain. *(LILY examines the discoloration on the envelope.)* The heat of the fire got to it, but it's okay I think. *(Hands it to KAVANAGH.)*

KAVANAGH: It wasn't even opened. *(Holds it to his chest. Then approaches LILY.)* Before I leave here, I want to read this message to Jack.

LILY: I'll come with you.

KAVANAGH: *(Gets coat and hat and puts them on. Picks up his stick. Looks at the bureau for a last time and then turns to address LILY.)*

Yesterday, I was alone in this room. Noreen had left, she didn't seem to have any interest, and I was here, reading and looking through all the things that Jack had kept or written. It occurred to me to take some things then, I don't why that should occur to me, but it did... the diaries, I could've carried them easily. They were that close to finding a home. *(Sadly.)* But I couldn't do it.

(Hangs his head.)

FADE TO DARK

Scene 3

Later. NOREEN is standing beside Inside door. We hear the sound of a boy shouting. NOREEN comes into the middle of the room. She examines the bureau table. She rubs a finger across its surface and looks at it. LILY enters by Inside door. She is dressed in her overcoat and hat. She is holding a small suitcase.

NOREEN: It's you.

LILY: Yes.

NOREEN: You are going?

LILY: Yes, I've come to say goodbye.

NOREEN: But I thought...

LILY: I won't stay here now.

NOREEN: But Lily... you don't understand.

LILY: *(Puts down her suitcase)* I don't, so I don't. And I never will... Jack's things, all that Jack wrote, how could you?

NOREEN: *(Turns away, and then abruptly sits)* Because I'm a realist Lily, because I must survive. There is me and the three boys and we must live in the now...

LILY: And that meant silencing Jack?

NOREEN: I have no loyalty to Jack's politics... I'm a Catholic. I believe in my God, I believe in my bishops. Jack heaped scorn on what I believe in, on what I took to be important... Why should it fall to me to defend those views?

LILY: *(Bitterly)* You are his wife.

NOREEN: His wife!

LILY: When Jack contacted me about coming here, he wrote in his letter about his love for you and his fears for you when he was gone. That is the woman I came to help... not the woman I see before me now.

NOREEN: You all come here, Kavanagh and even you Lily, and you wax lyrical about Jack and all the things he's done and all the people he's fought for, but none of you take one moment to look closer. It's Jack, Jack, Jack... it's Jack all the time. None of you really want to know. *(Gets up and goes to the window.)* Did you know I was pregnant when I married Jack?

LILY: *(Taken aback)* What has that go to do with it?

NOREEN: I was alone in London and I was pregnant. All alone.

LILY: Did he force you into bed?

NOREEN: *(Blesses herself)* How dare you?

LILY: Well did he?

NOREEN: What choices did I have? Give up the child? Or was I to go home to my family in Dublin, pregnant? My family is respected, I'll have you know...I couldn't do that... so I had to take my chances with Jack, and it's been hard. You don't know how hard, none of you do. Jack lived in another world, Lily. That became apparent to me early on. The workers' republic! The workers' republic! Look out the bloody window? What do you see? All I see is that dreadful mountain, Slemish. *(Turns away and begins to cry. Cries out.)* No one understands me, what I've been through.

LILY: But Noreen, to burn his papers, his things...? They're what he left us. *(LILY puts her hand on her breast.)* Turn around and look me in the face Noreen... look me in the face and tell me that you haven't betrayed him.

(There's a long pause as LILY waits, but NOREEN doesn't turn; she continues to look out the window. LILY continues angrily.)

You have destroyed more than papers, Noreen, you have destroyed your own memories. I know, Noreen, what it's like to lose someone. I watched my Billy go off to war and he never came back. There isn't an hour that I don't think of him, but at least I think of him fondly... I think of the sweet kiss he gave as he went out the door of our home for the last time.

(There's another long pause and LILY turns and goes over to where her suitcase is. She picks it up.)

What do you have now? When you think of Jack, when in later years those boys grow into men and they ask you about him, what will you be able to say?

NOREEN: *(Still looking out the window)* Do you know what Gladys said to me last night?

LILY: *(Stops)* I have no idea.

NOREEN: She wondered if Jack was really her brother. She thinks that maybe the babies were switched at birth, that maybe her mother was bamboozled and some tinker's child was put in the place of her real brother. *(Laughs.)* After all this time that is what she thinks. *(Turns to look at LILY.)*

Do you understand that?

LILY: There must've been something in those papers that she was afraid of.

NOREEN: *(Puts a hand up to stop LILY speaking)* Lily don't go. Stay another few days... until the worst of it is over.

LILY: I won't stay another minute. *(Turns and walks towards Outside door. Looks at NOREEN.)* I'm ashamed, you know, ashamed that I was in this house and this happened while I was here. That I didn't do all I could to stop you. I could've. If I had been stronger, I could've... *(LILY's determination tails away; her head drops.)* But...I was afraid.

NOREEN: Jack was too extreme, Lily.

LILY: No. *(Shakes her head)* I remember the night he stayed with us in Belfast. We all waited through the night, waiting to see if the Orangemen would return with their fire. It was cold in the house and we all huddled together in one corner and we talked about so many things. I remember at one point thinking how could you tell any of us apart – Catholic from Protestant. If we burned in the house that night, would you be able? No, you would not. *(LILY pauses as she remembers.)* I had hope that night. Against the very worst, you must have hope. Jack gave me hope. He was a Protestant who broke with his privileges and upbringing to fight for justice. When you think of it he gave up a lot. But I think Jack knew that that was what he had to do. Something very strong inside him steered him on the course he took – to break with family, and community, to stand strong for the underdog. There is great bravery in what he did and never tell me otherwise.

(Pauses, then walks towards NOREEN. NOREEN appears relieved, imagining reconciliation, but LILY stops out of reach of NOREEN)

You will go from here, Noreen. You'll sell up, you'll take the money and you'll go South, back to Dublin and away from this infernal hatred. And then in time, you'll forget about us, the way they've forgotten us down South. But Catholics like me, who live here in the north of Ireland, we can't forget, because every day we must live with the hatred and the fear and the discrimination. What are we to do? What will become of us?

(Turns again, picks up her suitcase and walks to Outside door. At Outside door, looks back at NOREEN.)

LIGHTS OUT