

**Cast of Characters: 5 men, 4 women**

- Actor One.....male, to play Michael Cleary; Fairyman
- Actor Two.....female, to play Mary Kennedy; Quiet Woman
- Actor Three.....female, to play Bridget Cleary
- Actor Four.....male, to play District Inspector for the Crown  
Wansbrough; James Kennedy; Reporter
- Actor Five.....male, to play John Dunne; Dr. Crean;  
Examining Physician; A Judge
- Actor Six.....male, to play William Simpson;  
Solicitor Crean; Constable Egan; Reporter 1
- Actor Seven.....female, to play Johanna Burke;  
Reporter
- Actor Eight.....male, to play Patrick Boland; Father Ryan;  
Denis Ganey; Magistrate Grubb; Reporter
- Actor Nine.....female, to play Fairywoman; Minnie  
Simpson, Reporter
- Voices of unseen magistrates, reporters, townspeople, good people

**Time and Place**

County Tipperary, Ireland, 1895

**Settings:**

The interior of a laborer's cottage in a depressed landscape; a churchyard; a fairy fort; a courtroom. All locales should be staged with a minimum of set pieces, allowing the scenes to blend and overlap fluidly. Lighting, as opposed to furniture, should dictate the mood. This happened, but it isn't real.

~The playwright would like to acknowledge her debt to Angela Bourke, who's fascinating novel *The Burning of Bridget Cleary* sparked her imagination. ~ AG

“Come away, O human child  
to the waters and the wild  
with a faery hand in hand,  
for the world is more full of weeping  
than you can understand.”

W.B. Yeats

## Act One

### A clearing.

*An open space.*

*A small group is gathered in a tight circle onstage. They move rhythmically, ritualistically, whispering softly. We hear background clicks and excited chatter from the "good people". Other characters watch, without comment, from various points onstage during the entire play.*

*The year is 1895. Ballyvadlea, Ireland.*

COMPANY

Are you a witch?

Are you a fairy?

Are you the wife of Michael Cleary?

*(The movement grows bolder as they intensify their chant).*

Are you a witch?

Are you a fairy?

Are you the wife of Michael Cleary?

*(The chanting grows louder, more urgent.)*

Are you a witch?

Are you a fairy?

Are you the wife of Michael Cleary?

*(Two imposing figures, Fairyman and Fairywoman, abruptly break the circle, scattering the Players in all directions. The body of a young woman-- Bridget Cleary, is revealed. She lays on the floor, curled into the fetal position; she wears soiled bedclothes.)*

FAIRYMAN

Go on now, what's this? I'll put all of yez in a hot pot and make a stinkin' soup of yez, lest you clear off!

FAIRYWOMAN

Go on! Back in the earth now, all of yez!

*(The others howl their protest. The Fairyman*

*and Fairywoman stand over Bridget's lifeless body. They speak loudly to insure the inhabiting spirit will hear.)*

FAIRYWOMAN

What do you advise we do with the "anointed" sheeoge?

FAIRYMAN

We'll begin easy. We'll take her neck and crop and hold her head under water in the turnhold, till we'll drive the divel out of her.

FAIRYWOMAN

That'ud be a great deal too easy a punishment for the thief. I've a better idea. We'll heat the shovel red-hot, put it under her currabingo, and land her out in the dung-lough!

*(They laugh at their own brashness.)*

FAIRYMAN

Ah, and I'll put the tongs in the fire till the claws are as hot as the divel.

*Demonstrates with exaggerated gestures.*

And won't I hould her nasty crass nose between them till she'll know the difference between fiery faces and a latchycock!

FAIRYWOMAN

She was a sheeoge forty times, it will put the inside of her into such a state that she'd give the world if she could die! Die, die, die!

FAIRYMAN

Very well, very well. Let's begin. I'll bring my red-hot tongs from the kitchen fire, and you your little bottle of lussmore water. Don't any of yez go in, neighbors, till we have them ingredients ready. Now, to work.

*(Fairyman removes the poker from the fireplace. Bridget wakes with a start, sitting bolt upright. The Fairyman and Fairywoman stop their tasks and watch Bridget, dispassionately.)*

BRIDGET

Michael! You've got to tell them! Tell them it's me, Michael. It's Bridget Cleary, daughter of Patrick Boland and Bridget Keating Boland, God rest her soul. Ah, if I had her now I would not be this way.

*She looks down, examining her body.*

And what of me? Same legs, same hands, and face. All well. You know me, don't you? Michael?

*(Mary Kennedy enters with a basin of water, all business.)*

MARY

God as my witness look at you. On the floor now is it?

BRIDGET

Mother...

MARY

Mother? Wouldn't that be something for them to talk about! Me being your Da's sister *and* your mother? Come on then, Bridgy. Let's have you up.

*(Mary helps Bridget up and undresses her; she bathes Bridget during the following.)*

BRIDGET

They were meaning to burn me, Aunt Mary.

MARY

Who-?

BRIDGET

They thought I was one of the good people.

MARY

Did they now?

BRIDGET

And after, they were going to toss me onto a heap of dung. Oh and they were a nasty pair, too! All bumpy and old and their hair like moldy straw and smelling. My hens smell sweeter!

*(Fairyman and Fairywoman take great offense at this.)*

MARY

All that fairy dreaming. It's not healthful, Bridgy.

BRIDGET

First they were meaning to make me drink of the bitter foxglove.

MARY

*(gentle but firm)*

Sssh. No more talk of the good people.

BRIDGET

I was calling for my Michael. Where's he gone?

MARY

He's had a little bit of business to do. Never mind him.

BRIDGET

He was there.

MARY

What's that?

BRIDGET

In the dream. Michael came and he had in his hand...God in heaven.

MARY

Never mind. You shouldn't be thinking such thoughts, Bridgy.

BRIDGET

I've no more sway over what I'll be dreaming than you do, Mary Kennedy.

MARY

And I'm just saying. For your own sake, you should think otherwise.

BRIDGET

And how do you suppose I would do that?

MARY

Look at you, you're not even trying! Laying there, day after day, sick in bed. It's not like you, Bridgy. A strong, spirited girl like you, and only twenty-four.

BRIDGET

*Twenty-six.*

MARY

*Young.*

BRIDGET

You would punish me for being sick because I'm *young*, is it?

*(Mary dresses Bridget in a clean nightgown.)*

MARY

It's against God it is. All that fairy-folk blather. You should be on your knees talking to Him, 'stead of flirting with the fates up on Kynagranagh hill. And I

know you been to the fairy forts of late 'cause I seen you go. Across the low road, through Scanlon's field. Taking the same path as your mother did, Lord have mercy on her. Poor creature. You're too much her, Bridgy. You only need look to her to know...

BRIDGET

I know my Mother is gone a year, that's what I know. And by tuberculosis-- though no one would say such a thing, would they? For shame no! They would be talking about how headstrong she was, and queer. Too independent, coming and going to the fairy forts as she pleased. And what of it? I've no shame in me, nor did she. And if it's to Kynagranagh I'll be going, it's between me and my own mother and no one else!

MARY

If you knew what was being said--

BRIDGET

I do, and I don't care.

MARY

You should.

*Mary throws the used bath water out the door.*

BRIDGET

"*Bugga, bugga salach*"! Would you give the fairies warning, Mary Kennedy, so as not to get their clothes wet?

MARY

I'll not be hearing any more of your talk, Bridget!

BRIDGET

You think it, why don't you just say it?

MARY

I'm saying nothing.

BRIDGET

Are you afraid of me then?

*(Michael Cleary enters, behind Bridget; he looks directly at Mary.)*

MARY

No Bridgy. Not you.

*(Bridget turns to see Michael. He wraps a shawl around her shoulders. She goes*

*to the fireplace, where she sits trying to warm herself as a light reveals a Reporter.)*

REPORTER 1

Clonmel Chronicle, March twentieth, eighteen ninety-five.  
Headline: "Gone with the Fairies". A good deal of excitement has been caused in the district about Drangan and Cloneen by the "mysterious disappearance" of a labourer's wife. An old woman who had been nursing the sick woman was sitting up with her as usual one night last week and, as she puts it, the invalid was "drawn away". A search has been made everywhere, and the police have been communicated with, but up to this afternoon no trace of the missing woman has been discovered. The country-people entertain the opinion that she has "gone with the fairies".

*(General District Inspector Alfred Wansbrough and Magistrate Grubb speak directly to the audience.)*

MAGISTRATE GRUBB

Presenting evidence for the Crown, General District Inspector Alfred J. Wansbrough.

WANSBROUGH

Your worship, the Crown has charged Michael Cleary in the disappearance of his wife, Bridget. We shall now hear depositions from the following witnesses: John Dunne, a neighbor and friend of the family; James Kennedy and Johanna Kennedy Burke, cousins of the missing woman; and Mary Kennedy, their mother and aunt

WANSBROUGH *(cont.)*

to the missing woman. I will now endeavor to shed light on the fateful events that took place before Mrs. Cleary's mysterious and suspicious disappearance.

BRIDGET

Is that what they're calling it now, "mysterious and suspicious"? I like that, I do.

*(Mary Kennedy takes the stand.)*

WANSBROUGH

Now Mrs. Kennedy, what did Michael Cleary say, exactly?

MARY

It's "exactly" you want now? Well, let me think on it. Ah, and it was so he said this, he said 'she is gone on a white horse out the mountain'.

*(A murmur goes through the courtroom.)*

GRUBB

Order. Carry on, Inspector Wansbrough.

WANSBROUGH

This was in reference to his wife?

MARY

And wouldn't that be who we're talking of here? It were Bridget Cleary, my own niece, God rest her restless soul.

WANSBROUGH

What exactly would he have meant by such a statement?

MARY

There it is again, "exactly".

*(Solicitor for the Crown Richard Crean  
speaks from the stand.)*

SOLICITOR CREAN

Objection. This can only be speculation on the part of the prosecution witness as to what Michael Cleary--

MARY

I know what he meant. Everyone was in that house knows.

BRIDGET

He's making out that I have a fairy in my head, isn't that so, Aunt Mary?

SOLICITOR CREAN

Did my client, Mr. Cleary, actually confide this concern to you?

MARY

*Exactly.*

*(There is a commotion in the courtroom.)*

Her own mother ran with the good people she did! After she died, Bridget was all the time up to the raths, hoping to maybe see her there again.

*(Commotion ensues.)*

SOLICITOR CREAN

You mention the raths...

MARY

Aye, the ring-forts of Kynagranagh. It's fairy-haunted they are.

*(More commotion.)*

MAGISTRATE GRUBB

Order in the court! We'll have no more of that.

WANSBROUGH

And it upset Michael Cleary that she went there?

BRIDGET

Oh, he thought to burn me for it about three months ago!

MARY

Well now why not ask Michael Cleary about that?

WANSBROUGH

I assure you I will do just that when Mr. Cleary takes the stand. Now then, since Bridget Cleary was often seen going to Kynagranagh, why was the trip on March 6 of this year any different?

MARY

March six would have been a Wednesday. The girl knew— *everyone* knows, though whether they will admit it is another matter-- that the good people are especially active on Wednesdays. That's what she went up there for and that's when they took her.

WANSBROUGH

Is that what she said to you--

MARY

I know what I saw! When she came back, she was changed.

WANSBROUGH

Can you describe her manner?

MARY

Soon as she came down the mountain she took a fit of tremblin', poor thing. She was all out of sorts—sickly, irritable. Couldn't even recall how she got back-- all the way from the fort above Scanlon's field down to Skehan's gate on the low road. No memory at all, except to say she was left there! Have you heard enough now?

SOLICITOR CREAN

Your worship, I have a few more questions for the witness.

MAGISTRATE GRUBB

Solicitor for the defense Richard J. Crean of Fethard.

SOLICITOR CREAN

Now then, Mrs. Kennedy, if you don't mind—

MARY

Well I do! You think I don't know what this is about? Shame on the lot of you. Trying to show us "country Irish" as a pack of savages for our pagan ways, when it's the English the one's that's Godless!

MAGISTRATE GRUBB

Please try to contain your answers to--

MARY

We did everything we could to cure Bridgy. She was our own, you hear? She was family!

*(She turns from the stand.)*

MARY(*cont.*)

Han! Can you fetch her dirties from the bedroom? And there's another pile of towels needin' scrubbin'. I'm too tired for it.

*(Johanna enters, carrying a load of laundry.)*

JOHANNA

How is it with her, mum?

MARY

Plain miserable, she is. Fevered and coughin'. Saying she's a pain in her head and aching all over. It's everyday worse. Poor thing.

JOHANNA

I never seen nor heard of Bridget being sick.

MARY

She isn't our Bridget anymore, that's sure.

*(Mary sits off to the side of the stage.)*

MAGISTRATE GRUBB

Johanna Kennedy-Burke of Rathkenny. Your witness, Solicitor Crean.

SOLICITOR CREAN

Was anything done to help your cousin, Mrs. Burke?

MARY

*(unable to contain herself)*  
Was anything done, he's asking!

MAGISTRATE GRUBB  
That will be all, Mrs. Kennedy.

JOHANNA  
Mother kept Bridget in healthful herbs and soup. I did the fetching and cleaning. My brothers weren't much in the way of help, but women know better this sort of thing.

SOLICITOR CREAN  
And what about Mrs. Cleary's husband? Was there anything in particular he did to help her?

JOHANNA  
Michael did everything a husband could do to make his wife right. And why wouldn't he, he loved her enough. Anyone knows will tell you, she had a fine constitution, till that day. The day of the fairy stroke.

*(Commotion from the courtroom.)*

SOLICITOR CREAN  
Mrs. Burke, did Michael seek cures outside of the family remedies?

JOHANNA  
You're meaning a doctor now?

MARY  
That would be Crean, for all the good he was!

SOLICITOR CREAN  
*(re: Mary's outburst)*  
Your Honor...

MARY(to Solicitor Crean)  
Aren't you and him relations now?

MAGISTRATE GRUBB  
We'll hear no more from you, Madame. The Crown calls Dr. William Crean of Fethard.

*pause*  
Doctor Crean?

SOLICITOR CREAN  
There's seems to have been a misunderstanding on the part of

the witness.

MARY  
Or a drinkin' opportunity.

MAGISTRATE GRUBB  
Where is Doctor Crean?

*(Mary tends to Bridget during the following.)*

BRIDGET  
Is he waiting for me to die first?

SOLICITOR CREAN  
I beg your worship's patience in this matter. If the court could kindly grant us a delay--

MARY  
He'll be here, *a chroi*.

BRIDGET  
Where's Michael gone?

MARY  
Away to Fethard to fetch the doctor.

BRIDGET  
To Fethard again?

*(Michael enters, in an overcoat and warm hat.)*

MARY  
Three times in five days did Michael send for Crean. He posted notice on the man's door, requesting that the doctor come to the cottage.

MICHAEL  
"Your immediate attention for my ailing wife is needed urgent."

MARY  
For all the good it did!

BRIDGET  
Oh it's bad...very bad.

MICHAEL  
For God's sake, where is the man?

*(He storms off.)*

SOLICITOR CREAN

If it pleases the court, the witness has arrived.

*(Dr. William Crean appears.  
He is well-dressed, attentive.)*

MARY

Five days later! Michael was out to Fethard again that day, before dawn, to file complaint.

BRIDGET

He'll be hours out in this cold.

MARY

Turns out while Michael was filing, the "good doctor" wandered over to Ballyvadlea without bothering to tell anyone.

SOLICITOR CREAN

Your name?

DR. CREAN

Dr. William Crean of Fethard.

*(Mary scoffs.)*

SOLICITOR CREAN

On your arrival at the patient's residence on Wednesday, March 13—

MARY

Stinkin' of drink he was.

SOLICITOR CREAN

On that day, how did you find the patient, Bridget Cleary?

DR. CREAN

I found the patient suffering.

BRIDGET

And where were you? Michael left word days ago!

SOLICITOR CREAN

Did you diagnose the woman?

DR. CREAN

It was simply from nervous excitement, and slight bronchitis.

BRIDGET

Why did you not come when you first were sent for but made me wait?

DR. CREAN

I could see nothing in the case likely to cause death. And I did not anticipate any danger.

WANSBROUGH

Is it possible you could have mistook her symptoms?

DR. CREAN

Hardly. I'd treated Bridget for eight or nine years. I knew her to be a perfectly healthy-bodied, strong young woman.

WANSBROUGH

Did you prescribe for her?

DR. CREAN

I did—and gave the medicine that same morning. In addition to I recommended giving her some wine.

BRIDGET

A big help that was.

WANSBROUGH

Did you treat her after that day, Dr. Crean?

DR. CREAN

Bridget Cleary was a very nervous and...irritable sort of woman. She likely suffered from chronic dyspepsia, though I can't say for certain.

BRIDGET

Can you do nothing else for me?

DR. CREAN

I found her, at times a very...difficult woman.

WANSBROUGH

Did you see her after that day?

DR. CREAN(to Bridget)

Now Bridget, I've given you what I've known to work on others, but in your case...

BRIDGET

My case-? What of my case?

DR. CREAN

Calm yourself, calm yourself. I'm only saying...now, there are times when "sickness" is more a disease of mind than illness of the body. Meaning, when our well-being is tempered by emotional or, say, spiritual unrest...there is a subsequent condition that can be considered "sickness"—which is not saying the body isn't in so many words afflicted, but more accurately, influenced by whatever it is that's...taking up our mind. You understand, Bridget?

BRIDGET

I do.

DR. CREAN

Fine, good.

BRIDGET

I understand you've done nothing here. Nothing, except to cause my own husband to walk three times eight miles to fetch you! And for what?

DR. CREAN

I'll be calling on you in another week or so.

WANSBROUGH

Did you return to the Cleary cottage after that?

BRIDGET

There's no need for you to come back. Not 'til you're sober!

DR. CREAN(*to Wansbrough*)

I saw no need for further visitations.

WANSBROUGH

Thank you, Doctor.

*(Mary Kennedy enters.)*

DR. CREAN(*to Mary*)

Good day.

*He exits swiftly.*

BRIDGET

Good day! Not just sick am I, he says, but sick in me head. Is it lula I am now?

MARY  
Nevermind.

BRIDGET  
Or is this to blame?

*She picks up a coin.*

What of it, Mary? Could it be there's a *pishogue* in this very shilling, and that's what brought illness on me? A charmed shilling, from Kynagranagh, dropped by a fairy who had no need for it.

MARY  
Are you having your fun with me now?

BRIDGET  
That's where comes this chill in my bones. This violent ache... Not just sick, am I? It's in me is it?

MARY  
Come away, Bridgy.

BRIDGET  
It's sickness, it's nothing! Not what you're thinking, all of your whispers and looks! Ah Mother...Mother. If only I had you now...

*(A light reveals a Reporter.)*

REPORTER 1  
Clonmel Nationalist. March twentieth, eighteen ninety-five.  
Headline: "Strange Occurance at Ballyvadlea".  
The mysterious disappearance of a young woman is the topic of all lips in the neighborhood. The woman, named Cleary, the wife of a cooper, took sick a few days ago and suddenly disappeared. She has not been heard of since. Those attending the woman called in a medical doctor to look after the patient, however, fearing his medicine was ineffective, they apparently discarded his prescriptions and instead treated her to some fairy quackery.

*(Bridget is vigorous, healthy; she carries a pail of eggs to a stool as Johanna enters.)*

JOHANNA  
Bridget Cleary! What have you gone and done?

BRIDGET

What have I done she asks? Out there's a chicken coop with nary an egg in it. That'll be your first clue.

*(She sits on a stool and begins wiping the eggs.)*

JOHANNA

I'm not talking of eggs now, I'm speaking of Reverend McGrath. Is it true, Bridgy?

BRIDGET

I'm sure I don't know.

JOHANNA

He told your Da the whole of it!

BRIDGET

And you listening on?

JOHANNA

Oh and isn't he angry? Why, the entire of his front was soaking wet! Did you really throw a bucket of water on the Reverend?

BRIDGET

'tis the sad truth. And after scrubbing down the coops with it.

JOHANNA

Oh, and filthy it was!

BRIDGET

His horse got it too, though I didn't aim to harm the creature. Not the horse's fault his master's an ass. I'm done with him! Thinks he can sally forth whenever and where ever he likes, holding court and kicking up dirt in my dinner? And all for being "a man o' God"! Well he can canter 'round the churchyard for all he's worth, but he'd best stay away from the Cleary cottage. Now are you here for eggs or are you here to chatter?

JOHANNA

Is it true what he said?

BRIDGET

What's that?

JOHANNA

Oh don't make me say it! The curse? That's what he told your Da. That you—that women such as yourself, that you're sure to be punished for being...that way.

BRIDGET

And what way is that?

JOHANNA

Well, for arguing and having so much defiance about you.

BRIDGET

Defiance being independence, and arguing meaning having an opinion? Look here, I've my own business—I make more selling eggs than my husband the cooper, and if I look a man straight in the eye and that's headstrong, then by God I'll be it!

JOHANNA

He said something else but I won't say it.

BRIDGET

Don't get mysterious on me now, Han.

JOHANNA

It's too horrible, it would give me chills saying it! Ah Bridget, I'm sorry for you.

BRIDGET

Save your sorrow.

JOHANNA

You're not afraid for yourself?

BRIDGET

He's no prophet, that one. He's just a man—a wet one at that!

JOHANNA

I admire you, I do. You're fearless. I do wish...ah.

BRIDGET

There's nothing to standing up for yourself. All that working and mothering, bending your back for nothing but the good of your family? You're deserving of good too, Han. Instead of waiting around "wishing", you should for yourself demand it.

JOHANNA

And isn't it easy for you to say? You with your fine clothes and feathers in your hats, and a nice cottage—when it's for one pair of clean petticoats I'd be grateful.

BRIDGET

Well it's not my way and never has been to sit around and moan and grouse about what I haven't got. I make more by industry than by complaining.

JOHANNA

It's not so easy for some you know. You have your money and your looks. We're different in that, Bridget Cleary. Folks pay attention to such things and don't I know it!

BRIDGET

Suit yourself.

JOHANNA

He said you would die a violent death...by fire, he said. All for your impertinence!

*(Michael enters.)*

MICHAEL

Hello Han.

JOHANNA

It isn't fair and it never was!

*(She hurries off.)*

MICHAEL

How is it with Hanny?

BRIDGET

I would guess she's ticked.

MICHAEL

Ticked?

BRIDGET

Maybe I snapped at her.

MICHAEL

At Han?

BRIDGET

Good old Han, long-sufferin' Han. Well maybe she's been hanging over me like some bug-eyed cow spawnin' a two-headed calf!

MICHAEL  
What's that-?

BRIDGET  
And I'll bet it' Aunt Mary's sent her. Circling me like a crow over a putrid  
harvest, that one. Afraid of "catching me" she is.

MICHAEL  
What's gotten into you?

BRIDGET  
I'm sick of their fussin'!

MICHAEL  
They're concerned for you is all, Bridgy.

BRIDGET  
Concerned is it?

*(Michael goes to the stove and puts on a pan of water. He pulls a  
bag of herbs from his coat pocket and places them in a cup.)*

MICHAEL  
Your Da's tending to the hens.

BRIDGET  
No, not Da..!

MICHAEL  
He'll figure it out. You rest now.

BRIDGET  
He hates them, you know. Say's they're thick as planks.

MICHAEL  
And so they are.

BRIDGET  
Still. They give us a living.

MICHAEL  
That they do.

*(He hands her the cup of steaming herbs.)*

Horehound for the congestion. Fennel for the ache...and Wormwood.

BRIDGET

What's that one for, to put me out?

MICHAEL

Why would you say such a thing?

BRIDGET

My bitter tongue? I'll be good now.

MICHAEL

I doubt that. Drink up.

*(She hesitates as he watches her.)*

BRIDGET

What, you don't trust me?

MICHAEL

Go on, now. Maybe this will change your dreaming.

*(She stares into the cup.)*

BRIDGET

It's curious isn't it? How your mind can wander and take you to such places-- places that you'd never dare fathom awake. Why would you? But asleep it's safe to go to those places. To be still afraid—I know I'm afraid in dreams—but to look in spite of yourself. Seeing things that have meaning but no explanation. Or listening to something you can't stand hearing, something that makes you as fierce with anger as to cripple you...or hearing news too terrible to bear, and so sad as to make you weep. It's the heaviest feeling there is, crying in your sleep, like you'll never lift yourself or stop. It runs over you, sweeps you away, and there's nothing to be done but to let it. You wake and you're cleaned-out. And light. Like you've left something back there, somewhere.

*She again looks at the drink.*

But the people are hardest, isn't that so? Seeing the ones that hurt you, the ones you meant to hate, and then forgot. They come back, don't they? And the ones you've hurt-- even without meaning to, they've got their business with you, too. And then there's the ones you miss. Them that are forever gone. Those are the ones you hope for. Pray for. Ay, Mother? You're always waiting for your dreams to take you straight to them.

MICHAEL

She's in God's care now, Bridgy. She's found her peace.

*(She throws back the tea, makes another face, then hands him the cup.)*

There now, was that so bad?

BRIDGET

Godawful. If that doesn't kill what ails me, nothin' will.

*(He approaches her; he gently wraps his arms around her.)*

BRIDGET

What is it we're doing?

MICHAEL

Just...dancin'.

*(They move together, slowly, dancing in silence.)*

MICHAEL

The sun's a long time down...the heavens are slow to darken themselves. The night's in no hurry.

BRIDGET

If the astronomers are to be believed—

MICHAEL

Oh they can't be trusted, the squinty-eyed buggers.

BRIDGET

On this very night, Michael...on this Good Friday, the stars of the constellations, the moon, sun, and all the planets, should be aligned exactly as they were on the night that Jesus died on Calvary. Isn't that something.

MICHAEL

That's something.

BRIDGET

When you look back on what happened that day, what is it..?

MICHAEL

Two-thousand years. Nearly that.

BRIDGET

The glory and horror of it, and everything since. The way His life and death sway entire civilizations, down to us and this day, this night. One person.

(pause)

A bit wrong-headed, eh?

MICHAEL

How's that?

BRIDGET

Don't we have books and holy days after Him now? Churches and temples where we worship and pray for His wisdom and ways— and isn't it in His name we then fight and hate and kill? And *that* we call faith?

MICHAEL

You have to consider the nature of it, Bridgy. If you look at it as a kind of *promise*, to be broken or kept... faith is a kind of perfection that can never be achieved. But do you stop trying for lack of it? No. That's why we're still here, lookin' at the stars and moon this night. Hoping maybe for a little perfection. A tiny glance at God.

*(They are looking out a window now,  
still in an embrace, scanning the skies.)*

BRIDGET

Or whoever's up there. Whatever it all means.

MICHAEL

Could the heavens this night not foretell, I don't know, a conjunction of events to come?

BRIDGET

A prophecy, then?

MICHAEL

A guess.

BRIDGET

Aye. A guess.

*(Michael watches Bridget.)*

Has your tea made a difference in me, then?

*(He moves away.)*

Michael..?

MICHAEL

I only ask this so I can know for myself what it is... You're not seeming to get better, Bridget. Not with our own remedies. And haven't I tried each and every one at least once. Maybe it's something else we should be doing? I can't say for certain 'til I know--

BRIDGET

Tell me, what is it you'll be knowing?

MICHAEL

What was it you did Wednesday last?

BRIDGET

I've told you—it's gone from me memory! It went from me and I coming up the road, a weakness upon me--

MICHAEL

Aye, aye, that much I know, but, do you not recall anything more?

BRIDGET

What more is there?

MICHAEL

Did something take place on Kynagranagh?

BRIDGET

It was you were following me then, along with Aunt Mary?

MICHAEL

We weren't following--

BRIDGET

What is it, then? Was I having a peculiar smell on me? A certain paleness to my skin? Or is it that I was leaving a trail of fairy dust as I went?

*(During the following, John Dunne is simultaneously questioned on the stand.)*

WANSBROUGH

Can you tell the court, John Dunne, what you knew of Mrs. Cleary's activities?

BRIDGET

You know I was on my rounds.

DUNNE

She used to be meeting an egg man on  
down at my place, on the lower road to Kynagranagh.

MICHAEL

Alone?

DUNNE

From Ballypatrick, he was.  
Nice looking, too, for an egg man.

BRIDGET

What is it you're thinking?

DUNNE

Had a wife and young ones at home, he did.

MICHAEL

I need to know where you were.

DUNNE

I can't say exactly to what purpose Bridget  
met that fella on that Wednesday,  
being that I was away for over two hours.

BRIDGET

I said I was down to Cloneen.

MICHAEL

And nowhere else? Not over to Kynagranagh, with a stop at Dunne's cottage?

DUNNE

Word likely got back to Michael about  
the two of them meeting. Those things  
usually do you know.

BRIDGET

And who is it you've been talking to about me?

MICHAEL

I've talked to no one.

BRIDGET

Not John Dunne, your story-telling friend? And did he bother to tell  
you that I was delivering eggs that very day to his place, and so I went  
there and waited in the cold, but never did see him?

MICHAEL  
Did you see anyone?

DUNNE  
You'll be hard-pressed to get to the truth  
of it, what with Bridget gone now.

BRIDGET  
I was selling my eggs as I've done each and every Wednesday,  
Michael Cleary. This one was no different.

DUNNE  
A bit odd though, don't you think?  
What with that egg fella slitting his  
own throat, just after Bridget fell sick. And for "no  
apparent reason".

*(Lights fade on John Dunne.)*

BRIDGET  
Didn't I tell you, after my rounds I waited two hours in the freezing cold for your  
friend John Dunne? That's where comes this affliction!

MICHAEL  
And he living at the foot of Kynagranagh, where none go but you. God as your  
witness, were you after visiting the forts?

BRIDGET  
Whether or which, it's all gone from me memory now! Have you no belief in  
anything I say?

*(He pours more of the liquid into her cup.)*

MICHAEL  
Drink up.

BRIDGET  
Does it have to be so bitter?  
*She drinks, then rises.*  
I'll be after doing that laundry.

MICHAEL  
Let Han. She's more able.

BRIDGET  
Good old Han. What would we do without her?

*(Michael picks up a new blue handkerchief  
from the laundry basket.)*

MICHAEL

Hello, what's this-? A handkerchief—and new?

BRIDGET

Well there you are. I liked the blue.

*(pause)*

Do you like it?

MICHAEL

Very much. Very much.

*(They embrace.)*

MICHAEL

When did you buy it?

BRIDGET

Wednesday.

MICHAEL

After your rounds..?

BRIDGET

Yes. After.

*(They remain looking at one another as  
William Simpson enters, grandly leading  
the Reporters on a tour.)*

REPORTER 1

Simpson, is it?

SIMPSON

William Simpson. I can spell it.

REPORTER 1

Can you now?

SIMPSON

Look around, look around! This was a highly coveted laborer's cottage-- before the unfortunate incident. As roomy as any you'll find in south Tipp, and newer than most.

*He gestures towards the audience.*

And out there, splendid views across a rolling landscape to our most notable local feature: Slievenamon. That be one of the more picturesque hills in County Tipperary. That hill is a hill worthy of the name of a hill.

*He gestures offstage.*

Out that way you'll see Bridget's garden and her chicken coops. The building over there would be Michael's workshop.

REPORTER 2

It's a cooper he was?

SIMPSON

And much in demand, making butter firkins and barrels for the locals. But a temper.

REPORTER 1

Ever hit anyone, his wife?

SIMPSON

Not that I can say, though I won't say he didn't. You see that poker there? Ah-ah, nothin's to be moved. Now I happen to know he threatened Bridget with it during the fairy trial. Put it to the fire, too. Why, one time, for no reason whatsoever, he swung it at me, he did.

REPORTER 1

He get you?

SIMPSON

Nearly. I ducked, quick-like, and now he swings again! Closer, only just missing my left temple! He tries a third time, closer still! A fine aim he was, from all that coopering no doubt. But I was too fast for him. And for that, I escaped the entire episode in tact.

REPORTER 2

He went after you for no reason that you could say?

SIMPSON

None whatsoever. And I'd brought him cakes, too.

REPORTER 1

Was this recent?

SIMPSON

Saturday before last it was. One week before dear Bridget's disappearance.

REPORTER 2

Her parents still live here?

SIMPSON

Her Da. The mother's dead, barely a year now. Bridget was named for her. Michael's was a Bridget too. Three Bridgets. Now see that's a cause for concern.

REPORTER 2

How do you see that?

SIMPSON

The story is told that when he was a boy his own mother one night went off with the fairies.

*(As Simpson speaks, we hear the excited whispers and clicks of the "fairy folk".)*

No one knew if she'd ever return. On the third day she came home as suddenly as she had disappeared. Wouldn't tell a soul where she'd been! Now it's been said Bridget's mother ran with the fairies. And so they're saying about Bridgy. Three women, three Bridgets, and all three with a fascination for the Otherworld. Three threes makes nine and that is the ninth wave. And beyond that... Well.

REPORTER 2

Come on, say.

REPORTER 1

You look to fancy yourself an authority on witchcraft.

SIMPSON

It's nothing to do with bloody witchcraft!

*He calms himself.*

I take no stock in peasant superstitions.

*He laughs.*

You see it's the old Irishry-- they seriously think this way! They think the fairy folk are out and about, waiting for them to slip up.

*He plucks a small cake from a basket and crumbles it blithely onto the floor.*

Sure and their food falls off the table, they'll pick up a speck to eat and leave the rest there for the fairies, for luck. They'll be putting clean water only in the house at night, to please the "little folk". 'God bless them! God bless them!'

It's the country people who think this. I've nothing to do with any of it. Nothing at all.

*He turns to go.*

Now, over this way--

REPORTER 2

Mr. Simpson? Do you mean to leave the cake on the floor-?

SIMPSON

What's that? Did I leave it then?

*(A pause, then he picks up the cake and restores it to the basket—perhaps leaving a few large crumbs behind. He quickly points towards an unmade bed.)*

Now this here would be Michael and Bridget's bedroom. Look around, look around. Still a bit of a mess from the unfortunate event that took place. Bridget, though, she was always neat. Made all her own clothes she did, on her sewing machine. Fine clothes they were, too. Very fine.

*(He picks up a blue handkerchief—the same that Michael had earlier, but soiled now. He fingers it gently.)*

REPORTER 1

What have you found there?

SIMPSON

A handkerchief I lost. Just a handkerchief is all.

*(He folds it and puts it in his pocket. A separate pool of light comes up on Minnie Simpson. She addresses the court.)*

WANSBROUGH

Please state your full name and address.

MINNIE

Mary Simpson. Minnie's what I'm called by nearly everyone. We live in Ballyvadlea, about a half mile from the Cleary cottage.

WANSBROUGH

What work does your husband do?

REPORTER 1

You're an emergency man, Simpson, that right?

SIMPSON

Emergency caretaker.

MINNIE

William was brought in by Mr. Thomas Lindsay of Cork. The largest landowner in the county. Very rich he is

REPORTER 2

Was it you threw old Henry Meagher and his wife out?

SIMPSON

The tenant was evicted.

MINNIE

Mr. Cork hired William to manage delinquent property.

REPORTER 1

Bet they're fond of you 'round here.

SIMPSON

We get on fine with everyone.

MINNIE

Some don't like us for it, but you can't help that. We do our work, mind our business.

WANSBROUGH

Do you have relations with the family?

MINNIE

The Clearys you're meaning?

SIMPSON

Oh we get on fine with the Clearys.

MINNIE

We can't abide their practices and will have nothing at all to do with their beliefs! My husband and me are church-goers. Episcopalians. We don't go in for that other. We don't know anything about it.

WANSBROUGH

When did you last see the missing woman?

MINNIE

On the night of Thursday.

SIMPSON

March fourteenth it was.

REPORTER 1

Was that the night you and your wife went to the Cleary cottage?

MINNIE

Only just to see about Bridget's health and for no other reason.

SIMPSON

Down along the road we were, when I first heard the shouting.

REPORTER 1

From down the road did you say?

OFF-STAGE VOICE

TAKE THAT YOU BITCH!

SIMPSON

And the door being bolted and the shutters locked--

MINNIE

We didn't know what to think. We didn't know a thing.

WANSBROUGH

When did this occur?

SIMPSON

It was nine o'clock.

MINNIE

No, it was after nine.

WANSBROUGH

At this point did you see anything?

MINNIE

No sir.

SIMPSON

Well, except for seeing Johanna Burke there—

MINNIE

Only Johanna. Nothing more.

*(A gavel strikes. Johanna enters, awkwardly standing in a pool of light)*

JOHANNA

I live part time with my grown brothers and my mother, Mary Kennedy, in Ballyvadlea. I help with her chores.

MINNIE

Johanna was walking out from the cottage. I don't know why.

JOHANNA

My Katie and the baby stay with me. My husband stays in Rathkenny with our other children.

WANSBROUGH

What happened then?

SIMPSON

I inquired from Han how was Bridget.

JOHANNA

Worse and worse. She's sick already one week. They're giving her at this time herbs they got from Ganey over to the Mountain.

MINNIE

That's when we heard more shouting.

OFFSTAGE VOICE

TAKE IT YOU WITCH. ALL DOWN!

WANSBROUGH

Can you say who was doing the shouting?

SIMPSON

Is that John Dunne I'm hearing?

MINNIE

It's Michael Cleary if ever I heard him.

OFFSTAGE VOICE

YOU HEAR? TAKE IT!

MINNIE

Is it to Bridget they're talking, Han?

WANSBROUGH

Did you know what they were doing in that house? Mrs. Burke?

JOHANNA

Yes.

OFFSTAGE VOICE  
TAKE IT NOW OR WE WILL KILL YOU!

SIMPSON  
Mother o' God, what is it they're doing to her?

WANSBROUGH  
Can you answer the question?

JOHANNA  
They mean to...

*(Bridget rushes in, in her bedclothes.)*

BRIDGET  
Han-! Help me...

WANSBROUGH  
Mrs. Burke-?

JOHANNA  
I can't.

*(Johanna quickly exits as Bridget crosses the stage and sits fireside, listless. Lights reveal John Dunne, Patrick Boland, and James Kennedy, gathered in the kitchen area, near the fire. They are well into their cups.)*

DUNNE  
And that was not the only time Finn was robbed of some of his hounds. There was a daughter of Roman was woman-Druid to the Tuatha de Danaan, and she set her love on Finn. But Finn said so long as there was another woman to be found in the world he would not marry a witch. And then one time, three times fifty of Finn's hounds passed by the hill where she was, and she breathed on the hounds and shut them up in the hill. They never came out again. It was to spite Finn she did that. And then did the place get the name of Duma na Conn.

JAMES  
The Mound of the Hounds.

BOLAND  
Indeed.

DUNNE

There are many versions of the story, Jamie Kennedy, but mine is the true one, if it was the truth that Donagh told me.

BOLAND

To truth, then.

DUNNE

Aye, Patrick, to truth.

JAMES

To truth.

*(They raise their cups. Michael enters.)*

MICHAEL

John Dunne, how long is it you're here?

DUNNE

By the look of your father-in-law and your cousin, I'd say too long. How long is it you've been out walking in the dark cold, my friend? Let's pour one for him, Jamie.

*(James pours a drink for Michael.)*

BOLAND

Where were you, Mike?

MICHAEL

Across the road, down at the bridge.

JAMES

The bridge? What was it you saw there?

MICHAEL

Nothing.

BOLAND

For two hours?

*(Michael goes to Bridget and covers her with a blanket.)*

MICHAEL

We have a signal, Bridget and me, a kind of whistle. And sometimes, if I see her down at the bridge, her hair all in braids like that, I would signal her. And once or

twice, when she would turn towards me, I'd see her face, and it wasn't my Bridget at all—it was her mother, her own Bridget, hair in braids.

BOLAND  
My wife, may she rest in peace.

DUNNE  
Aye.

JAMES  
Aye.

BRIDGET  
I'm cold, Michael.

BOLAND  
Cold still.

JAMES  
Isn't it all night she's been saying it?

*(There is a knock at the door.)*

SIMPSON (offstage)  
HELLO AND GOOD EVENING TO YOU PATRICK BOLAND!

DUNNE(whispering)  
Is it Simpson?

JAMES(whispering)  
I fear it is.

SIMPSON (offstage)  
IS THAT JOHN DUNNE I'M HEARING?

DUNNE(loudly)  
Indeed it is not! Neither is it Mary Kennedy's boy James, nor Patrick Boland, nor his son-in-law Michael Cleary!  
*(pause)*

SIMPSON  
CAN YOU OPEN THE DOOR THEN?

*(Boland cracks the door; Simpson tries to poke his head, or any body part, inside, then shoves the basket in.)*

My Minnie sent me with cakes. Ten of 'em and still warm.

BOLAND  
My thanks to your wife.

*(Boland takes the basket of cakes and proceeds to walk away.)*

SIMPSON(offstage)  
WILL YOU BE LETTING ME IN THEN, PADDY?

*(A pause, then Boland reluctantly opens the door. Simpson enters, wiping crumbs from his mouth and coat.)*

BOLAND  
I count only six cakes.

SIMPSON  
Only six is it? John-- it is you I heard! Hello James.

JAMES  
Hey.

SIMPSON  
Evening to you, Michael.  
*Simpson extends his hand. Michael merely nods.*

BOLAND  
What's your business this night, William Simpson?

SIMPSON  
No business, neighbor. And sure I'm a bit thirsty myself, coming all this way.

DUNNE  
It's less than a mile you've walked from home.

SIMPSON  
Aye, but a fast one.

DUNNE  
Did you hurry so as to avoid being shot by your neighbors?

SIMPSON  
No.

JAMES  
What then, stabbed?

SIMPSON

I've no quarrel with my neighbors, James Kennedy, and that's so.

DUNNE

You're the first Emergencyman ever could say that.

SIMPSON

I only came quick-like to see about Bridget's condition. When was your only daughter taken bad, Paddy?

BOLAND

It's three days now.

SIMPSON

So I hear, so I hear.

BRIDGET

Is that someone?

SIMPSON

Hello, Bridget!

BRIDGET

Who are you?

SIMPSON

Don't you know me?

BOLAND

The sickness has her confused. It's the Simpson boy from down the road, Bridgy.

SIMPSON

Why just the other day we spoke down to Clonmel, you and me-- and wasn't it cold?

BRIDGET

Was it?

SIMPSON

And you with a bit of sneezing and no hanky, you remember, so I gave you mine.

MICHAEL

A blue handkerchief..?

SIMPSON

So it was, so it was. And new. I hear you're not doing well, Bridgy.

BRIDGET

I've felt better.

SIMPSON

I've brought cakes.

BRIDGET

I can't call to mind what your name is...it's after escaping me memory.

SIMPSON

William Simpson.

BRIDGET

Cakes. That's fine. I'm cold Michael. So cold.

*(Michael adjusts her blanket and  
she drifts back to the fire.)*

SIMPSON

She doesn't hardly look herself. I've never known her to be delicate in mind or body.

DUNNE

She's not the Bridget you knew and that's sure.

SIMPSON

He's not much better than her.

DUNNE

Hasn't slept, not since she was afflicted.

SIMPSON

Has anyone sent for Crean?

BOLAND

I went to Fethard myself this morning. Left notice for the doctor. Michael's called on him twice now.

JAMES

Takes his own sweet time, he does.

SIMPSON

She's very ill and that's so. I'd be going myself and getting Crean out of bed, were I you.

BOLAND  
Would you now?

SIMPSON  
And making threats on him too. That's what you do with the likes of Crean, or any man who pays you no mind.

MICHAEL  
You would know, eh?

BOLAND  
Give us another, Shanachie. Your story speeds the night.