

# JUST ABOVE DOGS



By  
Anne Curtis

A one act play, for 3 male actors

## Cast in order of appearance

**Cian Carroll:** mid- late 20s journalist, documentary filmmaker.  
English accent.

**Dec Carroll:** owner of Carroll's Construction - mid 30s to mid-60s.  
Irish (Cork) accent.

**Dessi Dwyer:** resident at St Finbarr's hostel - early 70s. Strong  
Irish (Cork) accent.

**Mikey Carroll:** Building labourer - 30s (*Irish*) Cork accent

**Christy McMahon-** Gangerman for 'Buffalo Bob' and Dec - late 30s.  
Irish (Kerry) accent

**Frank Quigley** - Parish Priest and brother in law of Dec and Mikey  
- 40s and 60s. Well-spoken Irish accent.

### **Actor 1**

Dec Carroll  
Father Frank Quigley

### **Actor 2**

Cian Carroll  
Christy McMahon -

### **Actor 3**

Mikey Carroll  
Dessi Dwyer

- Prequel** *St Finbarr's Hostel for Homeless men. Lunchtime  
16<sup>th</sup> March 2010.*
- Scene 1** *Outside one of the site offices of Carroll's  
Construction Ltd, North London 16<sup>th</sup> March 2010.  
Early afternoon.*
- Scene 2** *A room in St Finbarr's hostel for homeless men,  
North London. 16<sup>th</sup> March 2010. Mid-afternoon 16<sup>th</sup>  
March 2010.*
- Scene 3.** *Early morning- outside Camden tube, North London  
1975.*
- Scene 4** *A building site in the Nottinghamshire countryside  
1979.*
- Scene 5** *A building site in London 1980.*
- Scene 6** *Inside a pub North London 1980.*
- Scene 7** *Outside an Irish dancehall, North London 1981.*
- Scene 8** *Inside a pub London 1983.*
- Scene 9** *Room in St Finbarr's Hostel for homeless men. 16<sup>th</sup>  
March 2010. Late afternoon.*
- Scene 10** *Inside of a catholic church north London at 3am  
1983.*
- Scene 11** *Inside a Catholic church, midday April 2010.*

## **Staging**

"Just Above Dogs" has been written so that it can take place on an empty stage with minimal props. The exception to this is Dessie's chair in St Finbarr's hostel- which should be set down stage left or right. In previous productions sound effects have been used to create the backdrop. The play has been designed so that the props, which form the setting can be carried on and off stage by the actors.

In order to help the audience, understand where each scene takes place, it is suggested that the location and time is announced before each scene. It is also suggested that music is played in between scenes whilst the stage is dark.

## **Costume**

The actors wear shirts and trousers to which they add pieces of 'costume'.

## **Props**

The following props should be accessible to the actors for the various scenes:

- a dressing gown
- a chair for 'Dessie'
- Evening Standard newspaper
- walking stick
- transistor or portable radio
- clipboard and pencil,
- shoulder bag with Dictaphone or equivalent, photos of buildings. shamrock or similar,
- glass of water
- packet of tablets.
- A copy of the Racing Post
- tobacco and cigarette papers
- two shovels
- high viz jackets,
- tin mugs,
- head bandage
- photo of glamorous female.
- two metal stools or similar,
- two pints of beer
- Cash- coins and paper money
- a set of building plans
- a 'prieu dieu' or 'church kneeler'
- an alb
- a small wooden crate to stand on

## PERFORMANCE

The copyright is retained by the author. The piece may not be performed fully or in part without her written permission. Those wishing to perform the play should contact Green Curtain Theatre at [anne@irishinlondontheatre.co.uk](mailto:anne@irishinlondontheatre.co.uk).

**PREQUEL- St Finbarr's hostel for the homeless. Midday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2010.**

**Dessie Dwyer, an old man, unsteady on his feet, wearing a dressing gown and carrying a portable radio walks onto the stage and sits downstage right on a chair/ stool which should have been previously set. This should be lit by a spotlight. He turns the portable radio on. The announcement below is heard which Dessie reacts to with mounting anxiety.**

"Parishioners at St Finbarr's Church, North London were shocked to hear about the arrest of Bishop Elect Frank Quigley. Originally from West Cork, Frank Quigley is well known for his work with the many Irish builders who came over to this country in the 1950s and 1960s. Many people will know the soon to be Bishop Quigley as the brother in law of Dec Carroll of Carroll's construction, sponsors of this year's St Patrick's Day parade. Police have refused to comment other than to say that a man in his 60s is helping them with their enquiries. Now back to the studio."

**(BLACK) (Dessie leaves the stage)**

**Scene 1: In the yard of Carroll's Construction Ltd. Dec Carroll, man in his fifties, dressed in an expensive casual jacket is talking to his son Cian. Cian is dressed in casual clothes and has a shoulder bag or small rucksack over his shoulder.**

**Cian** Let's get this straight. You heard an item on the lunchtime news about Uncle Frank helping the police with their enquiries and you came to what conclusion?

**Dec** No conclusion about it - 'arrested' was the word used.

**Cian** Whatever. And you now think that he is.....I can't even say it, it is so gross. What sort of planet are you on?

**Dec** One where it is okay to protect me own son.

**Cian** I hope that you haven't said any of this to mum. **(Beat)** I don't believe it you have.

**Dec** Listen son, there is only one reason why priests get put on the news in this country and we all know what that is. It might be hard for your mother, but she needs to know..

**Cian** The truth. Which is, that her brother who is about to be made a bishop, is for some reason helping the police with their enquiries.

**Dec** Take your rose-coloured spectacles off son.

**Cian** Here we go again....

**Dec** Look across the water to the country that you think 'can do no wrong'.

**Cian** ...the same old record.

**Dec** How many people turned a blind eye because they thought that the fella wearing the dog collar was decent? You tell me!

**Cian** Is this the same man who used shout his head off against injustice? 'Don't forget about all the Irishmen arrested that the police had to let go again'. Now look at you, condemning

your own brother-in-law without evidence. Doesn't that make you the same as the coppers who stitched up the Guildford Four or the Birmingham Six?

**Dec** Then explain to me, why he spent so much time with you when you were small?

**Cian** He was helping mum out - you weren't around.

**Dec** That's right, blame Dec Carroll for wanting to do the best for his family.

**Cian** I'm not blaming you - you were trying to build up the business, I understand that. Just don't distort innocent games of hurling or kicking a football in the park with an uncle, with whatever is going on in your head.

**Dec** He didn't spend so much time with your sister.

**Cian** She doesn't like sport.

**Dec** She wasn't given the chance to.

**Cian** She preferred reading - how do you think she got into Oxford university?

**Dec** If you say so.

**Cian** For the last time Uncle Frank has been nothing but kind to me, he was the father to me when you weren't...

**Dec** Great!

**Cian** ...able to be. The man's a living saint- ask any of the people that he helps.

**Dec** Like those wasters down at St Finbarr's hostel?

**Cian** Old men who were wronged.

**Dec** Inherited your Uncle's romantic notions—shame you couldn't inherit your father's work ethic.

**Cian** I don't see anything romantic about helping the exploited.

**Dec** Exploited! Eejits unable to look after themselves.

**Cian** Men paid cash in hand - wages subbed. They lived 'day to day', 'hand to mouth' - they didn't stand a chance.

**Dec** Must be great to know everything.

**Cian** I don't, but I do know that plenty of Irishmen worked on sites run by 'their own' where no one gave a toss about them, leaving men like Uncle Frank to pick up the pieces.

**Dec** Bishop Frank Quigley- patron saint of the migrant worker, with feck all idea of what it takes to run a business.

**Cian** At least he tried to do something to help. Don't forget that 'they' are people like your brother.

**Dec** Mikey and I came over from Ireland at the same time without a penny in our pockets- no one stopped him from making something of himself.

**Cian** He chose not to be a sub-contractor, not to exploit his own.

**Dec** He chose to rely on others to give him the work. Okay the conditions weren't always great, but he was always paid- cash in his hand - no paying 'the pub landlord's levy' for your Uncle Mikey. And what did he do?

**Cian** Don't tell me. "Poured the word 'opportunity' into a glass and tipped it down his throat"

**Dec** Exactly.

**Cian** And that absolves you of all responsibility?

**Dec** I gave him and many like him work, which in case you haven't noticed, is more than Ireland gave him.

**Cian** Yeah by underpaying them. Cutting corners on Health and Safety. Never letting a union official anywhere near.

**Dec** It's been a long time since I barred the union from visiting any of my sites. No one gets on without bending a few rules.

**Cian** And that makes it okay?

**Dec** It was hard work and nothing else that got me where I am today. Getting up at five to make sure that it was I, not the other feckers first in the queue in Camden. Working long hours: digging, carrying, laying cables anything to bring in the money.

**Cian** Except you didn't do it on your own. Did you dad?

**Dec** Talk to me when you've done the same.

**Cian** Do you know how much research I've done for my documentary?

**Dec** Take care of the old back now.

**Cian** One day you'll understand the importance of social history.

**Dec** Yes Mr 'No Blacks, no Irish, no Dogs' man. Do you really think that the landladies who put those notices in their windows would have turned down the rent from Irish nurses or teachers? Would they? Like hell they would, only that doesn't make good TV.

**Cian** What are you saying?

**Dec** Open your eyes for Christ sake. Accept the fact that, some of the lads who came over wanted no more than money for pints at the end of their working week. Men who wouldn't have known what a bath and a bar of soap was if you had put it into their hands.

**Cian** Ever thought why? Exactly because they didn't know where they would be sleeping from one night to the next.

**Dec** Jesus.

**Cian** What kind of Irish are you dad? Tell you what, why don't you go down Cricklewood Broadway and take a look at one of your so called 'wasters' shuffling along alone and ill- with nothing to live on in their old age. Do you know what? They might just recognise you....

**Dec** Christ I'm terrified.

**Cian** Has it occurred to you, that if Uncle Mikey had died, that it might have happened on one of your sites?

**Dec** That old yarn.

**Cian** How dare you describe the story of how my godfather might have died as a 'yarn'.

**Dec** Well what else would you call your mother's interpretation?

**Cian** A credible account.

**Dec** For the last time- there was never any proof that your Uncle Mikey was killed on a building site- he just went missing. And when your mother asked Father Frank, if he thought that Mikey could have been killed, all Frank would say was: "I suppose it's possible"

**Cian** From what I've heard it was more than possible.

**Dec** Back to the land of fairy tales. He could have gone to America for all we know.

**Cian** Then why did Uncle Frank hold a memorial service for him if he didn't think that he was dead?

**Dec** Because his sister insisted. From my recall he wanted nothing to do with it. 'Wait and see Brid, sometimes things work out differently to what we expect'. Quigley knew what happens in the building trade. Fellas moving on all the time. Mikey probably got himself into some sort of trouble and headed off. *(Dec signals 'Good bye' to a man off stage)*. Slain - see you this evening. Jesus now what are we going to do about that fucking ball tonight?

**Cian** You can't cancel it. Mum's lifetime's ambition was for us to sponsor a St Patrick's day ball.

**Dec** I've no problem with the feckin' ball, Just the 'Frank Quigley Apprenticeship Scheme'.

**Cian** The what?

**Dec** Ar, ah some old nonsense of an idea that your mother had to mark her brother's 'clerical elevation'. She got me to put a few bob together to set up a fund for the young fellas who've started coming over from Ireland again. Help them get the qualifications that will give them a start in the building trade. We were going to announce it at the ball tonight, but now...

**Cian** But now what?

**Dec** What do you think? We can't have Frank's name associated with young fellas.

**Cian** Jesus dad - don't even go there. *(Cian goes to leave)*

**Dec** And where do you think you're going?

**Cian** St Finbarr's Hostel. I've an old man to interview. I'm sure he'll make more sense than you.

**Dec** Another storyteller who has seen you coming?

**Cian** No, an old fella with not long to live- why would he need to lie to me? *(Cian walks off stage)*

**Dec** *(Shouts after him)* Then do yourself a favour and keep your wallet in your pocket. D'you hear me now? **(BLACK)**

**Scene 2: St Finbarr's hostel for the homeless. Dessie Dwyer, an elderly man wearing a dressing gown is sitting on a chair, looking at the 'London Evening Standard'. Ci enters and sits down beside him on a stool, a moment elapses before they speak.**

**Cian** I'm Ci (*pronounced 'key'*). The guy making the documentary about construction workers. They said you might be interested in talking to me.

**Dessi** Jaysus another plastic Paddy! Think you're Irish because you drink stout in a pub with old bicycles and fly back for a fleadh each year. Is it the boron or tin whistle that you play son?

**Cian** That simple?

**Dessi** Christ my life would have been a lot easier if all 'being Irish' meant was finding a pub that sold decent stout and let me watch the All-Ireland final. Why the interest?

**Cian** 'Bout time you lads were recognised for what you did.

**Dessi** Jesus Christ!

**Cian** He was a carpenter.

**Dessi** Plastic and funny.

**Cian** We're hoping to speak to people who; how can I say it? Haven't really settled on either side of the water. Record their stories. Think of it as a legacy.

**Dessi** Listen Ireland gave me shag all, England not much more- so you'd better explain why I should leave anyone anything.

**Cian** But you were part of something - all the things you built, what you did was amazing. (*Opens his rucksack and shows Dessie photos of iconic London buildings*) Look.

**Dessi** You're well named plastic.

**Cian** (*Shakes his head*)

**Dessi** I crossed the water to survive son.

**Cian** I know. But when you got here, - your contribution. It needs to be remembered.

**Dessi** Just fuck off will you and leave me alone. *(Dessi looks at Cian)*

**Cian** *(Cian turns to go when Dessi yells out in pain)*. Are you alright?

**Dessi** Water. *(Dessi fishes in his pocket for some tablets. Cian hands him some water and looks on)*.

**Cian** Can I get someone?

**Dessi** *(Fumbles but takes the tablets in the end. Tries to sit up and fails)*  
Christ give us a hand would ye? *(Cian helps him up and as he is doing so he sees the shamrock in Cian's pocket)*. Do a bit of gardening in your spare time, do you?

**Cian** Oh that...shamrock.

**Dessi** That desperate old weed.

**Cian** My dad always gets a load for his men for St Pats', I thought you might like some.

**Dessi** 'His men'? Building trade is it? Why can't you ask him about life on the sites?

**Cian** I'm not really interested in success stories.

**Dessi** You've a great way with words plastic.

**Cian** Sorry, that sounded really rude.

**Dessi** Ar y'alright.

**Cian** I was told that you hadn't been back to Ireland for over twenty years...

**Dessi** No point.

**Cian** And that you didn't want any help in tracing your family.

**Dessi** Too much water between us. D'you know how many fellas freeze to death on the streets in winter? At least I'm looked after in here.

**Cian** But if we put you on the telly; someone might recog...

**Dessi** Telly! Now you can definitely fuck off. I thought it was stories you wanted. You get this into your head straight away... The last thing that Dessi Dwyer wants is to be recognised. Understand plastic?

**Cian** So, a man being interested in his heritage is 'plastic', is it? What about the motorways, the hydroelectric projects, the bridges, the tunnels, the housing estates? Faceless every one of them yet they make this country work - this country would be nothing without what you did. Laugh at me and call me a 'Plastic Paddy' as often as you want, but I still think who you are and what you did is important even if no one else does. Can you understand that? *(Cian smiles picks up the Dictaphone and shows it to Dessi)*. It is a voicerecorder not a bloody camera. It's your story, not your face that matters to me. Help me to get it out there before it's too late. If nothing else for the other fellas like you, the ones no one noticed, who are now gone. And for your information, I have no need of damp cloths to wipe any information away from anything.

**Dessi** Where's you da from?

**Cian** West Cork, the Sheepshead. *(Mikey splutters the water)* Why do you know it? *(Silence)*. Which part of Ireland are you from?

**Dessi** Roundabout.

**Cian** The mystery man.

**Dessi** Mysterious does me well enough. Means that those who want to can't catch me.

**Cian** There are people after you so?

**Dessi**      Mebbe.

**Cian**      When did you come over?

**Dessi**      60s back again in the 70s. Plenty of work then for the likes of me.

**Cian**      I'm sure.

**Dessi**      Strong man then, not like I am now, muscles the size of.....  
Ever done labouring son?

**Cian**      Years ago when I was a student. You wouldn't call it labouring though.

**Dessi**      Too good for you.

**Cian**      Course not.

**Dessi**      Then why don't you do it? Plenty of work so they say. Olympics and all that. Good money these days so they tell me. Make more than with the filums. What's ye da's name? *(Cian shakes his head)*  
How big's the firm? How many men? How many lorries?

**Cian**      Does it matter?

**Dessi**      Another mystery man.

**Cian**      Just want to make it on my own terms.

**Dessi**      Leave the firm to the younger brother.

**Cian**      ? *(Shrugs his shoulders)*

**Dessi**      Don't blame ye. 'Twas a desperate life. We are best forgotten. Look at this estate, the Hopton. In its day the finest feckin housing estate in Europe - won all the awards going. And look what is happening to it now. They've started pulling it down. Look. *(Dessi shows Cian the newspaper)*. Ach, they can draw a line under us. Let the Poles and the Romanians get their backs

broken and their hands blistered. What Paddy did is finished.  
No more to be said.

**Cian** I can't let that happen.

**Dessi** 'Twas only a feckin' job son.

**Cian** To you yeah.

**Dessi** And to the fella who never did it? Why is he so interested?

**Cian** I've got my reasons.

**Dessi** Thank Christ ye're not interviewing yourself.

**Cian** If you really want to know, it is about identity. We've just found out that we're expecting twins. It is months away but when they are is born, I want to be able to...to tell them about their heritage what their grandads and great uncles did for this country. I want them to be proud. You're right, my dad is wealthy, and I've wanted for nothing. Except for one thing

**Dessi** ?

**Cian** Connection. All my life I have never known whether to call myself Irish or English. I want my kids to know their history so that they can decide who they are. I want them to look down from the top of the London Eye, at all the buildings, the London skyline and to know that it wouldn't have been built without people like their granddad and great uncles.

**Dessi** Tis important to ye?

**Cian** To me yeah but not to you. People here can help you to find your family, but you don't want to know.

**Dessi** Roots were never of any use to me son. Tell me, what good is a country if the soil's no good and a plant can't grow there? I'll tell you a story. You say that your people are from West Cork, well one evening I was on the road to ... to... doesn't matter. 'Twas dark- it had been raining- the sky was full of clouds-there was no moon. I saw a cowshed ... It's okay you can switch that thing on. *(Cian switches his Dictaphone on)*. I heard a strange kind of crying- not a woman's cry but a mans'. I'd never heard that before... Thought men didn't ...you know... But

there he was. Jaysus the poor auld fecker sobbing' like a babby.

**Cian** Did you ask him what was wrong?

**Dessi** I didn't need to.....what I saw before me said it all, ye man had his arms around a cow... he was sobbing into the skin of the dead beast- 'I'm finished' he said. Over and over again 'I'm finished'.

**Cian** He'd no more cows?

**Dessi** More cows? Sure, the one was all he had to scrape together something on most days. That's why our history is different son. You don't know what too few 'something days' and the 'too many nothing days' are. I do. That's why I left and that's why I'll never go back.

**Cian** Because of a cow?

**Dessi** No because of its breath.

**Cian** I'm not with you.

**Dessi** Because of what De Valera's Ireland had for us culchies- sometimes so little that it seemed as if we were one breath away from death; the fact that the breath could belong to a four legged beast was too much for me. I went home and told me mammy what she already knew, that her son was 'for the boat'. My story begins in England. (**BLACKOUT: Cian and Dessi walk off stage**)

**Scene 3: Early morning- outside Camden tube 1975. Two men in their 30s Dec and Mikey Carroll run on. They are wearing the clothes of working men. They look round and look surprised that there is no one there. A Gangerman walks on after them and remains upstage looking at them, he is reading the Racing Post.**

**Mikey** There's no one here!

**Dec** But you said...

**Mikey** Jaysus I only told you what I was told.

**Dec** The fella on the boat?

**Mikey** Meet me outside Camden Town at nine.

**Dec** Not eight?

**Mikey** No.

**Dec** Not seven?

**Mikey** No.

**Dec** Not ..?

**Mikey** And before you ask he didn't say six either.

**Dec** You sure he said Camden?

**Mikey** Are those ears on the side of your head?

**Dec** This is bollocks. Jesus I should have stayed on me own on the boat. Not drank in the bar with some eejit my brother barely knew.

**Mikey** Twas great craic though.

**Dec** Where's the craic now? Our pockets are empty.

**Mikey** He told me he get us work. Well paid. Plenty of it starting this morning.

**Dec** Then where is he now? Jesus Christ. You feckin eejit!

**Mikey** Sure it's only just after nine, he's probably...

**Dec** Fast asleep in a warm bed we paid for, whilst you and I spent our first night in London sleeping on a park bench. I'm a fool for listening to ye these past years. All those tales you told mammy about how well ye were doing in England, and you came home wi' nothing.

**Christy**            *(The gangerman walks to the front of the stage)* Are yous lads lookin' for work?

**Dec**                We're sound. There's fella coming for us.

**Christy**            Prefers his bed to ye- does he?

**Mikey**             He'll be here soon enough.

**Dec**                We're sorted.

**Christy**            Tell me, where did you meet this fella?

**Dec**                On the boat over. In the bar.

**Christy**            And has this 'Mister Invisible' a name?

**Dec**                Buffalo Bob. *(The Gangerman responds by laughing his head off)*

**Mikey**             Gave him a couple of bob cos he was short like. Said he see us right if we were outside Camden tube at nine.

**Christy**            *(Still laughing)* 'Be outside Camden Tube at nine'. And 'Buffalo Bob' needed to borrow money from ye? I tell you lads, you'd best run back to Euston station quick. Boat train leaves from Platform 8. *(Reaction from Dec and Mikey)*. Go back to the farm lads, where there's only cows to take yer money. *(Continues laughing)*. Buffalo Bob short of a bob or two. That's the best joke I heard all week.

**Dec**                *(Grabs Mikey by the lapel and shakes him)*. You feckin eejit.

**Christy**            Whatever else Bob might need, 'twouldn't be to borrow money off the likes of ye.

**Mikey**             But the fella told me.

**Christy**            And your mind was clear of drink at the time was it? You sure he didn't say that 'he'd like to be Buffalo Bob'.

**Dec** You know him?

**Christy** If you're talking about the Bob, who's ahead of the game when it comes to men and lorries and contracts. Who walked outta Kerry wi' his arse hanging out of his trousers 20 years ago but who has a house on the 'Ring' that's the size of *Áras an Uachtaráin* (pronounced 'aw-rah's on ookh-thahr-aw-in') then I do. And one thing I know for certain is that he doesn't travel back and forth be boat wi' the likes of ye.

**Dec** But he said that he'd give us the 'start'

**Christy** *(Christy laughs)* Ye're a right pair of feckin culchies aren't ye? The Buffalo talk to the likes of ye.

**Dec** You asked if we were looking for work.

**Ganger** I did. Show me your cards.

**Dec** What feckin'?

**Ganger** National insurance - tax.

**Dec** *(To Mikey)* Why didn't you tell me about cards?

**Ganger** Hard to get taken on without them.

**Mike** More bollocks

**Dec** And you?

**Ganger** I might take ye on. Though there'd be a small deduction for the lack of a card though. Have a trade, do ye?

**Mikey** A couple of strong boys here sir. No trade but plenty muscle.

**Ganger** No skill and be the look of those boots no experience?

**Mikey** We're hard workers- no experience but great effort.

**Dec** What'll you pay us?

**Ganger** How much do a couple of eejits like you think that they are worth?

**Dec** Fifteen pounds is our daily rate

**Ganger** Fifteen pounds a day, my hole. And me havin' to train ye an all. You should think yourself lucky that I'll pay you half of that. You choose- the truck's leaving in two minutes

**Dec** Since when you have needed training to lift a feckin shovel?

**Mikey** Is it because it is an English shovel?

**Ganger** *(To offstage)* On the back now lads we're leaving in a minute

**Mikey** What'll we do?

**Dec** I'm starved. I could eat feckin bull shoved between two bread vans. *(To Ganger)* Hey! He didn't mean it. We'll take it.

**Ganger** The lorry is over there. Jump on the back. What part of Ireland did you say you came from? Kerry man meself. *(Mikey and Dec follow the man off stage.)* **Blackout**

**Scene 4: A building site in the Midlands 1979, four years later. Mikey is leaning on a shovel. Dec approaches him and hands him a mug of tea.**

**Mikey** There'll be sugar in there?

**Dec** Jesus, isn't that the only sweetness that we have in our sad lives? Stuck out here in the middle of nowhere. For fuck's sake there's more going on back home than there is here.

**Mikey** You miss looking at the cows and the grass- do you?

**Dec** Shacked up with other shag arsed fellas. *(Dec takes a card from his pocket)*. Not a woman in sight.

**Mikey** You're forgetting about the money.

**Dec** She was lovely, though wasn't she? *(Dec sips his tea. There is a pause.)* And she said I was lovely too.

**Mikey** And tell me how much extra did being told 'you were lovely' cost you?

**Dec** Jaysus the things I could only do to her. Opportunity is the only thing that is coming between us.

**Mikey** And she'd let a gombeen like yerself do them without handing over the money first?

**Dec** You could see it in her eyes.

**Mikey** Eyes was it? Save your money for pints. You wait till Friday when there's a new crew in town with more cash than you. You'll be left standing at the bar crying into your empty glass

**Dec** And that's enough for you?

**Mikey** One day I'll have me own room and use of a bath. I'll be after buying myself a suit. And then on Friday night you'll see me outside the Buffalo ballroom in Camden town. Girls queuing up to dance with me. *(Mikey starts dancing with his shovel)*

**Dec** You think we're in a fuckin' holiday camp, don't you?

**Mikey** Haven't we pints and a place to sleep?

**Dec** Packed in like feckin' sardines. Waking up in the morning with some fella or others arse in my face. I might head for the boat and take me chances across the water.

**Mikey** And tell me, what will they say to a man who comes back from England in shirt sleeves with barely the price of a pint in his hand?

**Dec** I'd be back with our own. I could start again.

**Mikey** And aren't the fellas you work for 'your own'? And they've money to pay you. I tell you boy, you won't see me crossing the water, until a fella offers me sort of folding money, I can get over here.

**Dec** Listen to me. There's a fella, only works on the big projects. Says there's money and progress to be had big time.

**Mikey** Jaysus if you think that I'm breaking me feckin' back just to pay taxes to the British government then you have another think coming.

**Dec** Suit yerself but I don't want to be on the shovel in ten years' time (*Pause*). We need to find the lad we met back in Camden.

**Mikey** The fella who took money out of our wage packet?

**Dec** The fella who gave us work.

**Mikey** By stealing from 'us', his own.

**Dec** It got him off the shovel and outta the trenches.

**Mikey** And look at how fast he must run to keep ahead of those who are after him. Jaysus that fella's risen from the dead more times than feckin' Lazarus. Changing his name, his story and his address from one month to the next. Leaving stories of his passing to stop anyone, who wants to kill him from looking. Joe O'Dwyer- 'God love him, 'twas a dreadful way to go'. Patsy Daly- 'twas very sad alright. Brendy Kinnear, gone- and his wife just after giving birth to a baby too. May God be good to them all. Jaysus, you'd be so busy looking behind you that you wouldn't have the time to drink your stout!

**Dec** So tell me, how are we going to mend the holes in our pockets?

**Mikey** Ach we'll be alright.

**Dec** I didn't leave Ireland for this.

**Mikey** Ye left because ye had to.

**Dec** For a better life.

**Mikey** We have that here, now.

**Dec** No, better is having yer own bed under yer own roof with a wife there beside ye. With children in the next room. Money for food, clothes, and a few pints in yer pocket. All I want is what other people have. And if Christy, the gangerman can point me down the right road, then he is the man I'm following.

**Mikey** And what of the fellas you'll kick along the way?

**Dec** They'll get up again.

**Mikey** And that makes it okay?

**Dec** Aren't they well used to it? Weren't we kicked around for eight hundred years? D'ye think our lives would be like this if Ireland had been left alone. *(A hooter announcing the return to work can be heard)* Nothing wrong with having lads start on a training wage - look where it got us. *(They both exit the stage)*  
**(BLACKOUT)**

**Scene 5: Roadworks at the side of a London street 1980. Dec is digging a trench with his back to the audience. The Gangerman looks around, then at his watch and comes over to Dec.**

**Ganger** Where the fook is he?

**Dec** He's on his way. Stopped off for fags probably

**Ganger** He'll have plenty of time to smoke them if he doesn't get here soon. Jesus.

**Dec** I said he'd be here, didn't I?. *(There is a moment or two when Dec returns to his digging and the ganger to his work. Mikey walks on with his head bandaged indicating that he has been in a fight. The gangerman looks at his watch. Mikey walks towards Dec but is blocked by the gangerman).*

**Ganger**           What time d'you call this? *(Mikey shrugs his shoulder and tries to pass)*. Where d'you think you're going?

**Mikey**            I'm on the shovel. Let me pass, will ye.

**Ganger**            You're going nowhere.

**Mikey**            I've work to do.

**Ganger**            Not on this site.

**Mikey**            You said that 'we've' to finish by tonight.

**Ganger**            'Ve' is it? Well 'we' stopped an hour ago. A minute to talk to your brother and then you can fuck off. *(Mikey pushes past)*

**Dec**               Where the fuck have you been? Leaving me to dig the trench on me own? Get stuck in.

**Mikey**            Can't.

**Dec**               Don't give me feckin 'can't? Listen you only got this job because I told him that I could supply hard workers. You can't let me down now.

**Mikey**            I'm heading out of here.

**Dec**               *(Grabs Mikey by the collar)* Listen you're going nowhere. Take that shovel and start digging and don't stop till ye'r finished. I want paying at the end of the day.

**Mikey**            Ye man doesn't want me back- said that the shift started long since. I'm finished here

**Dec**               Why didn't you come back to the digs last evening when I told ye?

**Mikey**            Me back was bad.

**Dec** And pint of stout is a cure for a bad back? Did you never hear about fellas called doctors?

**Mikey** And how am I going to get treated? We've no cards remember

**Dec** What'll you do? I can't leave here. I can't let this fella down.

**Mikey** He's nothing but a cute hoor.

**Dec** Mebbe, but he knows people the people who matter.

**Mikey** Ye should have taken more care when ye were shovelling that dirt over yer shoulder. Dust. Eyes. Jesus. Never mind.

**Dec** Things could get good for me.

**Mikey** **An té a luíonn le madaí, eiroidh sé le dearnaid.** (*Pronounced: On tay a lee-on le maw-dee aye-rogue shay le dar-nid. Translates: He who lies down with dogs, gets up with fleas. (If you mix with the wrong company, you'll pay for it.)*) You'll make a great ganger man. Just don't forget your who you came over with. (**Mikey goes to leave**)

**Dec** Hang on, will ye. Stay there now... (**Dec walks towards the gangerman**) C'mon give him another chance.

**Ganger** Will I fuck? Listen to me Dec - you're sound - you work hard. Ye need to move on- that fella's only holding you back.

**Dec** He's me brother.

**Ganger** And ye're not his mammy.

**Dec** 'Blood' Christy.

**Ganger** Blood is it? The number of times, I 've seen good men ruin their chances because of that. (**Clenches his first and turn his arm too show Dec his veins**). Good men wi' a future like you, swopped for sentimentality. Look around you - there's ten of him for one of ye. I only need men who benefit me- hard workers- men who won't let me down. D'you have me now?

**Dec** I do but go on give him another chance. I'll stand beside him on the shovel make sure he doesn't/

**Ganger** Let him go or say goodbye to me. Listen to me, the longer you stay with him- the further behind you'll fall. No Dec. No.  
*(Dec walks over to Mikey)*

**Dec** Feck it, I/

**Mikey** Sound.

**Dec** Says I'll be the ganger in a few months. Be able to take on who I want then, won't I? *(Pause)* Won't be long.

**Mikey** I'll be grand. Haven't I been here on my own before?

**Dec** Where'll I find you?

**Mikey** Pick a pub Cricklewood? *(Mikey exits) (BLACKOUT)*

<p><b>Scene 6: Inside a pub in Cricklewood 1980. Dec and Mikey are standing by the bar. Dec hands Mikey a drink.</b></p>
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**Dec** There you go. Happy Birthday.

**Mikey** What else d'you have for me?

**Dec** I'd have bought you a card, but I didn't know if you had room on the mantelpiece.

**Mikey** You know what I mean.

**Dec** *(Places money in Mikey's hand)*. A few bob- here you go- help with the celebrations.

**Mikey** You know what I'm after.

**Dec** No Mikey.

**Mikey** I won't let you down.

**Dec** My hole.

**Mikey** I was led astray.

**Dec** That's what you said last time.

**Mikey** A misunderstanding about timings.

**Dec** You nearly lost me the job.

**Mikey** I won't let you down again. Ah Dec please- this'll only cover the cost of a few pints.

**Dec** Then you'll be able to look for a 'start' tomorrow.

**Mikey** I've nowhere to sleep.

**Dec** I'm not your feckin' mammy.

**Mikey** It's me birthday.

**Dec** Then look back on the year gone and ask yourself if anything's changed. Because I've had enough of giving you feckin' chances. *(The gangerman enters. Dec gives Mikey money)* Take this - get them to pour another two. *(The man shows Dec a piece of paper. They do not speak but their actions indicate that some sort of deal is being done. They shake hands and the man walks off stage. Dec walks back to Mikey).*

**Mikey** I thought that ye were done wi' that fella.

**Dec** Why, d'you have a job for me? **(Pause)** Look he's a contract to lay cables- only he hasn't time and needs me to help. I need four fellas but if I could get two fellas who could do the work of four men, that'd be sound. Oh fuck.

**Mikey** What?

**Dec** Where am I going to find them by tomorrow?

**Mikey** Look beside ye, Mikey Carroll- fastest man up the scaffolding

**Dec** Speed's no good to me. It's pulling cables, I need strong men.

**Mikey** And what used they call us Carroll boys back home?

**Dec** You can do the work of two men can ye? Stand up straight in the morning can ye? Well you'd better not let me down because if I see you sitting on your fuckin arse drinking tea, talking or smoking when you should be working then, I'll...

**Mikey** Sure what man wouldn't be working twice as hard for double money?

**Dec** Double money?

**Mikey** 'Two men to do the work of four' 'twas what you said. Tis Sunday as well.

**Dec** *(Dec turns round and calls out to the audience)* "Any lads of you lads looking for work? *(Mikey comes up to him and pulls at his sleeve)*

**Mikey** Ar, isn't the normal rate a fair price from the man who goes to the trouble of getting the work in?

**Dec** You'll be here at 7 o'clock tomorrow morning - no messin'. It's cash in hand. There'll be no family favours, so I'll be expecting a drink waiting for me next time I see you in this bar. Any misunderstandings about timing and you're out *(Dec turns round and calls out to the audience)* "Any lads of you lads looking for work? *(BLACKOUT)*

**Scene 7. Outside the Buffalo Ballroom in Camden, north London 1981. Mikey, worse the wear from drink is looking at the women going into the ballroom. Dec appears in an agitated state.**

**Dec** Where is he? Jesus, I'll feckin lamp him when I see him (**sees Mikey**) you little bollocks- what the fuck did you think you were doing?

**Mikey** What?

**Dec** You know 'what'. You keep your hands off my woman.

**Mikey** I wouldn't lay a finger on that old whore,

**Dec** You.

**Mikey** I didn't go near her.

**Dec** I don't believe you.

**Mikey** Do you think that she let me even if I wanted to? Mind you there's no saying what that one would do if I had a few more pounds in me pocket.

**Dec** Meaning?

**Mikey** Open your eyes will you. Just because Brid has a brother in the monastery doesn't change what her ma did to pay for his schoolbooks, when the auld fella was tipping what little money they had down his throat.

**Dec** Small town tittle tattle.

**Mikey** The hinges on the gate and the tread on the path worn out by the weight of boots.

**Dec** So you'd visit the sins of the father on his daughter now?

**Mikey** Are you blind man?

**Dec** Brid and I intend to make something of ourselves in England and there is nothing wrong with that.

**Mikey**           What is wrong, is that she wants you because you've a few vans and men working for you. Well I tell you boy, you better get hitched quick, because sure as night follows day you'll kicked out the front and down the garden path if she spots anyone with more money than you.

**Dec**               Stay away from her. Do you hear me?

**Mikey**           Now you hear me. I didn't fuckin' touch her.

**Dec**               Keep away.

**Mikey**           Turning brother against brother.

**Dec**               'Twas me that did the turning, not her. Do you know what? Sometimes when I look at you and your waster pals, I am ashamed that you are my brother.

**Mikey**           That's not you talking!

**Dec**               Always with other fellas- never a woman in sight- no wonder you don't know how to behave towards them.

**Mikey**           I didn't touch her.

**Dec**               I want nothing to do with you.

**Mikey**           Not what you said when I sent the postal order home every week to pay for your schoolbooks.

**Dec**               That's was over twenty-five years ago.

**Mikey**           And the boat fare over- who was after giving you that?

**Dec**               And who has been getting you the starts ever since?

**Mikey**           I gave you the opportunity, without me/

**Dec**               I'd have saved up for me own feckin ticket. Jesus if life were a ladder, you'd still be on the feckin bottom rung. Now take that old record out of that jukebox in your head and listen

well. You stay away us, do you hear? Cos I've more than men and a few vans, I've got contacts. And if I put the word out that Mikey Carroll isn't to be trusted on a site, then you can stand in the line outside the Crown in Cricklewood till kingdom come and no one will stop for you. Are you hearing me now?

*(Dec exits) (BLACKOUT)*

**Scene 8: Dec and Mikey meet in a pub 1983. Dec walks onstage carrying two pints, he gives one to Mikey and then hands him cash.**

**Mikey** Things going well?

**Dec** Sound.

**Mikey** Good.

**Dec** Up to the nines, like.

**Mikey** Rolls Royce be parked out there soon.

**Dec** Better learn to drive.

**Mikey** ?

**Dec** Chauffeur.

**Mikey** *(Lifts his pint glass)* Thanks but I'd miss the lads.

**Dec** Ah well. I'll wave at ye as I drive past.

**Mikey** Indeed. 'There he goes' I'll say. Dec Carroll, a lad who got his start but eight years ago, from the same gangerman he now has working for him. Tis good to catch up.

**Dec** Tis.

**Mikey** Ye've been very busy.

**Dec** Sure, an opportunity is only an opportunity if you take it

**Mikey** Indeed.

**Dec** You'd something to tell me.

**Mikey** The lads on the site.

**Dec** The lads, is it?

**Mikey** Asked me to have a word like... about things.

**Dec** What things?

**Mikey** The working conditions.

**Dec** And?

**Mikey** Things aren't right.

**Dec** Like to be warmer, would they?

**Mikey** Come on.

**Dec** Have more comfortable places to sit on their tea break?  
Or maybe they'd like the work to be less tiring.

**Mikey** You know what I mean.

**Dec** Do I or Christy have a gun?

**Mikey** No.

**Dec** That we put to their heads?

**Mikey** No.

**Dec** To march them through the site gates each morning?

**Mikey** No.

**Dec** So, they can leave if they don't like it?

**Mikey** Come on Dec. The recession. Things are hard.

**Dec** Then they should be grateful to a man who gives them work. *(Loudly)* Shouldn't they?

**Mikey** Listen would ye? What if something bad happens?

**Dec** Like what?

**Mikey** The site's not safe.

**Dec** The lads look well enough to me.

**Mikey** The scaffolding- there could be an accident.

**Dec** Inspector's report is in the site office. The lads can take a look anytime.

**Mikey** They say that the fella who wrote it must have needed a white walking stick.

**Dec** Would you like his name so you can report him? Or me? So that we can all lose our jobs.

**Mikey** No need for that. Look, there's a fella, Brick Boylan-Kerry man, he knows about these things. Says the bolts on the landings need replacing. Tis not that big a job Dec. Twouldn't cost much to make the site safe. Could you not do it?

**Dec** Tell ye what. I'll have a word wi' me gangerman (*Dec walks offstage*)

**Mikey** And Christy will do nothing about it. **(BLACKOUT)**

**Scene 9: Room in St Finbarr's Hostel. Mikey is back on stage dressed as Dessi. He looks visibly upset**

**Dessie** Turn that thing off and go.

**Cian** Look I'm sorry if I/

**Dessie** You've enough for your Plastic Paddy filum anyways.

**Cian** ..reminded you of something bad.

**Dessie** Leave me be.

**Cian** You should have asked me to stop.

**Dessie** Go! Ach. (*Indicates he doesn't want to speak*) Listen son, I'm a fella without family or friends. I'll be dead in a few days and keeping me own company at me funeral I expect. Forgotten the same as the hundreds of other Irish fellas who never made it through the night air. But before I go, I want you to tell me something. What's the real reason for you wanting to dig up all the dirt that the navvies left behind?

**Cian** It's for a documentary- I told you.

**Dessie** You told me 'bollocks' that came from up here. (*Dessi points to his head*). Now tell me what comes from here. (*Dessi points to his heart*). Who are you looking for?

**Cian** I'd an uncle who disappeared without trace about 25 years ago. Last place that anyone saw him was the Hopton estate, the one in the paper, the one that they are demolishing. His name was Mikey Carroll. One amongst hundreds of labourers. My mum was only glad to see the back of him. Dad thinks he went abroad. I hardly remember him, but I know that he was kind to me. He bought me this watch- it hasn't worked for years. I kept it because it is all that we have of him. My mum and dad think that I am mad to be interested in all this, but I just think ..well. It's your choice if you want to be forgotten, but just remember that some of don't think that it should be that way. Thanks for telling me what you did. (*He picks up the shamrock*) Do you want me to throw this away?

**Mikey** From the Sheepshead you say. And your name is?

Cian           Cian, Cian Carroll. Why?

Mikey          You know Frank Quigley so

Cian           He's my uncle- why?

Mikey          You best turn that old yoke back on. Think that the  
Irishmen on sites were brothers, well let me tell you.  
**(BLACKOUT)**

**Scene 10: St Finbarr's Church, North London 3 am, Spring 1983. The stage is split into two parts. The right-hand side of the stage is where the action on the building site takes place. The left-hand side is the inside of a church. A 'prieu dieu' or church kneeler is set downstage left. When the lights go up, we see Mikey is kneeling on the prieu dieu', Father Frank Quigley is standing behind him. Both men are in their thirties. It is three o'clock in the morning. Mikey is in the process of explaining why he has come to the Church in the middle of the night. The stage should be lit with two spotlights which can be switched on and off as the action switches through the telling of the story.**

Fr  
Quigley        Continue Michael. *(Lights go down on the left hand side and up on the right hand side of the stage.)*

Christy        Coming down now boys. *(Sound of man jumping from the scaffolding. Christy, the ganger man enters from stage right. He is talking to an unseen labourer, the audience needs to imagine that there are other workers on stage)* Nothing wrong with that. Sure, an elephant could dance on that yoke. Oh, you've a problem have ye - and tell me what's that? Oh it's the bolts now...they aren't secure...next you'll be telling me that you've see fellas falling down from the sky, one be one during the day. Do you know what I think is wrong with this fella lads? I think that his landlady gave him some of those magic mushrooms with his eggs and bacon *(Calls up)* Gerry tighten those bolts for me will ye? ... ..as tight as they'll go are they? Now 'Mister Health and Safety' are you going back to work? Or shall I tell the bus driver to wait for you? Good man. Now to put the lads minds at rest about the safety of the scaffolding and the ladder, you'll carry that pile and that pile of bricks up above for me. You need a rest, do you? Old body not as fit or as quick as the tongue? *(Christy remains still as if he is looking at the man who he has forced to go up the scaffolding)*

Offstage            *(The sound of a man falling can be heard)*. Man down.

Mikey                *(Jumps up from the Prieu Dieu and runs onto the 'site')*. Brick Boylan's fallen. Call an ambulance someone quick. *(The lights go down and then up again. Fr Quigley stands at the side, Mikey who is in a more disheveled agitated state is moving around.)*

Frank                Then what happened? *(Christy re-enters carry a small box which he stands on and speaks as if speaking to the men below. The lights go up on him)*

Gangerman           Listen lads, I know ye well and ye are like me- you think that this is a terrible thing altogether. A desperate thing to have happened. A man dead - one of us- a brother. Tis terrible now, but do you know what I think lads? Do ye? I think that yer man would want some good to come out of this. Now there's a recession on- work's short- ye man would no more want ye or yer families to go hungry. We're brothers-fellas from the same part of the world- we understand adversity. Don't we? Well don't we? *(Lights down on Christy)*

Mikey                I watched them nod their heads one by one. "We do Christy- we do".

Frank                No point in asking if there was a union.

Gangerman           *(Lights go up on Christy)* We're men of the world so. We understand the way things work. The Brick - God rest his soul is dead- we can't bring him back. I'll see to it that his coffin gets back home, and the family is well looked after. I've a cousin, a priest, who'll say a Mass for him and we'll make sure that the coffin is met when it arrives home. Do you trust me now lads?

Mikey                Not a word.

Gangerman           Lads you know what will happen if one of ye calls the police. The job will more than go like. Most of ye've no cards so there'll be no point standing at the end of the dole queue. What will ye do? *(Takes some money from his pocket and hands it to Mikey who resists)* It's been a terrible shock so here's few bob to help you get over it- take it go on. My cousin has a pub - you know where it is - there's a hot meal waiting for you there now and money aplenty behind the bar for you to raise a toast in his memory. God to be good to him. *(Lights down on Christy and up on Frank and Mikey)*.

**Mikey** 'God to be good to him' and even to me Frank.

**Frank** You took his money?

**Mikey** I'd nuttin- the lads said that I'd feel better after a drink.

**Frank** And did you?

**Mikey** Not really. A few pints and things began to get on top of me. I became angrier and angrier. I looked at all the fellas spending Dec's money in Christy cousin's pub and I thought. Is this it? Is this what Irishmen like me become? I thought I was with my own, but I felt an outsider. I wanted one of the lads-just one..anyone like, to say something, to say what happened was wrong... That...that raising a few glasses for the Brick wasn't enough...

**Frank** But no one did.

**Mikey** These were decent men.

**Frank** So, you decided to take matters into your own hands?

**Mikey** No, I walked away. Needed time to think. Went back to the site; I wanted to pay my respects.

**Frank** What went wrong?

**Mikey** Laughing. I was just nearing the site gate when I heard laughing. The Brick not cold in his grave and Christy and his mate were laughing (*Christy walks on stage, signaling 'good bye' to a friend off stage. The lights go down on Mikey and Frank and up on Christy*)

**Mikey** I want a word with you.

**Gangerman** Not now Mikey, I'm away to my bed.

**Mikey** A man's after being killed.

**Gangerman** A fatal accident.

**Mikey**            That's not true.

**Gangerman**        Grow up.

**Mikey**            One of our own.

**Gangerman**        Feck off.

**Mikey**            I don't like it.

**Gangerman**        I don't like fellas coming to work drunk.

**Mikey**            He wasn't.

**Gangerman**        Not what the undertaker told Dec.

**Mikey**            What?

**Gangerman**        Said he stank of the drink when they laid him out.

**Mikey**            He's lying.

**Gangerman**        Says who? The fellas who are using the Dec's money to buy pints? Like you've been doing. Like all men on site do at the end of a long day. Only some can't stop, come to work the next day when they shouldn't, like I've seen you do.

**Mikey**            You know why he died.

**Gangerman**        Do I now?

**Mikey**            He died because of you.

**Gangerman**        Best night the landlord had in months.

**Mikey**            You should've called an ambulance.

**Gangerman**        Why waste their time on a man killed by his own stupidity?

**Mikey** Can you hear yourself Christy?

**Gangerman** Sure the man was dead.

**Mikey** Murdered. A good man with a wife and children.

**Gangerman** Complain to Dec.

**Mikey** What's happened to you?

**Gangerman** What happened to me is that I understand the way that things work, and you don't. That's why I am Dec's ganger man now and you're his feckin eejit brother who came over on the boat with him. Go home Mikey before I tell Dec about all the trouble that you have been causing.

**Mikey** You'd do that to me would you?

**Gangerman** Listen up. I work for Dec and if we agree that the scaffolding is safe then that is good enough for ye. Yer well paid aren't ye? Well aren't ye?

**Mikey** And what about the man whose just lost his life? Does the money you gave us cover that?

**Gangerman** Did anyone force you to work for him? No. Now. You're getting boring. How much drink have you inside you?

**Mikey** Jaysus I'll...

**Gangerman** You'll what. What'll you do? What will you Mikey Carroll do to me? Go home. Here get yourself a taxi- if one'll stop for you.

**Mikey** You...

**Gangerman** Be careful now-

**Mikey** Oh I'll be careful boy. I have to be cos' it's not safe up there

**Gangerman** I'll show you how safe it is. It's safe enough for fellas who can manage to put one foot in front of the other without falling over. Watch me. *(BLACKOUT BUT SCENE CONTINUES)*

**Mikey** Jesus it's pitch black

**Gangerman** No bother to me. It's what I said, the danger comes from fellas with too much drink on them. You best stay down there.

**Mikey** Don't think that you're the only fella who can do that.

**Gangerman** Watch your step now, we don't want you falling like your friend..

**Mikey** He throws a brick at my feet. I should've walked away Frank I know, but he went on and on.

**Gangerman** You made it. What did I tell you? Nothing wrong with the way that this was put together. Only you're not the king of the castle. Eejits like you belong down there. Like your mate ... what was his name?'

**Mikey** He goaded me. Throwing bricks over the side as if they were nothing and then when they landed. I grabbed him Frank. God forgive me I couldn't help myself. The next thing I heard a scream - he'd fallen. *( Sound of man falling can be heard off stage)* 'Twasn't my fault. *(FULL STAGE LIGHTS BACK ON ON)*

**Frank** Are you sure that he's dead?

**Mikey** Lads had been pouring the footings all day- the cement wouldn't have been set.

**Frank** You looked for him surely? You wouldn't lie to me now.

**Mikey** Listen to me. I know I'm not the greatest, but I've never done anything like this before. It was an accident Frank. I promise an accident. I don't want to go to hell, sort the confession out for me. *(Mikey kneels down on the pew)*

**Frank** Bow your head Mikey. *(Mikey stands up before Frank has had a chance to administer confession)*

**Mikey**                   What will I do?

**Frank**                   If you're sincere about confession, then I'll give you absolution.. *(Mikey bows his head and we see Frank putting his hands on his head to administer the sacrament)*. You need to think about making amends as well. *(Mikey jumps to his feet)*

**Mikey**                   You tell me how working on the site fits in with 'amends'?

**Frank**                   You're frozen man. Come into the presbytery and have a cup of tea - it'll help you to think straight.

**Mikey**                   Someone will see me.

**Frank**                   And tell me what other options do you have?

**Mikey**                   I could hide here. You'll help me.

**Frank**                   How? God gave me the power to absolve people's sins, he didn't show me how I to turn the clock back.

**Mikey**                   Help me.

**Frank**                   It will look better if you've tried to put things right. I could arrange for some money to go to his widow.

**Mikey**                   He wasn't married.

**Frank**                   His parents then.

**Mikey**                   No.

**Frank**                   What will happen when he doesn't show up tomorrow?

**Mikey**                   Dec will think that Christy has done him a favour- headed off till the heat dies down over the accident. Advise me Frank.

**Frank**                   Well my advice is that a man can only run for so long, so, if I were you, I would turn myself in now. We'll explain to the police about the accident and how angry you were. We'll get

you a solicitor who'll make a convincing case. We'll get the other fellas on the site to say that yer man was a bully ...

**Mikey** The fellas from one of Dec's sites standing up in an English courtroom giving evidence against him. Jesus, where did anyone ever get the idea that you were the one with the brains?

**Frank** D'you have you a better idea?

**Mikey** I need to get everyone to think that I've disappeared.

**Frank** But you've family, what about Dec, Brid the children?

**Mikey** Don't see too much of them these days. Think Frank.... What about a funeral?

**Frank** You want to organise his burial?

**Mikey** Who puts the body in the coffin? You?

**Frank** No, the undertaker of course. Why?

**Mikey** But would a priest look inside?

**Frank** Mikey what are you thinking of?

**Mikey** Answer the question Frank. Do you look inside a coffin before you start the requiem Mass?

**Frank** No.

**Mikey** So the body could be swapped? Or the coffin could be empty? Bury me, let them think that it's me who's gone

**Frank** How dare you ask me that!

**Mikey** I'll get money- I'll pay for everything.

**Frank** You'll do no such thing- I'll have no part in it.

**Mikey**            Bury me Frank. Let everyone think that I died on the site.

**Frank**            And deceive my own family. Go way from me Mikey ... Before I'm tempted to tell someone.

**Mikey**            It's confession. You can't.

**Frank**            I'll not let you use God and his sacraments.

**Mikey**            I don't want a Requiem Mass- I wouldn't ask you to do that.

**Frank**            Then what do you want?

**Mikey**            A word out....just that... let a coffin with my name on it rest here one night.

**Frank**            What!

**Mikey**            Jaysus you must bury fellas that end up in East Finchley cemetery, courtesy of Camden council. Just pretend one of them is me.

**Frank**            You come to me for confession and then expect me to cover up a murder for you?

**Mikey**            I am only asking you for a few hours Frank- let the word out that Mikey Carroll is dead-. Tell Dec that you were after hearing a rumour like.

**Frank**            You want me to lie to my own sister and your brother? No one will ever know was said in the confessional. No more. I have been the priest that you wanted me to be.

**Mikey**            Then be an Irishmen too.

**Frank**            Most of the Irishmen that come here don't ask me to cover up a murder.

**Mikey**            Help me- I beg you.

**Frank** I can't, not in the way you want.

**Mikey** You could but you won't. Remember that the only reason that you go in one side of the confessional box and I the other is because someone pulled you out of national school and sent you away to college to be educated. Without that education you'd be working the sites the same as me, Declan and all the others.

**Frank** It was a calling- d'you think I've stayed otherwise?

**Mikey** And what was my calling Father Quigley?

**Frank** No one's life is easy

**Mikey** Certainly not the fella's who built your church so you priests could stay inside in the warm. "How are you Father? Are you grand Father? Will you have a drink Father- Jaysus put your money away now Father? Tis more than an altar divides us Frank

**Frank** So we've come down to insults now. *(Mikey walks to leave, Frank bars his way)*. For God's sake, I know this is bad, but it doesn't have to be the end. Would you ever start thinking about who you are, what you want to be

**Mikey** What?

**Frank** We all have choices.

**Mikey** Like mine, to be part of Patrick's last snake? Slithering down the feckin' gangplank in the early hours of the morning to a train, waiting at a Welsh dockside, to take us to sites outside towns we'd never heard of.

**Frank** I know things weren't easy but there's many a man, part of your so called 'snake' who has come over here, made a decent living and led a good life. You could go back, not now but in a few years when you've served your...

**Mikey** No.

**Frank** Look I've contacts, people who'd help, give you a job, help you start afresh. You're not too old to start again, little

less of the drink and things could be good for you. Think Mikey think.

**Mikey** About what? The cottages that are empty, the streets where I know no one, villages where there is hardly a person left to leave a footprint? The place I couldn't wait to leave?

**Frank** It's some kind of solution.

**Mikey** It's been years since I was home. Since I walked out of Horan's bar and stood by the shore, the damp sod leaking through me boots, the rain spitting on my jacket. I thought of all the people like me who'd sailed away and the price we'd paid for that leaving. I thought of the building work in England that wouldn't happen in Ireland. And do you know what I thought? I thought '*that this is mine*'.

Understand Frank it isn't the work on site that's the hardest, you get used to being cold, tired, aching from back breaking labour. Nor is it waiting at the counter till the landlord decides whether you've bought enough stout for him to cash your pay cheque. Tisn't picking yourself up from the ground after fellas with too much in them have thrown punches at you because you're from Cork and they're from... Kerry, Clare, Limerick anywhere that you're not ... I tell you Frank, these things are mine. These are the things that keep me alive, that tell me in the dark of the tunnels and the cramp of the footings that I come from somewhere that I belong.

It's the Sunday afternoons that kill you...when the work stops, when there's no site, no pub, no fellas to talk to. Just yourself in a room or launderette, listening to time passing, thinking back and wondering what is happening everywhere else. Working all over but belonging nowhere. Watching as the walls move in and then out again as if yer breathing and theirs are one...just you, the walls and the tick and the tock of the clock. There's no outside...no fields...no skies...no breath of wind ... Nothing that's yers.

A lot of fellas made the journey to this country and many have done well. You might say that fellas like me are of a different kind and maybe you're right. But I'll tell you one thing. One thing. There's not a man who walked a ferryboat gangway who'd lay mortar on bricks to build walls that would imprison a fellow Irishman whose only crime was his poverty. Don't forget that now Frank. *(Mikey exits, Frank falls to his knees his head in his hands) (BLACKOUT)*

**Scene 11: The interior of a church at midday. Frank Quigley is on stage 'tidying up' after Mikey's funeral when Cian enters. April 2010.**

**Cian** At least he's at peace now. Twenty years of fear, hiding from his family.

**Frank** Not the ending you had expected?

**Cian** How could you keep a secret for so long?

**Frank** The seal of the confessional.

**Cian** Weren't you tempted to say or even hint at something?

**Frank** *(Frank shakes his head)*. The seal protects people, allows them to change, come to see the errors of their ways, like your dad did.

**Cian** Dad?

**Frank** Where do you think that the money for the hostel, who cared for Mikey came from? No better fundraiser than a guilty conscience. Who knows what that documentary of yours might achieve?

**Cian** I still don't get why you agreed to hold a memorial service for Mikey.

**Frank** I called it a prayer service. I can't see into people's hearts. Who knows what your mother prayed for that day?

**Cian** I can't get over dad think such disgusting things about you

**Frank** Why not?

**Cian** Come on.

**Frank** Dreadful things have been done by men of the collar and we don't always know to whom. I must accept that in the same way that any successful Irish building contractor must

acknowledge the sharp practices that went on. Learn to understand anger.

**Cian** But what dad thought was unforgivable.

**Frank** Predictable.

**Cian** You're too charitable.

**Frank** I just prefer predictability to the alternative. Now I would have been worried if your dad had thought, that I was helping the police, because I did know something about Christy Mahon's remains being lodged in concrete on the Hopton estate.

**Cian** Still.

**Frank** Try to understand him- he sees me as someone who was given everything a suit, a collar and a place to live that he never had. He thinks that I had it easy and maybe he's right. Now would you like me to lend you a handkerchief?

**Cian** Why?

**Frank** To wipe the rose coloured or even the green coloured tint from those spectacles

**Cian** I don't wear specs.

**Frank** You sure? Remember a good journalist sees things clearly- tries to understand the whole picture, keeps his prejudices out of his story. Come on - there is a wake going on in there. I don't know about you, but I could do with a drink and your Uncle Mikey deserves a glass raised to him. *(Frank and Cian leave the stage). (Blackout. The End)*