



JUST ABOVE DOGS

Camden Town Tube Station 1971, brothers Mikey and Dec Carroll, newly arrived from the West of Ireland wait on the promise of a start in the building trade. Forty years later, one of the estranged brothers is ending his days in a hostel for homeless men whilst the other has become a wealthy building contractor. What happened in the intervening years? And as St Patrick's day approaches, will the documentary about Irish builders' that contractor's son Cian is researching throw any light on what happened?

Written by
By Anne Curtis

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 AKA Dessi Dwyer: 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 | Actor 2 | Actor 3 |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| Dec Carroll | Cian Carroll | Mikey |
| Father Frank Quigley | Christy McMahon/ Gangerman | Carroll Dessi Dwyer |

SCENE LOCATIONS

Prequel- *St Finbarr's Hostel for Homeless men. Lunchtime 16th March 2010.*

SCENE 1- *Outside one of the site offices of Carroll's Construction Ltd, North London 16th March 2010. Early afternoon.*

SCENE 2 - *A room in St Finbarr's hostel for homeless men, North London. 16th March 2010. Mid-afternoon 16th 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. 16th 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 Dessi'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.

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 scene 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

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Green Curtain Theatre 2022
WWW.GREENCURTAINTHEATRE.CO.UK

PREQUEL- St Finbarr's hostel for the homeless. Midday 16th 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

Tir na Fecckin' Og. 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 feekin' 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 that doesn't mean that we should forget what you did.

Dessi

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

Cian

(Cian turns to go when Dessie 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 came out the wrong way.

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 of London 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? This country wouldn't function without them. Call me a 'Plastic Paddy' all 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 voice recorder 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 the Hopton estate. 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 yes but it is about identity to me.
Look 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'd 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 30 years ago but who has a house on the 'Ring' that's the size of *Áras an Uachtaráin* (pronounced 'aw-rahs 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 feekin' 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 learn how to bounce.

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

'We' 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

That shovelling put too much dust in your 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)

**SCENE 6: Inside a pub in Cricklewood 1980.
Dec and Mikey are standing by the bar. Dec
hands Mikey a drink.**

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 planet are you on? 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

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.

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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 planet are you on? 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 stuck on 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

Did the fella who wrote need 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 see to 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

Dessi

Turn that thing off and go.

Cian

Look I'm sorry if I/

Dessi

You've enough for your Plastic Paddy film anyways.

Cian

..reminded you of something bad.

Dessi

Leave me be.

Cian

You should have asked me to stop.

Dessi

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.

Dessi

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 is it you're looking for?

Cian

I didn't say..

Dessi

The fella you want your kids to remember,

Cian

Okay. I'd an uncle who disappeared without trace about 25 years ago. Last seen on 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?

Dessie

From the Sheepshead you say. And your name is?

Cian,

Cian Carroll. Why?

Dessie

You know Frank Quigley so

Cian

He's my uncle- why?

Dessie

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 yous 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

Mike

What?

Frank

We all have choices.

Mikey

Like mine, to be part of Patrick's last snake? Sent away to slither down the feckin' gangplank in the early hours of the morning.

To board 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 isn't 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 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, that cares for men like 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 all the things he never had. A suit, a collar and a place to live . 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