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SF PERUSALS

A Slice of the Blarney

Kitty Burns

A Samuel French Acting Edition



SAMUEL FRENCH
FOUNDED 1830

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PLAYBILL

The World Premiere
of an Original Comedy
in Two Acts

"A $lice of the (B)larney"

by Kitty Burns

Directed by Lewis Hauser

Dramatis Personae
(in order of appearance)

Shannon O'Leary	*Tim Holtwick*
Katie O'Leary	*Catherine Michaels*
Colleen Sullivan	*Stephanie Carr*
Douglas O'Leary	*Robert Malcheski*
Arlene O'Leary	*Alice Lunsford*
Patrick O'Leary	*Seth Gillum*
	or Trevor Wilde
Sharon O'Leary	*Jacee Jule*
Dr. Goldberg	*Lewis Hauser*

The setting is Shannon O'Leary's house, in a town right outside of Manhattan.
It is Christmastime, present day.

There will be a 15-minute intermission
between the first and second acts

Set and lighting design and booth operation by Kevin Patrick Wright

ALL ACTORS ARE APPEARING COURTESY OF ACTORS' EQUITY ASSOCIATION

CHARACTERS

SHANNON O'LEARY – 60-65. Crotchety, old man

DOUGLAS O'LEARY – 40's-50's. Loud mouth, Shannon's brother

KATIE O'LEARY – 20's. Sweet, caring, Shannon's youngest daughter

ARLENE O'LEARY – 50's. Headstrong, Shannon's ex-wife

SHARON O'LEARY – 30's. Shannon's daughter. Gypsy-like, fun. Thinks she's psychic.

PATRICK O'LEARY – 20's. Chip on his shoulder, Shannon's Son

COLLEEN SULLIVAN – 30's. Pleasant, especially toward Shannon. Shannon's maid.

SETTING

Shannon O'Leary's house in a town right outside of Manhattan.

TIME

Present

This play is dedicated to the real Sharon O'Leary

ACT ONE

(The living room is decorated for Christmas, with a tree in the upstage right corner of the room and a banner saying, "Peace on Earth" on the wall above the rifle. A few other Christmas decorations are throughout the room [not overdone].)

(SHANNON *is in his bed reading.* **DOUGLAS** *is walking out of Shannon's room into the living room where* **KATIE** *is sitting on the couch.)*

SHANNON. *(yelling to* **DOUGLAS** *as he leaves the bedroom)* I'll be out livin' all of you just to drive you crazy!

DOUGLAS. He's pushing me too far. *(goes over to wet bar and fixes himself a drink)* I can't take this much longer.

KATIE. *(sadly)* You won't have to take this much longer. The doctor said it's just a matter of time.

DOUGLAS. Just a matter of time, my ass. He's probably helping Shannon drag this out on purpose. He still has one more boy to put through college. All I know is, I for one have spent too much time putting up with that bastard in there.

KATIE. He means well.

DOUGLAS. Means well? All he does is threaten to cut me out of his Will because he hates the way I'm running his damned business.

KATIE. You know he'd never do that.

DOUGLAS. I don't know what he'd do.

KATIE. You're his brother. No matter how much he complains, he loves you. He'd never admit it, but he thinks the world of you.

DOUGLAS. Yeah. That's why he keeps telling everyone I'm the black sheep of the family because I was born in the States so I'm not a real Irishman.

KATIE. You know that's just his way of bating you. He's been doing it since you were kids.

DOUGLAS. Well, I'm sick of it.

KATIE. Where would you two be without your daily battles?

DOUGLAS. I can't wait to find out. I just wish he'd hurry up and put us all out of our misery.

KATIE. You shouldn't talk that way. I hope to God that you two make peace with each other before it's too late.

DOUGLAS. Katie, you're a dear, sweet girl, but as God is my witness, I'll never understand how you can live here and take care of that man!

KATIE. *That man* is my father. I know he's not perfect, but he's always been good to me, and as long as he's alive, I'll be good to him.

DOUGLAS. I've never been able to figure you out. Either you're as sweet as you seem and you really do love the old fart, or you're a martyr who has sentenced herself to Hell on earth, or you're a conniving, back-stabbing suck-up who's just after his money – like the rest of us.

KATIE. How dare you! *(enters Shannon's room.)* I can't stand having them here.

SHANNON. I know, Katie, me darlin', but surely you won't be putting up with them much longer.

KATIE. Dinner will be ready soon. Why don't you come out and sit at the table tonight. I hate to see you spend all day and all night in your room by yourself.

SHANNON. I haven't been by meself, and I have you to thank for that. You've come in and kept me company three times today. You're an angel from heaven, Katie, me darlin'.

KATIE. Then do me a favor and join us at the table for dinner tonight.

SHANNON. I'll think about it.

KATIE. Come on, Dad. The whole family will be here. It won't be the same without you.

SHANNON. All right. If it means that much to you, I'll be there.

(The doorbell rings.)

DOUGLAS. I'll get it. *(opens the door)* Oh, it's you.

ARLENE. *(enters and kisses* **DOUGLAS** *on the cheek.)* Merry Christmas to you too, Douglas.

DOUGLAS. You look well.

ARLENE. Yes, so do you.

SHANNON. You know, that's the worst part about dying. All the ghosts from your past come back to haunt you. Couldn't she have waited till I died to come and harass me? Now I know what they mean when they say, "May you be in heaven a half hour before the devil knows you're dead."

KATIE. I'll try to keep her away from you as much as I can.

SHANNON. God bless you, darlin'.

*(***KATIE** *enters the living room.)*

KATIE. Mother.

ARLENE. Katie, you look wonderful.

KATIE. Thank you, Mother. So do you. *(hugs* **ARLENE***)*

ARLENE. What a hideous trip I had. First class was oversold, so I had to sit in coach. And if they think just reimbursing me for the difference between a first class ticket and a coach ticket is going to pacify me, they're sadly mistaken. They're also going to pay me back the $5.00 I spent to watch that stupid movie, and the $32.00 it cost me to drink my way across the country. It was the only way I could survive sitting next to that horrible screaming baby! And don't even get me started on the food!

KATIE. Well, other than that, Mrs. Lincoln, how was the play?

ARLENE. Kathryn Margaret, you know how I hate being put out.

KATIE. All too well.

ARLENE. Then have a little sympathy. I don't think it's asking too much to be treated with the respect I deserve.

KATIE. Of course not, Mother.

*(***ARLENE** *looks around the room and focuses on the Christmas tree.)*

ARLENE. *(insincerely)* Nice tree.

KATIE. Thanks. Colleen and I did it.

ARLENE. Ah, so now it's down to two? I remember when we all did it together as a family. But, that was a long time ago.

DOUGLAS. So, Arlene, how long are you staying?

ARLENE. If you mean when will I be leaving, my plans are indefinite. So, how's business? Still prosperous I hope.

DOUGLAS. Don't worry, Arlene. Business is better than ever now that I'm running things. In fact, your million dollars in stocks is now worth double, thanks to me.

ARLENE. Well, I guess this trip will be worth the trouble after all. *(shouts to the kitchen)* Colleen!

COLLEEN. *(enters from kitchen)* Mrs. O'Leary, welcome back.

ARLENE. Yes. There's a man in a taxicab out in front waiting to be paid. While you're at it, bring in my bags.

COLLEEN. *(under her breath)* Like I said, welcome back. *(exits to the kitchen, then returns and goes out the front door)*

ARLENE. I'm starving. The food on that airplane wasn't fit for a dog.

KATIE. I'll make you a small sandwich.

ARLENE. A sandwich? How quaint.

KATIE. Dinner will be ready shortly, so you don't want to eat anything too heavy. By the way, Mother, in case you're interested, Dad is not doing well.

ARLENE. Oh yes, that's right. I almost forgot. How is my dear ex-husband?

DOUGLAS. Slipping further away day by day.

ARLENE. He always has been a procrastinator.

KATIE. Your compassion is overwhelming.

ARLENE. I have no compassion for the man.

KATIE. The man is dying.

ARLENE. The man is loitering.

*(***COLLEEN** *enters with two bags of luggage and puts them inside by the front door. Then she goes out and brings in two more, then two more.)*

DOUGLAS. Are you moving back?

ARLENE. That'll be the day! This trip is going to be as short as possible, *(looks towards Shannon's room)* God-willing.

KATIE. I'll go get you something to eat.

ARLENE. You'll do no such thing. Why do you think your father has a maid? *(pointing to* **COLLEEN***)*

KATIE. You're a maid? You didn't tell me that!

COLLEEN. We've been keeping it from you.

ARLENE. It didn't take long for you two to remind me why I don't miss this madhouse. Tell me, Colleen. Do you and my ex-husband still play chess everyday?

COLLEEN. No. He stopped playing with me ever since I beat him two games in a row. Katie's his chess partner now.

ARLENE. That's too bad.

COLLEEN. It's okay. I still read James Joyce to him every night after his massage.

ARLENE. I'll bet you do.

COLLEEN. *(coldly)* What would you like to eat, Mrs. O'Leary?

ARLENE. Anything is fine, as long as it is not surrounded by two pieces of bread.

DOUGLAS. Why don't you go say hello to the old man?

ARLENE. I suppose I should.

KATIE. Maybe you should have something to eat first, Mother.

ARLENE. No, let me get this over with. *(exits to Shannon's room.)*

SHANNON. Well, Lord have mercy! Look who's here. Am I dreaming?

ARLENE. No, Shannon, you're not dreaming.

SHANNON. Damn!

*(***ARLENE** *kisses* **SHANNON** *on the forehead.)*

ARLENE. You look...*(pause)*

SHANNON. Like poop?

ARLENE. Shannon, must you be so vulgar?

SHANNON. I only talk this way for you.

ARLENE. Is that supposed to make me feel special?

SHANNON. Unique.

ARLENE. I know I'm unique. I don't need you to tell me that. So what does the doctor say?

SHANNON. You'll be rid of me anytime now.

ARLENE. He's been saying that for months.

SHANNON. Then why did you suddenly believe him and come to visit me?

ARLENE. I didn't want it to end like this.

SHANNON. Like what? With me dying? All right, Arlene, I'll be a gentleman. You go first.

ARLENE. I mean with us hating each other.

SHANNON. Hating each other? I don't hate you. Actually, I find you rather amusing.

ARLENE. I am not amusing, and I am not amused. I mean it, Shannon. I want the hostility between us to end. We're both adults. I think it's time we were able to forgive and forget.

SHANNON. So you can live long and prosper? Don't worry, Arlene. You're in my Will.

ARLENE. I don't care about that. I want us to part friends.

SHANNON. Part friends? Darlin', we're not breaking off a courtship. I'm dying!

ARLENE. *(starts to cry)* I did the best I could, honest I did. I tried to be a good wife. I just didn't like coming second to your business.

SHANNON. You knew my work came first when you married me.

ARLENE. I thought you would stop working so hard once you became a success.

SHANNON. And surely I would have if I had listened to you, but praise be to God that I didn't. You stop working hard and you stop making money.

ARLENE. You didn't have to make this much money. We didn't need to become rich. We could have just been comfortable.

SHANNON. I can't believe you just said that. I had to keep making money to keep up with you're spending it. You can run up a credit card faster than a filly at the Sweepstakes.

ARLENE. You bought a few choice toys for yourself too, you know. You didn't need four cars and three sailboats.

SHANNON. Surely I did. They all gave me a way to get away.

ARLENE. But you never went anywhere. You were always working.

SHANNON. Aye, but I could have if I wanted to.

ARLENE. Shannon Joseph O'Leary, you're a very strange man.

SHANNON. That's what makes me so much fun.

ARLENE. I've got to go get something to eat. I'll see you at dinner.

SHANNON. *(puts on his glasses to watch her walk out of the room)* All right, Sweet Cheeks, see you at dinner.

ARLENE. You start calling me that again and I'm going to get you right in the spizerinctom.

SHANNON. I'll stop calling you that when you tell me what the hell a spizerinctom is!

ARLENE. Look it up.

SHANNON. I've looked in every goddamn dictionary in the country. There's no such word.

ARLENE. If there was no such word, I couldn't be using it, now could I?

SHANNON. You just made it up to torment me, didn't you, Sweet Cheeks?

ARLENE. *(to herself)* You got that right. *(to* **SHANNON***)* I'm warning you, Shannon. The next time you call me

that, you're going to find out what a spizerinctom is–then you'll wish you didn't know.

SHANNON. Promises, promises.

*(***ARLENE** *enters the living room.)*

ARLENE. Is Sharon going to be here tonight?

DOUGLAS. Yes, but she can't make it for dinner.

*(***COLLEEN** *enters with a plate of cheese and crackers.* **ARLENE** *is fixing herself a drink.)*

COLLEEN. Will this do until dinner?

ARLENE. I suppose it will have to.

(The doorbell rings. **COLLEEN** *answers the door.* **PATRICK** *enters.)*

COLLEEN. Hi, Patrick.

PATRICK. Hi, Colleen. What's going on?

COLLEEN. Not much yet, but it's getting interesting. *(Enters the kitchen. Then begins setting the dining room table.)*

ARLENE. Patrick, dear, it's so good to see you. *(hugs him)*

PATRICK. *(sincerely)* It's good to see you too, Mother. I've really missed you.

ARLENE. I've missed you too, son.

DOUGLAS. Would you like a drink, Patrick?

PATRICK. I'll get it. *(goes to the bar and fixes himself a drink)* Doug, you left the office early today.

DOUGLAS. I had some things to do before I came here tonight. Did those perfume shipments go out on time?

PATRICK. Yes, the shipments went out on time.

DOUGLAS. All 175?

PATRICK. All 175.

DOUGLAS. I'd better not find any in the warehouse tomorrow. I don't want those Beverly Hills princesses breathing down my neck again.

PATRICK. They all went out, okay? I told you I could handle it.

DOUGLAS. Don't be so damned cocky. You've only been a supervisor for two months.

PATRICK. Yeah, and I haven't screwed up anything yet, have I?

DOUGLAS. Let's see how long you can keep it that way.

PATRICK. God, man, I thought Dad made me feel useless. You make him sound like my number one fan.

DOUGLAS. You're not exactly executive material, you know. That's one thing you didn't inherit from your father.

PATRICK. You're complimenting him? I'd like to get this on tape.

DOUGLAS. Don't be such a smart ass. I may disagree with ninety percent of everything he does, but after fifty years the business is still going strong, and he ran it alone for twenty years before he bribed me into joining him.

PATRICK. Why *did* you suddenly join up with him?

DOUGLAS. I had no choice.

PATRICK. How come?

DOUGLAS. Let's just say that your father can be very persuasive. Remember how he suckered you into working for him?

PATRICK. Remember? I'll never forgive him for that.

DOUGLAS. It's not easy to say no to him though, is it?

PATRICK. No kidding! But what could I do? If I didn't change my major from Drama to Business, he would have cut me off. So I learned his stupid business so that when you two kick off I can run it.

DOUGLAS. Into the ground.

PATRICK. Well, neither one of you will be here to stop me.

DOUGLAS. That's your plan, isn't it? Once you get ahold of the business, you're just going to destroy it–or even worse, sell it.

*(***PATRICK** *smiles and enters the kitchen.)*

ARLENE. I didn't know we were going to be playing "Truth or Dare" tonight.

DOUGLAS. Arlene, every time this family gets together, it's a game of "Truth or Dare."

ARLENE. True.

COLLEEN. *(enters from the kitchen)* Dinner is ready.

KATIE. I'll go get Dad.

COLLEEN. I'll help you.

*(***COLLEEN** *and* **KATIE** *exit to Shannon's room)*

KATIE. Grab your tap shoes. It's show time.

SHANNON. You're not going to let me get out of this, are you?

KATIE. Nope. *(***KATIE** *and* **COLLEEN** *help* **SHANNON** *out of bed and into a wheelchair)* Come on. We'll all be together except Sharon, and hopefully she'll get here before dessert.

SHANNON. Colleen, tell her I shouldn't be getting out of bed.

KATIE. Don't expect Colleen to come to your rescue.

COLLEEN. That's right. You need to sit up for a while. You've been in bed all day today.

SHANNON. I'm tired.

COLLEEN. Come on. Let's go.

SHANNON. You're a cruel woman, Colleen McCarthy.

COLLEEN. That's why you love me so much.

SHANNON. Is that why? *(to* **KATIE***)* And you, you're just as bad.

KATIE. *(to* **COLLEEN***)* I sure am glad you're on my side.

COLLEEN. Likewise.

SHANNON. I really do love you two.

KATIE. We love you too, Dad.

COLLEEN. We sure do.

KATIE. Come on. Let's get this show on the road. At this rate, Sharon will get there before we do.

SHANNON. She is coming alone, isn't she? I hope she doesn't bring any of her gypsy friends with her.

KATIE. No. She knows this dinner is for the family only.

SHANNON. Good. *(laughs)* Maybe she'll call up Leonardo D'Vinci on that psychic hot line of hers and get him to come and do a portrait. He's good at last supper scenes.

KATIE. If anyone could do it, Sharon could.

SHANNON. She's still messing with that blasphemous spook stuff, isn't she?

KATIE. Oh yeah. She has a séance every time there's a full moon and on the night of every Friday the 13th.

COLLEEN. Who does she try to contact?

KATIE. I don't know. I've never been to one of her little parties.

SHANNON. You always were the smart one.

COLLEEN. Sit up nice and tall.

KATIE. And no dribble tricks tonight.

SHANNON. I'll be a perfect gentleman.

*(***KATIE** *wheels* **SHANNON** *out into the dining room and puts him at the head of the table.* **DOUGLAS**, **KATIE**, **PATRICK**, *and* **ARLENE** *sit at the table.* **EVERYONE** *bows their heads and folds their hands.)*

SHANNON. Oh Lord, bless us and the food we are about to eat. And let us get through this meal without killing each other.

ARLENE. Touching.

SHANNON. *(raises his glass)* May your troubles be few and far between like the space between your grandmother's teeth. *(looks around at everyone)* It's been a long time since we've all been together.

ARLENE. Too long.

(said simultaneously)

DOUGLAS. Not long enough.

KATIE. Why don't we try to have a nice, pleasant meal. It won't take long, and then you can all go back to being yourselves.

SHANNON. Well said.

*(***COLLEEN** *enters with a tray full of meat and puts it in the middle of the table and enters the kitchen. Everyone begins serving themselves and eating.)*

ARLENE. I'd like to hear what everybody's been doing lately. Katie?

KATIE. Not much. I pay the bills and read a lot and play chess with Dad. I go to a movie once in a while, when there's one worth seeing.

SHANNON. She baby sits me is what she does. This little lass has given up her job and hardly ever sees her friends just so she can take care of her poor old gray-haired father.

KATIE. It's not as bad as he makes it sound. I go out enough, and *(to* **SHANNON***)* I love taking care of you.

SHANNON. I'd be lost without you, Katie me darlin'.

ARLENE. Douglas?

DOUGLAS. *(bitterly)* I work.

ARLENE. That's it?

DOUGLAS. That's it.

SHANNON. You're full of malarkey.

DOUGLAS. Why don't you keep your mouth shut!

KATIE. So much for our nice pleasant meal.

DOUGLAS. You think it's easy running that business by myself?

SHANNON. I did it for twenty years.

DOUGLAS. That was thirty years ago, Shannon. In case you haven't noticed, things have changed since then. We have twenty times as many customers as we had back then, and *(pointing to* **PATRICK***)* 100 times as many headaches.

PATRICK. Hey, it wasn't my idea to become a prisoner of O'Leary Enterprises.

DOUGLAS. Prisoner? You're lucky to have that job. There are a lot of people out of work today, you know, people who would give anything to have a job like yours.

PATRICK. Hey, they can have it. I never wanted it.

SHANNON. Lad, you're an O'Leary whether you like it or not, and this is the family business, and being a male member of this family, it is your duty to be a part of the business as well.

PATRICK. No choice.

SHANNON. That's right, son. You're either with us or agin' us.

PATRICK. I'll take a Guinness.

DOUGLAS. Don't be such a smart ass. This business has given you a lot of privileges most boys never get.

PATRICK. It's a privilege to have to spend my life doing something I don't want to do?

SHANNON. And what is it that you wanted to do? *(pause)* Ah yes, that's right. You wanted to become a famous actor, another Lawrence Olivier.

PATRICK. *Sir* Lawrence Olivier.

DOUGLAS. Yes, now you get knighted for playing dress up and pretending to be someone you're not.

PATRICK. Acting is an honorable profession.

SHANNON. Honorable, you say?

PATRICK. Yeah. Lots of actors and actresses are very well respected–Sir Anthony Hopkins, Robert DeNiro, Dame Judith Dench.

SHANNON. Eddie Murphy? America's version of Black Irish.

PATRICK. What about Bill Cosby? You like him. You even read his book.

SHANNON. Surely I did. I read all about the joys of fatherhood, according to Mr. Bill Cosby. Best piece of fiction I've ever read–more like science fiction.

KATIE. Not for most families.

SHANNON. In case you haven't noticed darlin', we're not like most families. *(to* **PATRICK***)* Why don't you tell your Mother what else you've been doing.

PATRICK. I've been seeing someone lately.

ARLENE. *(delighted)* Oh really? What's she like?

SHANNON. *(to* **ARLENE***)* You're going to love this.

PATRICK. She's beautiful. She sings. She's divorced and has a little girl, two years old. She's an intern at New York Memorial Hospital, and she's a vegetarian.

ARLENE. Is she Catholic?

PATRICK. *(pause)* She's Dr. Goldberg's daughter, Sarah.

ARLENE. Holy Mother of God! You're not serious about her, are you?

PATRICK. Very.

ARLENE. This is your fault, Shannon!

SHANNON. Why is this my fault?

ARLENE. You had to have a Jewish doctor.

SHANNON. They're the best.

ARLENE. No, they're the most expensive.

SHANNON. That's because they're the best.

ARLENE. A lot of good he's doing you!

SHANNON. Now don't go blaming my dying on Dr. Goldberg. He's seen our family through three births, two deaths and more colds than you've got gray hairs hiding under that red.

ARLENE. I've never understood why you stay with that quack. He's charging you a fortune, not making you any better, and now this!

PATRICK. Mother, shut up! Dr. Goldberg is a wonderful man, and Sarah is smarter, sweeter, and a far better person than anyone in this family will ever be.

SHANNON. Now I know why God hasn't blessed me with grandchildren. Who can blame him for not wanting to continue this chapter of the O'Learys.

PATRICK. Cheer up, Dad. Sarah and I will give you plenty of grandchildren someday.

ARLENE. That's not funny, Patrick. *(pause)* Tell me something, son. What are you celebrating this month, Christmas or Hanukkah?

PATRICK. Both.

ARLENE. And what kind of carols will you be singing? "Deck the Halls with Matzo Balls?"

PATRICK. Very funny, Mother.

KATIE. Why don't we all just shut up and finish our meal in peace.

SHANNON. Good idea.

(The lights go down to indicate time passing. The doorbell rings.)

COLLEEN. *(from the hallway where she has obviously been eavesdropping)* I'll get it. *(Opens the door.* **SHARON** *enters.)* Hi Sharon. Come on in. They're still eating dinner.

SHARON. *(stops suddenly as she enters the dining room)* Oh my God! I wish I had a camera.

COLLEEN. Why don't you sit down. I'll get you a plate. *(exits to the kitchen)*

ARLENE. *(gets up and hugs* **SHARON***)* Sharon, how are you?

SHARON. Apparently much better than you. *(hugs* **ARLENE** *again)* You're tense. You're worried about *(pause)* your cats, but don't be. They're fine. And you're up to something, Mother. What is it?

ARLENE. Sharon, stop that clairvoyant mind reading crap and sit down. I haven't seen you in over a year, so let's wait for at least a little while before we start getting on each other's nerves. Besides, you'd be tense too if you'd been on the airplane ride from Hell that I was on today.

*(***SHARON** *laughs and sits at the empty seat next to* **ARLENE**. **COLLEEN** *enters with a plate and silverware and puts it in front of* **SHARON**.*)*

SHARON. What happened? *(begins serving herself and eating)*

ARLENE. I'll tell you all about it later. I want to hear about you now. How's your business doing?

SHARON. Business is good. I have a new supplier for my beads. I brought some samples. I'll show you later.

ARLENE. *(playing with one of* **SHARON***'s earrings)* Do you sell a lot of these?

SHARON. Enough to pay the bills. How are you feeling, Dad?

SHANNON. I'm still here.

SHARON. You sure are. See? I told you God wouldn't strike you down with a bolt of lightning if you got the whole family together in one room.

SHANNON. The day isn't over yet, darlin'.

SHARON. Oh, come on. Everything's gonna be just fine–including you. *(takes* **SHANNON***'s hand and closes her eyes)* I can see you being with us for a long, long time.

*(***EVERYONE** *except* **KATIE, SHARON,** *and* **SHANNON** *looks around at each other trying to disguise their horror at the thought.)*

PATRICK. And if Sharon can see it, it must be true.

KATIE. *(smiles at* **SHARON** *and raises her glass)* I'll drink to that.

*(***EVERYONE** *raises their glasses.* **KATIE, SHARON,** *and* **SHANNON** *are smiling genuinely, and* **ARLENE, DOUGLAS,** *and* **PATRICK** *have worried, forced smiles.)*

SHANNON. Might I have a word with all of you while we're here together?

PATRICK. About what?

SHANNON. About my wake, lad.

ARLENE. Shannon, not now. That's not appropriate conversation for the dinner table.

SHANNON. Balderdash! I could go at any time now, and I want to make sure that instructions are given while I'm still among the living to give them.

PATRICK. Why don't you wait till after and let Sharon call you up?

SHARON. Non-believers are such a pain in the butt.

SHANNON. When it's over and I'm gone, I want things to be run as if I was here supervising, and I will be. Arlene, a corpse is woman's work. I want you and the girls to dress me in my blue suit with a light blue shirt and

plain white tie.

SHARON. Dad, not now.

ARLENE. You don't want to wear your tux?

SHANNON. I wouldn't be caught dead wearing that thing for all eternity. The blue suit will be fine. Douglas, you're in charge of the bar. You're to bring up ten bottles of my best whiskey from the cellar. That'll get you through the day.

DOUGLAS. Very nicely.

SHANNON. Patrick, you're to give each mourner a pinch of salt to put in their pocket.

PATRICK. No way.

SHANNON. Look, you heathen, I'm still the head of this family, and as long as I am, you'll do what I'm telling you.

PATRICK. You're gonna get a nice, normal wake. It's not going to be a freak show like Grandpa Donnley's.

SHANNON. It will be exactly like Grandpa Donnley's! I came into this world an Irishman, and I'm going out an Irishman, in the true Irish spirit. And you'll give everyone a pinch of salt like I told you to. There'll be no evil spirits at this wake.

PATRICK. Let Sharon do that. That's right up her alley.

SHANNON. I'm telling you to do it, lad.

PATRICK. Man, people are gonna think we're nuts!

SHANNON. To hell with what people think! This is my wake, and it'll be done my way or I won't die.

KATIE. Don't worry, Dad. Everything will be done just the way you want it.

SHANNON. You girls make sure the candles burn brightly and that my new boots are by my feet so I can walk right through Purgatory and straight to the gates of Heaven. And don't forget my rosary.

KATIE. It'll be on your hands as if you're saying it with us.

SHANNON. Colleen! Quit your eavesdropping and get in here.

*(***COLLEEN** *enters)*

SHANNON. You've got your work cut out for you too. You're to make a lamb stew, potato bread and soda bread, with butter, and blood pudding. No, maybe not. Knowing these people, they'd probably use my own blood. Get some Limerick bacon and ham. They're the best. And cheese, blarney cheese, and lots of it.

PATRICK. This is insane!

SHANNON. No, boy, this is Irish. I'm a lace curtain Irishman, and I want everyone to know it. Now, about the Will. Arlene, I've made you my executor.

ARLENE. Executrix.

SHANNON. Whatever.

DOUGLAS. Why Arlene? A man should be in charge of the Will.

SHARON. Uncle Doug, join the 21st century.

DOUGLAS. A man is always in charge of the Will.

ARLENE. That's not true. If it were, they never would have invented the word, "executrix."

DOUGLAS. Executrix. Sounds like a hooker for businessmen. Why are you doing this, Shannon?

SHANNON. When we were first married, Arlene handled all the money and did the bookkeeping for the business. She's a wiz with numbers.

DOUGLAS. But you always complained because she spent too much money.

SHANNON. That was our own money. When it came to the business, she knew just when to spend and when to save. She'll treat the Will as if it was business.

ARLENE. And you all know that I will handle things fairly and carry out the Will just as Shannon has written it.

SHANNON. That's right. And I don't want any disputing of the Will. You'll all take what you get and be happy with it. I want the reading of the Will to be on the first night of the wake when only the family is here.

ARLENE. You mean the family and your attorney.

SHANNON. Of course, but if Sol is out of town or for some reason can't be there, Arlene has permission to read the Will to you. *(pause)* Katie, darlin', I'm getting sleepy. Could you be a sweetheart and bring me back to my room?

KATIE. Sure.

*(***KATIE** *wheels* **SHANNON** *back to his room and helps him into bed.)*

KATIE. I hated listening to you talk about your wake and your Will.

SHANNON. I know, but it has to be done. If I don't tell these knuckleheads how to do all this, they'll make a mess of the whole shebang.

*(***COLLEEN** *enters the dining room and begins clearing off the table.* **ARLENE**, **SHARON**, **DOUGLAS**, *and* **PATRICK** *exit to the living room.)*

KATIE. Goodnight, Dad. Pleasant dreams. *(kisses* **SHANNON***)*

SHANNON. Katie, could you call Dr. Goldberg and ask him to come over for a bit?

KATIE. Sure. You rest comfortably till he gets here. *(enters the hall)*

ARLENE. Well, what shall we do?

PATRICK. We already tried talking.

SHARON. Let's play a game.

DOUGLAS. We've already done that, too.

ARLENE. Look we're a family. Let's try to act like one. I really did come here to make peace with Shannon. Why don't we all try to get along like we used to.

(nobody responds)

How long do you think we're all going to be here?

DOUGLAS. Could be a while. Could be a week or two.

PATRICK. Could be longer.

DOUGLAS. Could be shorter. *(pause)* I mean, anything can happen.

ARLENE. That's right. Life's a funny thing. One minute you're here, and the next minute you're gone.

PATRICK. Then, before you know it, there's nobody alive who even knew you ever existed.

SHARON. That's only temporary. Those who were interrupted by death before their time, return to finish what they were sent here to do. These souls get another chance to live a better life, and to do something worth being remembered for so they are not forgotten.

PATRICK. Yeah, right. *(pause)* Do you think the old man is suffering much?

DOUGLAS. It's hard to tell with him.

ARLENE. People shouldn't have to suffer needlessly. Too bad that doctor he loves so much can't do anything to *(pause)* help him. You know, last week on my soap, there was an Angel of Mercy at the hospital. She was helping the terminally ill patients find peace.

DOUGLAS. It takes a special kind of doctor to do that. I don't think Dr. Goldberg is the type.

ARLENE. I wasn't suggesting that he was–or should be.

SHARON. Of course not.

DOUGLAS. Besides, like I said, anything can happen.

PATRICK. That's right. Most accidents do happen in the home.

DOUGLAS. That's what they say. Somebody could fall out of bed and hit his head on a nightstand or something.

PATRICK. People accidentally get the wrong medication, or too much.

ARLENE. Or not enough.

DOUGLAS. Wheelchairs can suddenly go berserk.

ARLENE. Someone could fall out of a chair and roll down the hall, out the front door, down the flight of stairs outside, right into the street and get run over by a car.

*(***EVERYBODY** *looks at her)*

ARLENE. It could happen.

SHARON. Would you listen to yourselves? I don't believe what I'm hearing.

ARLENE. We're just having fun, Sharon.

PATRICK. Yeah, lighten up.

DOUGLAS. Yeah, besides, life is very unpredictable. That's why those of us who still have long lives ahead of us should do anything in our power to make our lives as enjoyable as possible. We owe it to ourselves.

(They all look at each other in silence thinking about what has just been said.)

KATIE. *(enters)* What do we owe to ourselves?

SHARON. To enjoy life.

KATIE. You're right. *(pause)* I just called Dr. Goldberg. He's on his way over.

DOUGLAS. *(hopefully)* Should we call Father Hammond?

KATIE. No. You're going to have to wait for that.

*(***DOUGLAS** *looks disappointed. He goes over to the bar and fixes himself a drink.)*

ARLENE. You know, as long as we're all together, maybe this would be a good time to start planning *(pause as two chords are heard played from an organ, soap opera style)* the arrangements.

KATIE. You mean?

ARLENE. Yes. That way, when the time comes, we won't be rushed and forget something and we can do everything just right. *(goes to a desk and takes out some paper and a pen and begins writing what is being said)*

DOUGLAS. Makes sense to me.

ARLENE. Okay, who wants to order the flowers for the house?

SHARON. I'll do that. I know a great florist on Mulberry Street. *(takes a card out of her purse and reads)* ''Flowers for all occasions from cradle to grave."

ARLENE. *(yells to kitchen)* Colleen, come in here.

COLLEEN. *(enters)* Yes, Mrs. O'Leary?

ARLENE. You should be in here too. We're discussing *(pause as the chords are heard again)* the arrangements.

COLLEEN. I've got the menu Mr. O'Leary asked me to prepare.

ARLENE. Do you understand everything he wants?

COLLEEN. Yes, Mrs. O'Leary.

PATRICK. Make sure you get some Corn Critters too, okay?

SHARON. Yeah, and some Potato Poopies.

COLLEEN. Okay.

KATIE. This isn't a party!

DOUGLAS. You obviously don't remember Grandpa Donnley's wake.

ARLENE. What about drinks?

DOUGLAS. I'm in charge of drinks, remember?

ARLENE. That's right. Who wants to pick out the casket?

PATRICK. I'll do that.

*(***COLLEEN** *goes to the kitchen)*

ARLENE. Get the best one they have. Make sure it's airtight and waterproof.

PATRICK. Should it be soundproof too?

ARLENE. Just get the best. I'll pick out the headstone.

KATIE. What are you going to have them put on it?

*(***ARLENE, PATRICK, DOUGLAS** *and* **SHARON** *look at each other like they're trying to think of something clever.)*

PATRICK. How about:
My time's run out,
But there's no doubt.
I can still rant and rave
Though I'm down in this grave.

DOUGLAS. I've got one:
From Cork to New York
Came an Irish dork.
I was once a six foot wonder.
Now I'm six feet under.

ARLENE. Wait a minute. How's this:

Beloved husband – that's a laugh.
I made my lovely wife go daft.
My work came first, and to her that sucked,
But I didn't care, cause she was …

KATIE. Mother! I think you've had enough to drink. *(takes* **ARLENE***'s drink out of her hand)* Stop it! All of you! Can't any of you find it in your heart to make peace with a dying old man?

DOUGLAS. Any other dying old man, sure.

KATIE. You know, if it wasn't for the fact that he started O'Leary Enterprises, the company that you all hate so much, you wouldn't be on the verge of inheriting over a million dollars each. Can't you at least think of it that way and be a little grateful?

PATRICK. I'll be grateful when I get the money.

DOUGLAS. That's right. Until I have that money in my hand, I don't trust him, and I'm not grateful to him.

ARLENE. You've got a point. None of us even knows for sure that we're in his Will.

SHARON. That's why you came here today, Mother, isn't it– to make sure you're in his Will?

ARLENE. Of course not, Sharon. I wanted to make peace with him. I couldn't live with myself if he died and we were still on bad terms.

KATIE. So this is all for your peace of mind.

ARLENE. Sure. After he's dead, he won't care.

(the doorbell rings)

KATIE. But you'll still be alive to feel guilty.

ARLENE. And you know I would. *(softly)* I'm very sensitive.

(the doorbell rings again)

ARLENE. *(yells to the kitchen)* Colleen, answer the damned door!

KATIE. *(calls to the kitchen)* I'll get it, Colleen. *(opens the door)* Come in, Dr. Goldberg.

DR. GOLDBERG. *(enters)* Hello, Katie.

ARLENE. Dr. Goldberg.

DR. GOLDBERG. Arlene, it's been a long time.

ARLENE. At least ten years.

DR. GOLDBERG. How have you been?

ARLENE. Wonderful. California's been very good to me.

DR. GOLDBERG. I can see that.

ARLENE. *(upset)* How's your daughter, Sarah?

DR. GOLDBERG. I'd better go see what Shannon wants.

KATIE. *(follows* **DR. GOLDBERG** *into Shannon's room)* It's getting harder for him to breathe.

*(***KATIE** *and* **DR. GOLDBERG** *enter Shannon's room and close the door.)*

SHARON. Now, where were we? Oh yes, the tombstone. If we're going to have it blessed by Father Hammond, we'd better be serious. Let's just go with beloved ex-husband, father, and brother.

*(***SHARON** *takes* **ARLENE***'s paper from her and writes on it.)*

ARLENE. Beloved ex-husband? I don't think so.

*(***ARLENE** *takes the paper back from* **SHARON** *and scratches it out.)*

DOUGLAS. Don't worry about "brother." You can leave that off too.

*(***KATIE** *enters)*

ARLENE. Are you sure?

DOUGLAS. Beloved brother?

ARLENE. *(scratches out "brother")* Well, I want to be represented on there somehow.

SHARON. Then how about, "Beloved Father and Friend"?

ARLENE. Perfect.

DR. GOLDBERG. *(enters the living room)* It's over.

End of Act One

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