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SF PERUSALS

Faith Healer

Brian Friel

A Samuel French Acting Edition

SAMUEL FRENCH
FOUNDED 1830

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OPENING NIGHT, APRIL 5, 1979

LONGACRE THEATRE

A Shubert Organization Theatre

Gerald Schoenfeld, *Chairman* Bernard B. Jacobs, *President*

MORTON GOTTLIEB

presents

JAMES MASON
CLARISSA DONAL
KAYE DONNELLY

in

FAITH HEALER

by

BRIAN FRIEL

Scenery by **JOHN LEE BEATTY**

Costumes by **JANE GREENWOOD**

Lighting by **MARILYN RENNAGEL**

Associate Producers

BEN ROSENBERG and WARREN CRANE

Directed by

JOSE QUINTERO

The Producer wishes to express his appreciation to Theatre Development Fund for its support of this production.

The Producer and Theatre Management are Members of The League of New York Theatres and Producers, Inc.

CAST
(*in order of appearance*)

FRANK ..... *James Mason*

GRACE ..... *Clarissa Kaye*

TEDDY ..... *Donal Donnelly*

FAITH HEALER

Part 1—FRANK

Part 2—GRACE

Part 3—TEDDY

Part 4—FRANK

There is an interval between Part 2 and Part 3

Part 1—FRANK

FRANK

The stage is in darkness. Brief pause. Then out of this darkness comes FRANK's *incantation, "Aberarder, Aberayron . . ." At the end of the second line bring up lights very slowly, first around him and then gradually on the whole set. Throughout this opening incantation he is standing Down Left, feet together, his face tilted upwards, his eyes shut tight, his hands in his overcoat pockets, his shoulders hunched. (Left and Right from the point of view of the audience.)*

He is middle-aged; grey or greying; pale, lined face. The overcoat is unbuttoned, the collar up at the back; either navy or black, and of heavy nap material; a good coat once but now shabby, stained, slept-in. Underneath he is wearing a dark suit that is polished with use; narrow across the shoulders; sleeves and legs too short. A soiled white shirt. A creased tie. Vivid green socks.

Three rows of chairs—not more than fifteen seats in all—occupy one-third of the acting area Stage Left. These seats are at right-angles to the audience. On the backdrop is a large poster:

The Fantastic Francis Hardy
Faith Healer
One Night Only

This poster is made of some fabric, linen perhaps, and is soiled and abused.

(Stage directions have been kept to a minimum. In all four Parts the director will decide when and where the monologist sits, walks, stands, etc.)

FRANK. (*Eyes closed.*)
Aberarder, Aberayron,
Llangranog, Llangurig,
Abergorlech, Abergynolwyn,
Llandefeilog, Llanerchymedd,
Aberhosan, Aberporth—
all those dying Welsh villages. (*Eyes open.*) I'd get so tense before a performance, d'you know what I used to do? As we drove along those narrow, winding roads I'd recite the names to myself just for the mesmerism, the sedation, of the incantation—
Kinlochbervie, Inverbervie,
Inverdruie, Invergordon,
Badachroo, Kinlochewe,
Ballantrae, Inverkeithing,
Cawder, Kirkconnel,
Plaidy, Kirkinner . . .

Welsh—Scottish—over the years they became indistinguishable. The kirks or meeting-houses or schools—all identical, all derelict. Maybe in a corner a withered sheaf of wheat from a harvest thanksgiving of years ago or a fragment of a Christmas decoration across a window—relics of abandoned rituals. Because the people we moved among were beyond that kind of celebration.

Hardly ever cities or towns because the halls were too dear for us. Seldom England because Teddy and Gracie were English and they believed, God help them, that the Celtic temperament was more receptive to us. And never Ireland because of me—

I beg your pardon—*The Fantastic Francis Hardy, Faith Healer, One Night Only.* (*A slight bow.*) The man on the tatty banner.

(*He takes off his overcoat, selects an end chair from one of the rows, and throws the coat across it. This chair and coat will be in the same position at the opening of Part 4.*)

When we started out—oh, years and years ago—we used to have Francis Hardy, Seventh Son of a Seventh Son across the top. But it made the poster too expensive and Teddy persuaded me to settle for the modest "fantastic." It was a favourite word of his and maybe in this case he employed it with accuracy. As for the Seventh Son—that was a lie. I was in fact the only child of elderly parents, Jack and Mary Hardy, born in the village of Kilmeedy in County Limerick where my father was sergeant of the guards. But that's another story . . .

The initials were convenient, weren't they? F.H.—Faith Healer. Or if you were a believer in fate, you might say my life was determined the day I was christened. Perhaps if my name had been Charles Potter I would have been . . . Cardinal Primate; or Patsy Muldoon, the Fantastic Prime Minister. No, I don't mock those things. By no means, I'm not respectful but I don't mock.

Faith healer—faith healing. A craft without an apprenticeship, a ministry without responsibility, a vocation without a ministry. How did I get involved? As a young man I chanced to flirt with it and it possessed me. No, no, no, no, no—that's rhetoric. No; let's say I did it . . . because I could do it. That's accurate enough. And occasionally it worked—oh, yes, occasionally it *did* work. Oh, yes. And when it did, when I stood before a man and placed my hands on him and watched him become whole in my presence, those were nights of exultation, of consummation—no, not that I was doing good, giving relief, spreading joy—good God, no—nothing at all to do with that; but because the questions that undermined my life then became meaningless and because I knew that for those few hours I had become whole in myself, and perfect in myself, and in a manner of speaking, an aristocrat, if the term doesn't offend you.

But the questions, the questionings . . . They began modestly enough with the pompous struttings of a young man: *Am I endowed with a unique and awesome gift?*—my

God, yes, I'm afraid so. And I suppose the other extreme was *Am I a conman?*—which of course was nonsense, I think. And between those absurd exaggerations the possibilities were legion. Was it all chance?—or skill?—or illusion?—or delusion? Precisely what power did I possess? Could I summon it? When and how? Was I its servant? Did it reside in my ability to invest someone with faith in me or did I evoke from him a healing faith in himself? Could my healing be effected without faith? But faith in what?—in me?—in the possibility?—faith in faith? And is the power diminishing? You're beginning to masquerade, aren't you? You're becoming a husk, aren't you? And so it went on and on and on. Silly, wasn't it? Considering that nine times out of ten nothing at all happened. But they persisted right to the end, those nagging, tormenting, maddening questions that rotted my life. When I refused to confront them, they ambushed me. And when they threatened to submerge me, I silenced them with whiskey. That was efficient for a while. It got me through the job night after night. And when nothing happened or when something did happen, it helped me to accept that. But I can tell you this: there was one thing I did know, one thing I always knew right from the beginning—I always knew, drunk or sober, I always knew when nothing was going to happen.

Teddy. Yes, let me tell you about Teddy, my manager. Cockney. Buyoyant. Cheerful. Tiny nimble feet. Dressed in cord jacket, bow-tie, greasy velour hat. I never knew much about his background except that he had been born into show-business. And I never understood why he stayed with me because we barely scraped a living. But he had a devotion to me and I think he had a vague sense of being associated with something . . . spiritual and that gave him satisfaction. If you met him in a bar he'd hold you with those brown eyes of his. "I've 'andled some of *the* most sensational properties in my day, dear 'eart, believe me. But I've threw 'em all up for Mr. 'Ardy 'ere, cos 'e is just the most fantastic fing you've ever seen." And listening to

him I'd almost forget what indeed he had given up to tour with us—a Miss Mulato and Her Three Pigeons, and a languid whippet called Rob Roy who took sounds from a set of bagpipes. Humbling precedents, if I were given to pride. And he believed all along and right up to the end that somewhere one day something "fantastic" was going to happen to us. "Believe me, dear 'eart"—perhaps when we had barely enough petrol to take us to the next village—"Believe me, we are on the point of making a killing." He was a romantic man. And when he talked about this killing, I had a fairy-tale image of us being summoned to some royal bedroom and learned doctors being pushed aside and I'd raise the sleeping princess to life and we'd be wined and dined for seven days and seven nights and sent on our way with bags of sovereigns. But he was a man of many disguises. Perhaps he wasn't romantic. Perhaps he knew that's what I'd think. Perhaps he was a much more perceptive man than I knew.

And there was Grace, my mistress. A Yorkshire woman. Controlled, correct, methodical, orderly. Who fed me, washed and ironed for me, nursed me, humoured me. Saved me, I'm sure, from drinking myself to death. Would have attempted to reform me because that was her nature, but didn't, because her instincts were wiser than her impulses. Grace Dodsmith from Scarborough—or was it Knaresborough?—I don't remember—they all sound so alike—it doesn't matter. She never asked for marriage and for all her tidiness I don't think she wanted marriage—her loyalty was adequate for her. And it was never a heady relationship, not even in the early days. But it lasted. A surviving relationship. And yet as we grew older together I thought it wouldn't. Because that very virtue of hers—that mulish, unquestioning, indefatigable loyalty—settled on us like a heavy dust. And nothing I did, neither my bitterness nor my deliberate neglect nor my blatent unfaithfulness, could disturb it.

We'd arrive in the van usually in the early evening. Pin

up the poster. Arrange the chairs and benches. Place a table inside the door for the collection. Maybe sweep the place out. Gracie'd make tea on the primus stove. Teddy'd try out his amplifying system. I'd fortify myself with some drink. Then we'd wait. And wait. And as soon as darkness fell, a few would begin to sidle in—

Penllech, Pencader,
Dunvegan, Dunblane,
Ben Lawers, Ben Rinnes,
Kirkliston, Bennane—

Teddy and his amplifying system: I fought with him about it dozens of times and finally gave in to him. Our row was over what he called "atmospheric background music." When the people would have gathered Teddy would ask them—he held the microphone up to his lips and assumed a special, reverential tone—he'd ask them to stay in their seats while I moved among them. "Everybody'll be attended to, dear 'eart. Relax. Take it easy. And when Mr. 'Ardy gets to you, no need to tell 'im wots bovvering you—Mr. 'Ardy knows. Just trust 'im. Put yourself in 'is 'ands. And god bless you all. And now, dear 'eart—Mr. 'Ardy, Faif 'Ealer!" At which point I'd emerge—and at the same moment Teddy'd put on his record.

And as I'd move from seat to seat, among the crippled and the blind and the disfigured and the deaf and the barren, a voice in the style of the thirties crooned Jerome Kern's song

"Lovely, never, never change/
Keep that breathless charm/
Won't you please arrange it/
'Cause I love you/
Just the way you look tonight."

Yes; we were always balanced somewhere between the absurd and the momentous. (*Moving through seats.*)

And the people who came—what is there to say about them? They were a despairing people. That they came to

me, a mountebank, was a measure of their despair. They seldom spoke. Sometimes didn't even raise their eyes. They just sat there, very still, assuming that I divined their complaints. Abject. Abased. Tight. Longing to open themselves and at the same time fearfully herding the anguish they contained against disturbance. And they hated me—oh, yes, yes, yes, they hated me. Because by coming to me they exposed, publicly acknowledged, their desperation. And even though they told themselves they were here because of the remote possibility of a cure, they knew in their hearts they had come not to be cured but for confirmation that they were incurable; not in hope but for the elimination of hope; for the removal of that final, impossible chance—that's why they came—to seal their anguish, for the content of a finality.

And they knew that I knew. And so they defied me to endow them with hopelessness. But I couldn't do even that for them. And they knew I couldn't. A peculiar situation, wasn't it? No, not peculiar—eerie. Because occasionally, just occasionally, the miracle would happen. And then—panic—panic—panic! Their ripping apart! The explosion of their careful calculation! The sudden flooding of dreadful, hopeless hope! I often thought it would have been a kindness to them not to go near them.

And there was another thing about them. When Teddy was introducing me, I would look at them and sometimes I got a strange sense that they weren't there on their own behalf at all but as delegates, legati, chosen because of their audacity; and that outside, poised, mute, waiting in the half-light, were hundreds of people who held their breath while we were in the locality. And I sometimes got the impression, too, that if we hadn't come to them, they would have sought us out.

We were in the north of Scotland when I got word that my mother had had a heart attack. In a village called Kinlochbervie, in Sutherland, about as far north as you can

go in Scotland. A picturesque little place, very quiet, very beautiful, looking across to the Isle of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides; and we were enjoying a few days rest there. Anyhow, when the news came, Teddy drove me down to Glasgow. Gracie wanted to come with me and couldn't understand when I wouldn't take her. But she used her incomprehension as fuel for her loyalty and sent me off with a patient smile.

It was my first time home in twenty years. My father had retired and was living in a housing estate outside Dublin. When he opened the door he didn't recognize me—I had to tell him who I was. Then he shook my hand as if I were an acquaintance and led me up to the bedroom.

She was exactly as I remembered her—illness hadn't ravaged her. Her eyes were closed, her skin smooth and girlish, her chin raised as if in expectation. Sleeping silently. Jesus, I thought, O my Jesus, what am I going to do?

"She looks nice," he said.

"Yes," I said. "She looks great."

He cleared his throat.

"She passed away quietly. You missed her by approximately one hour and ten minutes"—as if he were giving evidence. And then he cried.

And I felt such overwhelming relief that when he cried, I cried easily with him.

Twelve years later I was back in Ireland again; with Teddy and Gracie. Things had been lean for a long time. Or as Teddy put it, "If we want to eat, we've got to open up new territory, dear 'eart. You've cured 'em all 'ere. Come on—let's go to the lush pickings of Ireland." And I agreed because I was as heart-sick of Wales and Scotland as they were. And the whiskey wasn't as efficient with the questions as it had been. And my father had died in the meantime. And I suppose because I always knew we would end up there. So on the last day of August we crossed from

Stranraer to Larne and drove through the night to County Donegal. And there we got lodgings in a pub, a lounge bar, really, outside a village called Ballybeg, not far from Donegal town.

There was no sense of homecoming. I tried to simulate it but nothing stirred. Only a few memories, wan and neutral. One of my father watching me through the bars of the day-room window as I left for school—we lived in a rented house across the street. One of playing with handcuffs—slipping my hands in and out through the rings. One of my mother making bread and singing a hymn to herself: "Yes, heaven, yes, heaven, yes, heaven is the prize." And one of a group of men being shown over the barracks—I think they were inspectors from Dublin—and my father saying, "Certainly, gentlemen, by all means, gentlemen, anything you say, gentlemen." Maybe one or two others. They evoked nothing.

When we came downstairs to the lounge in the pub we got caught up in the remnants of a wedding party—four young men, locals, small farmers, whose friend had just gone off on his honeymoon a few hours earlier. Good suits. White carnations. Dark, angular faces. Thick fingers and black nails. For a while they pretended to ignore us. Then Ned, the biggest of them, asked bluntly who we were and what we were. Teddy told them. "Dear 'eart. the. most. sensational. fantastic." And either at the extravagance of the introduction or because of an unease they suddenly exploded with laughter and we were embraced. We formed a big circle and drank and chatted. Gracie sang—Ilkley Moor?—something like that. Teddy entertained them with tales of our tours ranging from the outrageous to the maudlin and ended with his brown eyes moist with tears: "Dear 'earts, the insights it 'as given me into tortured 'umanity." And I told myself that I was indeed experiencing a home-coming. All irony was suspended.

Then suddenly a man called Donal who had scarcely

spoken up to this thrust a bent finger in front of my face and challenged, "Straighten that, Mister Hardy." And the bar went still.

I caught the finger between the palms of my hands and held it there and looked into his face. Already he was uneasy—he wanted to withdraw the challenge. He began to stammer how the accident happened—something about a tractor, a gearbox, a faulty setting. And as he spoke I massaged the finger. And when he stopped talking I opened my hands and released him. The finger was whole . . .

Badrallach, Kilmore,
Llanfaethlu, Llanfechell,
Kincardine, Kinrose,
Loughcarron, Loughgelly . . .

We caroused right through the night. Toasts to the landlord who claimed he met my father once and as the night went on that they were close friends. Toasts to Teddy and Gracie. Toasts to my return. To Donal's finger. Toasts to the departed groom and his prowess. To the bride and her fertility. To the rich harvest—the corn, the wheat, the barley. Toasts to all Septembers and all harvests and to all things ripe and eager for the reaper. A dionysian night. A bacchanalian night. A frenzied, excesssive Irish night when ritual was consciously and relentlessly debauched.

Then sometime before dawn McGarvey was remembered. Their greatest, their closest friend McGarvey who in time had danced with them and drunk with them and built roads with them and cut turf with them. McGarvey who ought to have been best man that day—my God, who else?—and who wasn't even at the wedding reception. And as they created him I saw McGarvey in my mind, saw his strained face and his mauve hands and his burning eyes, crouched in his wheel-chair and sick with bitterness. Saw him and knew him before Teddy in his English innocence asked why he wasn't there; before Ned told us of the fall from the scaffolding and the paralysis. Saw him and recog-

nised our meeting: an open place, a walled yard, trees, orange skies, warm wind. And knew, knew with cold certainty that nothing was going to happen. Nothing at all.

I stood at the window and watched them set off to fetch McGarvey. Four of them getting into a battered car; now serious and busy with good deeds; now being polite to one another, holding doors open, you sit in front, no you, no you. Then they were gone, the car sluggish under their weight.

Teddy lay slumped in a stupor in a corner. Gracie went round the tables, emptying ashtrays, gathering glasses and leaving them on the counter, straightening chairs. No intimation whatever of danger. I suggested she should go to bed and she went off. Why wouldn't she?—housework was finished. (*He comes right down, walking very slowly, until he is as close as he can be to the audience. Pause.*)

The first Irish tour! The great homecoming! The new Beginnings! It was all going to be so fantastic! And there I am, pretending to subscribe to the charade. (*He laughs.*) Yes; the restoration of Francis Hardy. (*Laughs again.*)

But we'll come to that presently. Or as Teddy would have put it: Why don't we leave that until later, dear 'eart? Why don't we do that? Why not?

Indeed.

(*He looks at the audience for about three seconds. Then—quick black.*)

END OF PART 1

Part 2—GRACE

GRACE

We discover GRACE HARDY *on stage—the same set as Part 1, with the rows of seats removed. She is sitting in a wooden chair beside a small table on which are ashtrays, packets of cigarettes, the remains of a bottle of whiskey, a glass.*

She is in early middle-age. Indifferent to her appearance and barely concealing her distraught mental state. Smoking a lot—sometimes lighting one cigarette from the other.

GRACE. (*Eyes closed.*)
Aberarder, Aberayron,
Llangranog, Llangurig,
Abergorlech, Abergynolwyn,
Penllech, Pencader,
Llandefeilog, Llanerchymedd—
that most persistent of all the memories, (*Eyes open.*) that most persistent and most agonizing—

But I *am* getting stronger, I *am* becoming more controlled—I'm sure I am. I measure my progress—a silly index, I know, and he would certainly have scoffed at it—but I can almost measure my progress by the number of hours I sleep and the amount I drink and the number of cigarettes I smoke. And, as they say, I've a lot to be thankful for; I know I have. And I like living in London. And the bedsitter's small but it's warm and comfortable. And it's a pleasant walk to the library in Paddington where I work four hours every morning. And on my way home, if the day's fine, I usually go through the park. And at night I listen to the radio or I read—oh, I read a lot—fiction, romance,

history, biography, whatever I take home with me, whatever's handy; and I've begun to make a rug for the hearth—I'll do a bit at that or maybe I'll try a new recipe or read the paper or knit or—or—or— And on Thursday afternoons I go to the doctor to get my pills renewed. He said to me last week, he said to me, "Of course you've had a traumatic experience, Mrs. Hardy; absolutely horrific. But it's over—finished with. And you've really got to be stern with yourself. You were a solicitor once, weren't you? Well, what you must do now is bring the same mental rigour, the same discipline to your recovery that you once brought to a legal case." And he looked so pleased with his analogy and so clean and so pleasant and so efficient and yes so innocent, sitting there behind his desk with his grey suit and his college tie and his clear eyes and his gold pen poised, and he meant so well as he was so patient and it was all so simple for him; and I found myself nodding yes, yes, yes to him, yes, yes; and I thought: That's how you used to nod to Frank, too, especially in that last year—yes, yes, yes, Frank, you know you can, Frank, I swear you can; but he's watching me warily—nothing was simple for him—he's watching me and testing me with his sly questions and making his own devious deductions, probing my affirmations for the hair-crack, tuned for the least hint of excess or uncertainty, but all the same, all the same drawing sustenance from me—oh, yes, I'm sure of that—finding some kind of sustenance in me—I'm absolutely sure of that, because finally he drained me, finally I was exhausted.

But I *am* making progress. And I suppose what I really mean by that is that there are certain restricted memories that I can invite now, that I can open myself fully to, like a patient going back to solids. I can think about the night the old farmer outside Cardiff gave him £200 for curing his limp—just handed him his wallet—and we booked into the Royal Abercorn and for four nights we lived like kings. And the weekend we spent one Easter walking in the Gram-

pian mountains. I can think about that; yes memories like that I can receive and respond to them. Because they *were* part of our lives together. But then as soon as I begin to open under them, just as soon as it seems that I'm beginning to come together again— (*Eyes closed tight.*)

Abergorlech, Abergynolwyn,
Llandefeilog, Llanerchymedd,
Aberhosan, Aberporth—

it's winter, it's night, it's raining, the Welsh roads are narrow, we're on our way to a performance. (*Eyes open.*) He always called it a performance, teasing the word with that mocking voice of his —"Where do I perform tonight?" "Do you expect a performance in a place like this?"—as if it were a game he might take part in only if he felt like it, maybe because that was the only way he could talk about it. Anyhow Teddy's driving as usual, and I'm in the passenger seat, and he's immediately behind us, the Fantastic Francis Hardy, Faith Healer, with his back to us and the whiskey bottle between his legs, and he's squatting on the floor of the van—no, not squatting—crouched, wound up, concentrated, and happy—no, not happy, certainly not happy, I don't think he ever knew what happiness was—but always before a performance he'd be . . . in complete mastery—yes, that's close to it—in such complete mastery that everything harmonised for him, in such mastery that anything is possible. And when you speak to him he turns his head and looks beyond you with those damn benign eyes of his, looking past you out of his completion, out of that private power, out of that certainty that was accessible only to him. God, how I resented that privacy! And he's reciting the names of all those dying Welsh villages—Aberarder, Aberayron, Llangranog, Llangurig—releasing them from his mouth in that special voice he used only then, as if he were blessing them or consecrating himself. and then, for him, I didn't exist. Many, many, many times I didn't exist for him. But before a performance this exclusion—no, it

wasn't an exclusion, it was an erasion—this erasion was absolute: he obliterated me. Me who tended him, humoured him, nursed him, sustained him—who debauched myself for him. Yes. That's the most persistent memory. That's the most persistent memory. Yes. And when I remember him like that in the back of the van, God how I hate him again—

Kinlochbervie, Inverbervie,
Inverdruie, Invergordon,
Badachroo, Kinlochewe,
Ballantrae, Inverkeithing,
Cawder, Kirkconnel,
Plaidy, Kirkinner . . . (*Quietly, almost dreamily.*)

Kinlochbervie's where the baby's buried, two miles south of the village, in a field on the left hand side on the road as you go north. Funny, isn't it, but I've never met anybody who's been to Kinlochbervie, not even Scotch people. But it *is* a very small village and very remote, right away up in the north of Sutherland, about as far north as you can go in Scotland. And the people there told me that in good weather it is very beautiful and that you can see right across the sea to the Isle of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides. We just happened to be there and we were never back there again and the week that we were there it rained all the time, not really rained but a heavy wet mist so that you could scarcely see across the road. But I'm sure it is a beautiful place in good weather. Anyhow, that's where the baby's buried, in Kinlochbervie, in Sutherland, in the north of Scotland. Frank made a wooden cross to mark the grave and painted it white and wrote across it *Infant Child of Francis and Grace Hardy*—no name, of course, because it was still-born—just *Infant Child*. And I'm sure that cross is gone by now because it was a fragile thing and there were cows in the field and it wasn't a real cemetery anyway. And I had the baby in the back of the van and there was no nurse or doctor so no one knew anything about it except Frank and Teddy and me. And there was no clergyman at the grave-

side—Frank just said a few prayers that he made up. So there is no record of any kind. And he never talked about it afterwards; never once mentioned it again; and because he didn't, neither did I. So that was it. Over and done with. A finished thing. Yes. But I think it's a nice name, Kinlochbervie—a complete sound—a name you wouldn't forget easily . . . (*Tense again.*)

God, he was such a twisted man! With such a talent for hurting. One of his mean tricks was to humiliate me by always changing my surname. It became Dudley or Elliot or O'Connell or McPherson—whatever came into his head; and I came from Yorkshire or Kerry or London or Scarborough or Belfast; and he had cured me of a blood disease; and we weren't married—I was his mistress—always that—that was the one constant: "You haven't met Gracie McClure, have you? She's my mistress"—knowing so well that that would wound me and it always did; it shouldn't have; I should have become so used to it; but it always did. And Teddy—Teddy wasn't just a fit-up man who was always in trouble with the police for pilfering but a devoted servant, dedicated acolyte to the holy man. It wasn't that he was simply a liar—I never understood it—yes, I knew that he wanted to hurt me—but it was more complex than that—it was some compulsion he had to adjust, to refashion, to recreate everything around him. Even the people who came to him—they weren't just sick people who were confused and frightened and wanted to be cured; no, no; to him they were . . . yes, they were real enough, but not real as persons, real as fictions, his fictions, extensions of himself that came into being only because of him. And if he cured a man, that man became for him a successful fiction and therefore actually real, and he'd say to me afterwards, "Quite an interesting character that, wasn't he? I knew that would work." But if he didn't cure him, the man was forgotten immediately, allowed to dissolve and vanish as if he had never existed. Even his father—and if he loved

anyone he loved his father—even he was constantly recreated, even after his death. He was in fact a storeman in a factory in Limerick—I met him once, a nice old man; but Frank wasn't content with that—he made him a stonemason and a gardener and a bus-driver and a guard and a musician. It was as if—and I'm groping at this—but it seemed to me that he kept remaking people according to some private standard of excellence of his own, and as his standards changed, so did the person. But I'm sure it was always an excellence, a perfection, that was the cause of his restlessness and the focus of it.

We were in Wales when he got word of his father's death. He went home alone. And when he came back he spoke of the death as if it had been his mother's. "She passed away quietly," he said. "I don't know how father'll manage without her." And the point was his mother had been dead for years when I first met him. Oh, he was a convoluted man.

The first day I went to the doctor, he was taking down all the particulars and he said to me,

"And what was your late husband's occupation, Mrs. Hardy?"

"He was an artist," I said—quickly—casually—but with complete conviction—just the way he might have said it. Wasn't that curious? Because the thought had never occurred to me before. And then because I said it and the doctor wrote it down, I knew it was true . . .

Dunvegan, Dunblane,
Ben Lawers, Ben Rinnes,
Kirkliston, Bennane—

I left him once. Yes; I left *him!* Up and left. God, when I think of it! We'd been married seven years at the time, and within that twelve months I'd had a pleurisy and then two miscarriages in quick succession and I suppose I was feeling very sorry for myself. And we'd been living that winter in a derelict cottage in Norfolk miles from anyone—it was really

a converted byre. I remember kneeling before a tiny grate and crying because the timber was so wet the fire wouldn't light, and trying to get to sleep on a damp mattress on the floor. Anyway we'd had a fight about something silly; and I must have been very depressed or suddenly worked myself up into a stupid panic because on some mad impulse I tore a page off an old calendar and wrote on the back of it, "Dear Frank I'm leaving you because I cannot endure the depravity of our lives any longer do not follow me I love you deeply Grace." Wasn't it awful! "I love you deeply"—to a man like that. And "Do not follow me"—do not follow me!—God, I had some kind of innocence then!

Anyhow I went home. For the first time and the last time. I got the night crossing from Glasgow and then the bus to Omagh and walked the three miles out to Knockmoyle. I remember I stood at the gates for a while and looked up the long straight avenue flanked with tall straight poplars, across the lawn, beyond the formal Japanese garden and into the chaotic vegetable plot where my mother messed about and devoted her disturbed life to. It was Bridie, the housekeeper, who reared me; and mother in her headscarf and wellingtons was a strange woman who went in and out of the mental hospital.

Father was in the breakfast-room, in a wicker chair beside a huge fire, with a rug around his knees and his head slightly forward and staring straight in front of him just as he did when he was on the bench and hectoring a defendant. The stroke had spared his features and he looked so distinguished with his patrician face and his white hair perfectly groomed and his immaculate grey suit.

And I knocked on the table so that I wouldn't startle him and I said,

"It's me, Father. It's Grace."

"What's that? Speak up!"

And I could hear old Bridie moving about the kitchen and I was afraid she'd hear me and come up and throw her arms

around me before I'd have a chance to kiss him over and over again and say sorry and tell him how often I thought about him.

I moved round so that I was directly in front of him.

"It's Grace, Father."

"Yes? Yes?"

"Grace—Gracie."

"Raise your voice. You're mumbling."

"Timmikins," I said—that's what he used to call me when I was a child.

"Who?"

"Timmikins," I said again.

"I know who it is," he said.

"I came home to see you," I said.

He gazed at me for a long, long time. And his mouth opened and shut but no sound came. And then finally and suddenly the words and the remembrance came together for him.

"You ran off with the mountebank." And he wasn't accusing—all he wanted was corroboration.

"Frank and I got married," I said.

"Yes, you ran off with the mountebank just after you qualified. And you killed your mother—you know that. But I told her you'd be back. Six months, I said; give her six months and she'll come crawling back."

I was crouching in front of him and holding his cold hands and our faces so close that I could smell his breath.

"Father," I said, "Father, listen—"

But words were now spilling out of him, not angry words but the tired formula words of the judge sentencing me to nine months in jail but suspending the sentence because he understood I came from a professional family with a long and worthy record of public service and hoping that I would soon regret and atone for the blemish I had brought on that family and on my own profession and threatening that if I ever appeared before him again he would have no option but

to send me to jail and impose the maximum penalty et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

And as I watched him and listened to him and felt the darts of his spittle on my face, I had an impulse—and I thank God I resisted it—a calm, momentary impulse to do an ugly, shameful thing: I wanted to curse him—no, not curse him—assault and defile him with obscenities, and to articulate them slowly and distinctly and brutally into his face; words he never used; a language he didn't speak; a language never heard in that house. But even in his confusion he'd understand it and recognize it as the final rejection of his tall straight poplars and the family profession and his formal Japanese gardens. But more important, much, much more important, recognise it as my proud testament to my mountebank and the van and the wet timber and the primus stove and the dirty halls and everything he'd call squalor. But thank God I didn't do that. Instead—and he was still sentencing me—I just walked away. And I never saw him again. And he died before the year was over. And the next night I was back in the Norfolk byre, back on the damp mattress and kissing Frank's face and shoulders and chest and telling him how sorry I was; and he's drunk and giving me his sly smile and saying little. And then I was pregnant again and this time I held on to it for the full time. And that was the blackfaced, macerated baby that's buried in a field in Kinlochbervie in Sutherland in the north of Scotland—

Badrallach, Kilmore,
Llanfaethlu, Llanfechell,
Kincardine, Kinross,
Loughcarron, Loughgelly . . . (*At banner.*)

Faith healer—faith healing—I never understood it—never. I tried to. In the beginning I tried diligently—as the doctor might say I brought all my mental rigour to bear on it. But I couldn't even begin to apprehend it—this gift, this craft, this talent, this art, this magic—whatever it was he possessed, that defined him, that was, I suppose, essentially

him. and because it was his essence and because it eluded me I suppose I *was* wary of it. Yes, of course I was. And he knew it. Indeed, if by some miracle Frank could have been the same Frank without it, I would happily have robbed him of it. And he knew that, too—how well he knew that; and in his twisted way read into it the ultimate treachery on my part. So what I did was, I schooled myself—I tried to school myself—to leave it to him and him with it and be content to be outside them. And for a time that seemed to work for both of us: we observed the neutrality of the ground between us. But as time went on and particularly in the last few years when he became more frantic and more truculent, he began to interpret my remove as resentment, even as hostility, or he pretended he did—you could never be sure with him—and he insisted on dragging me into the feud between himself and his talent. And then we would snarl and lunge and grapple at one another and things were said that should never have been said and that lay afterwards on our lives like slow poison. When his talent was working for him the aggression wasn't quite so bitter—after he'd cure someone he'd be satisfied just to flaunt himself, to taunt me: "And what does the legal mind make of all that? Just a con, isn't it? Just an illusion, isn't it?" And I'd busy myself putting away the chairs or taking down the banner. But when he couldn't perform—and in those last two years that became more and more frequent, the more desperate he became—then he'd go for me with bared teeth as if I were responsible and he'd scream at me "You were at your very best tonight, Miss O'Dwyer, weren't you? A great night for the law, wasn't it?—you vengeful, spiteful bitch." And I'd defend myself. And we'd tear one another apart.

As soon as we'd open the doors, that's where I'd take my seat, at a table if there was one, or if there wasn't, with a tray on my knee; because sometimes they'd pay on their way in, now and again far more than they could afford, I suppose in the hope that somehow it would sweeten Frank

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