

# **THE LODGERS**

by

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## TIME AND PLACE:

The play takes place in a backroom of a boarding-house in Dublin. It is the late fifties.

## CHARACTERS:

EDDIE: about nineteen years of age; a fitter-turner apprentice.

BILLY: the same age; an apprentice draughts-man.

MORIARTY: early fifties; a heavily set gruff country-man, a fitter-turner.

## ACT ONE:

Scene One: Monday evening.

Scene Two: Friday evening.

## ACT TWO:

Scene One: Saturday morning.

Scene Two: Sunday night.

## THE SET:

A backroom with three iron-beds. One of them is more ornate than the other, that is it may have a brass headboard and footboard. This bed is in the left corner of the room and belongs to Moriarty. It is upstage left in against the back wall and running parallel to it, its head in the corner, its foot stopping where the window begins. The window is a sash-window and looks out on a terraced cityscape of chimney-pots and slated roofs. In the right corner there is a simple iron-bed, this is Billy's. Its head up against the back wall and its length running downstage in against the side-wall. At its foot there is a wardrobe, a simple plain affair with an interior long mirror that is seen by the audience when opened. Downstage left and parallel to Moriarty's bed is Eddie's, another simple iron-bed. Between the two beds there is a small bedside cabinet. On the walls adjoining Billy's bed there are a series of machine-drawings with shelves for some books. Between the foot of his bed and the wardrobe there is a drawing-board, an angle-poise lamp, a stool and a cardboard-box full of scrolls. On the back wall above Moriarty's bed there is a gun-rack with 202's. On the wall over the head of his bed there is a framed picture of the Proclamation of Independence of the Irish State. Eddie's bed is downstage left. On the wall above the head of his bed are sexy pictures of Marilyn Monroe, Elvis Presley and James Dean.

**ACT ONE****Scene One**

(It is evening. Billy comes in. He takes a scroll of drawing-paper from the cardboard box. He then gets his drawing instruments and begins to draw. As he does so, he whistles a tune. It is the patriotic song of the '98 Rebellion, Boulavogue. Preoccupied he works away. Eddie comes in. He is in his vest. Around his neck is a miraculous medal and a scapula. He's in his bare feet. As he comes in it is obvious that he has been washing himself. Not a bath or a shower but just head and shoulders. His hair is wet, tussled, he's been drying it. As he comes in he gives his head another wipe with the towel and then goes to the wardrobe, opens it so he can look at himself in the mirror. He combs his hair, looks at himself; a search for blackheads and combs his hair again, looks at himself, closes the wardrobe door and goes towards his bed where he drapes his wet towel over the footboard.)

EDDIE

Did you see my nail-clipper?

BILLY

What would I be doing with your nail-clipper?

EDDIE

I didn't ask you what you'd be doing with my nail-clipper I simply asked you did you see it.

BILLY

No. I didn't see it.

EDDIE

Thanks for the information.

(He starts looking for it. Looks on the cabinet between his and Moriarty's bed, goes back to the wardrobe, opens it, goes back to the cabinet, looks again.)  
Hope that bleeder Moriarty hasn't been using it.

BILLY

What would he be doing with your nail-clipper?

EDDIE

What do you think? Clipping his nails.

BILLY

He uses his hunting knife.

EDDIE

Sure he does. Geronimo.

BILLY

He has his own nail-clipper.

EDDIE

I'm well aware he has his own nail-clipper. Darling Eva gave him a Christmas-box of one. A whole tool-box full of butcher-knives for manicuring his toe-nails.

BILLY

Well then what'd he want your nail-clipper for?

EDDIE

Because maybe he likes my nail-clipper. And maybe he doesn't want to wear his out.

BILLY

They'd take some wearing out.

EDDIE

Have you seen his toe-nails? Like elephant tusks. There it is. On the window-sill. What did I tell you? I knew Clarke Gable was using it.

BILLY

How do you know?

EDDIE

The perfect position. Good detective work. That's how. He stands here like this. One foot up on the window-sill, clipping an' contemplating.

BILLY

Contemplating?!

EDDIE

Yeah. He's an inventor isn't he? Clipping, combing and contemplating.

BILLY

You left out trimming.

EDDIE

Trimming what? His eyebrows?

BILLY

No. His moustache.

EDDIE

Pruning his moustache would be more like it.

(He goes back to his bed, sits up on it and begins clipping his toe-nails.)

What you doing?

BILLY

Drawing.

EDDIE

I know you're drawing. Do you ever do anything else? What are you drawing?

BILLY

Machine-parts.

EDDIE

Jesus. Are you constipated or something? What are you drawing?

BILLY

Ah. That'd be telling you.

EDDIE

So it would. Would you mind telling me?

BILLY

Something special for Mr. Moriarty.

EDDIE

Isn't he paying you?

BILLY

I don't know. Maybe.

EDDIE

Make sure he does. He's as slippery as an eel.

BILLY

He's not that bad.

EDDIE

What are you doing for the genius this time?

BILLY

Top secret.

EDDIE

Some new bit of nonsense.

BILLY

He's quite an inventor Jim Moriarty.

EDDIE

What's this he's going to patent this time? A new form of wheel?

BILLY

No. A new form of drill.

EDDIE

What does it do that drills don't do?

BILLY

Go through inches and inches of steel.

EDDIE

What's it made of?

BILLY

The bit?

EDDIE

What else?

BILLY

That's not what I'm working on.

EDDIE

What are you working on then?

BILLY

The motor. It's very complicated. It has to have very high revs and a very low resistance.

EDDIE

What's he want it for?

BILLY

What do you think? To make money.

EDDIE

By patenting it?

BILLY

Of course. He's bound to succeed. He's had a number of near misses.

EDDIE

And here's another.

BILLY

No. I think this one is going to work. Make him as rich and as famous as Eddison and Forde.

EDDIE

And then he'll be able to marry Eva.

BILLY

Of course. What else drives him?

EDDIE

Distraction? She's old enough to be me grandmother.

BILLY

She's not old. Thirty, thirty-five? A mature woman.

EDDIE

You can have her. I'll stick to Marilyn.

BILLY

Like glue.

EDDIE

Wish I was.

(Looks up at picture.)

I'd be stuck to her right now.

(After a moment.)

But that Moriarty. He intrigues me you know that? He's in that machine-shop from early morning to late at night. Ever since he's started the job.

BILLY

Mr. Moriarty's always works hard. Hardly ever home.

EDDIE

There must be something up. I've never seen him grafting as hard as he's been grafting these days. You can't get near that lathe with him. Everybody's complaining. Wouldn't mind it's not even company time. It's for himself. He told you that didn't he Billy?

(Eddie gets up and crosses room to look at Billy's drawing.)

BILLY

He didn't tell me more than I told you. He just asked me to do him a favour. Said there'd be something it in for me when he'd finished and patented it. Said he was going to make a fortune.

EDDIE

Let me have a look.

BILLY

Come on Eddie. You might as well be looking into a bush.



EDDIE

I'm a fitter-turner. As good as the next.

BILLY

You're not out of your time yet.

EDDIE

I will be. In a couple of months.

BILLY

The man's a genius. Everybody says so. Even the engineers. They are all jealous of him.

EDDIE

It's just practical stuff. He hasn't the qualifications.  
(He goes back to his bed.)

BILLY

Doesn't matter. That's what the university trained engineers are always saying. Yet he's the first they run to when there's a problem. There's nothing he can't solve.

EDDIE

What's he doing here then if he's such a genius? Living here with the two of us. Even if he has the best bed.

BILLY

It's handy. It's nearer his work.

EDDIE

Nearer his work my eye. And then that snobby bitch of a girlfriend of his. She's ashamed of her life to come near the place. Do you see the snooty nose of her every time she walks up the garden path? Her nose in the air and her arse wagging.

BILLY

She's got class. Breeding.

EDDIE

So have horses. She refuses to go into the kitchen with the rest of us. All the other lodgers bring their girlfriends in there for tea and cakes. No. She must have her apple-tart in the parlour.

BILLY

The landlady likes her.

EDDIE

I don't know why she does. She looks down her snoot at us.

BILLY

Maybe that's why. Oh come on Eddie it's your imagination. She just doesn't like small-talk.

EDDIE

And we love it. Do we? Who does she think she is? Dishing out dole in the labour-exchange.

BILLY

She's all right. Wouldn't mind her myself. And so would a half dozen others.

EDDIE

What!?! She'd cost you a fortune in razor-blades.

BILLY

Now now Eddie don't be jealous.

EDDIE

Me! Jealous!

BILLY

Mr. Moriarty is going to make a fortune when he patents this drill. Wait'll you see, a fortune. Then he'll be able to keep her supplied.

(Both boys break down with laughter.)

EDDIE

And I suppose he'll be changing his motor-bike for a motor-car.

BILLY

Of course. Wouldn't you? From push-bike to motor-bike to motor-car. Maybe he'll sell you his motor-bike.

EDDIE

That heap of junk. Triumph! Wouldn't be seen dead on it.

BILLY

Liar. If you had that 650 now you'd be spinning around the park picking up mots.

EDDIE

B.S.A Golden Star is a much better bike. When I get out of my time I'll get one.

BILLY

Start inventing like Mr. Moriarty. Patent something. Then you'll be able to get all the mots you want.

EDDIE

What mots!

BILLY

What mots! Mots. That's all you want.

EDDIE

Mots. That's all I want.

BILLY

Yes, that's all I want. You never stop looking at yourself in the mirror.

EDDIE

I wash twice a day is that all right?

BILLY

Ten times is more like it.

EDDIE

And you, you dirt-bird wash once a week. On a Saturday. You're as manky as Moriarty.

BILLY

Mr. Moriarty is not manky. He's always spotless.

EDDIE

Well look underneath his pillow then.

BILLY

What would I want to look underneath his pillow for?

EDDIE

To see how manky he is. Have a look. Go on. See for yourself.  
(Billy looks.)

BILLY

Machine-parts!

EDDIE

Yeah. Greasy machine-parts. Underneath his bleeding pillow that the slave downstairs'll have to wash.

BILLY

He mustn't have realised.

EDDIE

That fellow should either do one of two things. Bring his bed into the machine-shop or bring the machine-shop in here. What Mrs. Murphy's keeping him here for I don't know.

BILLY

She needs the money.

EDDIE

She could get a nice clean clerk from the drawing-office who'd pay the same board.

BILLY

She likes him. He's clever.

EDDIE

Is that enough?

BILLY

Maybe she got taken away.

EDDIE

He needs taken away. In a straight-jacket. He's more than just an odd-ball. He's a dirt-bird

BILLY

He's not Eddie. A little strange maybe.

EDDIE

Strange! Yeah, you can say that again. A strange sort of nut-case. A brute.

BILLY

What have you got against him?

EDDIE

Him? Nothing. Just that he's him. I told you before Billy. I'm suspicious. I don't know what he's doing here. What age is he? Forty? Fifty? Sixty? Hard to tell isn't it? Travelled the world. In and out of America and England. At sea. Do you know what? For years he was a ship's engineer. I'd say he's been married before. To a big black one I bet. What's he doing here? In this kip.

BILLY

This is not a kip Eddie. Mrs. Murphy is very good. She lets you keep Marilyn on the wall.

EDDIE

(Looks up at picture.)

So she does God bless her. Sorry, didn't mean the house is a kip. It's all right. But the area's a kip. Anybody with anything would move out of it. That's what I keep asking myself. What's he doing here? Honest to God Billy I don't trust that fellow. There's something up his sleeve.

BILLY

There's not. And you accuse me of too much imagination.

EDDIE

Yeah. Now. And it's working overtime. The absent minded engineer. He's hiding something. Look. Wait'll I show you.

(He lifts up Moriarty's mattress.)

Look at that. And that.

BILLY

More!

EDDIE

Yeah. More machine-parts. Hidden under the mattress.

BILLY

Let me see.

(He looks at them.)

Some I recognise. Some are parts for the motor. The others? Never saw anything like these before.

EDDIE

There's something fishy Billy. We should tell the law.

BILLY

The law. That wouldn't be right.

EDDIE

Why? Doesn't it make you suspicious?

BILLY

No. Hold on. Let's not jump to conclusions. He seems all right to me.

EDDIE

(Pointing to gun-rack.)

And what about those guns?

BILLY

What about them? They're just hunting-guns.

EDDIE

So they are. But what about these?

(He reaches underneath Moriarty's bed.)

This little box of goodies.

(Pulls out box, puts on bed, opens it.)

BILLY

Telescopic sights?!

EDDIE

Yeah. Telescopic sights. We don't know who this fella is Billy?

BILLY

But hunters use telescopic sights.

EDDIE

Are you kidding me?

BILLY

I'm not kidding you Eddie.

EDDIE

I don't like living with this fellah Billy. Not with all these guns about the place.

BILLY

They're licenced.

EDDIE

How do you know?

BILLY

He told me.

EDDIE

He tells you more than he tells me.

BILLY

Maybe.

EDDIE

You mean he doesn't trust me?

BILLY

Maybe.

EDDIE

What's this "maybe". Who do you think you are? A Russian spy?

BILLY

Oh come on Eddie. Don't be so serious. They're harmless. He's harmless. Here let's have some fun.

EDDIE

Some fun?

BILLY

Yeah. Let's have some target practice. Ever used telescopic-sights before?

EDDIE

No. Never.

BILLY

Didn't you use them in the F.C.A.?

EDDIE

No. Much better to train without them.

BILLY

(He screws on the 'scopes.)

There's a couple of jackdaws on the chimney-pots over there. You have first shot.

EDDIE

Mrs. Murphy'll go mad if she hears us.

BILLY

She's not in.

EDDIE

Where's she?

BILLY

At evening Devotions. Come on. You're first.

(Gives Eddie the gun.)

A quid if you knock him dead off the chimney-pot.

EDDIE

Okay.

(Eddie leans out the window. Gets ready to fire while Billy prepares the other gun.)



BILLY

(Eddie fires.)  
Did you get him?

EDDIE

Of course I got him. I wasn't in the F.C.A. for nothing

BILLY

Hold on there's another. Give me the gun. Double or quits on that quid.  
(Billy gets ready to fire. He fires.)

EDDIE

You didn't get him. Let me try. Here. Give me the gun.

(As he takes it Moriarty appears at the door. A swarthy, heavily set, middle-aged man; brutish, an Irish countryman. He stares at Eddie and walks slowly over to him. Eddie backs away lowering the gun. Moriarty throws a dead crow onto Eddie's bed.)  
Get that thing off my bed.

MORIARTY

Wouldn't you like it for your dinner?

EDDIE

Me good clean bed.

(He puts the gun down on the floor, goes to the bed, picks up the crow, turns and flings it out the window.)

BILLY

(Looks to the window.)  
Mrs. Murphy's washing!

MORIARTY

Where did the sights come from?

BILLY

Sorry Jim. Just having a shot at the crows. Didn't think you'd mind.

MORIARTY

(Slowly turns to Eddie who is making a vain attempt to clean his bed. Moriarty goes over and stands over him.)  
Rooting at my stuff are you?

EDDIE

I wasn't rooting.

MORIARTY

(He shouts angrily.)

You were. You never stop. Let me tell you if I catch you again I'll break your bloody neck.

BILLY

All right Jim. He didn't mean any harm.

MORIARTY

He's too nose-y for his own good.

(Moriarty takes up rifle, unscrews optics and puts them back in the box.)

Have you got those plans ready yet Bill?

BILL

I've only just started.

MORIARTY

I'll be needing them by Friday.

BILLY

Friday! But there won't be enough time.

MORIARTY

You'll have to make time.

BILLY

Oh now come on Jim. After all I'm just doing you a favour.

MORIARTY

I told you I'd treat it more than a favour. Finish the plans for me Bill and I'll look after you.

BILLY

I'll do my best.

MORIARTY

(Sits on the edge of his bed. A tired sigh.)  
Fair enough. A man can do no more.

(Eddie gets up off his bed, pulls on a shirt and jacket and gets ready to go out.)  
Where are you off to?

EDDIE

Is that any business of yours?

MORIARTY

It is when you come in at two in the morning drunk and spend the night vomiting out the window.

EDDIE

I didn't vomit out any window.

MORIARTY

Ask the dogs. They spent the morning lapping it up.

EDDIE

You're disgusting.

MORIARTY

You're old enough now to know your drink.

EDDIE

You'd think you're me bleeding father the way you carry on.

MORIARTY

Wish I was. I'd tan your arse for you.

EDDIE

Who do you think you are? This is a free country.

MORIARTY

Too free for the likes of you. Great pity they did away with the cat o'nine tails.

EDDIE

You're a tyrant do you know that? A dictator.

MORIARTY

That's what the likes of you need. A dictator.

EDDIE

Ah belt up.

(Opens wardrobe. Looks in glass while putting on his tie.)

MORIARTY

I suppose you'll be spending your evening on the street-corner.

EDDIE

Yeah daddy-man.

MORIARTY

Watching the girls and playing pocket-billiards.

EDDIE

I'm going to tell the landlady about you.

MORIARTY

(Standing up.)

About me! What are you going to tell her about?

BILLY

Now lads.

MORIARTY

Keep out of this Bill. What are you going to tell the landlady about?

EDDIE

What do you think? Your filthy sheets.

MORIARTY

My filthy sheets?

EDDIE

Yes. Your filthy sheets. You think the place is the machine-shop. Storing your stuff underneath the pillow.

MORIARTY

(Advancing on Eddie.)

So you've been rummaging under my pillow have you?

BILLY

(Goes between them.)

Lads. Eddie.

EDDIE

I'll tell her. Any more lip out of you and I'll tell her.

MORIARTY

Get out of here before I give you a whelp. You pimply faced wanker.

BILLY

Come on Eddie.

(He gently escorts him to the door.)

EDDIE

Do you think I'm going to listen to that? From that Roscommon.... That culchie.

BILLY

I'm also a culchie Eddie.

EDDIE

At least you've got breeding. Not him. Doesn't even wear pyjamas. Walking around the room at night in his tail-shirt. His ballox swinging like the gong of a grandfather-clock.

MORIARTY

Get out of here.

BILLY

Come on Eddie. Come on. See you later. See you later.

(He pushes Eddie gently out .)

EDDIE

(From outside the door.)  
I'll tell the landlady on you. You dirt-bird. You grease-monkey. Grease-monkey.

MORIARTY

Don't come back drunk or I'll stick your head in the slop-bucket.

BILLY

Now that's enough. Christ you pair. Do you ever stop? What the hell are you doing in the same room.

MORIARTY

It's up to him to leave.

BILLY

He says the same. Neither of you will budge. Mrs. Murphy has offered you both beds in different rooms.

MORIARTY

Well let him take the offer.

BILLY

One of you should. Every second week we're having a fracas like this. She'll throw us all out one of these days.

MORIARTY

Sssh. I've more on my mind than worrying about that fellah.

BILLY

I know you have. That's the trouble.

MORIARTY

How do you know I have?

BILLY

You're all tense. It's all this work. What's the hurry? What's so important about it?

MORIARTY

I told you I've a date-line. It must be finished by Friday.

BILLY

What's so important about this drill?

MORIARTY

Don't pry Billy. It's none of your business. It's a date-line. It must be finished by Friday. Do you hear Billy? Friday. If we're to work day and night. Everything. Everything must be ready by Friday.

(He goes and sits on his bed, slowly putting his feet up and stretching out while Billy goes back to his drawing-board. The lights slowly come down in the room. Moriarty's bed and corner pass into darkness. In turn the desk-lamp slowly fades.)

BLACK OUT

**ACT ONE****Scene Two**

(Evening. Eddie sits on his bed reading a letter. Billy works away at his drawing-board.)

EDDIE

Hey Leonardo. Listen to this.

(Billy laughs.)

This is a love letter. A love letter from the widow Eva to the widower Moriarty.

BILLY

He'll belt you if he catches you at that Eddie.

EDDIE

Dear James. She calls him James. Dear James, the last time I nestled my head on your hairy chest I swooned with desire.

BILLY

You're making it up.

EDDIE

I'm not. Look.

(He holds up the letter.)

Written on perfumed paper, rose-tinted. How can a young maiden like me possibly control myself whilst in the arms of a hairy gorilla like you, the overpowering odour, note she doesn't say smell, intoxicating my nostrils and sending love fumes up into my brain. Now she's not half hot is she his Eva. It's a real German name that. Eva Von Braun. Hitler's girlfriend. Wasn't that right Billy? Wasn't Hitler's mistress called Eva? Hey listen to this Billy. This is a letter from Moriarty to Eva. This time written on emery paper and smelling of diesel-oil. Dear Eva, the last time I had you in the coal-bunker my cinders were **burning** so hot I thought the seat of my pants was on fire.

BILLY

Shut up Eddie. If he comes in and catches you at that he'll give you a thick lip.



EDDIE

He will and I'll roast his coals for him. You know what they say. The bigger they come the harder they fall. You see, he has the advantage of weight and height but I've the advantage of speed. I didn't win the feather-weight title for nothing did I? Yes, as soon as he'd lunge at me waving his fists I'd side step and give him a knee in the cobbles sending him screaming, me nuts, me nuts, to the canvas. Hey, talking about nuts do you know there's a fellah in the army, Tommy McGrath is his name. Well if Moriarty thinks he's a stand-in for Clark Gable this fellah is a ringer for Humphry Bogart. Real lady-killer this fellah. You'd want to see him, cig dangling from his lower lip, hair brylcreamed back, wide lapels, the lot, just walks into a dance-hall and all the birds fall like a pack of cards. Well this fellah has a secret. Will I tell you?

BILLY

Sure. I'm dying to hear.

EDDIE

You see he has a theory about women and sex and this he told me is how he's so successful. You should try it Billy. Might get you away from the drawing-board more often.

BILLY

What's the secret? Don't keep me in suspense.

EDDIE

It's to do with sex and smell. Like a bitch going into heat and sending all the dogs yapping and barking after her. He says it's a question of getting your sexual smell quickly to a girl's nose, and if she clicks with the smell then you're on, if she doesn't she won't come within an ass's roar.

BILLY

Come on Eddie. What's it?

EDDIE

You see when he goes dancing he gets himself a big, long handkerchief, silken, usually yellow and before he goes out he rubs his bollox with it, up and down a few times, like a swimmer drying himself with a towel. Then he puts the handkerchief into his breast-pocket and goes dancing. As soon as the unsuspecting victim comes within whiffing distance, depending on the attraction, she's either won or lost. His secret is to get their noses buried into it as soon as possible.

BILLY

Have you tried it?

EDDIE

Not yet but I'm working on the idea. I was thinking you see of getting a hold of one of Moriarty's handkerchiefs. Now that'd be some whiff. Eva would come running, her knees knockin' together with excitement.

BILLY

Where did we get you from Eddie? Where did we get you from?

EDDIE

Would you like to hear another love letter?

BILLY

No Eddie. That's enough. I'm busy.

EDDIE

Still slaving away for him. That fella has you by the short and curlies.

BILLY

No he hasn't.

EDDIE

Did you finish his drill?

BILLY

Yes.

EDDIE

Up half the night. I bet he won't give you a tosser.

BILLY

That remains to be seen.

EDDIE

What are you up to now?

BILLY

Oh just doing a little of my own work.

EDDIE

You're too good for that place up there. You should leave and get yourself a better job.

BILLY

This is all right.

EDDIE

A machine-draftsman! You've got more talent than that. You should be a designer, an architect or something.

BILLY

Thanks for your encouragement Eddie. But it's all right for the minute.

EDDIE

Don't say that Billy. The trouble is you don't dream enough.

BILLY

Dream?

EDDIE

Yeah. Dream. Like me. Dream of becoming something great. Somebody important. Somebody distinguished.

BILLY

Is that what you dream of?

EDDIE

Yeah. I dream all the time of being great.

BILLY

But great at what?

EDDIE

Of owning my own engineering firm. Of driving up to work, through the gates, in a silver Jaguar or a Rolls. Swishing silently in and alighting from the motor-car, the chauffeur bowing as my stately presence carries itself into head-office and all the scum are licking my boots, bowing and scraping: Sir Edward this, Sir Edward that. Yeah and I'd love to have Moriarty working for me. He'd be my special dog's body. I'd just have one big dirty toilet that I'd make sure a couple of hundred tinkers and winos used it non-stop right round the clock and each evening I'd have the one and only get down on his hands and knees and wash it with a toothbrush.

BILLY

Why do you stay in the same room if you hate him so much?

EDDIE

Wrong Billy. I never said I hated him I despise him. Him and his Frau Hitler, tight arse.

BILLY

Now. Now Eddie. She never did anything on you.

EDDIE

She's insulted me by being with him. The dirty animal. Should go and buy himself a pair of pyjamas.

BILLY

You still didn't answer my question. Why don't you leave the room?

EDDIE

The only time I'll be leaving this room is after Moriarty, not in front of him. I don't know if you remember properly but it was me who moved into the room first.

BILLY

By a couple of days.

EDDIE

A couple of days is enough to give me the proper seniority and on that the Roomkeepers' Association will back me up.

BILLY

The Roomkeepers' Association!

EDDIE

Yes. The said association of indigent roomkeepers.

BILLY

I never heard of them. Where do they hold out?

EDDIE

You don't know your city do you even if you're an adopted son.

(He sits back for a minute, sees an open book on Moriarty's bed. Reaches over, grabs it, flicks through it.)

Did you read this book?

BILLY

Which one?

EDDIE

Moriarty's. A thriller.

BILLY

Oh the Raymond Chandler?

EDDIE

I don't know who wrote it. It's good isn't it?

(He flings it back on Moriarty's bed.)

That was a real slick way they got into the bank wasn't it?

BILLY

How?

EDDIE

Remember? They came in through the roof being careful not to set off the alarms.

BILLY

Oh yeah. They used an umbrella didn't they?

EDDIE

Ingenious. You must admit you can't help admiring thieves like that. If they'd 'ave gone the right way when they were kids they'd have made university professors or government ministers. Now who would have thought that up?

BILLY

Going through the floor?

EDDIE

Nah. Not just going through the floor. It had to be a real clean job. So they drilled a hole through the plaster-work and then put the umbrella down through the hole and opened it out.

BILLY

I don't understand.

EDDIE

Jesus. Where did we get you from? Like this. Don't you remember?

(He gets down on the floor.)

Where's Moriarty's umbrella? There it is. Like this. You just drill a hole. After you take up the floorboards, one or two, drill the hole neatly through the plaster, let through the umbrella, right here, open it out, then just cut a circle through the plaster within the diameter of the umbrella. All the plaster drops as silently as snowflakes into the open umbrella, then it's gently lowered to the flower. The thieves like angels from heaven, descend into paradise.

BILLY

(Laughing.)

What an imagination!

EDDIE

Hello. Hello. Hello. What's this?!

BILLY

What?

EDDIE

A rocky floorboard.

BILLY

What do you mean a rocky floorboard?

EDDIE

Underneath the mat. You'd think you were on the mail-boat. Just at the edge of Moriarty's bed. Never noticed that before.

(He pulls back the mat.)

Ah. Ah. Very neat. So this is where he keeps his treasure-chest.

BILLY

What are you talking about Eddie?

EDDIE

So this is where the old Shylock keeps his nest-egg. Saving up to get married is he? Well let's deprive him of his honey-moon. Eva will have to wait for her Fuhrer if old Eddie gets his hands on his nest.

(He pulls up a board.)

BILLY

(He stops drawing and looks curiously over at Eddie.)

What've you got there?

EDDIE

A couple of these boards are loose. The ones right under the bed. It's a hide-away.

BILLY

Now come on up Eddie. That's not right. The man's got a right to his privacy.

EDDIE

So this is where he stashes his love letters. The crafty old sod.

BILLY

What you're doing is not right Eddie.

(Eddie, his back to Billy, rummages away, takes up something and then turns slowly to Billy pointing at him a sawn-off shot-gun.)

EDDIE

Neither is this right Billy.

BILLY

Jesus Christ what've you got there?

EDDIE

What does it look like Billy? A sawn-off shot-gun. And underneath the floorboards.



BILLY

But Mr. Moriarty?

EDDIE

You can say that again. But Mr. Moriarty. I told you I didn't trust that bleeder. Here give me a match.

BILLY

What?

EDDIE

A match quick. Give me a match. What time is it? It's near ten. He'll be home any minute.

(He strikes a match and looks beneath the floor.)

Jesus Christ. Do you see what I see?

BILLY

No. How can I? You're in the way.

EDDIE

Have a look. A bleeding arsenal. The magazine-fort underneath the floorboards.

BILLY

(He looks.)

Detonators. Sticks of gelignite.

EDDIE

And this. A Smith & Weston. And about sixty rounds. Who are we living with Billy? Who the hell is Moriarty?

BILLY

I don't know.

EDDIE

Neither do I.

BILLY

He said he was from Mullingar.

EDDIE

Mullingar how are yeh?

BILLY

That's him. It's him. I hear his motor-bike.

EDDIE

Take it easy Billy. Take it easy. Let's get all this stuff back in. He won't know the difference. Here. Let me.

( He puts back the stuff.)

Give me that floorboard. And that.

BILLY

He's coming.

EDDIE

Quick. Quick. The mat now. Go to your drawing-board. Let on to be working.

(Billy goes back to his drawing-board, pretends to be working. Eddie finishes putting everything in order, puts the mat back, jumps on his bed, picks up book and pretends to read. Moriarty comes in carrying a heavy suitcase and a message-bag. He's in good humour as he's had a couple of drinks.)

MORIARTY

Fine evening gentlemen.

BILLY

(He keeps his head to drawing-board as if absorbed.)

Evening? Yes.

EDDIE

(He looks over his book at Moriarty.)

Yeah. Fine evening.

MORIARTY

(He eases the suitcase gently to the floor by the side of his bed and puts the message-bag alongside it.)

Yes. And a very fine evening it is too. An August evening with the full moon faintly visible in the reddening sky. Wouldn't you like to be out there strolling along the river bank with your loved one, walking arm in arm with the warm mist slowly forming on the river?

EDDIE

Get sodding wet.

MORIARTY

Get sodding wet. Where are your poetic powers young fellah?

EDDIE

Don't have any?

MORIARTY

(He takes a bottle of whiskey out of the message-bag.)  
Will you have a drink with me?

EDDIE

Me have a drink with you?

MORIARTY

Yes. Why not? It's not every day a man realises something important.

EDDIE

What's so important to realise?

MORIARTY

To realise that you are on the very edge of a great discovery and just pushing yourself a little further is going to bring you right through to the end.

EDDIE

I'm sure.

MORIARTY

But you'll have a drink with me won't you Billy?

BILLY

Well. I don't know. I've some work to do.

MORIARTY

Yes you will. You've worked hard enough. If it wasn't for you. Eternally I'll be in your debt.

BILLY

I just did a drawing.

MORIARTY

A very special drawing. With no questions asked. That was the important thing. Trust. Trusting one another.

(He turns to Eddie.)

That's something you'll have to learn about my friend. Trusting your friends. Trusting your wife, your loved one, above all your friends. Now let's have a drink. For to-day is a happy day, we are on the eve of an adventure, a new phase. Just like the passage of the moon, from its infancy to its fullness.

EDDIE

The blooming moon. What's that got to do with tomorrow?

MORIARTY

Everything. Everything. Now give me that cup there and I'll pour you a drop of whiskey.

EDDIE

It's all right.

MORIARTY

Come on. Pass me that cup there.

EDDIE

The landlady doesn't like us drinking in the rooms.  
(He eagerly passes his cup.)

MORIARTY

Never mind the landlady. Mrs. Murphy won't mind. She will understand. And you Billy, here, give me your cup there and let me see you wet your whistle.

BILLY

No thanks Jim. You know I seldom.

MORIARTY

I insist. You've done me a great favour. I repeat. Without you none of this would have been possible. The nation will owe you a great deal.

BILLY

The nation?

MORIARTY

Yes. The nation. Without the nation we are powerless souls on the face of the earth. Without the mother of us all we are nothing. It is to her we turn in danger and defeat. It is she who gives us nourishment as we struggle to prosperity and happiness. Even in death she takes us warmly down into her soil and snuggles us up. Gives us a place of eternal rest and solitude. Here, let me fill that mug Billy.

(He pours.)

And you too. You part-time soldier.

EDDIE

What do you mean part-time soldier.

MORIARTY

What do I mean part-time soldier? What I exactly mean. F.C.A.. Free Clothes Association. Growing men play with guns.

EDDIE

F.C.A. means Forsai Cosanta Aitsuil. Reserve army. First line of defence in case the country is threatened.

MORIARTY

Shower of wankers. You'd fall like tulips. All it needs is a puff from the North and you'd fold over. You join for the uniform. For the swagger. So you can pick up a couple of admiring girls at the street corner. Why don't you go and do something for your country? Something that'll make it great and looked up to. Why don't you go and join the real army?

EDDIE

What do you mean? I'm in the real army. It's part of the real army.

MORIARTY

Wankers. Young boys playing at being men. F.C.A.. Here's to you Billy.

(Raising his mug.)

You're one of the finest draftsmen in the country. And your country is going to be proud of you. Believe me boy you've made the history books without even knowing it.

BILLY

(Astounded.)

What?

MORIARTY

Your name will be seen and read gloriously by generations of Irishmen to come.

BILLY

My name?

MORIARTY

Yes. Your name.

BILLY

How? What have I done?

MORIARTY

Billy. You my boy have moved mountains. You've opened so many doors that generations will pass through grateful in the knowledge.

BILLY

How? I don't understand.

MORIARTY

You will. Soon enough. You won't regret the day you came into the orbit of Jim Moriarty. And all by chance. That you'll never regret my boy.

BILLY

I don't know what you're talking about.

EDDIE

Me neither.

MORIARTY

How inadvertently our simple humdrum lives can get caught up with the lives of others, more brilliant, more powerful beings and get hurled along with them. Either to destruction or glory. Just like a heavenly body, just like one of those stars out there hurtling on and on through space in infinite glory, forever and ever on and on 'till it's suddenly stopped in its tracks by one big bang. One big bang. Yes. One big bang can end it all. But it's this one big bang that's the most important of all. One comes into this world with a cry and a bawl. One should go out with a bang.

(He raises his powerful fists.)

A bang. A bang. Do you hear me? A bang.

(He looks at them bleary eyed.)

You think I'm mad don't you? Both of you. You can't figure me out. You wonder. You wonder as you've been wondering these past months. What is this Moriarty fellah living in such humble dwellings for? What's he doing slaving away? Day in. Day out. All the time with his head in machines. All the time knocking his head for plans, solutions. Never even taking the time to spend with his beloved Eva. How cruel I must seem to you. How negligent. How our only time together seems to be on the river bank, walking arm in arm. Oh what the hell. You're not interested. Here have another drink.

EDDIE

Go on. We're interested.

MORIARTY

You're interested. You. The mot-chaser. The toy-soldier. Go on and join a decent army. An army that'll make you feel you're a soldier. Make you feel that you are a true professional. Yes. A professional bearer of arms. Not someone endlessly, stupidly square bashing. Be a real soldier. Join a real army.

EDDIE

A real army.

MORIARTY

Yes. One that will fight. One that will die for the freedom and the soul of its nation.

EDDIE

What'll they fight with? Whiskey bottles?

MORIARTY

Funny. Ah.. Funny. But not so funny. Just a whiff before the storm Eddie. Just a whiff before the storm. It's coming boys. It's coming and it'll be overtaking us before we know where we are. Soon we'll be all embroiled, all of us, every single man, woman and child before long and it'll only take a stroke, a single simple stroke to ignite the powder keg and I, Moriarty, am the man who's going to do it. Armageddon my boys is upon us.

BLACK OUT



**ACT TWO****Scene One**

(The following morning. Billy is still in bed sleeping. Eddie is in his vest and underpants about to pull on his trousers. Moriarty stands over him fully dressed.)

EDDIE

Who do you think you are? The law around here?

MORIARTY

Yes. That's exactly what I am. The law around here.

EDDIE

You can't keep me here. Not against my will.

MORIARTY

Oh yes I can and I intend to.

EDDIE

(To Billy.)

Do you hear that Billy? Hey Billy. Wake up. Do you hear this tyrant? He's going to keep us in here against our wills.

BILLY

(Sleepily.)

What?

EDDIE

(He shakes Billy.)

Wake up Billy. Wake up. Did you hear what I said? This bleedin' Moriarty is going to keep us locked up in here for the weekend.

BILLY

What? The weekend. But I've to go home.

EDDIE

And I've to play a football-match. Our team is in the semi-finals.

MORIARTY

You'll be both out on Monday.

BILLY

Monday? But I've to go...

EDDIE

This is Saturday. I'm not waiting 'till Monday. My match is to-day. Hey who do you think you are anyway? Why should I be giving explanations to you about my whereabouts? I intend leaving here whether you like it or not. Now open that door.

MORIARTY

No.

BILLY

The door's locked.

EDDIE

Yeah. Do you see what he's done Billy? He's barred the door while we were sleeping. Yeah look.

BILLY

Barred the door?

EDDIE

Yeah. He's locked us in.

BILLY

Why?

EDDIE

Don't ask me why? He just said he's locking us in. Here let me out of here. As soon as I get these clothes on I'm leaving.

MORIARTY

(He raises his voice.)

No you're not.

(He grabs Eddie.)

EDDIE

Here. Let me go you bleeder.

MORIARTY

If you're going from here you'll be going naked.

EDDIE

Here you leave me trousers alone. Hey Billy. Billy. He's reefing the trousers off me. Billy. Help me.

BILLY

Mr. Moriarty.

EDDIE

Leave me alone you. Leave me alone. You bleeding pervert. He's pulling the trousers off me.

(The trousers are pulled off.)

Give me them back. They're me only pair. Give them me back.

MORIARTY

I'll settle you. This is what I think of your trousers you scut.

(He flings them out the window.)

EDDIE

My good trousers Billy. He's flung them out the window into the yard.

BILLY

Mr. Moriarty.

EDDIE

Where's the bleeding landlady?

(He shouts.)

Mrs. Murphy. Mrs. Murphy.

(He knocks on the door.)

Would you come up here? Mrs. Murphy. Mrs. Murphy. Would you come up? Moriarty's gone mad. He's locking us up. Mrs. Murphy. Mrs. Murphy.

MORIARTY

Scream away. Shout away. 'Till your lungs burst. She won't hear you.

EDDIE

She will. I know she's a bit deaf but she'll hear.

MORIARTY

She'll never. If you're heard in Co. Galway she might. Because that's where she is right now.

EDDIE

What? Mrs. Murphy?

BILLY

Mrs. Murphy? The landlady?

MORIARTY

Yes. She left the house early this morning.

EDDIE

(He bangs the doors frantically with his fists.)

And the other lodgers then? Tommy. Freddie. Tommy Meagher. Freddie Lawlor. Answer me. Answer me.

MORIARTY

You might as well shout to high heaven.

EDDIE

(He turns to Moriarty.)

You fucking animal. Let me out of here.

MORIARTY

(He runs at Moriarty to belt him but Moriarty quickly side-steps him, catches him in the arm hold, twists him around and shoves his face onto Eddie's bed.)

Now one more whimper out of you and you'll spend a very uncomfortable weekend. I'll shove one of my socks into your mouth and tie you up.

EDDIE

You're breaking me arm. You're breaking me arm.

BILLY

Jim please.

EDDIE

You're breaking ... Let me go. Let me go.

BILLY

Let him go Jim. Please. Please Jim. You'll hurt him.

MORIARTY

Now you're going to shut up and be quiet. Do you hear?

(He twists Eddie's arm.)

EDDIE

Oh oh.

MORIARTY

Do you hear?

EDDIE

Oh oh.

MORIARTY

Answer me. Do you hear me?

(He twists Eddie's arm again.)

EDDIE

Yes. I hear.

MORIARTY

Not a word out of you. Do you hear?

EDDIE

Yes. Yes. I hear.

(Moriarty eases his grip and lets Eddie go.)

BILLY

(He gets out of bed. He's in his pyjamas.)

What's going on here? I don't understand. What are you locking us up for?

MORIARTY

I'll explain in due course.

EDDIE

Explain what? There's no explanation.

MORIARTY

Shut up.

EDDIE

It's a free country.

MORIARTY

I said shut up.

BILLY

But Mr. Moriarty. You can't keep free citizens like us locked up against our will.

MORIARTY

Citizens. It's because you're citizens that you're going to be locked up. It's because you're citizens in this great country that you should be pleased to be locked up.

BILLY

I don't understand your logic Mr. Moriarty.

EDDIE

He doesn't have any logic. He's a dictator.

MORIARTY

A necessary dictator. An interim stage in government.

BILLY

Government? This isn't the government. What are you talking about?

MORIARTY

It is. This room is part of the country. This room is the beginnings of a new country. This room is the very kernel of the new state, and this here for the minute, for the time being is its capital and I am its governor, its commander-in-chief, its chief justice, its dictator, yes, its dictator. In me all of those powers are vested.

EDDIE

He's bonkers.

BILLY

Who says that? Who gives you that right?

MORIARTY

The powers of the New Ireland Government give me that right.

BILLY

What New Ireland Government?

MORIARTY

The New Ireland Government. Within these four walls. Within this house I am its sole representative.

EDDIE

Who elected you?

BILLY

Yes. Who elected you?

MORIARTY

My compatriots, my comrades elected me.

EDDIE

He's a bleeding Communist.

MORIARTY

I am not a Communist. In fact I hate and abhor Communists. If I had my way I'd have them all shot, without trial, anyone with the slightest taint of redness would be shot, executed, without trial.

EDDIE

Billy. Why are you talking to him? He's a lunatic. The man's a lunatic. Did you hear him last night talking about the moon? He's looney Billy. We're living with a looney. He's under the influence of the moon.



MORIARTY

I'll show you just how much of a lunatic I am.

(He flips back the mat.)

EDDIE

Jesus Billy. Stop him. Stop him. The guns. The guns.

(Eddie throws himself at Moriarty. Billy can't move as he's frozen with fear.)

MORIARTY

(He catches Eddie by the throat as if he were a dog and holds him down to the floor putting a knee on his chest.)

So you've been rooting again have you? This time I'll fix you. You prying cur.

(He pulls up boards and pulls out sawn-off shotgun.)

EDDIE

Please. Help. Help. He's going to shoot me. He's going to shoot me.

MORIARTY

Shut up. Shut up. You cur or I'll drive my boot through your face.

EDDIE

Oh mammy, daddy. Help me. Mammy, daddy. Help me.

MORIARTY

Shut up. You whimpering cur.

(Moriarty puts two shells into the breach.)

Get up there.

(He pulls him up with one hand and flings him onto the bed.)

One more squeak out of you and I'll plaster you against that wall for wall-paper. Do you hear?

(He shouts.)

Do you hear?

(He goes closer, he places the mouth of the gun beneath Eddie's chin.)

Do you hear? Answer me. Answer me.

EDDIE

I hear.

MORIARTY

Say it again.

EDDIE

I hear.

MORIARTY

Say you hear Mr. Moriarty.

EDDIE

I hear Mr. Moriarty.

MORIARTY

Say you hear Mr. Moriarty, President of the New Ireland.

EDDIE

I hear Mr. Moriarty, President of the New Ireland.

MORIARTY

Say that you are now subject to me and under my jurisdiction.

EDDIE

You are now subject to me...

MORIARTY

Don't say I am subject to you. Say, quote, you fool, quote, after me. I am subject.

EDDIE

What?

MORIARTY

After me. I am subject.

EDDIE

I am subject.

MORIARTY

To you.

EDDIE

To you.

MORIARTY

President Moriarty.

EDDIE

President Moriarty.

MORIARTY

Of the New Irish Republic.

EDDIE

Of the New Irish Republic.

MORIARTY

And I promise.

EDDIE

And I promise

MORIARTY

To be totally loyal

EDDIE

To be totally loyal

MORIARTY

To all your actions

EDDIE

To all your actions

MORIARTY

And decrees

EDDIE

And decrees

MORIARTY

From this day forth

EDDIE

From this day forth

MORIARTY

Any breach of these laws

EDDIE

I don't have to say anymore do I Mr. Moriarty?

MORIARTY

Mr. President Moriarty.

EDDIE

Mr. President Moriarty.

MORIARTY

Yes you do. After me. And any breach.

EDDIE

And any breach.

MORIARTY

Of these self-same laws

EDDIE

Of these self-same laws

MORIARTY

Will lead

EDDIE

Will lead

MORIARTY

To my immediate arrest and execution.

EDDIE

What!

MORIARTY

Say it.

EDDIE

I can't say it.

MORIARTY

Say it.

EDDIE

To my immediate, oh help me Billy.

(Billy steps forward towards Moriarty.)

MORIARTY

Keep out of this Billy.

(Billy stops where he is.)

Say it you cur or I'll squeeze this trigger: arrest and execution

EDDIE

Arrest and execution

MORIARTY

Good.

(He throws Eddie from him. Eddie breaks down.)

EDDIE

He's a maniac. A maniac. A maniac.

(Billy doesn't know what to say or to do. Moriarty puts shot-gun down and starts to open suit-case. He takes out small radio, hand grenades, about eight and other small fire-arms.)

BILLY

Mr. Moriarty I don't understand.

MORIARTY

You will shortly Billy. You will shortly.

BILLY

But can you give me an explanation? All these guns. And this proclamation.

MORIARTY

In time Billy.

BILLY

And why can't we go out? Why can't...? I promised my mother I'd go home to see her on Saturday afternoon.

MORIARTY

Your mother will have to wait. All mothers will have to wait while their sons are about their work.

BILLY

What work? I am finished my work.

MORIARTY

Yes Billy you are finished your work. You have well served the nation who is your mother, your real mother but now you must wait while others of us serve her too.

BILLY

What? I...

MORIARTY

Don't worry Billy. At most it'll take forty eight hours. Maybe even less. In forty eight hours all our fates will be sealed for good and ever.

BILLY

Jim.

MORIARTY

Mr. President.

BILLY

Sorry Mr. President. I don't understand. Why are we being kept in detention?

MORIARTY

I told you for the nation's business.

EDDIE

I want to get out of here.

MORIARTY

Tell him to shut up Billy. Next time and there'll be no second chance.

BILLY

But you've a right to tell me. I want to know why I'm being detained here.

MORIARTY

All right Billy. Inadvertently you have been part of a master-plan to force the British Government into leaving Ireland.

EDDIE

He's an I.R.A. man.

MORIARTY

I am not an I.R.A. man. I'm a member of the Irish National Free Army.

EDDIE

Another shower of thugs.

MORIARTY

Billy. My patience...

BILLY

What is the plan?



MORIARTY

It is very simple Billy. At twelve midday we will know if it has been successful or not. It is divided into three phases. Phase one: from midday to-day to midnight to-night. Phase two: from midnight to-night to midday tomorrow and phase three: from midday tomorrow to midnight Sunday night. First, before I proceed. Just in case any of you boys, including you Billy my collaborator up 'till now, should attempt to escape or scream your heads off for help. This belt of grenades. These I will now strap around my waist and if any of you should attempt anything I'll pull the pins and grapple with you. All of us will go together. Do you hear?

EDDIE

What did I tell you Billy? We should've turned him in before now. He's a lunatic. We've been living with a lunatic.

(Moriarty turns as if to belt him.)

BILLY

Please Jim.

MORIARTY

Mr. President.

BILLY

Please Mr. President. Don't. He's just excited.

MORIARTY

We'll control him Billy. I'll leave him to you to control. I must be about my nation's business and just in case the authorities, the so-called authorities that is, should discover and try to root us out, we, all three of us, we'll be going together, we've enough explosives under these boards to keep them occupied. But that's highly unlikely. Let me rig up this radio. Our plans are so ingenious that they probably don't know or will never know that I have been implicated. And well if they do and we succeed it'll be for the victory parade.

BILLY

Mr. President could you tell me more about the plan?

MORIARTY

You're interested? Yes. I will then. Why not? During the early hours of the morning a small band of highly intelligent and highly equipped patriots of the New Ireland Movement slipped quietly into Britain. Their object. To break into a nuclear arsenal, overpower the guards, prime the bomb or bombs and then threaten the British Government with either or.

BILLY

Either? Or?

MORIARTY

Either they dismantle their administration and withdraw immediately from Northern Ireland or we will explode one of their nuclear bombs. You know the consequence.

BILLY

What!

EDDIE

What did I tell you? A mass murderer. Another Hitler.

MORIARTY

That's how the Americans ended their war. Why waste more lives in a prolonged war that may wage on for generations? Let's have it over now. Yes, with one big bang.

BILLY

But they'll blow us to smithereens. They'll annihilate the whole country.

MORIARTY

For that tiny bit of ground up there. With its squawking Presbyterians.

BILLY

Yes, they would.

MORIARTY

And so what if they should.

EDDIE

Billy for God's sake why are you listening to that nut. His masterplan and his atom-bombs. He's off his tree can't you see. He needs to see a doctor.

MORIARTY

I told you before you pimply faced cornerboy. Billy, when we have our country back for ourselves, when we are free, the first thing we must do is clean out this vermin. Clean it all away. Purify ourselves. Successive generations of British soldiers brought into our country have created this class; this worm-bitten class of underdogs. We have to Billy, we must go back to the fields of Ireland to discover and renew ourselves with purer Gaelic stock. West of the Shannon. West of the Shannon is our only salvation.

EDDIE

Yeah. Back to the pig-sty and the cow-parlour.

MORIARTY

Where's that sock? I'll shut that gurrier up for good. If he thinks he's going to ruin my plan to save this nation we'll see.

(He goes for Eddie.)

EDDIE

Keep away from me. Keep away from me you brute.

BILLY

Mr. Moriarty please.

MORIARTY

President Moriarty. Give me one of those socks. I'll soon shut that bugger up.

BILLY

What socks?

MORIARTY

My socks.

(He looks under his bed and picks one up. He goes to get Eddie who backs up onto the bed.)

I'll shove this into his gob and that'll keep it closed for a while.

EDDIE

Not one of his smelly socks.

(Moriarty grabs him.)

No. No. Help me Billy. He'll poison me. He'll poison me. He hasn't washed his feet for weeks.

MORIARTY

Come down here you scut. Come down. Insult the President of the Nation would you? Where's that shot-gun

(Turns to look for it. Billy has made a feeble attempt to grab it. He fails.)

And you Billy? You. You'd attempt to would you? And I trusting you with the masterplan.

BILLY

What masterplan? It was just a simple drill.

MORIARTY

You fool. It was a high-speed drill capable of piercing the shell of the atom-bomb and allowing my men tinker with its workings. Only for you we would never have gotten through. Yes. Don't look at me like that. You're in this just as much as me. If there's a repeat of the Nuremberg trials you'll be at it. You'll shoulder as much responsibility as Himmler or Goebbels. It was your plans Billy. Your plans and my brains.

EDDIE

I told you Billy we should have told the police and had him locked up. He's deranged. It's the looney-bin he should be in.

MORIARTY

(He turns back to Eddie. Gets up on bed after him. Catches him by the throat and pulls him down on the bed.)

I'll shove this down your throat you traitorous hooligan.

EDDIE

Help. Help. Help.

(Moriarty has him down on his bed trying to push the sock into his mouth.)

Don't push that sock into my mouth. Don't. Don't.

(Moriarty manages to.)

MORIARTY

Where's that other sock?

(He gags him with the other, then ties Eddie's hands behind his back with another sock or scarf.)

BILLY

Mr. Moriarty. Please.

MORIARTY

(Still tying Eddie up.)

President Moriarty.

BILLY

President Moriarty. Can we just sit down quietly and talk this out?

MORIARTY

Talk what out?

BILLY

This. All this. About the bomb. About your plan. About the New Ireland.

MORIARTY

Yes. But first I have to...

(He finishes with tying Eddie. Eddie lies on his bed moaning.)

Wait a minute. I hear something. There. There's something coming in on the radio.

BILLY

The radio?

MORIARTY

Yes. The radio.

BILLY

But the radio's not on.

MORIARTY

I hear them.

BILLY

What?

MORIARTY

The voices. Their voices.

BILLY

Whose voices?

MORIARTY

The voices of my commanders. Listen. They've broken into the arsenal. They've overpowered the guards. They're priming the bomb.

BILLY

The atomic-bomb?

MORIARTY

Yes. The atomic-bomb. The atomic-bomb. We've got one. At last. At last. At last. We've got one. We've got one. We've got the atomic-bomb.

BLACK OUT

**ACT TWO****Scene Two**

(An half an hour before midnight Sunday.)

EDDIE

I said I'm dying to go.

MORIARTY

You can use the bucket.

EDDIE

I won't. What do you think I am? An animal? I'm not going to use that filthy bucket.

MORIARTY

The rest of us have.

EDDIE

I haven't gone in days. Please President Moriarty will you let me out to the lavatory.

MORIARTY

I said no. You're a security risk.

EDDIE

If I don't I'll burst.

BILLY

Jim. Please.

MORIARTY

No Billy. I said no. Not at this critical juncture. He can use the bucket.

BILLY

But he doesn't want to pee.

MORIARTY

I know he doesn't want to pee. He'll have to hold on to it. The nation's security depends on it. Our destinies depend on it.

EDDIE

Please Mr. Moriarty. Please I'm bursting.

MORIARTY

Well cock your arse out the window.

EDDIE

Oh no do you hear him Billy? What did I tell you? He's got no shame. He's a brute. He's no heart. He'll watch my insides explode without batting an eyelid.

BILLY

How long more do we have to wait?

MORIARTY

A half hour at the most. He can hold onto it. I've gone days in solitary myself without letting go.

BILLY

Solitary?

MORIARTY

Yes. Solitary. Solitary. When the very rats would be waiting ravenously for what you drop.  
(Sickening reaction from Billy.)

Yes. Ah. Get sick. Such have men, patriots, suffered for their country. Do you hear me? You with your liverish bellies. Yes. We have. True patriots. Crawled through the shit and the mire in order to free you from bondage, yes, we've crawled through the bowels of humanity in order to give you light in the sun. And now he's ashamed to shit in a bucket because we're looking. What a worm. Get out or I'll kick your arse for you.



BILLY

You've been to gaol?

MORIARTY

Of course I've been in gaol. All in all nearly ten years. And all for the cause.

BILLY

Did you not mind?

MORIARTY

Of course I didn't mind. That's what motivation is about isn't it? Suffering. Suffering. Suffering for an aim, a cause, a worthwhile sacrifice that humanity in the end will benefit from.

BILLY

Do you think humanity in the end will benefit from this?

MORIARTY

Of course they will.

BILLY

But if the bomb goes off there'll be nothing of us left.

MORIARTY

Of course there'll be nothing of us left. The universe is vast, is varied. An atomic explosion. Pah.

EDDIE

Oh I'm dying to have a shit. Me belly is cramping.

MORIARTY

What about it? There have been many explosions on this earth that have rocked the planet to its core and it won't be the last.

BILLY

But we'll disappear.

MORIARTY

No you won't disappear. Other creatures. Other beings will take our place. Life has great adaptive powers don't you know that? Look at the dinosaurs. They reigned supreme for four million years.

EDDIE

You look like one.

BILLY

But civilization...?

EDDIE

Civilization. I'm dying to have a shit.

BILLY

But it'll disappear. All our cities, our institutions will go.

MORIARTY

Our cities? Our institutions? What about them? How long did it take? How long did it take tell me for us to get this far.

BILLY

What do you mean?

MORIARTY

How long did it take for us to arrive where we've arrived in terms of civilization? Eight, ten thousand years? Yes? Well that's what it is. About that. And what's that time in relation to the life of the world? Millions. Millions. Billions of years.

BILLY

But it'll take that long again.

MORIARTY

But time is infinite isn't it? We've got plenty of it. Haven't we?

(Billy nods his head in submissive agreement.)

So what are you worried about? Do you think one radio-active explosion is going to stop the universe in its tracks? Of course it won't. There's life elsewhere. There must be. Something or other will replace us.

BILLY

But if you think that way why do you want to bomb the British?

MORIARTY

Why? Because we're on opposite sides that's why.

BILLY

Is that all?

MORIARTY

Yes. That's all. And up 'till now they've been winning. For the past eight hundred years they've been winning. It's about time that we reasserted ourselves and won.

BILLY

So it's just for the sake of winning.

MORIARTY

Of course it's for the sake of winning. Why else does one live but to win? Those who lose wither away. The strong are strong because they win and in order to keep strong must keep on winning.

BILLY

But what about the losers?

MORIARTY

The losers lose, die out. That's all.

BILLY

But do you think everything is as simple as that?

MORIARTY

Of course it's as simple as that. Only fools think things are complicated. They're complicated because they can't understand or don't have the abilities to go right to the heart of the matter. That's why they are always like worker bees swarming around inside a hive, courting entry to the queen's palace but never ever getting in.

BILLY

But Mr. Moriarty.

MORIARTY

President Moriarty.

EDDIE

Billy. I'm dying.

BILLY

All right Eddie. It won't be long now.

MORIARTY

Do you want to know something else? Do you want me to tell you what I think? About life, seeing that we're on it. It's simple. It's like a billiard-game or a snooker match with the balls set incessantly in motion by an unseen hand. The motions and collisions of the balls will be forever infinite and from their infinite combinations infinite varieties are possible. Out of these collisions rise life. If this ends another one begins. It is conceit Billy to think that we as a civilization are important. We are no more no less important than another. All that matters is he who plays the game wins. Now look at us for instance. For years we have played and lost. To who? To our neighbours. Now it's about time we played and won.

BILLY

But will we?

MORIARTY

Of course we will. But there is one thing certain there is no chance of us winning if we don't play and play to win.

EDDIE

Play to win. I missed the semi-finals yesterday. That's what. And it's all because of you and your atomic-war you nut-case.

MORIARTY

Do you see that heap of shit Billy? Now tell me honestly. Is it worth keeping alive? Is it? Is it? Billy answer me. Billy.

BILLY

I can't answer you.

MORIARTY

You can.

BILLY

I can't. How can I?

MORIARTY

You can all right Billy. But you won't because you won't face what's obvious. That heap of shit is not worth keeping alive. It's inferior. It has no pedigree. It is nothing. And life would be far better off without it. Eliminate it Billy. Eliminate it. It's the only solution. Blow the shit out the window.

EDDIE

Do you hear him? The madman. Blow the shit out the window. I wish you would. And I wish it'd blow in your face. You little Hitler.

MORIARTY

Do you see the kind of mind he has Billy? Loaded with vulgarity and filth. How could we possibly let that father children. How could we? It's pollution. He's human pollution. Either eliminate it or castrate it. Ssssh. I hear something. There is something coming in. I hear it. Quick everybody.

(Eddie makes a supplicatory sign to Billy indicating that Moriarty is mad and they should do something about it. Overpower him. Billy gives him a sign to be calm, to be cool with Moriarty.)

BILLY

What do you hear?

MORIARTY

Ssssh. Ssssh. Yes. Very good. Very good. Do they agree then? Yes? Yes? Yes or no. Tell me. They do then. But they want another ten minutes. Give it to them.

BILLY

What was that?

MORIARTY

My commanders. Eva is doing a great job. What a woman! The very soul of the nation's greatness. Our next Prime Minister.

BILLY

Eva. What's she...?

MORIARTY

She's carrying out the negotiations.

BILLY

She. She's over there is she?

MORIARTY

Yes. She led the attack on the atomic arsenal.

BILLY

And she's inside.

MORIARTY

Yes. She's inside. In the very nerve centre. Well it's time.

EDDIE

Time? To go ... to go to the lav?

BILLY

Time? Time for what? Where are we going?

MORIARTY

Nowhere. I'm just getting ready for zero hour.

BILLY

Zero hour?

MORIARTY

Yes. As Commander-in-Chief it'll be up to me to make the final decision.

BILLY

What final decision?

MORIARTY

To press the button or not.

BILLY

Press the button?

EDDIE

Press the button?

MORIARTY

Yes. But first as Commander-in-Chief I must be appropriately dressed.

EDDIE

What's he going to do now Lord helps us?

MORIARTY

(He searches his suitcase.)

These occasions demand decorum. Now. Where is my uniform? Here it is. The uniform of the Commander-in-Chief of the New Ireland.

BILLY

Are you going to put it on?

MORIARTY

Of course I'm going to put it on. I'd hardly go into battle dressed in my underdrawers like that scallywag would I?

(Moriarty puts on his uniform, that of a general in the cavalry; riding-boots, cavalry riding britches, Sam Browne belt, decorations.)

EDDIE

Billy is there any chance of convincing him of letting me go to the lav. Honestly it's coming up into my mouth. Tell him please will you that I can't do it in the bucket.

BILLY

Be quiet Eddie.

EDDIE

Be quiet! I'm bursting. I'm going to blow apart.

BILLY

Hold on. We'll see what happens at twelve.



EDDIE

That's what I'm worrying about. We mightn't be here after twelve. Holy Jesus where is Mrs. Murphy?

MORIARTY

She's in Galway I told you.

EDDIE

Holy Jesus Mrs. Murphy pray God that you'll come home from Galway and save us.

MORIARTY

It's no good praying. Your destiny is in the hands of Moriarty.

EDDIE

Who are you telling? Jesus Billy please. He's going to kill us. Do you realise that? We're not going to be any longer on this earth.

BILLY

Of course we are Eddie. Keep calm will you? Everything will be all right. Nothing is going to happen.

EDDIE

I don't believe that. There is. It's going to happen. Even by accident. He's mad don't you see that?

BILLY

Be quiet Eddie. Please. Nothing will happen. I assure you. You're riling him. Don't you see? Just keep calm and he won't hurt us. He's been away for the past two days. He's bound to fall asleep.

EDDIE

He won't. He's taken those tablets.

BILLY

Yes. He will. Wait'll you see he'll fall asleep and this night-mare will be soon over.

EDDIE

Oh I wish I could believe you Billy. Those hand grenades. Those hand grenades. He's tying them around his waist. He only has to pull the pins.

MORIARTY

What are you two muttering about? Saying your prayers are you? Well that's a fine uniform. Fit for a Commander-in-Chief. Don't you think? Well what do you think boys? Do you like it? A fit way for a soldier to go. In uniform with all his medals blazing.

EDDIE

Billy. Billy.

BILLY

Sssh. Sssh.

EDDIE

Would you please ask him could I at least see a priest?

MORIARTY

A priest? Did I hear you say a priest? A priest? Is it a priest you want to see? Well, speak up boy. What kind of a priest do you want to see? A Catholic priest or a Protestant priest?

EDDIE

A Catholic priest.

MORIARTY

(Now ensconced stately at the foot of his bed.)  
Why do you want a Catholic priest?

EDDIE

I want him to hear my confession.

MORIARTY

Your confession? What have you got to confess?

EDDIE

My sins.

MORIARTY

What kind of sins? Oh I know your sins. I know all your sins. Impunctuality, envy, jealousy, lechery, lust and masturbation. You're absolved.

(He makes the sign of the cross.)

EDDIE

Billy he's getting worse not better. He now thinks he's the pope. In a few minutes he'll be God and that will be the end of us.

BILLY

Eddie please.

MORIARTY

Sssh. There are more communications. Sssh. They say that they are quiet capable of sacrificing three millions of their own on principle. Do you hear that boys? Three million human souls for a principle! Now what did I tell you Billy? Some people hold their principles dearly. Hold on. Hold on. There's something else. For the sake of freedom. Do you hear that? What a funny word? Freedom.

BILLY

But we've only got four million here on the island. What'll they do with us?

MORIARTY

Good question Billy. Good question. But we've anticipated that one. The important question is which, which three million? And that is how our strategy is working wonders. The bomb Billy is in London. Its centre. Right in the City. And the other is in the stock-broker belt. Not in working class Birmingham or Wolverhampton but right where it'll hurt the most.

EDDIE

Billy please. Ask him. Ask him. Tell him I don't want to die. Those hand grenades. Look at the way he's fingering them. If he pulls one of those pins there'll be nothing of us left.

BILLY

You'll excite him.

EDDIE

Billy. Do you know what?

BILLY

What?

EDDIE

I want to tell you something.

BILLY

What?

EDDIE

I've a confession to make. Do you mind if I confess something to you?

BILLY

No Eddie. Go ahead. If it'll make you feel good.

EDDIE

Despite all my old talk and all that.

BILLY

What?

EDDIE

I've never made love to a woman.

BILLY

But Eddie neither have I.

EDDIE

You haven't? I thought I was the only one.

BILLY

Why's that?

EDDIE

Well you know. Nowadays.

BILLY

But that's nothing to be ashamed of.

EDDIE

I'm not ashamed of it Billy. I regret it. Billy in less than five minutes I'm going to leave this planet and I'll have never made love to a single woman.

BILLY

Eddie.

EDDIE

It's true. I'll have come here and gone from here without having made love to a woman or fathered a child.

BILLY

Don't be thinking like that. You will. When you get out of here you will.

EDDIE

I won't Billy. I won't. And neither will you.

BILLY

We will.

EDDIE

We won't. Don't you see? Don't you see he's mad? Look at him. Look at him. Listening to voices. Watching the heavens. Scanning outer space. He's suffering from a brain-storm. He said it. Didn't he? Waiting for Armageddon.

BILLY

Sssh Eddie. Nothing will happen.

EDDIE

It will. It will. I'm telling you.

MORIARTY

So that's it eh. So that's it. They've given us their ultimatum and we've given them theirs. Set your watches boys.

EDDIE

I don't have a watch.

BILLY

Neither do I.

MORIARTY

Well I'll set mine. At five minutes to midnight. Zero hour. When the clock strikes twelve it will be zero hour. Ready. Get ready. Billy. Eddie. It is now five minutes to midnight. The bomb is primed and ready. Fingers are on the button.

(He puts his fingers into the grenade rings.)

Eva. My beloved Eva's finger is on the button. And gloriously we will die together if we have to. For the motherland. For our country. For our nation. For civilization. For mankind. It's them or us. Minute by minute it'll be up to them to either push those hands forward or pull them back.

(He sits regally, ready to pull the pins. Eddie and Billy sit together, Eddie throws his arms around Billy. Billy embraces him, comforting him.)

EDDIE

Oh Billy. Oh Billy. I don't want to die. I don't want to die.

BILLY

Neither do I Eddie. Neither do I.

(Moriarty is about to pull the pins when there is a thunderous farting-noise and Eddie collapses to the floor.)

EDDIE

Billy. Billy. Help. Help. Help me. I'm blowing apart. My insides are splitting.

(He clutches his stomach.)

BILLY

Oh Eddie. Oh Eddie. Don't. Don't. Hold on. For God's sake hold on.

EDDIE

I can't. I'm flying apart.

(Moriarty looks on in consternation.)

My insides. My insides.

(He's rolling around the floor in agony.)

MORIARTY

(Getting up from his chair.)

You little fucker. You little fucker. Spoil the master plan would you? And at the eleventh hour. I'll kick your arse for you. You little scallywag.

(He goes to do so.)

BILLY

Stop. Stop. He's dying.

(He proceeds to kick Eddie.)

EDDIE

(Rolled over and curled up like a dog.)

Help me Billy. Help me. He's kicking the shit out of me.

MORIARTY

(As he kicks him Billy tries to restrain him.)

You shite. You shite. You dirty little Dublin shite. Ruin the master plan would you. And all my years of preparation. You'll have no insides left again I'm finished with you. You dirty little Dublin shite.

(There is a rapping at the door and we hear the voice of Mrs. Murphy.)

MRS. MURPHY

What's going on in there? What's going on in my house?

(She pulls at the door.)

Open that door. Open that door. What's a locked door doing in my house? I can't go down the country for a couple of days without hell breaking loose.

(The three lodgers look to the door and then to each other.)

BILLY

It's Mrs. Murphy.

MORIARTY

Mrs. Murphy?

EDDIE

Now you're for it. You clod-hopping culchie bollox.

(Moriarty gives him a kick. Eddie groans.)

Mrs. Murphy. Mrs. Murphy.

MORIARTY

Shut up. We'll all get our walking-papers.

BILLY

Go to the door. Tell her something.

MORIARTY

What'll I tell her?



EDDIE

Tell her she's got a lunatic under her roof.

MORIARTY

(Looking at Eddie, making a fist.)  
I'll kill the little bastard.

MRS. MURPHY

What's that commotion? What's going on in there?

MORIARTY

Oh. Nothing at all Mrs. Murphy. Just Eddie. He's been eating too many crab-apples. Tummy cramps. He's got tummy cramps. That's why he's been groaning.

BILLY

That's right Mrs. Murphy. That's right. He's been eating too many crab-apples. He's got a bad tummy ache.

MRS. MURPHY

He'd eat from a slop-bucket the same fellah. Does he need any medicine?

BILLY

No. Not now. Not now. Mr. Moriarty gave him some Milk of Magnesia. He's getting better. He'll be all right. I'm sorry about the commotion but it was him rolling about the floor in pain. He's getting better now. Isn't he Mr. Moriarty?

MORIARTY

Yes. Yes Mrs. Murphy. He's getting better by the minute. I'm sorry about the door Mrs. Murphy. The lock is stuck. I'll have it fixed for you in no time. I'll just have to unscrew it.

MRS. MURPHY

I hope that's all that's going on in there. Big men like you. Be quiet now. Any more ructions and you'll be out on the street. Bags and all. This is a respectable boarding house I'll have you all know.

MORIARTY

(Listening at the door.)

She's gone. Never thought she'd come back from Galway like that. Nothing is going right. Blasted earphones. Blasted radio. Well I've done my best. It's up to them now. If they're caught they're caught. And that's it. They'll have to suffer the consequences.

(He turns around, not knowing what to do with himself.)

As for you you little fucker.

EDDIE

Don't you start again. Ruined my Sunday. You bleeding madman. You'd better get you and your gear out of here. Else I'll be going to see somebody.

MORIARTY

You won't be seeing anybody. You know what we fellows do with traitors? It won't be wind you'll be breaking. Somebody will be breaking your skull. Down a laneway. Late at night. When you're wobbling home from the pub.

BILLY

Shut up. Both of you. Shut up. She'll kick us out.

EDDIE

He should get himself to see a doctor. Him and his girlfriend. Go and see the Jewish doctor down the road. Get his head sorted out.

BILLY

(Restraining Moriarty who's about to make a lunge at Eddie.)

That's enough Eddie.

MORIARTY

One more squeal out of him.

EDDIE

One more squeal out of me. You'd think I was a pig. He's no respect for anybody. Not even for himself.

BILLY

Okay boys. Jim. Eddie. Let's clean this place up before Mrs. Murphy comes back to do an inspection. You know what she's like. Mother Ireland. She brooks no nonsense.

(The lights come down as the music of Boulavogue comes up.)

END OF PLAY