THE CRAZY CIRCLE

This is a neglected play about the Irish Troubles by Una Birch, also known as Una Birch Pope Hennessy. She was a writer, especially of historical biographies. Her dates are 1876-1949. She espoused various radical causes and during the First World War attended the International Womens' Peace Congress at the Hague in 1915. The daughter of an English colonial governor, she later converted to Catholicism. In 1910 she married Major-General Richard Ladislas Pope Hennessy from the Cork Catholic family of that name. He was a first world war strategist and near the end of it was sent as a part of the team to govern Mesopotamia when it was conquered from the Turks. They were both in the group that campaigned to have Roger Casement's death sentence commuted. More or less the same people were then in the Irish Dominion League which Pope Hennessy led; he being the first person to propose publicly the idea of dominion status for Ireland in 1919. They left Cork for London before the Treaty. Una was made a dame in 1920 for her Red Cross work on behalf of war prisoners.

It is not clear whether this play was ever staged - perhaps it was an amateur drawing-room production amongst friends. It covers the main issues of the Troubles pretty well and has a dramatic ending. The gentry family in it are called the Sandersons. Edward Saunderson, another intellectual type, had been leader of the Irish Unionists before Carson but the radicalisation path that the family in the story follow is more like the Pope Hennessys' own. The Crazy Circle title has certain Yeatsian connotations.

The play is contained in Box 155 folder 2 of the Pope Hennessy papers in The Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles. It was photographed by John Borgonovo in 2009 and has now been typed up in a similar format to the original by Lydia Morgan.

I confirm that this document is 'transcribed from original held by the Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (990023) www.getty.edu/research/tools'.

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Dame Una Constance Pope Hennessy Courtesy of Cecil Beaton Archive, Sothebys

THE CRAZY CIRCLE.

THE CRAZY CIRCLE

A Play in Four Parts,

Time. 1918-1921

Scene. The living room of an Irish country house.

C H A R A C T E R S.

EDWARD SANDERSON — A small landowners, living in Ireland. Formerly a hunting man and now, owing to Sciatica, obliged to follow more sedentary occupations. He has always got on well with the tradespeople and peasants because of his bonhomie. He has never taken any interest in the Irish Question, but has always regarded it as something to joke about and looked on Gaelic Leaguers etc., as 'mad.' A great believer in the Empire and in the superiority of the English race everywhere. His age is about 55.

ETHEL SANDERSON — His wife. The daughter of a solicitor in Monaghan – of ultra Unionist, not to say Orange views. She dislikes the South of Ireland and thinks the people have no moral partly because they belong to an inferior race. She has done her duty in the station of life to which she has been called, but has become somewhat frost-bitten in the process. She is about 45 and wears invisible pince-nez.

ROSIE — Their only child, a girl of 19, very full of life and brought up on the place, and therefore in sympathy with local life and the aspirations of Young Ireland.

SHANE BARRY — A schoolmaster full of Pearse ideals and nursing the historic grievance against England. A believer in an Ireland that shall set an example to the world in civilisation and good administration. His age is about 48. He is tall and thin with a little beard.

TERENCE BARRY	His son, brought up in the Irish atmosphere but educated in England. He enlisted in August 1914 in a wave of enthusiasm – has done very well in the war, and has just been promoted on the field. His Irish views are overlaid by the activities of the war and he is temporarily out of sympathy with his father, though very devotes to him.
MURPHY	An old and confidential butler.
THREE MEN	Nameless and disguised
A TELEGRAPH BOY	……
AN OFFICER OF THE AUXILIARY CADETS	……

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THE CRAZY CIRCE

Part 1. April 1918.

SCENE 1. The Breakfast room of a country house in Waterford. A sunny room with French windows at back; fireplace left and door near the right corner. Furniture: chairs and sofa in leather, a piano. Mr. Sanderson is sitting at the breakfast table and has the newspaper propped up in front of him. He is discovered eating and reading.

ROSIE (A girl of 19 comes in.) Morning Dad! (Pecks him on the forehead.)

MR. SANDERSON Morning my dead. Glass has dropped a bit. (Goes on reading.)

ROSEIE Oh, has it? (Gets herself food from sideboard.) Wonder if it'll rain.

MR SANDERSON (Suddenly.) By Jove, Rosie! Barry's boy has done well. And M.C and promotion on the field! I'm glad I noticed it before he comes up this morning.

ROSIE (In a rather bored voice.) Who is coming up this morning?

MR. SANDERSON (Not looking up.) Why Barry of course.

ROSIE What for?

MR. SANDERSON Oh, I don't know quite, but something to do with the future of some of his boys at the school.

ROSIE Oh, (Sits down to breakfast) is that all?

Mrs. Sanderson enters through the window with basket, scissors, leather gloves; she is dressed in tweedy, severe clothes and wears invisible pince-nez

MRS SANDERSON — Morning Rosie- Get me up a hot plate!
(Rosie gets one from the fireplace.)
Thanks – (Goes to the sideboard.) Dear me! Six eggs for four people, too absurd! and mounds of bacon – no one would ever think there was a war on. (She goes sniffly to her seat at the table.) Is it this morning that Mr. Barry is coming up to breakfast, Edward? (Mr Sanderson looks up from his paper and nods) …. For goodness sake keep him off politics.

MR SANDERSON — He knows better than to talk politics to me, besides he's coming up on the business… Oh, by the way Ethel, his boy has just won an M.C and promotion and all that. Don't forget to congratulate him.

MRS SANDERSON — Very well, Edward, I won't forget. I always thought he was a good sort of boy in spite of his bringing up.

ROSIE — (Quickly) What was the matter with his bringing up, Mother?

MRS SANDERSON — Oh Rosie, I don't want to be drawn into an argument with you at this time in the morning. You know perfectly well that Terence was brought up with very unsuitable views about England, and even when he was quite a little boy was taught to sing all those wicked songs which do so much harm, about 'England's cruel red' and 'the French in the bay' and '98' and so on. Of course it was a great pity he was brought up to be disloyal, but as I say I don't want to argue with you.

ROSIE — (Good humouredly) Don't you take all these things rather 'at the foot of the letter' as they say in France? Those old songs are great fun to sing (hums 'The Wearing of the Green') and what are they after all? Just historic ballads, and who takes historic ballads seriously nowadays? Why Terence is proof enough of it. He is wearing khaki which is another form of 'England's cruel red.'

MRS SANDERSON — We won't argue any more, Rosie, I always think it is a pity when families begin to argue among themselves. Mr. Barry may be here at any moment… I hope he will be punctual, we have

out district egg meetings to-day and I have to present the quarterly accounts… Most satisfactory…

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a turnover of £720…. If eggs will only keep at 40 a hundred we shun't do too badly.

MR. SANDERSON — 40 a hundred in Waterford! no wonder the egg wives are all buying pianos and pony carts!

(The door right opens and an old and shabbily dressed butler announces)

BUTLER — Misther Barry.

(Enter a thin, pale-faced man with sandy hair, pointed beard, spectacles. He is in dark grey, almost black, clothes with a soft wideawake in his hands.

MR. SANDERSON — (With a jovial half patronising manner) Oh, there you are, Barry, good morning. (shakes hands.) Glad to see your son has done so well. (pats him on the shoulder.)

MRS. SANDERSON — (Rising) My congratulations, Mr. Barry (shakes hands.)

ROSIE — (Very casually.) Good morning, Mr. Barry. (Waves a hand.)

MR BARRY — (Rather stiffly.) Thank you, Mr. Sanderson – thank you, Mrs. Sanderson. I'm sure your congratulations are well meant….. The boy was never a white-livered boy. He's a true Irishman, thank God!

MR. SANDERSON — (Jovially) Oh Barry, don't you come any of that old-fashioned stuff over me. In this war we are all just Britishers, we are all out to crush the Huns, and there's no difference between Scotsmen and Irishmen and anybody else…… In this war it doesn't matter a row of pins where we were born… Come and have some breakfast.

MR. BARRY — I have had my breakfast, Mr. Sanderson, but if you have no objection I will sit at the table and discuss which you the future of some of our big lads in the town…. That is if the ladies do not object?

MRS. SANDERSON — Do go on, but it seems a pity to waste the eggs and bacon. Are you quite sure you won't have any? They were specially ordered for you.

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MR. BARRY — (Indicating refusal…. And then to Mr. Sanderson.) Well, I am not too happy about them. You see most of our men from Carrow went to the war, and the few that have come back are no good for anything, and boys of 17 and 18 are getting grown men's wages and no one to keep them in order. Their fathers are away in France of Salonika, and they run wild when they are not working….

MRS. SANDERSON — (Interrupting) Mr. Barry, they should enlist.

MR. BARRY — I don't think there will be any more enlistments in Ireland, Mrs. Sanderson, during the continuance of this war

MRS. SADNERSON — (With a toss of the head and a Disapproving sniff) Sinn Fein – of course… but it seems a great pity…

MR BARRY — (Taking her up rather quickly) Common sense, Mrs. Sanderson. Irishmen do not like being tricked.

MR. SANDERSON — (With the air of one pouring oil on troubled waters.) There you are Barry, off again with your wretched tags of Nationality. In this war – I really can't say it too often – we are all one, no distinctions are made in the field – every one belongs to one glorious arms, and, as for us stay-at-homes, we might find something better to do I think than to go on talking about divisions that don't exist. I tell you Barry, straight (with a laugh) there is neither Jew nor Gentile – neither bond nor free in this war.

MR. BARRY — (Drawn by his host's levity he replies with asperity) Begging your pardon Mr. Sanderson, there are still bond men and free men, and we Irish are bondmen still…. but (pulling himself together) I will not be talking of anything but business this morning. The matter we have to discuss is what we can do for the young Irish lads of the town to put a little discipline into them and a proper respect for law and order. It's a bad thing for them their fathers being off to the like this. The way things are going now will lead to a lot of broken heads.

MR. SANDERSON (A little pompously) It must be a d… d sight worse in England, Barry, where all the fathers have gone to the war.

MR. BARRY I don't know so much about that. After all, the South has sent a lot of men into the war. I calculate that some 120,000 Southerners went to Ulster's 100,000.

MR. SANDERSON (Without interest) Perhaps – I really don't know. I can't bear statistics. They tell me they can be made to prove anything. Did you never hear of the Colonel in India who stated that 50% of the teetotallers in his regiment had died during the year. (Mr Barry indicates that he has no heard the story.) Well, it turned out there were only two teetotallers, and one of them had been eaten by a tiger! (Laughs loudly. Mr. Barry joins in a little slightingly)

At the French window appears a boy with a telegram – he is out of breath.

MR. SANDERSON (Assuming the telegram is for him) Now my boy, that's not the way to deliver a telegram. You should go to the front door and ring the bell and let my butler bring it in, you know.

BOY Please your honour, the telegram is for Misther Barry, and when I did not find him at the house below I ran up here…… they was after telling me at the post office it's something to do with Mr. Terry…

MR. BARRY (Stretching out hand and taking telegram, reads it with obvious excitement and takes out watch.) Why then Terry may be here any minute – the mail is due at 9.56 is it not? May I use your telegram phone, Mr. Sanderson.

MRS. SANDERSON (With curiosity) You might let us know what is in the telegram, Mr. Barry.

MR. BARRY Oh, it's from Terence, he telegraphs that he was leaving London on the mail last night.

ROSIE (Pleased.) Hooray! that's grand news, Mr. Barry.

MR. SANDERSON Well you'll want to be off. I shouldn't waste time telephoning.. the clock there is a bit slow Rosie, isn't it? (taking out watch.) Why it's 10.05 by the right time – that means the

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mail's in. Bring the boy up to dinner to-night, Barry!

MR. BARRY (Who during the talk about the time has collected hat and stick.) Thank you very much. I will just run across by the meadow, Mr. Sanderson – It's shorter that way.

(He waves a general goodbye and bolts through the window, hardly is on the gravel when a cheery voice is heard shouting.)

VOICE Hello Dad, is that you? (A young man in khaki greets him on the terrace.)

LIEUT. BARRY You did not get my telegram in time to come and meet me – that is what they tell me down below (laughing.)

MRS. SANDERSON (moving towards window) How do you do, Terence, welcome back.

MR. SANDERSON (also at window) Congratulate you Terry on having stopped no bullets, my boy.

ROSIE (Who waits for them to come forward, just shakes hands with Terence.) Won't you have some breakfast… the stuff they give you on the train is so beastly.

LIEUT. BARRY Thank you – may I Dad?…. but look here shan't I be keeping you all? Haven't you finished?

ROSIE It isn't every day we got someone here from the trenches. I think we can all bear sitting with you while you eat. (she waits on him and he is bombarded with questions.)

MR. SANDERSON How are things going on out there? Are we keeping out end up do you think?

LIEUT. BARRY Oh yes… But we had a pretty hectic time of it at Easter, they very nearly got Amiens, the 1th Division did might well in that retreat at Goffys

ROSIE Is that how you got your M.C.?

LIEUT. BARRY (Nodding) They want people to fill the ranks now and I must try and get some of the boys round here to join. They have passed conscription in England and that has cheered the old stagers out in France, for they feel now that nobody can shirk doing their bit.

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MR. SANDERSON I wish they'd apply it to this God forsaken country and not go in for all this shilly-shally. Why in the name of fortune they didn't apply conscription after the Rebellion I never have understood. They'd all have gone like lambs – they were only waiting to be fetched, but ever man in authority was afraid to make a move. As I always say, Terence, the Irish are alright if you understand them, which is more than the British government has ever done. And a man's a man in this war, and it doesn't matter a tinker's cuss where he was born so long as he is ready to fight the Huns.

LIEUT. BARRY (Good humouredly.) I think it does matter very much, Mr. Sanderson, where a man was raised, and Irishmen do like fighting side by side and shouting 'God save Ireland' when they go over the top. Bye the bye, have you seen the new War Office poster asking for recruits? I was so pleased with it that I copied the wording of it down while I waited at Broadstone this morning (takes out notebook) … 'Fight for the freedom of the Little Nations – Ireland to receive the same treatment as Poland – Put us to the test by joining to-day…' Fine, isn't it. Have you seen them, sir?

MR. SANDERSON Yes, yes I've seen them. I only hope it'll make some of these young swine from the town below go out and join you gallant fellows in France. 'Pon my word it makes my blood fairly boil to see the corner boys smoking and talking down there in the streets – taking no interest in the war – saving their own beastly skins and living on the fat of the land… (taking letter from table) Why my sister writes from London she hasn't tasted butter this year and hasn't had a bit of Irish bacon for months…. And here we are wallowing in butter, surfeited with bacon… all the luxuries in fact.

LIEUT. BARRY (Still at breakfast.) Yes, it's very jolly getting back to a good breakfast like this…. These eggs are simply delicious, and the butter…. I could eat a pound at a sitting.

MR SANDERSON (Smiling indulgently.) You're the boy for me, Terence. I wish all the Carrow lads would take after you. (turning to Mr. Barry who has been sitting rather glumly by.) Barry, while your boy is finishing his breakfast how would it be for us to talk business. Shall we go and sit on the terrace?

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MR. BARRY Yes certainly (to Terance) you'll find us just outside Terry when you are ready. (both go just outside window.)

LIEUT. BARRY All right Dad.

MRS. SANDERSON (Who during most of the conversation has been fidgeting round the room, snipping off dead leaves and watering plants, and then collecting crumbs and scraps from the breakfast table.) I must feed the chickens now. I shan't be long. (Goes out.)

ROSIE (Looking at Terence and laughing.) The war hasn't changed them much has it?

LIEUT. BARRY No – but this is a young man's war. The second 'loot' is the one that gets it full in the face – what?

ROSIE Yes, while we sit at home and make pots of money out of eggs and farming… We haven't felt the war a bit, no bombing, no rations, no dark streets, we're in an absolute back-water right out of everything… We're all stagnant and horribly prosperous… sort of war profiteers…. I'd give ten years of my life to be in a front line trench for an hour and get the feel of it all. (shaking herself as if to drive away selfish preoccupations)… I'm awfully glad about that M.C.

LIEUT. BARRY (Obviously pleased.) Are you really?

ROSIE Really and truly. What did you get it for?

LIEUT. BARRY Oh, nothing at all. I mean nothing more than thousands of other fellows have done.

ROSIE (Getting up to find cigarette box.) Don't be idiotic – I want to know. I loathe modesty.

LIEUT. BARRY (Laughing) You loathe modesty do you? Well so long as you don't publish it in the Daily Mail, I just wriggled through a "what you may call 'em" and…

ROSIE And what is a "what you may call'em"… I'm not a telepathist.

LIEUT. BARRY Oh, a double barrage sort of thing, and so brought back a bit of first class copy.

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ROSIE Oh, aren't you stupid – what is "first class copy."

LIEUT. BARRY Well, 'Valuable information.'

ROSIE (Very much interested.) How perfectly splendid. And did you crawl over No Man's land? How ghastly that must have been.

LIEUT. BARRY Life isn't very pretty out there and I was lucky to get through. I'm glad you're glad anyway. (bringing something out of pocket.) Have you got one of these?

ROSIE (Takes up trench ring) No – nobody has sent me one of these. (tried it on and looks at it.)

LIEUT. BARRY You would never wear a thing like that of course – of course it's perfectly hideous really. Some poor devils of Belgians make them in the trenches.

ROSIE (Turning it round) It looks like the war… doesn't it?

LIEUT. BARRY Yes, it looks awfully like the war. I suppose you'd never think of wearing it for the -- war – would you?

ROSIE Yes…. I think…. I might.

LIEUT. BARRY Don't think me slobberingly sentimental or anything like that, but it would make a lot of difference to me if you would wear it.. just for the war… what?

ROSIE Perhaps I will.

MRS. SANDERSON (Bustling in with a basket of eggs) 17 eggs this morning and 24 last night, that makes 41 for the 24 hours, not at all too bad… Rosie, if Terence has quite finished I think it's time the breakfast things were cleared away, I can't bear meals standing about. (Rosie goes to bell and rings.) Terence I want a word with you… It's difficult to talk to your father he is so political…. Couldn't you do anything to get some of the Carrow lads to enlist? They are loaders, horrible loafers and the devil always finds mischief for idle hands to do. It makes me sick to think of them going off to their silly little volunteer drills and calling themselves patriots when there's man's work to be

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done in France. Can't you do something? after all, they all know you. It seems a pity for you to be home and not do anything

LIEUT. BARRY I've every intention, Mrs. Sanderson, of going and talking to a lot of them this afternoon. Mick Reilly down at the station told me they had got a route march of something this evening and I thought I'd potter over to see them and tell them what I think about things… There are a good many dead from this place and I'm going to tell them how they died… Bye the bye, that new poster the Government has issued will do no end of good… "Come and join the fight for small nations – Ireland to be treated like Belgium and Poland"…. There is no excuse for hanging back now.

MRS SANDERSON I like hearing you talk Terence, one really gets sick of the disloyalty all round here. Really, everyone is disloyal except people in our position.

LIEUT. BARRY Oh, it's not quite so bad as that is it? 450 men have gone from these parts I think.

ROSIE (Impatiently breaking in.) Can I go and hear you talk to the volunteers?

LIEUT. BARRY Do you want to?

ROSIE Yes, tremendously… you don't mind Mother?

MRS. SANDERSON (With a gesture of hopelessness) It's not much use my minding, but I can't see why you must needs go and mix yourself up in politics… it seems a pity (leaves door on right, murmuring) I wonder why no one has answered the bell.

ROSIE (Going over to Terence.) It would be grand if you could get some recruits, Terry…. Terry, I like you in uniform, and I like this little bit of colour, the modest violet arising from the dust, or mud is it? The colour I mean (touching the M.C. ribbon) How I loathe not being able to fight…. I wish you'd recruit me (laughs)

LIEUT. BARRY (Thinking he sees an opening.) I should just think I would if you gave me half a chance (takes her hands) Will you let me recruit you, Rosie?..... (turning away impatiently) what's the good of anything, when one hasn't got a shilling in the world.

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ROSIE Don't be idiotic, Terry. I mean, can't I go as a Wren or a Waac or something. I simply can't sit at home and pretend I'm and Land Girl any longer. Where does one enlist for these things?

LIEUT. BARRY Don't know, but I'll find out (A voice shouts 'are you ready, Terry') By Jove we mustn't forget the Daddies.

ROSIE (laughing) No, no, poor Daddies. (They go on to the terrace.)

Butler enters and begins to clear table.

CURTAIN.

PART II

Some twelve hours later.

Dinner is over and Mr. and Mrs. Sanderson are sitting in the room and Mr. Burry is standing by the fire. Time 10 p.m. They are talking. The close strikes.

MRS. SANDERSON (Looking over her pince nez) Wasn't that someone at the door? (listens… looks at clock) Ten o'clock, nearly bed time….. tsch…tsch… What can have happened to Rosie and Terence?

MR. BARRY I do not know.

MR. SANDERSON (Giving the fire a poke from his seat) Oh, they'll come all in good time…. Go on improving the shining hour Barry and tell us why those d…d young swine in the town won't fight… that is, if you know.

MR. BARRY Need we go over that old ground, Mr. Sanderson. You know the reasons as well as I go, it's just the Crazy Circle.

MR. SANDERSON Crazy circle – by gad I don't know what you mean. You've ranted at me often enough about Ireland, but I have never listened, but now I want to get the arguments fair and square. They've got to be countered you know. From all I hear we are properly up against it over there (jerking head in direction of France) and 100,000 Irish lads might turn the scale…. (very gravely) I mean this seriously Barry… there is such a thing as losing the war.

MR. BARRY (looking at him with some curiosity) If England is going to rely on Ireland winning the war for her, God help her!

MR. SANDERSON (furiously.) What the hell do you mean by saying that Barry?

MRS. SANDSERSON (flinching as if struck.) Edward! what dreadful language!

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MR. SANDERSON I beg your pardon, Ethel, I forgot you were there.

MR. BARRY (Coldly) I mean precisely this… that Ireland is not going to send any more boys to this war or any other war until she is recognised as a Nation…. (slowly and impressively) Ireland. will. not. be. sorry. if. England. loses. the. war..

MR. SANDSERSON (furiously) The brutes, the cursed brutes!

MRS. SANDSERSON (shocked.) Edward, you should not listen. This is treason.

Mr. Sanderson does not appear to hear her, he is engrossed in what Barry is saying.

MR. BARRY (ignoring Mrs. Sanderson's outburst) If you are really serious in wanting to know the reason that things are like this I will tell you. Ireland has had the prospect of self-government dangled before her nose for 40 years and she seems to be as far off getting it as ever.

MR. SANDERSON And after the Rebellion of two years ago she d…m well forfeited any claim to self-government. The dirty traitors to stab us in the back like that. Maxwell was a deal too lenient.

Mrs. Sanderson shows approval.

MR. BARRY (taking no notice of Mrs. Sanderson's ebullition) There was the First Home Rule Bill of 1886, then there was the Second Home Rule Act of 1893 and the Third Home Rule Act 1912…. all scrapped, but all finger posts along the road Irishmen have travelled, finger posts indicative of bad faith.

Mrs. Sanderson follows the discussion with intense interest.

MRS. SANDERSON You (swallowing an epithet) Irish are always looking backward. You haven't got the elements of progress in you or the slightest capacity for running anything.

MR. BARRY (Going on ticking incidents off on his fingers dispassionately.) Then in 1916 came the Connolly rising in which some 1200 men were concerned. It was on the whole an unpopular rising in

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Ireland, but an English General came over here and carried out a series of cold-blooded executions. Irishmen will never forget Butcher Maxwell, as he was called in the streets of Dublin. The Labour Leader, Connolly, was nursed back to life in hospital so as to be fit to face a firing party. The result of the executions was to reinforce the rising with the sympathy of three parts of Ireland.

MR. SANDERSON Sixteen executions, when there ought to have been scores!

MRS. SANDSERSON Yes, only sixteen executions.

MR. BARRY (Going on with slightly more fervour.) These men were executed in a prison yard and buried in quicklime – yet from their graves a crop of heroic legends were sprung – legends and stories which will endure while Irishmen can speak. Round the heads of Pearse, of Rahilly, of Connolly and the rest, shines the aureole of martyrdom.

MR. SANDERSON You make a lot in this country of dying bravely, don't you realise that thousands of men are dying hero's deaths in France – perhaps at this very hour?

MR. BARRY Thousands of brave deaths have been died in France, but the deaths of those few civilians will outlast them all. Already from their graves has sprung the contagion of a more ardent patriotism already have the poets spun their poems – already have the story-tellers woven their legends – their indestructible legends… (in a half-mystical way) Pearse was right, a blood sacrifice was required for us!

Mrs. Sanderson shows both embarrassment and contempt.

MR. SANDERSON (Not caring much about the turn the conversation has taken.) Well all that was two years ago, and what is there to complain of now?

MR. BARRY (Going on quickly) At this moment numbers of men are being arrested for getting together and talking about Ireland – to talk

about Ireland and her nationhood is "sedition." To write about Ireland and her future is "disloyalty." The goals are being filled with men whose only crime is that they want Ireland to be free of English control. Such a spirit of exasperation is being

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stirred up in Ireland today as will result, if I mistake not, in guerrilla warfare – civil war in other words. (prophetically) A time may be coming when the pale memory of '98 will be re-dyed in the bright blood of young Ireland!..... and woe betide the British Empire when that day comes.

MR. SANDSERSON (Glad of an opening) The British Empire is quite capable of looking after itself, Barry…. You needn't worry your head about that.

MR. BARRY (almost as if he had not heard) The wrongs of Ireland will be brooded over in the remote villages of India, and the subject peoples of Egypt will whisper one to another of Freedom's war in Erin, and the sun of Empire will sink in a red bath of blood…..

MR. SANDERSON (Quite cheerfully) I don't know so much about the blood bath as you seem to do, but I do know that the willy Hindoo and the fellaheen damn well won't know anything about Ireland if there is trouble here. We've learnt all about censorship and propaganda in this war. The Empire can look after itself.

There is a noise in the hall and Rosie and Terence enter. They appear tired, yet rather excited.

MRS. SANDSERSON (Obviously relieved that the discussion has come to an end) Back at last – What have you been up to? (Without waiting for an answer) I've had some sandwiches put on the table there and hot coffee in a Thermos.. and whisky and soda.. (pointing in direction of table) but it does seem a pity not to come in to proper meals.

ROSIE I'm sorry we're so late Mother, but it could not be helped.

LIEUT. BARRY No, we couldn't help it Mrs. Sanderson, I'm very sorry.

(They both go and help themselves to drinks and sandwiches.)

MRS. SANDERSON Any luck, Terence?

LIEUT. BARRY No (wearily) Father is right. It's no good.

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ROSIE (Munching at sandwiches and rather eager) It really was rather exciting Dad. We went up Carrigmill for about two miles and then turned off to the right (Terence is dealing with a noisy syphon and does not hear the first few words but catches the next) for about two mules till we got to the foot of Slievedoon and then we climbed up and got to a sort of cave (Terence tried to stop her by sighs) – of course we had Mickey Heilly for a guide (Terence drops the syphon and Rosie looks at him and sees what she has done) Oh, I forgot I mustn't say where we went. How perfectly awful, have I given the show away? (looks very distressed) but of course it doesn't matter Terence, it's only Mother and Dad.

MR. SANDERSON (Rather excited) Carrigmill – Slievdoon, I'd like to put the police on to them.

ROSIE Father, you couldn't do such a thing. Oh, Terence do explain.

LIUET. BARRY Sir, you really mustn't take advantage of Rosie's excitement. I gave my word of honour not to give them away. Please forget what she said.

MR. SANDERSON (Doesn't reply directly but nods amiably and pats Rosie's hand.) Alright… and so you didn't get a single recruit, what?

(Mrs. Sanderson has listened acutely to this conversation and has jotted a word or two down on an envelope taken from her bag of orewels.

LIEUT. BARRY (Satisfied that the incident is at an end.) No, not one, they are all set on fighting for Ireland in Ireland. I told them that in fighting with us they would be fighting for themselves. I told them we were fighting for little nations, but they didn't seem to believe a word of it. How ghastly it all is when one thinks of the boys out there and these great strong lads sitting at home and not realising in the slightest degree the hell out yonder and how they can help to end it. (hands over face) it's ghastly – it's brutal their hopeless indifference. They simply don't care. You

are right, Sir… and saving my father's presence, they are proper young swine.

ROSIE — They simply don't care how many Englishmen are killed. I hate them.

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MRS. SANDSERSON — (bitterly, to Mr. Barry who has been sitting on one side) And that is Sinn Fein, the movement that is going to make self-respecting men of the Irish. I hope you like it.

MR. BARRY — Even Sinn Fein is part of the crazy circle, Mrs. Sanderson. England promises and doesn't perform, and Ireland retaliates, and so it goes on, bad faith produces dissatisfaction which voices itself in and anti-English creed. Sinn Fein, and Sinn Fein means conspiracy, and conspiracy means political arrests, and resentment for political arrests will lead to assassination, and assassination will lead to counter-assassination. I can see the circle growing ever bigger and ever more crazy, increasing until it includes us all.

MRS. SANDSERSON — (drawing herself up) I can hardly imagine that it will ever include me, Mr. Barry.

MR. BARRY — (rising) I don't feel so sure about that Mrs. Sanderson, the rate things are going now it will be difficult for anyone to remain outside… Terence we should be saying goodnight.

LIEUT. BARRY — (Going over to Mrs. Sanderson) I hope you have forgiven me for keeping Rosie out so late? Good night and thank you for the sandwiches.

MRS. SANDSERSON — (Rather frigidly.) It seems to have been a completely wasted evening and that is always a pity. Good night.

MR. SANDERSON — (who has quite recovered his temper.) I'll see you out Barry.

(The two Barrys go out the door right to the hall. Rosie follows. After a second's reflection Mrs. Sanderson goes to the door after them. She shouts out)

MRS. SANDSERSON Edward! Edward! Listen. I'm going to turn out the lights. It's high time we all went to bed.

(She comes back into the room and turns out the lights leaving the room dark except for fire-light. One can hear the front door opening and then the door is shit and Rosie is hear very slowing going up wooden stairs.)

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MR. SANDERSON (appears in doorway and peers in, then speaking over shoulder) Your mother must have gone up, the lights are out Rosie. (He shuts the door and locks it on the outside)

MRS. SANDSERSON (Who has been in the shadow comes out and goes over to the telephone.) Give me 33…. Is that Capt. Moynham? Well please fetch him…..No, urgent, very urgent… (waits impatiently, tapping foot.) Is that Capt. Moynham? A friend speaking… I wish to inform you that 2 miles up Carrigmill at foot of Slieverdoon there is a cave used for Volunteer assemblies, it is in use to-night. Mickey Reilly the station porter is in the secret and I rely on you to act promptly… (indignantly) How can you know that it is a friend speaking?.... Let me give you the Larne pass-word "Gough" and the alternative word "Curragh," is that good enough for you? (rings off.)

(She tried the door, finds that it is really locked and then decides to go on the terrace and shout up to her husband that she has been locked out by mistake. She goes to window and is just opening it when a man with a handkerchief across the lower part of his face confronts her….. Mrs. Sanderson suppressing a scream starts back and runs to the bell by the fireplace. She does not reach it as the man puts a hand on her arm.

MAN (Switching on a torch) I am not a burglar Mrs. Sanderson, my business is very simple. My two friends and I can explain it in a moment… we need arms and ammunition. Will you please to shew us what you have in your gun-room?

MRS. SANDSERSON (Recovering from fright.) Never…never. I would rather be shot…. Why don't you shoot me?

MAN We have no wish to harm you or anything in this house, but guns we must have. Please sit down and be quiet if you will not help us. We shall have to gag you if you stir.

(She considers screaming aloud, but is pushed into a chair. The Man stands almost in front of it with his torch so that he can see her movements and stop her if she moves. He beckons to the other men who come in quietly. They both have handkerchiefs over the lower half of their faces.)

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1ST MAN Pull out your torches. Leave the window open but draw the curtains. (They do so.) I will stay here with Madam while you look in the gun room… You know where it is.

TWO MEN We do. (They go to the door, find it locked and open it with a jemmy. They disappear into the hall.)

1ST MAN I shall not be detaining you long, Madam. My friends know what they want and where it is. I hope we shall not be here more than a minute of two longer.

MRS. SANDERSON (Mouth pursed up puts hand into crewel bag and abstracts from it a handkerchief which really covers a pair of pointed scissors. The light is not good for the spot-light from the torch is on her face and above her head. She gets a grip of her scissors and then waits her moment. (Venomously) You need not think I don't recognise you for I do. You are nothing better than a common thief and you call yourself a grand patriot I suppose.

1ST MAN (Jauntily whistles 'Soldiers' Song') Do you also recognise this tune?

MRS. SANDERSON (Stung by the sounds, jumps up suddenly and jabs the scissors in his neck and the same time shrieking) Help!...help!

(The two men come back with a couple of sporting guns and cartridges. They size up the situation rapidly and push Mrs. Sanderson down on to the chair again.)

2ND MAN We'll best be going. We'll carry him out between us.

3RD MAN He's not so bad as all that… he'll walk. (They get hold of wounded man and push him through the curtains.)

MRS. SANDSERSON (Rushing to door.) Help, thieves! murderers! Sinn Fein!

(Sanderson with a revolver, and Rose with a fire extinguisher both appear and find Mrs. Sanderson hysterically looking at her hand and at the scissors which have blood on them.)

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MRS. SANDSERSON Edward….Edward.. did I kill him?

ROSIE AND SANDERSON (together) Kill who?

MRS. SANDSERSON Why the Sinn Feiner of course.

(Sanderson rushes out the windows and Rosie follows. Mrs. Sanderson collapses in chair.)

Curtain.

PART III

(Three years later….. March 1921.)

Time 10 a.m.

(Mr. Sanderson is sitting at a writing table in the same room. He looks rather fussed and gives the bell a pull. Mrs. Sanderson is arranging some flowers and looks more pinched and wretched than in the first act.)

MURPHY (entering) Yes Sir?

MR. SANDERSON No papers yet?

MURPHY No sir, there are no paper to-day.

MR SANDERSON What about the post, has that come?

MURPHY There is no post to-day Sir, the mail was raided last night.

MR. SANDERSON This is really getting beyond a joke – two days without letters or newspapers. One might as well be in the Sahara (turning to Mrs. Sanderson) Do you hear what Murphy is saying, Ethel?

MRS. SANDERSON (Very drearily.) Yes, Edward.

MR. SANDERSON (fuming) This county positively isn't fit to live in.

MRS. SANDERSON I haven't thought it was fit to live in for a long time – but what can we do? This is the only house we've got, and if we tried to sell it it wouldn't fetch anything, and if we left it, it would be burnt down.

MR. SANDERSON They've taken my motor (ticking off items on fingers.) They've unscrewed the wheels and put 'em inside the police barracks. They've cut off my telephone. Curfew is at 5 o'clock, and as if the whole thing were not too damnable for words, they make it a little worse by docking one of newspapers and letters!

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MRS. SANDERSON (drearily.) I hear another Creamery at Ballydon was burnt out yesterday. It seems a pity, but of course if they will use them as Sinn Fein clubs….it's only to be expected.

MR. SANDERSON (impatiently) Expected? Oh Lord! yes we expect nothing but devastation now-a-days! (turning with account book in hand.) Ethel, I have been looking at my account books 0 do you realise it is seven months since our Creamery was burnt down by Crown Forces and not one penny compensation have we got?

MRS. SANDERSON Yes, I do realise it Edward, and do you realise that I haven't sent one egg away for four months and that I'm every day killing off hens which now aren't worth their keep? Look at out egg club with its turn-over of £2,000 a year….all gone… what's the good of anything in this country now that it's in the clutches of Sinn Fein. The trains don't run, the mails don't come, the ships don't start… Life isn't worth living.

MR. SANDERSON (working himself up.) Yes, and what's more, it's hardly safe to go out in the high roads now. Why, Time Geoghan was telling me yesterday he had a bullet whizz by his ear when he was ploughing down in Farley's field.

MRS. SANDERSON Oh, I know they make a lot of fuss in the country-side about this "precautionary shooting," but of course if they are expecting an ambush they are quite right to take precautions.

I'm sure I don't complain when I am nearly run down in the pony cart by a lorry. The poor police drive very fast and no wonder.

MR. SANDERSON — I should damn well think they do – half of 'em are drunk and they loose off their rifles at anything they see. Why they killed a couple of beasts last week and wounded a child.

MRS. SANDERSON — Of course it is a pity, but it doesn't surprise me in the least considering the appalling ambushes that have taken place. Why Sergeant O'Driscoll himself told me all their nerves are going. I think these police and soldier murders are too shocking for words, and people who goin for that sort of thing deserve no consideration whatever – they must take the consequences….. (after a pause, enquiringly.) Sometimes Edward you seem to me to be changing sides?

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MR. SANDERSON — Well, I should think anyone would end by being 'agin the Government' in this country. Why, take the housing question alone – Everybody knows there's a great shortage of houses and the Government's gone and burnt down hundreds.

MRS. SANDERSON — So has Sinn Fein.

MR. SANDERSON — Oh no it hasn't… that's where you make your mistake, Ethel. Sinn Fein has burnt a few large country houses which were not being lived in, and I believe one or two farms too, but the Crown Forces have burned something like 2,000 dwelling houses and shops.

MRS. SANDERSON — There have been about 250 soldiers and police murdered in cold blood. Would you have those dastardly murders unpunished?

MR. SANDERSON — There have been about 400 Irish civilians murdered in exactly the same way. Two wrongs never made a right yet, Ethel.

MRS. SANDERSON — But a loyal policeman is worth ten of these skulking Sinn Feiners who never come out into the open, but shoot from behind walls and run away. 'What good are they,' as an officer said to me lately, 'what good are they to anyone when they are

alive. The country is well rid of them,' as he said. 'Nobody can govern it while they are at large.'

MR. SANDERSON Well, it's not much good our bickering away like this, Ethel, we're all in a vicious circle and God knows who is going to get us out of it. The way the Government is going on now we shall have another devastated country on our hands and a country that, if properly treated, might be one of the richest in the world. It isn't only that houses and property are being destroyed – it isn't only that men and women are being murdered by night and by day, it isn't only that we are all being ruined, it isn't only the material loss, but it's the moral loss. The moral bankruptcy of England; England isn't respected, The English-man's world is not believed, the English uniform is disgraced. I've always stood up for England, but I can't stand up for the deeds done in England's name to-day. (emotionally) I would rather have died than lived to feel like this about the government.

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MRS. SANDERSON (severely) I really think you've lost your head, Edward – you know quite well that if it were not for the Crown forces we should all be murdered in our beds. And you don't seem to realise that things are improving. Capt. Moynham told me yesterday that all reports shewed that the murderers were being tracked down and caught, and I'm thankful to say some of the murder gang are going to be shot.

MR. SANDERSON Murder Gang! Murder Gang! How often have I heard those words during the past year. I wonder is there a murder gang at all? or is it that every man in the I.R.A is ready to kill if he is ordered to do so by his superior officer.

MRS. SANDERSON Well, that's only another way of saying that the I.R.A. is a murder gang. I don't see that it matters by what letters of the alphabet you choose to call people – the fact remains that these brutes commit dastardly murders and call it war.

MR. SANDERSON Of course (with a weary gesture) of course, but it's just because I loathe Sinn Fein methods that it makes me wretched to see the English Crown Forces ordered to imitate them in every detail.

(The door opens and Rosie and Terry, now married, enter together. Terry had lost his right arm, the sleeve of which is in the pocket. He is dressed in country clothes and so is Rosie.)

TERENCE (looking very anxious walks up to Mr. Sanderson with a very pre-occupied manner.) They've arrested my father – we've just seen him carried off in a lorry.

MR. SANDERSON Good God, have they?

MRS. SANDERSON Your Father, Terence? (sententiously) Well I must say I thought they would have him some time or another…. you really can't expect anything else after those lectures on Irish Nationality and the Irish Language and so on…. It doesn't surprise me one bit.

TERENCE (Rather irritated) Isn't that rather beside the point, Mrs. Sanderson at the moment? Surely the point is to find out on what charge have they arrested him and what can we do to get him proper Counsel?

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ROSIE (Rather excited over the incident) Yes we must get hold of the best Counsel. But listen Mummy, when they took Terry's father they took Mayor O'Flanagan, and Kelly the butcher along with him.

MRS. SANDERSON (interrupting) Kelly the butcher? but there isn't another butcher for miles round. Who will kill our meat? How perfectly idiotic to select the butcher of all people! They haven't the brains of a flea.

ROSIE And they've taken the dispensary doctor…

MRS. SANDERSON (interrupting) Not Brennan, surely not Brennan? But what will happen to Mrs. Burke and Mrs. Daly and their babies, and Doyle's children down with diphtheria…. There's no end of sickness about this spring… This really is madness.

ROSIE (resumes her narrative)….and several others, but the ones I've told you of are the key men.

MRS. SANDERSON (half stunned) Key men?

ROSIE — We couldn't do anything for them of course, except pack up a few things for them to take along with them and jot down their last messages. We tried to look merry and bright and as if we were all enjoying ourselves very much and they carried it all off well, singing 'God Save Ireland' as they drove away. We joined in till they were out of sight, and now we are here.

MRS. SANDERSON — (Shocked) Joined in? Rosie, you haven't gone Sinn Fein?

ROSIE — Oh yes I have Mother – and I know you think it rather like going Bolshie, but it isn't…really… there's nothing else to be done you see… there's no room for neutrals… you've either got to be on the side of the Crown Forces or against them. Terry and I both joined the Sinn Fein Club last week, the day we heard Lenihan has been taken up as a hostage and then shot like a dog when they had finished trying to worm a confession out of him. (trying to be playful) Cheer up Mummy, you may see us on a tumbril, no, I mean a lorry, yet. (hums Soldiers' Song.)

MRS. SANDERSON — So you have both joined the murder gang, joined what your Father calls the I.R.A.

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MR. SANDERSON — (injured) Well, I didn't invent the name, Ethel.

ROSIE & TERENCE — No, no; we have got nothing to do with the I.R.A

ROSIE — You go on Terry and explain it to Mummie

TERENCE — No, we have nothing whatever to do with the I.R.A, but we had to take a decision – do something practical to shew our intense disapproval of the Government's policy and action, and so we have joined Sinn Fein; but that does not mean that we are not dead against ambushes and murders and all the other villanies carried out by the gun-men. But what is absolutely certain is that we Irishmen of all classes have got to make a stand, got to take hold of this country and run it in our own way. We've got to get our hand on the lever, even if we have to brain the man who's at the control now.

MRS. SANDERSON — And a find mess you'll make of it.

MR. SANDERSON — Do you seriously think, Ethel, the country could be in a much bigger mess than it is now? At any rate, under Irishmen it will be run by people who love the country and not by people who hate it.

TERENCE — May I use the telephone? I want to get on to Crisp the solicitor in Dublin and consult him about my father.

MR. SANDERSON — You seem to forget Terry that no private person is allowed the use of a telephone now.

TERENCE — Oh damn.. well I shall have to go down to the town and send a telegram. Will you help me draft it?

MR. SANDERSON — All right.. I'll go down to the Post Office with you, and we'll discuss how to word it. I wonder would it be better to up to Dublin straight away?

(They prepare to go.)

MRS. SANDERSON — (Waiting till they are going through the door) As I was saying to Terence, Rosie, it really doesn't surprise me one bit to hear that his father has been arrested. In fact it is exactly what I should have expected.

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ROSIE — Oh Mother – can't you be a little more understanding?

MRS. SANDERSON — I don't think I want to understand the revels, Rosie.

Rosie going out. Mrs. Sanderson remains staring into the fire.

CURTAIN.

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Part IV.

(Same evening… same room)

(Time 8.45.)

(Mrs. Sanderson sitting over the fire alone with a meal on a tray by her. She looks depressed. The butler comes in.)

MURPHY Have you quite finished M'm.

MRS. SANDERSON Yes, Murphy.

MURPHY Mr. Sanderson is late M'm.

MRS. SANDERSON Yes, he is coming down on the evening mail from Dublin. H went up to see the solicitor about Captain Barry's father. He caught the 11 o'clock train.

MURPHY To be sure M'm, but as Captain Barry did not go with him to Dublin, I thought he and Miss. Rosie might be coming up to see you this evening.

MRS. SANDERSON I don't know about that. I don't know what the Captain and Mrs. Barry have been doing all day – they could not go to Dublin… We live in queer times Murphy, and it was supposed that it would attract a lot of attention if they all went up to Dublin together.

MURPHY Attention is very unpleasant these day M'm. As my wife was saying to me yesterday. A man is lucky now-a-days if he escapes attention the way a fungus does on an old tree.

MRS. SANDERSON (Nods.) Yes, no one wants to be advertising his movements now-a-days.

MURPHY Shall I put on another log M'm? They may not be back yet awhile. (Mrs. Sanderson nods assent)…They were saying there was an ambush somewhere in the countryside this evening.

MRS. SANDERSON An ambush…an ambush of Crown Forces.or what?

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MURPHY Yes M'm I do believe so. The country will never be safe with the Crown Forces flying round in them great lorries.

MRS. SANDERSON But I thought you said it was the Crown Forces that had been ambushed?

MUPRHY Yes M'm, it was that I said.

MRS. SANDERSON But then you mean that the country will never be safe so long a there are Sinn Feiners lurking about.

MURPHY If there were no Crown Forces M'm, there would be no ambushes. The boys are always telling me about that. They are a peaceable lot of young fellows but the Crown Forces is a disturbing element.

MRS. SANDERSON You do talk rubbish Murphy. No Irishman seems to me to have any power of reasoning left. Peaceable lot indeed! Fiddlesticks!

If there had been no murders by Sinn Feiners the Black and Tans would never have been sent to Ireland to hunt down the murderers.

MURPHY — Begging your pardon M'm, if England had kept her bargain the same as a cattle drover at a fair, there would have been no occasion for muder. It was bad faith in the beginning that did it – as Mickey Reilly God rest his soul – used to say, we Irishmen go round and round like jennets round a well and divil a drop of the water of Home Rule do we get. The buckets come up empty every time; is it any wonder at all that we take to kicking and biting, and we a patient God – fearing people?

MRS. SANDERSON — That's all pernicious, putrid rubbish Murphy. Everyone knows quite well that Ireland could have had everything she wanted if she had followed Redmond into the war instead of sitting down and moaning about imaginary grievances and then turning traitor and taking German money.

MURPHY — It's my thinking M'm that if the young fellows of Ireland had followed Redmond they would all have been killed in England's war and there would have been nobody with any strength in them to demand for Ireland her rights. That would have suited England very well, I'm thinking…. 'Tis not German money that makes the boys love Ireland.

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MRS. SANDERSON — (Severely) If you hadn't lived with us 20 years Murphy, and if I didn't know you to be a very foolish wrong-headed old man, I wouldn't sit by and listen to all the rubbish you have spoken. (footsteps are heard in the hall… Mr. Sanderson comes in followed by Rosie.)

MRS. SANDERSON — Oh, there you are Edward… Have you had any food on the train?

MR. SANDERSON — No, but all I want is a whiskey and soda and a sandwich. (he makes a tired gesture and sits down in an arm-chair.)

ROSIE — I met Father at the Station and walked up with him. Terry isn't back yet.

MRS. SANDERSON — What did you do in Dublin, Edward?

MR. SANDERSON Not much, I'm afraid. I saw Crisp the solicitor, but he tells me that if Barry is tried before a Court-martial he will probably not plead, as of course he is a Sinn Feiner and will not recognise the jurisdiction of the Court. If, on the other hand he is not tried, as seems equally possible, he will be sent to an internment camp during His Majesty's pleasure. In either case there is very little to be done, so I really had my journey for nothing. However, I like feeling I have done what I could for Barry.

MRS. SANDERSON I only hope he'll be grateful to you, Edward.

MR. SADNERSON Oh, that's nothing to do with it. One can't sit by and do nothing in a case like this. Barry is an honest fellow and not at all self-seeking. All his life he has been working to get self-government for Ireland, and looking at the mess things are in now I have come to think there's a good deal in what he has said to me one time and another.

MRS. SANDERSON (Lifting eyebrows and looking out over pince-nez)
I felt you were changing sides Edward. What has made you do so I simply can't imagine. Everything I have seen during the last few years has made me more and more convinced that the people of Ireland are utterly unfit to run a village store much less a country. They are corrupt, they lie, they cheat, they ill-treat animals. They have no reasoning power. To me the peasant is more like a brute beast than a white man. The priests keep them like that. The priests would have no power if

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they didn't keep the people superstitious and ignorant.

ROSIE Mother, mother, do stop talking like that, it's terrible and we all know perfectly well there would have been a lot more killing if it hadn't been fore the priests. Please Mother don't. (holds her.)

MR. SANDERSON I do feel it is a bit late, Ethel, to go in to the causes of things now. We have a perfectly definite situation to face, a situation in which things are going from bad to worse, and no matter what our traditions and our former prejudices, we must act up to our lights, such as they are. We cannot sit by and let things rip and say "I told you so." Feeling, as I do, that Barry, though a Sinn Feiner is definitely on the side of good government, though not necessarily of the kind administered by the Forces of the Crown, knowing as I do, that he is out to make a better Ireland, I do mean to do my best for him. Understanding him and his views makes me realise that it is on him and his like

that Ireland has to depend for her regeneration, and not on the so-called Forces of Law and Order. After all, even England, rich as she is in long-suffering tax-payers, will not keep an army here for ever. I shall probably end myself by becoming a sort of pacifist Sinn Feiner as a protest against the Government that tries to crush out ideas and aspiration with tanks. It's sheer nonsense to tell me that the Crown Forces are here simply to put down a murder gang when they go and arrest men like poor Barry for lecturing in Gaelic and publishing lives of Finn and Cuchulain.

ROSIE (earnestly) Oh Father will you join us? If only people like you would become Nationalists the cause is as good as won. Why it is your sort of people the Black and Tans are here to protect.

MRS. SANDERSON Where is Terry to-night, Rosie?

ROSIE He had to go with a message.

MRS. SANDERSON A message?

ROSIE Yes, a message to some people at Gowls.

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MRS. SANDERSON Is he coming here.. on his way back?

ROSIE Yes, he's coming to pick me up.

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MR. SANDERSON As I came along in the train I wondered whether it would do any good if I went over to London and saw a few M.Ps and told them what things are really like here and how much worse everything is getting. That fellow Lloyd George seems to be mad when he talks of "getting murder by the throat." There's been more murders on both sides during the last fortnight than ever before….. I heard some talk of an ambush in the train just now.

ROSIE (Excited.) An ambush…did you Father? When? where? who?

MR. SANDERSON Oh, Crown Forces… a lorry load somewhere….. Everyone knows about these things before they happen, but no one knows anything about them afterwards, I've noticed that.

ROSIE Is that all you heard Father? Are you sure there was an ambush.

MR. SANDERSON I don't really know. It was more a rumour than anything else.

MRS. SANDERSON Now I come to think of it, Murphy said there was a rumour too.

ROSIE Did he? Oh, do let's ring the bell and hear if he knows anything… May I mother? (rings) I can't think how people know these things, you'd think it was bound to be given away and yet it never is.

MR. SANDERSON There's nothing like adversity for making people draw together. There's a marvellous solidarity in this new Nationalism. I don't believe there is a single case of a murderer being informed on.

MURPHY (entering) Did you ring M'm?

MRS. SANDERSON Please repeat to Mrs. Barry what you said to me just now about the ambush.

MURPHY Well M'm I only did hear that there was a report of an ambush this evening.

ROSIE Has it taken place?

MURPHY I don't know at all, but when I went down to the post they were talking of it. I could not rightly say whether it had taken place or not.

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(A loud rumbling as of a motor omnibus is heard outside… all look startled… than comes a knock and a ring…and the confused sound of voices.)

MR. SANDERSON Good God – they've not come to raid us have they?

MRS. SANDERSON How utterly monstrous! How like Sinn Fein.

MR. SANDERSON How can Sinn Fein have a motor lorry?

ROSIE No, It's Crown Forces right enough. What are we to do. Give us our orders.

(the knocking continues)

MR. SANDERSON Open the door at once, Murphy, don't stand staring at me like that.

MURPHY Very good, Sir.

MR. SANDERSON — We'll just sit here as if nothing was happening. I think that's the right thing to do. We've not got a fire-arm between us, so we cant do anything.

(Murphy is opening the door and the voices sound a little louder)

MR. SANDERSON — Might as well be on our dignity. Rosie you'd be better play something. (Rosie moves off to piano and opens it. Mr. Sanderson takes up newspaper and pretends to read.)

(The voices grow nearer and a sound of something heaving bein carried is distinguishable.)

MRS. SANDERSON — That sounds like a heavy gun being brought in… I hope they don't mean to blow the house to bit…. (nervously) I've heard they've done it in one or two places, but perhaps it's not true.

ROSIE — (Is standing petrified by the opened piano listening. The other two are also listening intently in their places. Presently a voice is distinguished speaking outside, an officer's voice.)

VOICE — I must see Mr. Sanderson (steps across hall and Murphy throws open the door. In walks an officer of Auxiliary Cadets looking very much embarrassed.)

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OFFICER — Are you Mr. Sanderson? Could I see you alone, Sir?

MR. SANDERSON — (Distinctly hostile in manner.) Certainly not Sir. Say what you have to say. Do what you have to do in the presence of my wife and daughter. We are all case-hardened in Ireland to outrage and injustice. No one who has lived in Ireland the last two years can be shocked at Ireland.

OFFICER — (Accepting situation) There's been an unfortunate mistake, Sir…

MR. SANDERSON — Mistake?

OFFICER — Your son-in-law, I think Captain Barry is your son-in-law? he has been shot by mistake, Sir.

MR. SANDERSON — What the devil do you mean, Sir?

OFFICER — A lorry was detailed for patrol work this evening up in the Slievdoon district. It was nearly dark and a man came out of a bohireen about five miles up the road and held up his hand… the lorry slowed down… Before he could speak they shouted at him to put up both hands… to take his tight hand out of his pocket as they thought he was clutching an automatic in the usual way… He persisted in keeping his right hand in his pocket – and they shot at him…Then they stopped the lorry to get hold of the body, but he was'nt dead… and he told them with the last breath he had that there was an ambush waiting for the lorry some mile and a half further up the road… He told us to let you know what had happened to him….. When we came to lift him up we found he only had one arm…. The right sleeve was fixes in his pocket..

(All terror struck by this terrible narrative)

MR. SANDERSON — My God!

ROSIE — What have you done with him?

OFFICER — He is here…… but he died as soon as we got him into the lorry… My God it is utterly damnable….. What can I say?

ROSIE — Murderers. (Tears out of the room.)

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MR. SANDERSON — (Slowly, as if trying to realise situation, and staring at officer) My son-in-law went out to warn you…of an ambush…because though a Sinn Feiner..he was dead against murder by either side….and..he is murdered himself….He fought in the Great War…..Terry..gave..his..right..arm – for England.

OFFICER — My God, you don't think I wouldn't have given my life for this thing not to have happened?.... Why I knew Barry during the Hundred Days in France…. I didn't come here to kill fellows like Barry…. I came here because they wanted men to hunt down a murder gang.

MR. SANDERSON — (Slowly) But you too are caught in the crazy circle… We are all caught in it….. the politicians have caught you with their clap-trap phrases… Can't you see it… they have caught us all.

MRS. SANDERSON — I suppose I am in the crazy circle now…. Poor Rosie.. poor Terry… how I loathe Ireland..! (breaks down)

MR. SANDERSON And why do you hate Ireland? Because it's been turned into a hell reverberating with clap trap phrases.. Republic! Murder Gang! .. Unionism!... Bolshevism! We are all driven mad by these parrot cries….

OFFICER (With feeling) Clap-trap phrases, by God you're right, Sir! I'm an Australian, But I've been long enough in this country to be dead sick of Unionist and Republican clap-trap alike…Orange drums and Tricolour… and now things are being a bit more fogged by 'Murder Gang' and 'anti-Bolshie' propaganda… In my country there is plenty of difference of opinion, but thank God we don't kill each other at the bidding of politicians… these poor blighters here do….. Why don't they let the winds of freedom blow across this back number of an island!

MR. SANDERSON (Breaking in violently and bitterly) Because the politicians English and Irish wont let them. Ireland have been nothing but a pawn in the Party Game as long as living men remember.

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OFFICER God blast the politicians, Irish and English too, who did this devil's work. Would to Heaven I had never set foot in Ireland.

MR. SANDERSON (Mournfully) Ireland has broken us all.

CURTAIN.