

05- Joe & Mag

MAG Call me at half past, will you? I have a bit of revision to do.

JOE A bit! You've done nothing!

MAG has dropped off again.

JOE Mag!

MAG Mm?

JOE That's all right! You go ahead and sleep! But I'm telling you: if I die of a heart attack and leave you with a dozen kids, you'll be damned sorry you haven't your GCE ordinary levels!

She sits up and stares at him. He goes on defiantly.

I'm just being practical. Nowadays you're fit for nothing unless you have an education. And you needn't stare at me like that: any qualification is better than nothing. You'll always get some sort of a job. Hennigan that teaches us *PT* — that's all he has — is GCE. And I'm telling you: I wouldn't give a shilling for your chances at the moment!

MAG And the children?

JOE What children?

MAG Who's going to look after the dozen children when I'm up at Saint Kevin's teaching physical jerks?

JOE Oh, you're very smart.

MAG And where, may I ask, did the round dozen come from all of a sudden?

JOE Cut it out, will you? You know what I meant.

MAG Indeed I do. And if you think I'm going to spend my days like big Bridie Brogan —

JOE Who's she supposed to be?

MAG She's married to a second cousin once removed of Joan O'Hara's —

JOE God, I might have known! If there's anyone I hate —

MAG — *and* after her third baby the doctor told her she'd die if she had any more; but her husband was an Irish brute and she had a fourth baby —

JOE And she died.

MAG She didn't die, smartie. But she lost her sight. And then she had a fifth baby —

JOE And she died.

MAG — and she went deaf. And she couldn't walk after the sixth. And after the seventh she had to get all her teeth out —

JOE Sounds like the Rose of Tralee.

MAG And by the time she had ten —

JOE Her husband died laughing at her.

MAG — she developed pernicious micropia.

JOE Pernicious what?

MAG I'm not in the habit of repeating myself. Anyhow, she's thirty-three now and —

JOE You made that word up.

MAG I did not.

JOE You did, Maggie.

MAG I did not.

JOE Say it again, then.

MAG I told you — I'm not in —

JOE Pernicious what?

MAG You're too ignorant to have heard of it. My father came across frequent cases of it. I don't suppose your parents ever heard of it.

As soon as she has said this, she regrets it. But she cannot retract now. JOE's banter is suddenly ended. He is quietly furious.

JOE Just what do you mean by that?

MAG What I say.

JOE I said: what do you mean by that remark?

MAG You heard me.

JOE You insulted my parents — deliberately.

MAG I was talking about a disease.

JOE You think they're nobody, don't you?

MAG You were mocking me.

JOE And you think your parents are somebody, don't you?

MAG picks a book, opens it at random, turns her back to him and begins to read.

MAG I have revision to do.

JOE Well, let me tell you, madam, that my father may be temporarily unemployed, but he pays his bills; and my mother may be a charwoman but she isn't running out to the mental hospital for treatment every couple of months. And if you think the Brennans aren't swanky enough for you, then by God you shouldn't be in such a hurry to marry one of them! (*As soon as he has said this, he regrets it. But he cannot retract now*) You dragged that out of me. But it happens to be the truth. And it's better that it should come out now than *after* we're married. At least we know where we stand . . . (*His anger is dead*) Margaret? . . . Maggie? . . . (*Stiff again*) Well, it was you that started it. And if you're going into another of your huffs, I swear to you I'm not going to be the first to speak this time.

He picks a book, opens it at random, turns his back to her, and begins to read.

WOMAN At the post-mortem on the evening of June 21 evidence of identification was given by Walter Enright. He said that the body recovered from Lough Gorm was the body of his daughter, Margaret Mary Enright.

MAN Michael Brennan identified the male body as that of his son, Joseph Michael Brennan.

WOMAN Doctor Watson said that he examined the bodies of both the deceased. There were no marks of violence on either, he said. And in his opinion — which, he submitted, was given after a hasty examination — death in both cases was due to asphyxiation.

MAN Mr. Skeeahan, the coroner, asked was there any evidence as to how both deceased fell into the water. Sergeant Finlay replied that there was no evidence.

WOMAN A verdict in accordance with the medical evidence was returned. Mr. Skeeahan and Sergeant Finlay expressed their grief and the grief of the community to the parents. And it was agreed that the inquest should be held as soon as possible because the coroner took his annual vacation in the month of July.