

shuffle that defies the rhythm of the song.)

'Mussolini will be there with his airplanes in the air,
Will you come to Abyssinia, will you come?'

Not bad, Maggie — eh?

(MAGGIE is trying to light a very short cigarette butt.)

MAGGIE. You should be on the stage, Rose.

(ROSE continues to shuffle and now holds up her apron skirt.)

ROSE. And not a bad bit of leg, Maggie — eh?

MAGGIE. Rose Mundy! Where's your modesty!

(MAGGIE now hitches her own skirt even higher than Rose's and does a similar shuffle.)

Is that not more like it?

ROSE. Good, Maggie — good — good! Look, Agnes, look!

AGNES. A right pair of pagans, the two of you.

ROSE. Turn on Marconi, Chrissie.

CHRIS. I've told you a dozen times: the battery's dead.

ROSE. It is not. It went for me a while ago.

(She goes to the set and switches it on. There is a sudden, loud three-second blast of "The British Grenadiers.")

You see! Takes aul Rosie!

(She is about to launch into a dance — and the music suddenly dies.)

CHRIS. Told you.

ROSE. That aul set's useless.

AGNES. Kate'll have a new battery back with her.

CHRIS. If it's the battery that's wrong.

ROSE. Is Abyssinia in Africa, Aggie?

AGNES. Yes.

ROSE. Is there a war there?

AGNES. Yes. I've told you that.

ROSE. But that's not where Father Jack was, is it?

AGNES. *(Patiently.)* Jack was in Uganda, Rosie. That's a different part of Africa. You know that.

ROSE. *(Unhappily.)* Yes, I do ... I do ... I know that ...

(MAGGIE catches her hand and sings softly into her ear to the same melody as the "Abyssinia" song.)

MAGGIE. 'Will you vote for De Valera, will you vote?

If you don't, we'll be like Gandhi with his goat.'

(ROSE and MAGGIE now sing the next two lines together.)

'Uncle Bill from Baltinglass has a wireless up his —
(They dance as they sing the final line of the song.)

Will you vote for De Valera, will you vote?'

MAGGIE. I'll tell you something, Rosie: the pair of us should be on the stage.

ROSE. The pair of us should be on the stage, Aggie!

(They return to their tasks. AGNES goes to the cupboard for wool. On her way back to her seat she looks out the window that looks on to the garden.)

AGNES. What's that son of yours at out there?

CHRIS. God knows. As long as he's quiet.

AGNES. He's making something. Looks like a kite.

(She taps on the window, calls 'Michael!' and blows a kiss to the imaginary child.)

Oh, that was the wrong thing to do! He's going to have your hair, Chris.

CHRIS. Mine's like a whin-bush. Will you wash it for me tonight, Maggie?

MAGGIE. Are we all for a big dance somewhere?

CHRIS. After I've put Michael to bed. What about then?

MAGGIE. I'm your man.

AGNES. *(At window.)* Pity there aren't some boys about to play with.

MAGGIE. Now you're talking. Couldn't we all do with that?

AGNES. *(Leaving window.)* Maggie!

MAGGIE. Wouldn't it be just great if we had a — *(Breaks off.)*
Shhh.

CHRIS. What is it?

MAGGIE. Thought I heard Father Jack at the back door. I hope Kate remembers his quinine.

AGNES. She'll remember. Kate forgets nothing.

(Pause.)

ROSE. There's going to be pictures in the hall next Saturday, Aggie. I think maybe I'll go.

AGNES. *(Guarded.)* Yes?

ROSE. I might be meeting somebody there.

AGNES. Who's that?

ROSE. I'm not saying.
 CHRIS. Do we know him?
 ROSE. I'm not saying.
 AGNES. You'll enjoy that, Rosie. You loved the last picture we saw.
 ROSE. And he wants to bring me up to the back hills next Sunday — up to Lough Anna. His father has a boat there. And I'm thinking maybe I'll bring a bottle of milk with me. And I've enough money saved to buy a packet of chocolate biscuits.
 CHRIS. Danny Bradley is a scut, Rose.
 ROSE. I never said it was Danny Bradley!
 CHRIS. He's a married man with three young children.
 ROSE. And that's just where you're wrong, missy — so there! *(To AGNES.)* She left him six months ago, Aggie, and went to England.
 MAGGIE. Rose, love, we just want —
 ROSE. *(To CHRIS.)* And who are you to talk, Christina Mundy! Don't you dare lecture me!
 MAGGIE. Everybody in the town knows that Danny Bradley is —
 ROSE. *(To MAGGIE.)* And you're jealous, too! That's what's wrong with the whole of you — you're jealous of me! *(To AGNES.)* He calls me his Rosebud. He waited for me outside the chapel gate last Christmas morning and he gave me this. *(She opens the front of her apron. A charm and a medal are pinned to her jumper.)*
 'That's for my Rosebud,' he said.
 AGNES. Is it a fish, Rosie?
 ROSE. Isn't it lovely? It's made of pure silver. And it brings you good luck.
 AGNES. It is lovely.
 ROSE. I wear it all the time — beside my miraculous medal. *(Pause.)* I love him, Aggie.
 AGNES. I know.
 CHRIS. *(Softly.)* Bastard.
(ROSE closes the front of her apron. She is on the point of tears. Silence. Now MAGGIE lifts her hen-bucket and using it as a dancing

partner she does a very fast and very exaggerated tango across the kitchen floor as she sings in her parodic style the words from "The Isle of Capri.")

MAGGIE. 'Summer time was nearly over;
 Blue Italian skies above.
 I said, "Mister, I'm a rover.
 Can't you spare a sweet word of love?"'

(And without pausing for breath she begins calling her hens as she exits by the back door.)

Tchook-tchook-tchook-tchook-tchook-tchook-tchook-tchook-tchookeeeeeee ...

(MICHAEL enters and stands L. ROSE takes the lid off the range and throws turf into the fire.)

CHRIS. For God's sake, I have an iron in there!

ROSE. How was I to know that?

CHRIS. Don't you see me ironing? *(Fishing with tongs.)* Now you've lost it. Get out of my road, will you!

AGNES. Rosie, love, would you give me a hand with this. *(Of wool.)* If we don't work a bit faster we'll never get two dozen pairs finished this week.

(The convention must now be established that the [imaginary] BOY MICHAEL is working at the kite materials lying on the ground. No dialogue with the BOY MICHAEL must ever be addressed directly to adult MICHAEL, the narrator. Here, for example, MAGGIE has her back to the narrator. MICHAEL responds to MAGGIE in his ordinary narrator's voice. MAGGIE enters the garden from the back of the house.)

MAGGIE. What are these supposed to be?

BOY. Kites.

MAGGIE. Kites! God help your wit!

BOY. Watch where you're walking, Aunt Maggie — you're standing on a tail.

MAGGIE. Did it squeal? — haaa! I'll make a deal with you, cub: I'll give you a penny if those things ever leave the ground. Right?