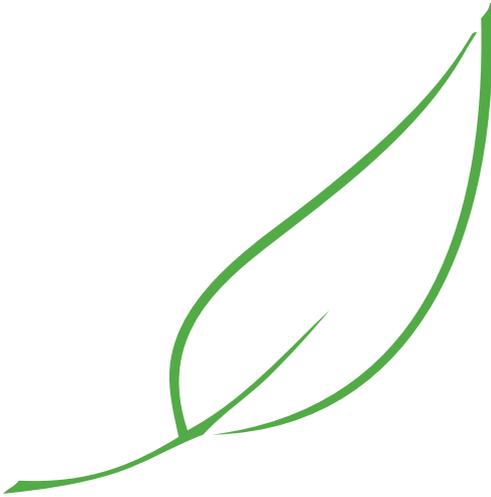


Blind Raftery and Seven Nights Of A Wake

By Robert Frankel



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BLIND RAFTERY AND THE SEVEN NIGHTS OF A WAKE

By Robert Frankel

SYNOPSIS: On his deathbed, fiddler Kevin Columcille Raftery—better known as Blind Raftery—commands his housekeeper Maudie to hold a wake in his memory for seven days. And with that, Raftery breathes his last. We flash forward to the seven-year anniversary of his wake. Four characters of unknown background—Peig, Colleen, Brian and Mark—are each mysteriously summoned to a field at midnight, committed the retelling of Raftery’s stories. Through the stories, we are introduced to a host of characters—each one channeled through our four reluctant orators. All these characters serve to shape and share the life of this extraordinary man. On this cold Irish night, they receive a beautiful understanding of innocence, experience, and death—the three pillars of a well-lived life.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3 male, 2 female)

BLIND RAFTERY (m)	The mysterious blind fiddler with faery connections. <i>(32 lines.)</i>
PEIG (f).....	Also plays MAUDIE MCCULLY and OLD NELL. <i>(87 lines.)</i>
COLLEEN (f)	Also plays EILEEN MCMANAHAN, MOLLY MALONE, DANU, and MCGINTY. <i>(78 lines.)</i>
BRIAN (m)	Also plays BRIAN the Barreler. <i>(92 lines.)</i>
MARK (m).....	Also plays PEADOR FOGARTY and FATHER O’LOONEY. <i>(62 lines.)</i>

NOTE

Whenever the play is produced, the following notice must appear on all programs, printing and advertising for the play:

"BLIND RAFTERY AND THE SEVEN NIGHTS OF A WAKE received its world premiere in a Lone Wolf Players production at Long Lake Theater on March 26, 2004."

AUTHOR'S NOTES

It is suggested that, for purposes of the playbill, you substitute the more generic "Storyteller #1 - #4" to denote the names of Peig, Colleen, Brian and Mark otherwise audiences tend to look and listen for their names which are never used in the play itself.

PROPS

- Dragon brooch
- Wool blanket
- Chunk of bread
- Crusty piece of sugared paper
- Small leather pouch
- Makeshift backpack
- Old knapsack
- Homemaker apron
- Trunk
- Stools
- Wooden stumps
- Bench
- Cast-iron caldron
- Two tall candlestick holders
- Two similar looking violins and bows
- Four liquor flasks
- Two smithy aprons and mitts

PRODUCTION NOTES

Costumes:

The simple garb of the common folk should be used for all characters. A simple hat, scarf or other addition from the trunk should be used to effect the transformation to a given storyteller.

Set/Lighting:

There are three major playing areas. DSR of course is the primary residence of the four story tellers. CS is the storyteller's seat. SL is used as the place where, in their imaginations, a given story is acted out. In the original production, the stage was a very small 8' x 18' with two 3'x 3' wings DSR and DSL. This dictated the staging greatly. With a slightly larger stage, moving the DSR storyteller "fire circle" to CS is a possibility to consider. Room for a live trio of fiddles is also a possibility, as is putting Raftery's shadow (*and perhaps a full contingent of shadowy bar/wake figures.*) against an upstage scrim.

Lighting is a critical component of this production. In particular, it is very important to have maximum control over CS and SL spotlights. Raftery can and should often appear in shadow, especially when not speaking. Cross-fades from the storyteller to Raftery and back (*for example, in the fifth night's tale.*) must be done smoothly so the audience can follow the flow - from retelling to enacting and back. In addition, I suggest DSR lights down half while a story is being told CS. Once the story is told, the lighting reverses, with CS down to half (*or near black.*) with lights up full DSR.

Sound Effects:

Clearly music is a critical to any production of this show. Specifically, solo Irish violin music should be used wherever possible. While it is tempting and possible to have music virtually throughout and underneath the entire show, I would suggest the use of it somewhat more sparingly. Each story has a climax that naturally begs for Raftery's fiddle. In addition, as a transition for the commencement of each night of the wake, the music of a full Irish band can be used, along with party crowd sounds to set the scene.

Caveat:

The stories that are woven in this play can be quite complex (*that of the second night, in particular*). It is therefore imperative that the actors take their time with the stories, making sure that their audience is truly following the flow of each tale. Toward that end, while Irish accents are essential, it's also important to ensure - for non-Irish ears - that they don't get so heavy as to make it difficult to understand.

Raftery appears throughout as a separate actor and character. When the actor playing Mark is revealed to indeed be Raftery, we want the audience to link these two, realizing that one has simply been the manifestation of the other. For this illusion, it's helpful for the actors playing Raftery and Mark to be of similar height and build, and at the end, for Mark to adopt a voice of similar timbre and pitch to that of the actor playing Raftery throughout.

From Peg Mayo, author of the book, The Seven Days of Blind Raftery's Wake

Blessings on all who have attended Blind Raftery's wake and may you never lack a song to learn or dog beside you on the long road or a sweet tussle under the goose softly quilt on a cold night. May your pocket always jingle. Keep your eye on the rainbow - particularly the space where blues goes into purple. Let there be willing hands to rub your poor tired feet and gristle enough in your bowl to satisfy your dog. Gather your rosebuds while you may - but do not disdain the full-bodied flower nor the wholesome dried hips of the faded blossom. You're our friends and family - those treasures which time has brought. This small gift is what I have to give you for the blessing of your company.

Particular gratitude to Don and David who have always believed, if not in Faery, at least in Raftery. And, with amazement, the vigor and vision of Rob Frankel, playwright.

DEDICATION

To my friends - Mark, Suzie and Peg, and my love, Amalie

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

SETTING: *Split stage. USL is Raftery's house, an old chair angles DSR, with a stool at its foot. Straw is scattered on the floor. DSR is an old cast-iron caldron with a peat fire blazing within it. In a semi-circle around the caldron, facing the Audience, are four stumps about the height of bar stools. An old trunk sits closed, next to them. DSL is an old bench that, when turned on it's side, doubles as a tree trunk. The suggestion of a fence sits next to it. USC is a small platform that will become the storyteller's place.*

AT RISE: *The stage is dark save the fire DSR. SFX: A lone fiddle strikes up a lonely, minor-key tune. After a few moments, SFX: wind is heard and appears to blow the light on in RAFTERY's house. RAFTERY, a tall, gaunt blind man, slumps in the chair, propped upright against a pillow, feet up on an old crate or footstool, dying. The lowing sound of a nearby cow is heard, followed by the soft clucking of a hen and the quiet grunt of a pig. LIGHTS FADE UP on RAFTERY who coughs, a rasping, breathy cough. SFX: Fiddle music fades out.*

RAFTERY: *(Calling out as best he can.)* Maudie? Maudie! Maudie McCully?

Townswoman PEIG shuffles in SL playing the part of MAUDIE, a woman of indeterminate age. She mumbles under her breath as she goes to RAFTERY.

PEIG: How many "Maudies" be there, Raftery? Your using my marriage-acquired name don't help me run faster to your bedside. What is it?

RAFTERY: Maudie, take my pampooties there...take 'em and...

PEIG: Your what?

RAFTERY: My shoes, woman. By god, my shoes. Take 'em there... *(Points at old, beaten ovals of cowhide hanging around bedposts at foot of bed.)* ...and take 'em apart.

PEIG: Take 'em apart? Whatever for?

RAFTERY: Do it, woman! And be quick about it. I'm closer to the next life than I am to this one.

MAUDIE takes shoes, as she digs through her pockets for her pocketknife.

PEIG: Take them apart! You're losing more than your ability to breathe, Raftery, you're losing your proclivity to think.

RAFTERY: (*Weary again.*) Just do it, Maudie. Just do it.

She digs knife into shoes and it crumples, leaving her in pain. She howls, grabbing palm.

RAFTERY: What is it Maudie? Did you use a common iron knife on my pampooties?

PEIG: Aye, it being more the tool than my few poor teeth! Now the knife has turned to sick meat and my hand has got the mark of some pagan tracin's burned in it. Can you wonder I let loose a hoot of wonderment?

RAFTERY: Ach, woman! You've taken care of me. Can't you see the breath is leavin' me? Let rest your verbal commotion and mind your manners in the presence of the dying. Faery hates iron, and it's faery as made my pampooties different than them that don't have a thick gold coin sewn in the sole.

PEIG: (*Grabbing palm starting to complain again.*) Just look at— (*Quiets down and looks at him.*) A gold coin, you say?

RAFTERY: You're a harsh woman, Maudie McCully, but you've been a good woman to me more often than not lo these six years since the feet gave out. So despite your terrible ignorance, I'll see to it that you're rewarded - should you do your duty right. Do it wrong, and the whole force of the faery will come down on you in truth.

PEIG: (*Turning over the pampooties in her hands.*) You're talking delirium, Raftery, and like as not to cause a whole troop of faery to come troopin' in - it's Father O'Looney, the priest, I'd best be gettin'.

RAFTERY: Be not so fast to oil me with the bland juice of absolution, Maudie. There's Genevieve and Cromwell and the old gray hen to deal with, let alone Sweet Deirdre and Strong Bow here. *(Reaches down and scratches the dog.)*

PEIG: What of them? If I'm to be rewarded, sure I'd like the cow, what with you having no relations and all -

RAFTERY: Listen to me wisely, old woman, and it'll be the better for you. *(Sits up, in full, deep voice suddenly.)* None of my animals shall leave here, Maudie McCully. Didn't I get Genevieve with her cinnamon-smelling milk in a fair trade for a special tune fiddled at the Rath of Shee two Midsummer Eves past? Others have their stories, but breath comes hard. That coin is yours, under certain statutes and conditions.

PEIG: Tell me, man, what is to be done to possess this coin?

RAFTERY: May your deathbed be surrounded by the ghosts of your own misdeeds, Maudie. May your grave be dug in wet sand where the horse crabs scuttle, if you fail me now. Three things you will do, keeping the pampooties in your possession at all times. When all the tasks are done, you'll find the coin safe in your own fist one morning on awakening. Meanwhile, what is needed will be provided. *(He leans back against pillow.)* First, each of the animals is to live a life of ease, with fresh water and bedding and the best of food - including fish heads every Friday for Queen Maeve, whether she has kittens or not. Woe to the man who seeks to slaughter Sweet Deirdre - a nicer piglet never grunted outside a man's door. Feed them, Maudie, see they have fresh water and what's needed for a good life, and your own plate will never be empty. Your bed won't have fleas and your well won't stink. Lay one rough hand to any of them, play the laggard on doing your duties, or let harm come their way and rat hair will fall in your soup, your knees won't leave a praying position, and you'll give birth to three newts and a frog on the day of your own death. Second, for my wake, you're to gather the neighbors seven nights running. Each night, seven songs will be sung in memoriam, seven kinds of cakes eaten, seven glasses of the Good Stuff drunk in toast to my blessed memory, and stories told each night that show off my character in a pleasin' light. Seven old women will keen as though sending all their sons into exile.

Through it all, the fiddlers of the countryside will stand at one side and play songs that fit the stories, so that all may wonder at the wake of Blind Raftery and remember my doings at least until they're planted themselves. (*RAFTERY coughs and MAUDIE'S eyes roll at the enormity of the request.*) For your part, Maudie, you are to see no plate goes empty, no mug allowed to show bottom. Let there be three bowls of rough cut smoke, clay pipes aplenty for picking up coals to light the sweet odors. Pile the sods high so the fire doesn't die the whole time, and get three brass lamps for them as can see and ten stools, each with a lambswool cushion. The stools are for the old folks. See that no able-bodied youth should crowd them off. Do this, Maudie, and your hair will shine like a young girl's. Your skin will pull itself up tight again holding your inside stuffings together in the taut, pleasing fashion of a maiden of sixteen, and her ripe for marrying. Fail, and your dugs will bounce against your knees, your hide will grow long quills, and every breath of your chest will whistle a banshee chorus tuning up for a long haunt across the mountains on All Saint's Eve. Will you do this, Maudie? Will you?

PEIG: (*Considers her choices. Gulps, then.*) I'll do it Raftery, you can count on me.

RAFTERY: (*Sinks into chair exhausted.*) The third thing then is to call Father O'Looney. It'll make him swell with righteous satisfaction to do his duty and save an old sinner - or so he thinks. Besides, he knows a story or two to tell at my wake.

SFX: MUSIC FADES OUT. It turns quiet.

PEIG: Raftery? (*Shakes his hand.*) Raftery. (*Reaches under chair and pulls out a bottle of liquor. She holds it under his nose, and then to his mouth, but he does not react. She takes a small sip herself.*) Oh dear.

SFX: Fiddle MUSIC UP. She bustles about preparing to leave putting on a sweater and wrapping a scarf over her head. She takes one last look at RAFTERY, genuflects, and moves DSL and pretends to EXIT. BLACK OUT. RAFTERY exits. SFX: MUSIC OUT and night sounds commence. It is now seven years later. LIGHTS FADE UP SL as PEIG re-enters, younger than Maudie, carrying an old bag and looking around as if searching for something. She removes a note from her pocket, checks it once more, then puts it away. She paces off seven steps, counting silently to herself, and ends DSR at the fire, examining the place. BLACKOUT SL as LIGHTS UP DSR. SFX: Outdoor noises up. She sits on one of the stumps and warms her hands by the fire. After a moment, BRIAN enters USR, also looking around strangely. He has a note in one hand, and is catching fireflies in his other hand, releasing them as he counts them under his breath. He does not notice PEIG at the fire until he catches his seventh, and final, firefly DSR.

BRIAN: *(As he catches another.) ...six....you may be fireflies...but I swear you're Raftery's own minions, y'are! (Watches the zigs and zags, and finally swoops.) ...seven! There ya crazy old--(Looks up and notices PEIG.) AHH!*

PEIG: *(Standing.) Oh dear!*

BRIAN: I'm sorry, lass, ya surprised me. And it's been an entirely surprising night right up until then!

PEIG: I know what you mean. *(Both are awkward for a moment. Then....)* Are you...would you be...

BRIAN: ...at the behest of one Kevin Columcille Raftery?

PEIG: Aye?

BRIAN: Aye. Uh, pleased to know you. *(Wipes hand on pants, then reaches it out.)*

PEIG: *(Shaking it.)* The same. I'd introduce myself proper but er the note...

BRIAN: *(Taking out a tattered note from his packet.)* Aye, the blessed note says... *(Reading.)* "...arrive at half past the stroke of midnight for the regaling of my wake. And nary a word as to your name or who you are until the last of the tale is spun..."

PEIG: *(Taking out her note.)* Mine actually had a slightly different--

COLLEEN enters DSL, note in hand, looking for, picking, and counting seven four-leaf clovers.

COLLEEN: *(Stooping to collect another.)* ...five...of all the things for a grown woman to be doin' at the bewitchin' hour, Raftery, I swear... *(Finds another.)* Six! Finding four-leaf clovers in the dead o' night...ugh! Where's the last o' you buggers and I can be done with this ill-begotten treasure hunt and make my way back...aha! Seven! There now...*(Has arrived DSR and looks up.)* ...oh!

BRIAN: Be you on a scavenger hunt set in place by one, Blind Raftery?

COLLEEN: *(Warily.)* Aye. The seven-year anniversary of his wake. At half-past midnight. *(Eying them very suspiciously, and immediately starts rummaging through her pockets and bra. Talking as she digs.)* And I warn ya! If ya be thinking thoughts of plunder...and pillage...and other sordid affairs of the cursed...now where did I put it?...if you think you can take advantage of a...of a...woman all alone, I brought along a little something that might make ya...think twice...!...*(Sighs with frustration.)* Oh bother...*(Resigned, pulls out a skeleton key and aims it at them. She gathers herself up.)* And don't think I won't use it!

BRIAN: Well now, you can put away your miniature rack-o'-bones there, and relax... *(To PEIG.)* ...can't she?

PEIG: Oh yes, yes. You see we're all of us - all three - here for the retelling of Raftery's wake. That is, if you...?

COLLEEN: *(After a moment, relaxes and hurries to the fire to warm herself.)* Yes, yes. I've been called on the same fool's errand - seven years to the day. So here we are and -

BRIAN: *(Hears something.)* Sssh!

THEY listen and hear slow crunching footsteps from USL.

PEIG: Another of us?

BRIAN: Could be.

COLLEEN: How many eedjits does it take to retell a blind fiddler's wake?

BRIAN: *(Thinking it's a joke.)* Wait. I've heard that one...

COLLEEN: *(Whacks him on shoulder.)* Gor!

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MARK enters USL, easily the eldest of the four, with a creak to each ginger step. He moves slowly to the group.

MARK: So we're all of us here, are we?

COLLEEN: Here for the awardin' of the Saint Christopher's medal, are ya?

MARK: Oh, I don't think that'll be happening tonight. We've got a story to retell, haven't we now.

COLLEEN: "Haven't we now"? Well la-dee-da.

PEIG: Well you're in the right place then.

BRIAN: And the sooner the better for the retelling, I say. That old man was mysterious when he was living, but now that he's dead...

SFX: Wind blows. All look around and eventually sit.

COLLEEN: Well. We're all here then I suppose.

PEIG: Uh, there's one other piece of business. *(She looks at them, then removes an old violin case from her bag, and places it on a stump. They stare at it.)*

COLLEEN: By god, is that Raftery's?! Did ya steal it then?

BRIAN: *(Looking around fearfully.)* Good God, woman, the faeries will set upon ya like sharks on a whale carcass!

MARK: Still yourself and let the woman speak.

PEIG: Tis with Raftery's blessin'.

BRIAN: Raftery's blessin'??

PEIG: That's what I'm saying - tis with Raftery's blessing that I come by this.

COLLEEN: But how? It being set beneath the ground -

PEIG: - for precisely seven years. And just as he told me -

COLLEEN: Raftery?!

PEIG: No, the burning bush!

MARK: Let her tell her story now. Go on.

PEIG: Of course, Raftery, else why are any of us here markin' the seventh anniversary of his wake, will ya tell me? His note... *(Waves it in air.)* ...his note to me had me at his graveside at the stroke o' midnight...

BRIAN: *(Crossing himself.)* Sweet Mary...

PEIG: Just so, as the full moon shone down on his grave, I heard what sounded like a choir of angels emanating from the ground. A display o' lights to put the devil's own fireworks to shame caused me to shield my eyes. And when they dissipated, I lowered my arm. And there, restin' gentle right where Raftery's bosom would be laying - only six feet under of course - was his fiddle.

They all look at the box again and gulp.

BRIAN: Well, what d'ya figger we ought to do now?

COLLEEN: Now? *(Whacks BRIAN's arm.)* Whadya think, you great goon?! Twas Raftery's last wish that the story of his wake be retold, in the presence of his very fiddle by four er... *(Looks around at them and at her note.)* ..."people of background". Under moonlight. On the seventh anniversary of his wake.

BRIAN: Well, there's the rub, isn't it.

PEIG: What's that?

BRIAN: Well, I mean "four people of background". What in the name o' St. Peter does that mean? I want to know why I'm here in this god-forsaken forest at a time o' night when I should be sleepin' cozy. Why *me*?

Pause. They look at him, then hesitantly.

MARK: I know why I'm here.

PEIG: Aye, I've a suspicion of my role, too.

COLLEEN: I've a notion.

BRIAN: Oh. Well. I s'pose then I've an idea too. But—

MARK: *(Tapping his head.)* You're using your head too much, lad.
(Calmly, slowly.) We've each of us been chosen for the end.

PEIG: The end?

MARK: Aye, the end. At the end of the tellin', each one present is to lay a hand on Raftery's fiddle. He promised he'd pass on something of importance from heaven—or wherever he found himself—that would bring a blessing of a peculiar nature to them as hears. That's what the note said.

PEIG: *(Indicating note.)* Aye, that's what mine said too.

BRIAN: And me.

COLLEEN: Aye.

BRIAN: But who sent the notes? And what's going to occur when we've finished? And how...

MARK taps his head again and BRIAN stops. All pause reflecting, expectant, observing their surroundings.

COLLEEN: *(To BRIAN.)* Well, go on then you.

BRIAN: Me?

COLLEEN: Well, someone's got to start the strange tale of this strange man.

BRIAN: But...me?

PEIG: I'll start. I perhaps know the start of it better than you others.

COLLEEN: Wait. *(She moves to trunk.)* There's a trunk here. Whaddya reckon...? *(She opens it mid-question. It's full of old clothes, and she pulls out a scarf.)*

BRIAN: Clothes.

COLLEEN: Tis open, ya fool.

BRIAN: No, I meant -

PEIG: Tis for the tellin', don't ya see.

MARK: Smart girl.

PEIG: We're to don them as it suits.

COLLEEN: So it's Samhain... *(Pronounced SOW-in, and akin to Halloween.)* ...now, is it, the time for puttin' on costumes! Where did you say you was from?

MARK: Ah that would be against the rules now, wouldn't it.

BRIAN: Ach, just do it woman, and let's be on with it. The air is chilly and full of... *(Shivers.)* ...portent.

COLLEEN: "Portent"! La-dee-da. Alright then, let's have it.

MARK: Go to it then, macushla. Start us off on the tale of Blind Raftery's wake.

SFX: One final fiddle chord is struck, and then MUSIC OUT.

PEIG: *(Clears throat. To them and eventually including the Audience.)* Well, when Raftery shut his trap and couldn't be roused even with a promise of a mouthful of the Good Stuff, Maudie...uh...*(Indicates that she will play Maudie and dons outfit as before while she talks.)* ...knew he was dead or as good as dead and called on a higher power than herself. "Father O'Looney!" *(Smacks MARK who stands.)* "Father O'Looney!"

BRIAN: That's it for him, is it Father?

MARK: *(Rubbing his hands in an ecstasy of satisfaction.)* Him as came to salvation with his last breath - some will say it was a sham he made of repentance - going on his heathen ways until there wasn't an ounce of turnip juice left in him. I say better the last ditch effort than no effort at all. Hell's a long time and Raftery was no fool in the end. For myself, I think old Raftery will fiddle his way out of purgatory faster than Tim Gilligan found the river when the wasps came out of his thatch.

MARK sits again. COLLEEN begins dressing as MARY EILEEN.

PEIG: Maudie and three other countrywomen prepared the body. There was nothing left of Kevin Columcille Raftery but a rack of chicken bones, a gray pelt, and a hank of white hair with his bald pate rounding out the top. What was it like, they wondered, to live all your life with your head in a coal sack, no light entering your eye sockets, never knowing the look of your own body or of white moonlight on the sea?

COLLEEN crosses SL to join PEIG. THEY head DSL to sit on bench, talking.

PEIG: *(As MAUDIE.)* He wasn't always blind. Until he was seven, he had the colors of the countryside as his instructors. 'Twas only the smallpox cursed him with ninety-seven years of wandering in the dark -

COLLEEN: Brought the curse on himself, I heard.

BRIAN: That would be Mary Eileen McManahan, the gossip.

PEIG: No! How would a lad no taller than your apron pocket bring a curse on himself?

COLLEEN: (*With a sly grin.*) I'm saving that for the wake. Sure and a grander wake than Blind Raftery's is hard to imagine.

PEIG: (*Full of importance.*) I'll be looking to that. Raftery charged me to see to the supplies and supplies there will be in great supply, if you follow my meaning.

MARK: Now word of Raftery's wake began to spread like a slick o' oil on the water. And the old women, casting about in the litter of their minds, sorted stories and half-remembered happenings they'd known themselves or heard about from their mothers or the woman across the field, seeking the choicest story to tell at the wake of Kevin Columcille Raftery. Meanwhile, they dressed his stiffening body in the black wool coat, vest, and pleated trousers they found on a hook on the wall, though none had ever seen Raftery in naught but brown corduroy. Oddly, the clothes smelled of cinnamon and lavender.

COLLEEN: (*As MARY EILEEN, looking meaningfully at PEIG.*) It's as if a woman's hand touched these duds—Blind Raftery ne'er smelled before of aught but smoke, boiled cabbage, dog, and the musty dust of unwashed old man.

SFX: Party MUSIC UP. PEIG discards Maudie's clothes in trunk, then moves US, returning with two standing candlesticks and a stool as MARK continues. She places stool on platform USC, with a candlestick on either side, and lights them. She returns to the fire.

MARK: The wake of Kevin Columcille Raftery was set to begin, when the sun sank in its hidyhole behind Inishmore, following the burial. People walked from Ballyvaughn, Miltown Malbay, and even Quilty for no one wanted to miss the memorial wake of Blind Raftery of Lobster Glen in the Parish of Lisdoonvarna. Raftery's hut, simple to the point of meanness, expanded as best it could to accommodate the gathering congregation. Dogs sat alongside children on the hard-pounded dirt floor and the place grew warm from the breathing of all - cow, humans, dogs, and, some said, vaporous beings in the shadows. The stories began when the nursing babes had fallen asleep under their mothers' shawls and the courting couples were unnaturally quiet in the shadowy rafters of the little loft.

RAFTERY appears, backlit in shadows USL. SFX: MUSIC OUT.

PEIG: The first time I heard Blind Raftery lift a fiddle I was a gosheen still hiding behind the petticoats of Mother, thumb in mouth, and no thought of education beyond learning the place the hen's nest was hid. And the animals with him!

BRIAN: The dog he had with him that first day I ever saw him was called CuChulain [*pronounced "Coo-KULL-in".*] after the champion hero of the old days. It's one thing as could always be said about Raftery - he had a way with the animals and birds.

COLLEEN: (*Still as MARY EILEEN MCMANAHAN.*) I remember, plain as the wart on the bishop's nose the first time I saw the fiddler. There stood Blind Raftery, looking like a wandering Jew, his parrot on one shoulder and a ferret sticking its head out of his coat pocket and the big black and white mongrel with one blue eye watching out ahead of him and never steering him wrong. It was a sight, you can believe that. "Look, Ma," I shouted, "the Angel of Death!", and fell into a faint. I'd taken the parrot for a heavenly being and who's to blame me? Later, I learned - and passed on as Christian truth - that uncommon things happened when Raftery sawed his fiddle.

LIGHTS FADE OUT on RAFTERY.

MARK: And that's how the first night of the blind fiddler's wake passed. A lot of flappin' of teeth on teeth.

BRIAN: And in some cases, gums on gums!

MARK: Mind your elders now, boyo. In any event, the good folks from Sligo to Ballybunion spent that first night then reacquainting themselves with each other, and with the plentiful cakes which were supplied with somewhat less plentiful hospitality by the clenched-mouthed Maudie McCully. (*Rubbing hands gleefully.*) Now, it was on the second night that the tales began, tales that –

LIGHTS FADE UP on USC storyteller stool. COLLEEN stands and strolls SR.

COLLEEN: I remember the second night of Blind Raftery's wake as if it happened yesterday. It was held in Maudie McCully's house with Big Tom paying the lofty host, directing the fiddlers where to stand and altogether making a fine show of spending the mysterious coin that kept welling up in Maudie's apron pocket. The word was out everywhere that a grand time was to be had and...

SFX: Party MUSIC FADES UP and under.

COLLEEN: ...still they came. Some listened at the doors and windows, there being no space left by the hearth, against the wall, in the cow's stall nor up the loft.

MARK: By then, Maudie McCully had resigned herself to playing nursemaid to Raftery's menagerie of creatures. But in the piece of Maudie's mind that she reserved for private cogitation, she wondered at the kind of man Blind Raftery was who, after 104 years on this good earth, would secure a life of ease for worthless, dumb animals at the cost of a dear woman like herself.

BRIAN dons old man's hat and scarf preparing as BRIAN DOOGAN.

PEIG: (*Standing and announcing, as MAUDIE.*) Hush and attend. We'll have respect here for Brian the Barreler - Lord knows, he's due for some.

MARK: The pipers wheezed their last and the keening old women wiped spittle from their lips, while courting couples settled in the shadows, scuffling and giggling indecently.

SFX: LIGHTS to half DSR. MUSIC OUT. BRIAN takes storyteller seat, mug in hand, myopic and itching from crown to foot.

BRIAN: It's penitence I'm doing, climbing up before your superior expressions. I know what you say about me when I'm passing the time of day in sleep on the floor of the Daffodil Pub and Grub. You think yourselves great wits and greater heroes to glue a coin to the counter, the better to torment a poor man with poorer eyesight. Your majesties may be wondering how old Brian Doogan, worthless and harmless besides, got his pathetic personage into so prominent a position as this chair. Penitence and nothing else - I done a wrong and it was Blind Raftery who caught me. To escape punishment, as any prudent man would do, I agreed to his terms—as Maudie McCully has done - taking part of my purgatory in this life rather than the one to come. The penitence laid upon me was that I'd tell a certain double tale at Raftery's wake. Was I to do it, he said, he'd see to it that no more would fleas molest me, the derision of neighbors would no longer follow as slime follows a snail, and I'd lessen the vicissitudes of purgatory. Well. He was a long time dying! And I've been a long time waiting so as to be released from the fleas and the neighbors. But I'm pledged to do his bidding to escape the narrow confines of Purgatory, which I'm bound is no worse than this world, except that the stout's been watered and the fleas are bigger. But this is all preface and introduction. The tale is this: It was a spring morning, cool with the scent of flowers and a hint of heat to come, when I first saw McGinty's daughter. (*COLLEEN grabs clothing and EXITS US to prepare. BRIAN steps down off platform. As he does, he becomes younger, turning his scarf into a belt, and hat into a pouch.*) I was a young buck, full of the rising juices of life, and I thought there weren't enough places to put them. I was selling pins and needles to the women of the house and ornaments for girls' hair—which brought me into the kitchen of every cabin I chose to enter. Not only into the kitchen, if you gather my meaning. More than once a man was fishing on the sea, and I was dipping my line in other waters and reeling in the bait, leader dragging, and the fish flopping on the hook. (*Stands and moves SL.*) So, there I was, striding like a duke down the lane when I saw McGinty's cabin... (*LIGHTS UP SL.*) ...newly whitewashed and thatched, and all the farm implements were hanging neatly from nails, according to size. On the window sills

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were clay pots of pink geraniums. The door path was freshly swept. I've ever had an eye for a neat place—liking a certain symmetry. A woman, too, should balance, if you following my meaning, from side to side and fore to aft. Too much fore and you're minded of a cow-seal; too little aft and it's a weasel that comes to mind.

COLLEEN hums as she brings chair out USL in the dark, setting the scene, and eventually sitting as McGinty's Daughter on stool, carding wool.

BRIAN: McGinty's place was as neat as one my pins, every aspect pleasing. It can be no surprise that I turned up the path and, as I did, I heard singing. I'm in luck, I thought, for it was a girl's voice twirling through a lover's lament from the Old Days.

COLLEEN: (*Singing through sniffles.*) A false love is the love of men—
Woe to the woman who does their whim!
Though their fine talk is sweet,
Their hearts are hidden deep within.

Do not believe their secret whisper,
Do not believe the close squeeze of hands,
Do not believe their sweet-talking kiss;
Tis through giving my love that I'm sick of my man's.

SHE continues humming

BRIAN: (*Listens to the song's start for a verse or two, then continues as singing continues in background.*) Blood rose up my cheeks as I listened and peeked carefully into the cabin through the hedge of geraniums. Carding wool as she sang sadly and sweetly, McGinty's daughter was the very vision of a young man's dream. She looked a ripe seventeen, and I was but twenty myself. "Halloo. Is the woman of the house about?"

COLLEEN: Hello to you then, young sir. Don't mind my singing, I beg ye.

BRIAN: I didn't. I'm new to town, a mere vendor of baubles, and I wonder if you could find it in your ample...heart... to spare a weary traveler a wee sup of food to tide him on his lonesome journey. (*Reaches into his pockets perfunctorily.*) I'd be happy to pay what I'm sure would be a pittance compared to the savoryness of the repast you—

COLLEEN: Ach! I won't hear of it. If McGinty's daughter can't offer a stranger welcome without being paid, the McGintys would be shamed 'til doomsday. (*She busies herself miming the preparation of a meal.*)

BRIAN: (*Sitting SL.*) As she hustled about, dishing up dumplings and cutting the rasher of bacon, I plied her with simple-sounding questions calculated to scout out her fortifications. She answered, all unmindful of my eyes on her reartidy while she bent over the table to straighten the white linen cloth. At last the ground being laid, if you gather my meaning, I asked her casual, as if I hadn't heard her sad song, "And have you a sweetheart, pretty one?"

COLLEEN bursts into tears and buried face in apron. BRIAN moves to her.

BRIAN: (*Putting arm around her, comfortingly.*) Oh, oh, oh...(*Sitting her on his lap, enjoying big breaths of her perfume as he feigns empathy.*) Oh!

After a moment, COLLEEN sits up abruptly in realization and jumps off his lap.

COLLEEN: Just so did Hugh Cochran behave before he ran off with the brewer's daughter - and me thinking he was my own true love. Perfidious man!

BRIAN: I didn't know if she meant the runaway or myself, but her horror at my gender was plain enough. "Is it all that wear trousers that you throw away like chaff from the barley or only the hare-brained Cochran who traded grace for gelt?"

COLLEEN: *(Through tears.)* The insidious Mr. Hugh Cochran was not even the first to take my heart and abscond with it! When I was but fourteen, twas a sunny May morning. A mossy pool in the woods offered me a refreshing chance to bathe the grime of winter off my skin - a deep woods, I would have you know, an unknown pool of water far off the well-trodden path! Naturally, I slipped off my clothes and dove in.

BRIAN: Quite naturally.

COLLEEN: Well up I'd come from the cooling dive to the bottom of the pool, when there stood Mickey O'Neil, standing in the bushes, fairly entranced with my...*(Looses a sob.)* ...wet hair! *(She regains her composure.)* Mickey came by that night and asked my Da if courting me would be in good order. I crossed myself with pleasure when it was 'yes' he was saying! Mickey was a tall, well-built spar of a man, rugged and able, yet nicely controlled in his wooing. At first, he was very fond of stroking my hair - I think because of the glimpse of it he'd gotten in the pool that day. But then there was his solid arm around my waist. And his smile...and the kisses on my neck. *(She giggles at the remembrance.)* He had me thinking of the babes we'd have, playing on the cabin floor. Then...*(Turns cold and retrieves from apron a letter written on scrap. Hands it to BRIAN.)* ...I received this...in the mail!

BRIAN: *(Reading.)* "Forgive me, Consolata, but when you read this, I'll be on board a great ship, on my way to America to build a railroad. You're the best thing about Ireland and I'll never see you again. Say a prayer for a sinner. Sincerely, Michael Dunne O'Neil" *(He returns to storyteller platform, reverting to old man demeanor and garb. LIGHT fades to half on COLLEEN, To Audience....)* That was the whole of it. With the evidence at hand, I set out to do a fearful thing. Knowing she'd been betrayed twice before, I reckoned to make her trust me so that I could add a third. By cutting hay for old man McGinty, I earned a place at the table and the time of day from his daughter. On the second night, I showed her the tear in the knee of my trousers - put there, if the truth must be told, by my own knife a-purpose and deliberate - and asked if she knew mending. For trade, I offered her a folder of needles, all with golden eyes in an array like a cathedral pipe organ. McGinty's daughter said it was too much and offered to embroider a flower

on the pocket of my shirt to make it all be fair. Pushed to the corner, I agreed. Come the third night...

LIGHTS UP FULL SL as COLLEEN moves to him. He transforms to younger man again.

COLLEEN: How is it a strong young man such as yourself wanders the by-ways without calf or child or wife and with no donkey for plowing?

BRIAN: Crocodile tears filled my eyes as I raised them and looked full into her round-cheeked face. I recited her an epic - acted a drama - performed an opera - polluting the air with a magnitude of extravagant lies, exaggerated half-truths, and unmitigated artifice. It was a tale as would test the powers of the bards of old to better for its rank self-serving. I manufactured conditions, gave birth to a round dozen characters, all bound on blighting my existence, and described a faultless noble hero beset by tests, trials, challenge, and curses - all of which I'd dealt with smartly. All but the last. (*To COLLEEN.*) I've traveled the byways, beset on every hand by adversity. The cold! The hot! The hunger! All have only strengthened my character and refined my sensibilities. But now, today, this moment, grief has slit my courage and all hope has poured out, like good grain from a ruptured sack.

COLLEEN: You poor dear man! Such suffering and noble rising above the awful anguish. I'll make you another cup of tay and fry up an apple fritter to sooth yer pain.

BRIAN: That's fine enough for a sweet womanly thought, but it's not my stomach that is hurting from the irreconcilable misery of my unfortunate situation. Er, have you a dab of clotted cream for the fritter? And a bit of cinnamon? Though it won't heal what ails me, it will be a small comfort.

COLLEEN: Sure, and I'll get right to it. But, what is the cause of this sudden suffering?

BRIAN: I'm a-feared to speak the name of the curse, you bein' so sweet and all. There is no hope. No hope at all. Why spread the sorrow?

COLLEEN: Not all men are vile violators of virtue and innocence! The priest and my own father are exempt and surely others are too. Like yourself, perhaps.

BRIAN: Well then. The terrible trouble is...my love for you. And me with no chance of winning your affection after Hugh Cochran and the other's awful misuses of your innocence. (*LIGHTS FADE on COLLEEN. To Audience....*) The truth was the dagger of lust had cut off my humanity and was throbbing with reckless intensity to have its way, the devil take the hindmost. The upshot of it was, she agreed to meet me in the apple orchard just after dark to study the messages said to be found in the stars, put here expressly for guidance in uncertain situations. I was well pleased with the way the lay of the land was going and saw no reason to examine my conscience. Another part of me was speaking with such urgency that all above my collar - or maybe my belt - was in darkness and but one end obsessed me.

COLLEEN spreads blanket DSL and lies down. BRIAN who moves to join her.

BRIAN: McGinty's daughter obediently lay down on the blanket I'd thought to bring to assist in our star study. The fish, gasping with star-struck delight, was grassed on the bank - or, more precisely - under the apple tree, when I first met Blind Raftery. I was nuzzling my muzzle into the tender place below her ear, when what should I feel but a cold nose against the self-same spot on myself! Though the aroma of clean young girl and apple blossoms had been regaling my nostrils, a new smell commenced - and more on the order of old groundhog and bad teeth. Previously the only sound ruffling the surface of the night was crickets creaking in the dark and a nightingale bursting his throat in courtship song. The new noise was more on the order of grumbling and growling, with a hint of an organ heaving up for a full hullabaloo in the understory. It put me off star-study, fearsomely. (*Leaping to feet.*) "Bears! The bears of the Old Days have returned to scourge the land!"

They are trapped SL against stone wall. They struggle with each other, first one than the other getting closest to the wall and away from the dog. COLLEEN loses.

MARK: *(Comments to PEIG and Audience.)* Properly speaking, it was the cur from the dark reaches of Hades, that Raftery called Formonian, that met Brian - not Blind Raftery.

MARK and PEIG humorously make deep snarling noises under this next dialogue.

BRIAN: *(Praying skyward as COLLEEN sobs quietly.)* "Saint Failbhe *(pronounced FAWL-vyeh.)*, patron saint of the forest, save me!"

RAFTERY enters USR.

BRIAN: It was no saint who called away the brute, poised as he was to go for my throat, snarling down deep in his chest like the simmering denizens of hell facing a three-fold increase in the fuel under their cauldron.

LIGHTS UP on RAFTERY.

RAFTERY: Attaboy, Formonian, have you sniffed out a gombeen man on his way to rob a widow?

BRIAN: *(Fighting off trepidation, and easing onto his high horse as he speaks.)* Yer quick as an interfering old biddy to pass judgment on all you don't understand! Ye stand there, darking out the stars and sic'ing yer snarlyow on an innocent girl and her gentle protector. Let me, a poet and orator of considerable renown, educate you, man. Though violent invective is rare, 'tis true it has its place as when love is thwarted or business disrupted. A gifted speaker, as myself, who speaks from the pure love of the liquid flow of language across the meadows of his mind, finds inspiration in peace and war, love and despair - and it is despair I am feeling with this beast that was bred in unholy union the like of which would stagger the senses. What sort of man, I ask, would find companionship with such a misalliance of nature? What sort of

man would take the sweet love from an innocent maid, learning the ways of the world from an accomplished traveler such as myself, and twist it to ragged ruin for his own nasty entertainment?

RAFTERY: (*Clicks to dog.*) Here Formonian. (*As he pets dog, he scowls at BRIAN ominously.*) What a man accuses another man of says more about the first than the second.

BRIAN: What do you mean to be saying, old man? Are you denying that your passing with your foul flea farm nipping around the countryside, has destroyed a sublime moment of unutterable rhapsodical melding of humankind and the symphony of the stars? Can you deny that the peace of the night was broken by yourselves and not by such quaint country creatures as ourselves? Can you deny—

RAFTERY: Stop! No more, you blatherskite, Professor of Codology, you third-class eedjit, and fluxing bla'ghard! What melding you had in mind was not with the stars, of that I'm sure, and your unwarranted colloquy catches my attention like donkey leavings in the pudding. You'll sit and Consolata Mary McGinty will come by my side without further ado.

COLLEEN sobs, and moves to RAFTERY who grabs a handful of air and blows it magically at BRIAN. He suddenly begins scratching himself violently as RAFTERY laughs.

BRIAN: Ahh!! There's a...a swarm o' blood-thirsty invaders jumping off the Formonian shore, as it were. Ahh!

RAFTERY: Be still! My name is Kevin Columcille Raftery, you vacuous mock of an orator! To escape double-time in purgatory, you'll tell this story at my wake. In the meanwhile, you're to be afflicted with fleas, and a relentless swiller of all spirituous liquids without regard to maker, place, or salvation. As such you'll be known as Brian the Barreler and should be wary of being buried in the same stout keg you're bound to drown in. No woman will smile on you...

RAFTERY exits USR. COLLEEN returns to DSR. BRIAN moves to storyteller chair, once again the old man.

BRIAN: ...No woman will smile on me and respect will always be two lengths down the road ahead. Until I tell the double tale at his wake. (*Gulps.*) I've near told half of it and I'm half released. Not only was I to tell the fate that befell Consolata Mary as a result of my puerile attentions, which I've now nearly done, but additionally I was to tell the story of Raftery's purest sweetheart. But that's for another night. Before I end for this night, I'm enjoined to beg you say a prayer for McGinty's daughter, now gone to her reward eight years past. You can find her grave in the burial grounds of the Convent of the Holy Innocents, under the headstone reading, 'Consolata Mary: Abbess.' She said she got her vocation at the moment I peeled her clinging hand from my arm. She'd never understand the ways of men and would do better in life with a gathering of like-minded women. Oh, it's penitence I was due, driving that quick-thrashing fish of a woman to religion. (*Rises scratching, and returns to DSR. LIGHTS FADE CS, and go UP DSR.*)

PEIG: And so ended the second night of the wake of Blind Raftery.

MARK: You look pensive, darlin'. What thoughts are coursing through your brain pan?

PEIG: Ach, tis nothing. Just that...the takin' advantage of a situation—whether human...or beast—tis a lesson for me. (*Quickly adding.*) And others.

MARK: Aye. Tis.

SFX: Party MUSIC UP and under.

BRIAN: Uh, shall we...? (*Clears throat.*) Now the wake—well, twas as if Raftery were a stone slung in a puddle, setting expanding rings of commotion, agitating the populace, and causing them to travel to Lobster Glen for the telling of tales in his name. The third night of Blind Raftery's wake so far out-succeeded the previous extravaganzas as Easter services out-draw those of bleak February.

COLLEEN: Indeed it did.

BRIAN: The upshot of it was that the wake was moved, and Raftery's funeral candlesticks with it, to the Daffodil Pub and Grub! (*LIGHTS up CS, perhaps a different color to indicate the Pub.*) Usurped from its common humanitarian function, Father O'Looney felt obliged to give us dire warnings about our conduct in our transplanted location.

COLLEEN prepares herself as the child MOLLY MALONE and heads to storyteller's seat.

PEIG: Aye, before he drank seven pints of the Daffodil's good stuff and wouldn't stop singin' Tur-a Lur-a Lur-a!

They laugh. MARK stands, as FATHER O'LOONEY. He starts to speak, then looks off toward the music and clears his throat. SFX: MUSIC DIES.

MARK: You'll take silence like a dose of bitters and acknowledge me as your physician. The first bitter swallow is giving heedance to the transformation of the Daffodil Pub and Grub to that of the annex of Raftery's own hovel. The second gulp is that, as such, you're to conduct yourselves as if ladies and gentlemen here, whatever yer natural impulse.

BRIAN: All nodded wisely. When the cakes were eaten and the old women ragged from keening, a child named Molly Malone bobbed her head respectfully and took the seat between the candlesticks.

SFX: MUSIC OUT. LIGHTS FADE DSR.

COLLEEN: Last summer it was for me to watch over the flock of geese mother keeps for making the softly quilts. A fox had captured two of the best birds and carried them off from the pond where, given any choice, they sleep. I was driving the gaggle of geese up the hill from the pond to take shelter in the byre yard over night when I heard a dog bark. (*BRIAN barks heartily.*) It was a polite bark. (*PEIG barks more pleasantly.*) Kind of a halloo. (*MARK barks "Haroo?".*) But the sound alarmed me. Dogs are fierce at scattering geese - and I was having a mean bad awful

time as it was. I'd get six geese ahead of me and seventh would be fluttering on the fringes, plotting escape. The big gander would twist that big serpent head of his over his back and curse harshly at me, in goose. (*Other actors honk in background, with an occasional bark or hiss.*) No one with the wits of a goose—which are few enough indeed - would be willingly caught unprotected in such a place after dark.

RAFTERY ENTERS DSL in the shadows.

COLLEEN: When the dog barked, I was passing by the west side of the faery circle, keeping an eye on the rebellious geese. (*She stands and heads DSC.*) It was then I first saw Blind Raftery, though I didn't know his name at that moment. He was heaped up against the black sky like a Norman tower, playing his fiddle for the frogs and stars. Finn McCool, the barking dog, sat at the end of a limp leash, watching the world for the blind fiddler. Terror-stricken I was and stopped herding the geese with my long staff to stare at the ghost made of solid shadows. The gander, seizing his chance, spread his wings and charged toward me with single-minded determination. The geese, taking heart from their leader's example, gathered 'round him and stretched their necks out along the level of the ground, and made weapons of their thunderous beating wings. One oddity about me is that when I'm filled with strong feeling - dread or delight - it is my way to sing, rather than chatter on as a common person would be expected to do. More peculiar yet, the songs that come to my throat often have words that by-pass my brain pan and are as much surprise to me as to those who hear. Standing erect, threatened on one side by the faery ring, straight ahead by charging geese, and loomed over by what I took to be a faery fiddler and his dog, I began a prayerful song of my own terrorized invention: (*Mumbles "St. Kevin protect me" several times to herself. Eventually it turns into a song. Fiddle music, either live by the actor playing RAFTERY, or recorded, joins second verse.*)

St. Kevin protect me
 Danger hangs above
 Fear congeals my blood

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And there is no hope in me.

Ferocious birds would flail me
 Faery wrath threatens to scorn
 Fiddler's magic would transform
 St. Kevin, protect me.

The fiddler fitted his tune to my voice and pitch, soothing under the high notes, lifting the low ones. At our blended song, the geese began feeding on tender grass tips, having lost all semblance of aggression.

SFX: Magical chimes sound. Special LIGHT UP. RAFTERY begins returning fiddle to pouch.

COLLEEN: *(con't..)*The faery ground was suffused with light, as if the standing stones were lanterns shining with an unearthly green glow in the night. It was clear my prayer was answered. I had been feared of being enchanted, but now I continued singing, only this time a sweet tune of joy and contentment. On I sang, several more verses with lyrics coming from where, I do not know. When finally I stopped, he put down his fiddle as I approached, the dog wagging between us.

RAFTERY: You're a thrush, a lily-throated musician blest with power to exult and a benefit to all who hear you. What is your name?

COLLEEN: Molly Malone, sir.

RAFTERY: Well Molly Malone, my name is Kevin Columcille Raftery - Blind Raftery to my friends. Pleased to know ya. *(HE extends a hand and SHE hesitantly shakes it.)*

COLLEEN: Good to know you too, Mr...uh...Blind Raftery.

RAFTERY: Well let us share what there is to share then. *(RAFTERY reaches in his pouch, pulls out a heel of sody bread, and shares it with her. After a moment of silence.)* You've the gift of listening, too, Molly, which is rare as strawberries in December and as precious. Finn McCool here has told me of your predicament with the geese and their contrary obsession with thwarting your efforts to herd them to safety. Tis ever so, Molly. Sit down and I'll explain the nature of the matter to you. *(She sits at his feet, as he squats*

to talk with her.) A goose, Molly darlin', is no better than most people - subject to the whims of appetite and habit. Habit is a terrible taskmaster. Beware the ones you form, for you'll be dancing to their tune until you forget all other songs. Your geese have formed the habit of tucking their heads beneath their wings at night, thinking to conceal the shape of their shadows from foxes while they sleep. Little do they understand that wily foxes will walk along half-sunken logs to reach birds resting in deep water. Such strategies are beyond geese, and so they are easy game. Driving geese is hard, ungrateful work leading to bitterness, escape, and attack. It is through their appetite that you can save them, irregardless of their habit. (*Reaching his belt and pulling a burlap sack off it.*) I have a gift for you. I'll give you a bag of seeds that come from flowers that grow like great rows of suns in southern climates. I once fed them to a parrot named Grania, mistress of many the bawdy ballad, but she took to eating cigars and died. I have no more use for this sack of seed. (*Hands it to her.*) Spread them before your geese with a generous sowing motion and they will follow where you lead, be it in the main street of Londontown or the peak of Crough Patrick. Keep plentiful seed before geese - or any of the human populace—and they will break any habit to join your court. It is how all monarchs rule and how disciples are gathered. It is a great burden to lead geese from slaughter—or people from their own folly—for it makes you both their slave and keeper. Spread the luring seed thoughtfully, for what follows is in your keeping forevermore.

COLLEEN: (*Awed.*) Thank ye kindly sir.

RAFTERY: Additionally, it is a most rare bag of seed. It will never be empty if you do but two things - thank it courteously for providing and entertain it with songs in cheerful tones.

COLLEEN: I'll do it, Mr. Raftery. I promise!

He pats her on head and EXITS SL. She exits with bag SR. LIGHTS FADE CS, UP DSR.

BRIAN: And with that, Molly Malone slipped from the chair, her childish face alight with innocence—and a hint of experience in her smile.

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MARK: Ah, the foibles of youth.

BRIAN: I've never led a goose but I've eaten one.

PEIG: (*Rolling her eyes.*) Ever the romantic.

BRIAN: No, I'm saying tis all of the same cloth. Whether controlling beasts...or urges...(*Looks away for a moment.*) ...tis a difficult thing for any of us to control our natural urges. And a point to be reckoned with.

PEIG: Aye. Aye, tis.

SFX: Party MUSIC UP.

COLLEEN: Now, where were we? Ah yes, the fourth night...

MARK stands, as FATHER O'LOONEY. He starts to speak, once again looks off toward the music and clears his throat. SFX: Music dies.

MARK: Now, I've several requests as we commence with this evening's festivities. First, I'd ask that the brass lamps be turned brighter. Several have made comment, and I've noticed myself certain noises and shifting shapes in the dark corners where quilts have rested on fresh straw and which have attracted some giggling not contiguous to the tale being unfolded from the storyteller's chair. I myself, though sworn to a Higher Good than any other present, remember what it was to be young and filled with rude questions. But it is your immortal souls I am concerned with and not just a scuffle in the dark. Decorum, above all, is not upheld with the committing of fleshly sins. Gluttony is an abomination, and I myself have abstained from all but three of the seven kinds of cakes each night. (*BRIAN prepares once again as BRIAN DOOGAN, and eventually moves to storyteller's seat.*) Though Brian the Barreler is fulfilling a task he was set to two score years ago, it is for each of you to keep your minds pure, so that if you're called to your Maker before the next breath, there is no worry that you'll be condemned to the hot place for all eternity.

COLLEEN: There was some thoughtful sipping among the philosophers on the benches and quilts. Then Brian the Barreler took the storyteller's chair again.



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