

Girleen D'ya think so, now?

Welsh As tough a get as you are? Going threatening to thump priests? Of course.

Girleen *brushes the hair out of Welsh's eyes.*

Girleen I wouldn't have gone thumping you, now, Father.

She gently slaps his cheek.

Maybe a decent slapeen, now.

Welsh *smiles and faces front.* **Girleen** *looks at him, then away, embarrassed.*

Welsh *(pause)* No, I just came out to have a think about Thomas before I go on me way. Say a little prayer for him.

Girleen It's tonight you're going?

Welsh It's tonight, aye. I said to meself I'll stay for Tom's funeral, then that'll be the end of it.

Girleen But that's awful quick. No one'll have a chance to wish you goodbye, Father.

Welsh Goodbye, aye, and good riddance to the back of me.

Girleen Not at all.

Welsh No?

Girleen No.

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Pause. Welsh nods, unconvinced, and drinks again.

Will you write to me from where you're going and be giving me your new address, Father?

Welsh I'll try, Girleen, aye.

Girleen Just so's we can say hello now and then, now.

Welsh Aye, I'll try.

As he speaks, Girleen manages to stifle tears without him noticing.

This is where he walked in from, d'you know? Poor Tom. Look at as cold and bleak as it is. Do you think it took courage or stupidity for him to walk in, Girleen?

Girleen Courage.

Welsh The same as that.

Girleen And Guinness.

Welsh (*laughing*) The same as that. (*Pause.*) Look at as sad and as quiet and still.

Girleen It's more than Thomas has killed himself here down the years, d'you know, Father? Three other fellas walked in here, me mam was telling me.

Welsh Is that right now?

Girleen Years and years ago this is. Maybe even famine times.

Welsh Drowned themselves?

Girleen This is where they all come.

Welsh We should be scared of their ghosts so but we're not scared. Why's that?

Girleen You're not scared because you're pissed to the gills. I'm not scared because ... I don't know why. One, because you're here, and two, because ... I don't know. I don't be scared of cemeteries at night either. The opposite of that, I do *like* cemeteries at night.

Welsh Why, now? Because you're a morbid oul tough?

Girleen (*embarrassed throughout*) Not at all. I'm not a tough. It's because ... even if you're sad or something, or lonely or something, you're still better off than them lost in the ground or in the lake, because ... at least you've got the *chance* of being happy, and even if it's a real little chance, it's more than them dead ones have. And it's not that you're saying 'Hah, I'm better than ye', no, because in the long run it might end up that you have a worse life than ever they had and you'd've been better off as dead as them, there and then. But at least when you're still here there's the *possibility* of happiness, and it's like them dead ones know that, and they're

happy for you to have it. They say ‘Good luck to ya.’ (*Quietly.*) Is the way I see it anyways.

Welsh You have a million thoughts going on at the back of them big brown eyes of yours.

Girleen I never knew you did ever notice me big brown eyes. Aren’t they gorgeous, now?

Welsh You’ll grow up to be a mighty fine woman one day, Girleen, God bless you.

Welsh *drinks again.*

Girleen (*quietly, sadly*) One day, aye. (*Pause.*) I’ll be carrying on the road home for meself now, Father. Will you be staying or will you be walking with me?

Welsh I’ll be staying a biteen longer for meself, Girleen. I’ll be saying that prayer for poor Thomas, now.

Girleen It’s goodbye for a while so.

Welsh It is.

Girleen *kisses his cheek and they hug.* **Girleen** *stands.*

Welsh You’ll remember to be giving that letter to Valene and Coleman, now, Girleen?

Girleen I will. What’s in it, Father? It does sound very mysterious. It wouldn’t be packed full of condoms for them, would it?

Welsh It wouldn’t at all, now!

Girleen Cos, you know, Valene and Coleman’d get no use out of them, unless they went using them on a hen.

Welsh Girleen, now ...

Girleen And it’d need to be a blind hen.

Welsh You do have a terrible mouth on ya.

Girleen Aye, all the better to ... no, I won’t be finishing that sentence. Did you hear tell of Valene’s new hobby, Father? He’s been roaming the entirety of Connemara picking up new figurines of the saints for himself, but only

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