

CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS

WOMAN: Mother of eight children. Close to death. Had grand visions and dreams for life once, but lost them somewhere along the way.

SCARECROW: A companion to WOMAN. Has been by her side since childhood. Will stay with her until the end, albeit not without complaining along the way.

HIM: The love of WOMAN's life. Her husband, and father of her children. Despite many affairs, always come back to WOMAN. A man who tries his best, but struggles to stay the course.

AUNTIE AH: WOMAN's aunt. She has raised WOMAN since the death of WOMAN's mother. Hard and cynical, she tries to be a mother to WOMAN, but often fails to understand her needs.

SCARECROW MONOLOGUE OPTION 1:

The first law which should be nailed on every cot. The first law. This world's job is to take everything from you. Yours is not to let it.

There is no describing what you have given away. Willfully given away. You used up everything you had giving everyone what they wanted. And hence your spite.

No matter how you dress it up, it's still nothing to be proud of. You're going into your grave out of bitterness, out of a sense of ruthless meanness. You who were given so much. You who I had such hopes for. I truly believed when I latched on to you before the weaver's throne, I truly believed that you and I would amount to something. I was wrong. Yes, your bitterness was a flaw in the weave, I noticed it, but I never thought it would bring us down. It looked such a small inconsequential thing, no more than a slipped stitch.

SCARECROW MONOLOGUE OPTION 2:

On the brink of extinction I have a few things to say.

Heading into the dark I want to leave a trail of darkness after me. I want you to wake at three in the morning and think of me packed into the cold hard clay and when you think of me down there I want you to realise that you have killed me as surely as if you had taken an ice pick and plunged it to the hilt.

Don't interrupt me! Write it down! You have reeled through my life wreaking havoc at every turn. Well, I am crying out at last, Enough! You will go no further with me. And I want you to know I am going to my grave with my heart broken, yes, broken, but not for you, my heart broken for myself and my children, that I allowed your puling, whining need ensnare me so.

And finally I want to talk to you about what we were and what we have become. It was the first betrayal. The ones after were nothing compared with the first.

And thought it would be so for all of time apportioned to us here. And then you denied me. And how? For a very long time I thought I had done something. And then I believed you had just stopped loving me. I realise now I was mistaken in my generous estimation of your capacity to love. For it is clear as day that you are and have always been and I presume will continue to be incapable of loving anyone. That is anyone except yourself and your insatiable ego. And what drives my hatred now is my blindness to what you have slowly taken from me down the years, that is, my capacity to love, which was boundless in the beginning, long ago, when we walked by the river too poor to buy a cup of coffee. Be aware I go to my grave bewildered by your cruelty. I go angry, I go unforgiving and I wonder when the time comes how you will go to yours.

WOMAN MONOLOGUE OPTION 1:

That day, the day she died. Daddy and I went in on the bus. A scorcher of a day but still I insisted on wearing my red coat and red hat. I wanted to wear them because a couple of days before my mother and I had spent a whole day trying on coats for me. We went from shop to shop but no coat satisfied her. She had in her mind this red coat and red hat that failed to materialise. We went to Lydon's for tea and buns. Her mood was sombre, belligerent even. It was getting late. The shops would soon be closed. She stared out the window and muttered about it being a bloody miracle if we found it now. Her voice so low, defeated, the huge hump of her belly wedged against the table, her shoes kicked off because they pained her... I can't remember where we found the coat. Her hands shook as she did up the black velvet buttons. She led me to a mirror. Now look at yourself, she said, just look at you. But it is her I see now, her girth disappearing in dusty shadow, old before her time and still radiant, the white teeth flashing, the russet gold of her hair and the expression in her eyes. I, in my new red coat and hat, gave her pleasure, pleasure beyond describing. For one brief moment, a mirror glance, I was that thing she had yearned for and found.

WOMAN MONOLOGUE OPTION 2:

And what should I be rattling on about? You think I should be calm and resigned and philosophical. You think the dying mull over eternity. They don't. They don't. They think about shoes and how they'll never get a chance to wear them. And when I land in eternity I'll still be praising those boots. I'll describe them to him till he aches to have a human foot the size of mine that he can encase in crocodile-skin boots. If I had another fifty years I'd put them on every day. I'd wear them to bed. You savage! How dare you accost me with Visa bills as I draw my last breath.

(**HIM** Well forgive me if I mention a small detail. There are eight of them to be fed and dressed and educated.)

That small detail never bothered you until now. And if I know you as well as I do you won't feed or educate them if you can get away with it. I'm leaving orphans! Orphans! You'll begrudge them a bowl of Weetabix. God help them with you at the helm, forever turning off the hot water and the lights and the heat. Tell me what it is you hate about light and heat? What is it about hot water that drives you crazy? I dreamt last night you were locking up potatoes. Yes, I said to myself. That's it. I married a man who locks up potatoes. Christ, get me out of here quick. You'll have my pension, my life insurance. I won't cost you a penny. Here. I'll even pay for my own funeral.

HIM MONOLOGUE:

All right, you want the unvarnished truth. Yes, I've just been with her. She's parked up the road. Now leave it please. Leave it at that. It's no good going over and over it.

Yes, I'll go back out to her. She's taking me for a quick dinner before I go mad here.

(**WOMAN** Go then! Go! There are others who can provide less venomous care.)

Your relations. The house is falling down with them. A big coven of witches in bairn and black. They've eaten everything, drunk everything. I've had to borrow money from my mother. Right now they're devouring the stew I made for the children. Last night they got through eight bottles of whiskey. They hang out in the bathroom, smoking and shrieking. The children aren't talking to me because I won't let them go clubbing. They haven't been to school in weeks. We're all waiting! We're all waiting! Die if you're going to. If not. Get up!

Don't worry, I'm finishing with her too. If she thinks I'm going to set up house when you're gone. I said it right out to her. What's the point in changing horses? Is that enough truth for you or will I go on?

You drive me to the limit every time so I say things that shouldn't be said... Look, take this stuff... it's revenge enough you're going. Must I watch you go howling?

There are many ways to leave someone. Mine is a cliché. I lack your savagery.

AUNTIE AUH MONOLOGUE:

Why didn't you go to a doctor sooner? There's no call for this nonsense. I could have laid down too more times than I care to recount, but it wasn't for nothing I grew up on the western seaboard, a grey land of rock and thistle where little or nothing thrives. And it wasn't for nothing you were born there too. But the eastern blood of your father diluted the limestone and softened you to this. Would you ever sit up and have a bowl of soup and put an end to this contrariness and whim? And what's in store for your chickens now? You think to fling them on the walls of the world and have the rest of us pick up the broken bones. Your mother was the same. No finishing power. Anyone can get through the first half. You start a life. You finish it. You don't bail out at the crossroads because you don't like the scenery. It's weak. I despise it. And I'll tell you something, my niece of a girl, there'll be no ecstasies at the finish. I've handed many back to their maker and not a one of them sang as the curtain fell. They went confused, they went jabbering, they went silent, they went howling, but not a one of them went with the beatified light in their eye as if they'd seen a vision of something pleasing. All I ever saw was the light draining from the basalt of the eyeball. The light draining. And the light gone... I'm leaving five thousand under the pillow, sure you can't even afford to die.