

# The Jetty

*By Bob Wallbank*

# The Jetty

## Characters

### Sean

Michael Davey, the engineer's son. A boy of 16. Irish, but from further east. He has had a basic education. He stammers when talking to girls, but never when he talks of engineering. He wears boots.

### Caitín

Patch's daughter. A girl of 15 who has lived all her life on the island. She is barefoot.

### Brigid

An island woman in her late 30s who has lost her husband in the famine. She is the village storyteller. She wears pampooties.

### Maire

An enigmatic woman in indeterminate middle age. She was rescued from the sea by Patch and lives with him, though not as his wife. She is not of the island. She is barefoot.

### Patch

A smallholder and fisherman of the island who has lost his wife and young son in the famine. He is in his 40s, and is a big man. He wears pampooties.

### Michael Davey

An engineer who has worked up from being a stonemason and is now embracing the modern technologies. He is in his 40s. He is from further East in Ireland. He wears boots.

### Ruairí Dearg

A smallholder and fisherman, sometime friend of Patch (Can be doubled with Michael Davey)

## Scenes

The action is set on an island off the west coast of Galway over a period of a year in 1848/1849. Scenes are set on the shore, in Patch's cottage, in the jetty workings, on the jetty, and in a clochan.

## Interludes

These should have an 'other worldly' feel compared to the realism of the scenes.

## Interlude 1

*The interludes should have an other-worldly/out of time feel, and can be seen as parts of a through-composed song that blends into the action. The song is based on the poem*

*Darkness. Noise of surf breaking on a beach. A woman is singing of the sea...*

### Maire

*Sunlight catches water where the nets are thrown  
A rainbowed squall covers the land  
Spray hauled in upon sodden oars  
Drips into an empty bilge*

*Black tipped gannets spear the sea  
The grey seal floats a disembodied head  
Flounder flapping from its whiskered mouth  
Bitter are the drops that salt an empty tongue*

*Turn homeward upon the tide  
For sea fret fills your boat  
Night roars in the east  
And your love lies on the strand*

*A low flickering firelight grows. It shines on Brigid's face as she sits by her hearth, telling a story to a group of islanders. Perhaps Patch and Ruairí might be seen upstage, fishing. The song continues its underscoring*

### Brigid

And they're after hearing it again, a song coming to them from the west, and they fishing in the east. A powerful song it is surely, full of sea swell, catching them with sweet hooks and reeling them in. Nothing can they do, but be rowing fast towards it, leaving their own lines trailing and snagging on the bottom. Fighting stallions could not give their equal for sweat. They round Cold Point where the sea booms on the cliffs and fetch towards the narrow strand set grey between the rocks. Turning they stop, oars frozen to the sky. On the streaming sand three girls are singing to the setting sun of love and nets. Seals roll in the surf, and two are climbing the beach, slithering and lumping. Before their staring eyes they slip their skins and stand as girls. And they are after singing songs that boil the blood. The boys could be watching for an hour or a year, for who knows time when you're with the fairies?

At last, the one speaks. Is it true, says he, that if you take their skins they must remain with you?

### Caitín

It is, it is...

### Brigid

It is surely says the other

Then I will take one, says the first, for see the girl that stands apart?  
Herself would I have as a wife. Put me ashore to the north behind the  
point, and I shall creep upon her

That I will, says the other, for I am your friend, but no more will I do. I  
will have none of fairy songs but paddle straight for home. This I tell  
you. No good will come of it, and if she finds her skin in years to come,  
you will lose her...

*The light fades on Brigid and we are left with the song. The song blends into and is  
subsumed by the noise of the sea, until only the sea remains as the lights build into  
Scene 1*

## Scene 1

Foreshore, Inishvickilane, off the West of Ireland. Spring 1848

*Sean is reading an official notice nailed to a rough building. He is a boy of 15 -16.  
He reads with pride, mouthing inaudibly then turns to face an imaginary audience,  
puffing out his chest and holding the lapels of his jacket. His clothes are homespun but  
in good condition. He wears boots.*

**Sean** *(Speaking carefully in English)* Mr foreman, I require you to deliver one  
hundred tons of dressed stone by Friday week. Be sure sir, that it is  
stone of the highest quality in your quarry

*He pauses, pleased with the effect. Unseen to him, Caitín has entered silently,  
observing him. Caitín is a girl of 13 -14. Her clothes are well worn and full of mends,  
but not tatty. She is barefoot*

**Sean** Sirs, I will drive a railway from here to Dublin across the biggest bridge  
of this world. I will build a harbour with a hundred miles of quays. I  
will launch great ships and put engines in them so they need not the  
wind. I will—

**Caitín** *(In Irish)* Is it saying all that? Can you read the English?

**Sean** *(Startled)* I I c c c can

**Caitín** What a lot it says in one small notice

**Sean** It d d d does

**Caitín** I can read the English too - I learnt some from the schoolmaster before  
the potatoes died. *(She runs her finger along the notice, stopping at  
each word she recognises)* We...do... and... the...of... the ...  
Inishvickilane! Inishvickilane! Our island! It writes our island! Can  
you read me all the English as you were reading just now?

- Sean** *(In English)* We do hereby notify and declare that all the requisitions of the Act 9th Victoria, chapter 3 intituled 'an act to encourage the sea fisheries of Ireland' by promotting... promowting and aiding with grants of public money the construction of piers harbours and other works with respect to the ex... execution of the proposed pier at the Island of Inishvickilane in the county of Galway have been complied with and—
- Caitín** *(Losing interest)* It's a fine thing to have the English
- Sean** I m m m m must learn the English to be an engineer
- Caitín** I like to hear the English - but I see no sense in it
- Sean** *(in a rush)* It says that a jetty is to be built here and we shall need men to build it
- Caitín** Can my Da work on the building of it?
- Sean** He can. And the government will p p pay him and he will be able to buy Indian meal for you all to eat
- Caitín** That will be a good thing for the village if the men can all buy Indian meal, for there are no potatoes left to plant this year
- Sean** It will
- Caitín** And your Da himself is from the government
- Sean** My f f father is an engineer. He has built a jetty in Mayo and this is his second. This time I am old enough to work with him so I can learn to be an engineer. Then I am going to America to build railways
- Caitín** I have heard the railway is a wondrous thing
- Sean** *(Animated)* It is it is! Two lines of steel driving through the rocks and a great engine with the strength of all the horses of the world, riding the wind. Mr Brunel has built a railway from Bristol all the way to London city, and his engines ride along it fifty miles in every hour
- Caitín** Surely that is too grand for Inishvickilane
- Sean** But we shall have a jetty. That will be a wonder too. Right here on the edge of the bay it will be, where the rocks stick through the surf. We'll scrape away the sand and lay great blocks of stone upon the rocks beneath. There will be a crane that can lift for twenty men-
- Caitín** That is a wonder
- Sean** And it will set the blocks as lightly as a feather

**Caitín** Is it right here the jetty will be?

**Sean** It is

**Caitín** Then I shall walk upon it every morning and watch the fish

*Brigid enters. She is a village woman in her early forties who rises above her ragged clothes*

**Sean** I will build great ships and railways like Mr Brunel

**Caitín** Is Mr Brunel from Galway?

**Sean** No he is a man of London and he speaks English.

**Brigid** You'll have to fight for him Caitín. Running after him the girls will be. There's nothing like new blood in a village

**Caitín** Whist Brigid! Running after him - he's not even telling me his name

**Brigid** Sean Mike he is, and the engineer's son

**Sean** J J John Davey I am

**Brigid** Well it's a wonderful thing when a lad doesn't know his own name. Your Da, whom sweet Mary knows, has known you longer than you know yourself, calls you Sean

**Sean** J J John Davey I am, and my Da is Michael Davey. When I am an engineer I must have an English n n n name. I have told my f f f father to call me John

**Brigid** Then it's not much I'm thinking to be an engineer if a boy must give up a good Irish name to do it

**Caitín** It surely is a great shame to turn away the name given by your Ma and Da and blessed by the priest

**Sean** *(flashing out)* My Da sees sense in it

**Caitín** But not your Ma I'm thinking

**Sean** My Ma's dead

**Caitín** With the famine sickness?

**Sean** D d drowned

**Brigid** I have heard it was right by the jetty itself your Da was building

**Sean** It was

**Brigid** She was visiting and her boat was upset by a big wave I've heard

**Sean** It was

**Brigid** Surely there's tragedy everywhere. My man gone with the famine sickness... and Caitín's Ma and brother. There's not a house it hasn't touched. But those of us left must still live and breathe and chase the boys. Life's a wondrous powerful thing

**Sean** With the jetty you'll not die of famine sickness. It will bring great boats and food. And there will be work in the building of it

**Brigid** And at what pay, would you be paying us Mr John Davey?

**Sean** The government pay ten pence per week

**Brigid** That's very kind, Mr Davey. And will that keep the landlord's agent from my door and leave me with a bowl of yellow slops they call the Indian corn

**Sean** My father does not set the pay

**Caitín** She'll tease the world, Sean

**Brigid** Friends I'll be with Sean Mike, but John Davey works for the English

**Sean** I m m must do it to be an engineer

**Caitín** Sean Mike's going to build railways

**Brigid** It's John Davey I'm thinking who will build the railways, not Sean Mike. And what good's a railway to us floating upon a few rocks at the edge of the Western ocean?

**Sean** It is not a railway that we build on Inishvickilane, it is a jetty

**Brigid** The moon will be boasting big tonight, Sean Mike, and a walk on the strand would be a grand thing. Is Caitín after showing you where she lives?

**Caitín** Brigid!

**Sean** I I I

**Brigid** There sits her house, Patch Mór's bothín, behind us by the rocky water's edge

**Sean** That house!

**Caitín** Is it so strange?

**Sean** N n no

*Ruairí enters and starts to read the notice. He is thin, dressed in rough homespun  
Brigid glances at him nervously, then brazens it out. The sound of the sea builds  
gradually, fading on Sean's exit*

**Brigid** You're hearing whispers in the village?

**Sean** I I I...

**Brigid** If you've heard a tale about that house, then it's best not believed for  
Maire Mara who lives with them is a fount of kindness

**Sean** I'll not b b believe silly stories of fairies and seals. They are for old  
people by their fires

**Brigid** When you're living here through winter storms, anything can happen.  
They tease poor Maire because she is not of the island

**Sean** Surely it is foolish

**Brigid** Surely it is. Well, Sean Mike, Caitín will be waiting up there as the sun  
leaves the Western sky

**Sean** I m m must be finding my Da. He has work for me

*Sean takes his leave with an embarrassed smile and exits*

**Caitín** Brigid...

**Brigid** He'll be round I'm thinking

**Caitín** He will not. His head is full of jetties ships and railways

**Brigid** A boy he is, Caitín

**Caitín** They'll be warning him away from our house.

**Ruairí** They'll be telling him the witch woman lives there

**Brigid** May your ears be burnt for prying. You listen too much, Ruairí Dearg

**Ruairí** It is you who speak too much. Were you not speaking with the English  
engineer this morning at the corner of the bay?

**Brigid** He is born as Irish as you or I



- Ruairí** He speaks English to his English masters
- Brigid** And will you not be taking the English pay when the work starts?
- Ruairí** Pay! Pah! They pay us to starve
- Brigid** And yet you will be taking it
- Ruairí** I will be taking it, so that I might starve a little slower
- Brigid** I hear tell he is a fair man
- Ruairí** It's watching him we'll be, like limpets round his back
- Brigid** Be waiting 'til you know what kind of man he is, Ruairí Dearg
- Ruairí** There's some of us who cannot wait, we starve already. We are not taking fairy food from the sea as you do
- Brigid** And what might you be meaning?
- Ruairí** You're taking fish from Patch, fish that Maire has charmed from the sea whilst our nets fly empty to the wind
- Brigid** Whist your lies, Ruairí
- Ruairí** They are no lies, Brigid, teller of stories. Those that eat with the fairies will die with the fairies

*Ruairí exits. Brigid turns to Caitín*

- Brigid** You must not listen to—
- Caitín** His boys call after me 'Witch girl Witch girl, daughter of the banshee'
- Brigid** They're jealous of the food Maire finds for you. She has skill with the fish where others gossip and complain. Your father saved her from the sea, and surely the saints pay kindness with kindness
- Caitín** Ma would have wanted us fed, wouldn't she?
- Brigid** Your Ma died to keep you alive. I saw her day by day, weaker and weaker, taking none for herself and giving all to you and your Da. Surely her it was who from beyond sent Maire Mara to wash up in the surf and look after you both

*Caitín is crying quietly*

**Brigid**            Come girl, what's done is done, and you must never be ashamed of living. Back to your Da and see if Sean Mike doesn't turn up tonight with his boots licked clean to take you for a turn along the strand

## **Scene 2**

Patch Mór's Cottage, that evening

*The interior of a poor cottage - single roomed, low, and smoky. No furniture as such - just found artefacts roughly fashioned that the sea might have brought them to sit on. Maire is tending an iron pot over the fire. Caitín is squatting near her*

**Maire**            A big sea was running today, driving over the western rocks. Your father is a strong rower

**Caitín**            There's none will beat him in the village

**Maire**            It is a wonderful thing to see the spray rising to the sun. The gannets were diving at the freckled water and we found the herring out beyond the black rock where the seals bask in summer. The waves grew high against the tide but your father rowed for fifty men and we pulled the nets without swamping

**Caitín**            There's many have drowned off the black rock

**Maire**            Since the potato sickness, men grow weak with hunger and the sea takes them

**Caitín**            Did others... were other currachs out with you?

**Maire**            They were not

**Caitín**            No others brought home fish?

**Maire**            They did not

*Caitín looks uncomfortable. Maire stirs the pot*

**Maire**            There was a hare dancing in the road this morning

**Caitín**            He'll be in a pot by evening

**Maire**            He'll not be caught

**Caitín**            I'm glad of that

**Maire**            The sun shining through his whiskers and his feet flying on the stones. He's laughing with the joy of life

*Patch Mór enters. He is a big man though emaciated and worn. Maire serves the fish*

- Maire** A long time you've been with the boys
- Patch** It is
- Maire** And what is the talk in the village?
- Patch** Of the jetty, and how the government will pay us all to move stone in the building of it
- Maire** This jetty is a madness of men
- Patch** I'm thinking I will be there
- Maire** Don't waste your back moving stone, Patch Mór, when it's the currach you should be pulling home full of fish
- Patch** If I'm working for the government I can buy the yellow meal and we will not starve, neither will you be risking your life with me in the currach
- Maire** I do not risk my life, Patch Mór
- Patch** It's myself alone should get us food
- Maire** You catch fish
- Patch** When you pull with me in the currach I catch fish. When I go with Martan, Mike or Ruairí...
- Maire** You've not had the luck

*There is an awkward silence. Maire busies herself, Patch stares into space*

**Caitín** Ruairí's boys are saying...

*She drifts into silence. Patch fixes her*

**Patch** What are Ruairí's boys saying?

**Caitín** *(Half laughing in confusion)* Wild boys they are...

**Patch** What are they saying?

**Caitín** That... that Maire is a sea fairy, a seal who can charm the fish from the water

**Patch** Then I'll be knocking some sense into them. Maire has skill in the reading of the birds, that is all

**Caitín** It's jealous they are, jealous of our food. Brigid says so

**Maire** They are hungry, Caitín. All they have is the Relief Board's soup

**Caitín** Then why are they not taking the fish you hold out to them?

**Patch** Some are powerfully afraid of the old stories

*Maire and Patch will not catch her eye. They eat*

**Patch** There'll be more wanting work on the jetty than the government will take on. I'll not be missing out. On Monday I'll be down there at the first glint of dawn

**Maire** All you men doing the government's work so you can buy the government's yellow meal instead of eating the good fish God sends you from the sea

**Patch** The jetty will be a grand thing for the village. It will help us with the fishing

**Maire** Fools, all of you. Who will use the jetty for the fish? Not the boys in their currachs but big ships from Galway and Dublin

*They continue eating. Sean appears diffidently at the doorpost*

**Sean** Hallo

**Maire** God's blessing on you. Come in young man

**Sean** A b b blessing on this house

**Patch** The engineers boy?

**Sean** I am

**Patch** A welcome to you. And what might you be wanting?

**Sean** I I I

*Caitín starts to laugh and this does not help Sean. They look at him, waiting*

**Sean** M m my father has s s s

**Maire** Come in from the door, boy, and warm yourself

**Sean** *(In a rush)* My father has sent me to find how many will be wanting to work upon the jetty

**Maire** There is one from this house, Patch Mór, and you'll find no-one stronger in the village

**Patch** Whist your laughing girl. What's so funny in that?

**Caitín** Brigid - it's her to blame. Sean and I met upon the rocks and Brigid dared him come here, and take me for a walk along the strand

**Sean** I I I

**Maire** Shame on you, laughing at him. And shame on Brigid for teasing him. Come in boy and have some soup. There's fish in it to keep the chill out of the wind. Sean is it you're calling yourself?

**Sean** *(after a split moment's pause)* Sean Mike

*Sean catches Caitín's eye and she smiles approval*

**Maire** There's always welcome here, especially when we're lucky with the fish

**Caitín** Maire is always lucky with the fish. She follows the birds diving

**Maire** And will yourself be working on the jetty

**Sean** I will

**Caitín** Sean is going to be an engineer and build railways and steamships and bridges and harbours

**Maire** *(Briskly)* Is that so. I'm sure it is a fine thing

**Patch** Maire does not love the jetty

**Maire** There is a grand rocky point sheltering the bay enough to beach the currachs. Why want for more and be disturbing the fish, ripping out the yellow sand and piling rocks upon the sea

*Sean speaks enthusiastically as he shovels the food fast and boyishly, gesticulating with a handful of fish*

**Sean** But the jetty will be built with hewn blocks. Massive stones the mighty ocean cannot move. We link them so *(demonstrates with his knuckles)*. Each side of the pier is blockwork, with a rubble fill between. Then my Da will lay great interlocking paving right across the top, keyed together with strong iron bars that will laugh at the storms

**Caitín** Sean's Da is surely a fine engineer. And so will Sean be. He will go to America and build great ships like Mr... Mr...

**Sean** Mr Brunel. He has built the Great Britain. It is the largest ship in the world and it is made of iron. It has a propeller not paddles. I'm not knowing exactly how a propeller works, but it beats the water underneath the ship and makes her fly across the Western Ocean

**Patch** No ship can be made of iron

**Sean** It is it is. My father has a drawing of it from a friend. She is so beautiful. Six masts and a great high funnel reaching to the clouds with streaming smoke. I would give my life to tread the decks and hear the mighty engines. Such power! When I go to America building railways I shall sail on the Great Britain

**Maire** Certainly it must be a wonder of the world, but I have no desire beyond sails and oars

**Sean** With an engine there is no more need to wait for wind or tide. We are become the masters of the ocean

**Maire** That, man shall never be. Are you wanting more fish?

**Sean** Surely I am f f full

**Maire** Then you'll be desiring to take Caitín out along the strand, for there's a crisp moon, and we cannot give the laugh to Brigid

**Sean** I I I

*Caitín runs across towards the door, sweeping Sean up*

**Caitín** Come! Be telling me about America

*Caitín and Sean exit. Maire clears away the food. Silence*

**Maire** So you will be working on this jetty then

**Patch** I will

**Maire** Then it's by myself I shall fish, or with Caitín when the weather is fine

*Patch crosses to her, holding her hand in desperation*

**Patch** Maire, Maire, please be listening. Who knows where this village madness will end if we carry on after the fish. They will not talk to me, neither pass a friendly word, except for Martan

**Maire** We must have fish to live

*Patch tries to hold her close, but she gently disengages him*

**Maire**            You had a wife, Patch Mór, and you have Caitín. Thank God for that

## **Interlude 2**

*The lights fade and the cottage dissolves, leaving Maire casting nets upon the sea. She is singing a continuation of her song. It fades into the next scene*

**Maire**

*Through green weed tasselled along the world's edge  
I chase mullet with the cormorant  
With the tern I skim herring from the jumping sea;  
The lives of men dissolve in racing tide*

**Patch**            They say I'm living with a banshee. It's not just Ruairí's boys who talk... I tell them every night and every day of how I found you washed up in the surf and dragged you home. Of how I emptied the seawater from your gut and forced hot gruel down your throat that I had begged from the priest. Of how you lay in a swoon two days before the life returned... Why can they not believe? Why can they not just believe!

**Maire**

*Above me, sea cliffs edge with auks  
Anchored to their rocky eggs,  
Whilst men drift past upon deceitful mist  
That plays amongst their tumbling walls*

## **Scene 3**

At the Jetty Works, late Spring

*At the jetty works, six weeks later. A heap of rubble with a wicker creel overturned on it and a stack of dressed stone. Michael Davey is sitting on a block of stone looking at a set of plans. Sean is looking over his shoulder. Mike wears a suit and waistcoat shiny with use and streaked with stone dust. He has a pocket watch with a worn watch chain.*

**Mike**            Always on my back they are, Sean. Always on my back. Hundreds of them in Dublin scribbling at their desks, wanting to account for every penny spent, but there's not a one will dirty their boots to come out here and see the grand job we are doing. Always they want reports and letters, explanations of expenses, but they cannot even send me an account book, Sean-

**Sean**            Father...

**Mike** -For two months I've been asking them. How I'd like to give them all a pick and set them breaking stone

**Sean** Father...

**Mike** Yes yes, right you are Sean, we must be working. *(He points to the plans)* It's going well, eh boy? six weeks today since we started and we have done all this. See this level here, the two foot course on the back side of the pier. We must finish the infilling below then set some sixty feet of it and lock it in position before the next spring tides. Then we can be moving out to deeper water. Ah, Sean-

**Sean** Father...

**Mike** If only we had a diver... But the expense is too great.

**Sean** Father...

**Mike** Sean?

**Sean** Father, you are calling me Sean again

**Mike** I am? Well since we are at work Mr John Davey I would like you to watch the infilling this morning whilst I set about moving the crane to the end of the workings. Be sure the rock is graded and the stones are well compacted with chippings. There must not be room for the smallest flea to crawl between them. Take your eye off and they'll be throwing in any rubbish

**Sean** They do not understand the infilling - even the chargehands. They're not realising how it compacts, and strengthens the whole jetty

**Mike** Quite right, Mr John sir, so you be my eyes. *(He slaps the folded drawings at Sean)* Look after these

**Sean** Th th thankyou, Mr Davey!

*Mike exits leaving Sean who spreads out the drawings on a rock, weighing down the corners with stones, and studies them intently. Brigid enters with an empty creel on her shoulders. She is drained, but manages to summon some good humour on seeing Sean*

**Brigid** Is it you left in charge? Look Mr Davey, it's running I am. Will you be doubling my pay now?

**Sean** Da— Mr Davey's gone to see about the crane

**Brigid** Then you'll not be minding if I rest a moment. This is the fifth load I'm taking this morning and I'm destroyed with all this lumping



*Brigid removes the creels and drops them by the heap of stone*

**Brigid** Very studious you are

*Brigid collapses back against the heap of stones*

**Sean** This shows how the jetty will be. Here is the high water mark, and here is the beach. We already have this bottom row in by the shore, look, and that is what you're filling now. Then it is this row we add to keep us above the high water, then we'll be moving the crane to the end and we can start on the next section. Look how big it will be when we finish - we're only building this small piece so far

**Brigid** It will be grand I'm sure when it's finished, but just at the moment I can't be seeing your drawings for the sweat in my eyes

**Brigid** You're still walking with Caitín every evening of a shining moon.

**Sean** I I I

**Brigid** Well she's as bright a thing as you will find along the ocean shore

**Sean** She likes to t t talk about ships and engines

**Brigid** Surely the world is changing

*Patch enters from the other direction with creels full of stone. He walks up to Sean and sets them down.*

**Patch** Good day to you Sean Mike

**Brigid** Mr Davey, Mr John Davey

**Patch** Have you been sending for those hand carts we talked of? It's only a madman would be moving this much stone on his back

**Sean** My father wrote to Dublin, but they are not providing the money for carts or barrows or any other tools. For material to build the jetty and labour only will they pay

**Patch** Hang the government in Dublin and in London too. Do they want to kill us or do they want a jetty?

*There is a roar from offstage and Michael Davey comes storming back, grabbing the plans from Sean. He pulls out a letter and waves it at his son*

**Mike** Bunous quarry! I asked for stones dressed to 2 ft and they have delayed and delayed and now they ship me stone cut every size that God sends. How can I lay a level course with those! I saw them coming from the boat with the crane and now it's the whole load I'm sending back. Mr

Cahill at the quarry is a drunken fool who cares for nothing save his bottle and his bed. He will not pay good money for masons, but hires any blockhead who will work for a shilling a week and sends me stone I wouldn't build a sheepfold with!

**Sean** That will hold us past the spring tide

**Mike** It will - two weeks gone. I'd hoped to take it out another fifty feet to the low water mark. By Jesus what's the point in moving the crane now

**Sean** We could build another layer on the shore end

**Mike** We could. If we had the stone. I'll never get it from Burnous in time and I cannot use another quarry by the terms of contract. Mr Cahill has seen to that by bribing the surveyors.

**Sean** Perhaps we should hire masons to dress the stone ourselves

**Mike** I'd thought of that too Mr John, sir, and I may just swing it past the Board of Works

*Patch goes to shoulder his creels. Mike notices him*

**Mike** Good God man you shouldn't take that much, you'll destroy yourself

**Patch** I take what I am able, Mr Davey

**Mike** Take less and make more journeys, then perhaps tomorrow we'll be seeing you alive

**Patch** I understand from Mr John that there will be no handcarts.

**Mike** Only if you have your own to bring. The famine relief committee pay wages only, they will not buy equipment. They'd have us ripping rock with our fingers if they could. I'm sorry, Padraig, we are ruled by fools. Come and see these devil stones, Seanín, and find if there is any we can save

*Sean and Mike exit. Patch puts down his creel again*

**Brigid** They'll be having us kill ourselves moving rock around in circles before they'll pay us out a penny in charity

**Patch** We are not building this jetty for ourselves but for the government.

**Brigid** Sweet Mary, is it only now you're seeing that! I'd not be choosing to work for the government, but it's work for them or starve

**Patch** Maire is thinking we are all fools

**Brigid** Is herself still fishing?

**Patch** She is – and catching fish. Good it is to see Caitín eating, but the village...

**Brigid** I've heard the gossip. Maire is not telling them who she is, which gives them cause to blather. If only she'd be saying what ship she came from, what part of Ireland...

**Patch** Ruairí called her a witch in front of all the boys a day back, then he threatened me. Said I was no better than a devil and not to enter his house. If Martan had not stood between us he would not have walked again until the month was out

*Patch and Brigid start to shoulder their loads*

**Brigid** At the end of all, it's only you can heal the wound

**Patch** How can I heal what is not there?

*Caitín can be heard shouting off*

**Caitín** Da! Da!

**Bridget** That's for you to find out, Patch Mór

*Bridget exits. Caitín enters with a piece of cold fish wrapped in a leaf. Patch stops and turns*

**Caitín** Da, Maire sent me with this for you. She says you are to eat it

**Patch** A good girl you are

*Patch looks around him before taking it and stuffing it quickly into his mouth. As he does so, Ruairí enters, struggling beneath a creel of stone*

**Caitín** She's above now on the green slope, coming down to launch the currach

**Patch** Don't be bringing me food when the other men are around

**Caitín** Why, Da?

*Caitín turns and sees Ruairí. Patch says nothing. Ruairí approaches Patch, watching him swallowing, and looks him in the eyes*

**Ruairí** Handcarts, Patch Mór, handcarts. Is it you were saying they'd bring us handcarts?

**Patch** I'm after asking. There is no money

**Ruairí**            There is no money... Sure there is money enough to pay for fine dressed stone and to pay Mr Davey's wages. I do not see him starving. I do not see him day by day weaker. He has no need of handcarts... And neither, it's seeming, do you

*Ruairí watches him pointedly as he swallows the last of the fish, then staggers on his way. Caitín looks at Patch, speaking awkwardly*

**Caitín**            Da, Maire's above...

*Maire can be heard singing happily in the distance*

**Patch**            I must be moving. Too long I've rested.

**Caitín**            I'll help her launch the small currach, Da

**Patch**            A blessing on you, Caitín

*Patch exits. Caitín looks after him for a moment, puzzled, then back up the hill towards Maire. She shrugs. Seeing the plan laid out on the rock she goes over to it and picks it up. She turns it this way and that and sights along it. Maire enters*

**Maire**            He'll not be waiting for his food?

**Caitín**            He's eaten it

**Maire**            And what is that you're waving?

**Caitín**            A picture of the jetty. Look, there are drawings of the stones. This is what it will be like

**Maire**            I'm thinking I see it differently to you

**Caitín**            What is it you're seeing?

**Maire**            I look above the new cut stones of the jetty to where the chough is flying on the hill, red feet and red bill, and under her, dancing, is the hare. Crouching he is beside grey stones as old as the world, then springing round upon his back legs, flitting, dancing dancing

**Caitín**            I see him... by the walls of the potato field

**Maire**            Fields empty since the potato died. But the sea will bring you hope, for as the years turn, it's yourself will be spreading seaweed on the rotting fields and they shall grow again, sheltered from the wind by ancient walls

**Caitín**            Those walls are surely older than the centuries themselves

**Maire** And older still the stone clochans by the shore where your father keeps his nets. There fishermen lived at the birth of stories, stories that still live by the stone hearths of the village

**Caitín** Sean says stories are for old people in the fireside corners

**Maire** Young and old feel the heat of the hearth. The engineers bring another world that has no place for stories. They work in stone and metal and believe only in the logic of their figures. They must measure our lives with a ruler, and their bright oil lamps kill the dark

**Caitín** I like to hear the stories

**Maire** They are our lives, Caitín... Look! Out beyond the point where the white waves sparkle, the black tipped gannet spears his fish

*Sean enters, and looks with puzzlement where he had left the drawing. Caitín, realising what he is looking for, holds it behind her back, then proffers it*

**Caitín** Is it this you're wanting?

**Sean** It is, and you should n n not be hiding it from me for I am at work

**Caitín** Whist Mr John Davey you should not be so sour

*There follows a brief childish chase with Caitín laughing at Sean's discomfort, but she allows him to take the drawings*

**Sean** Hush Caitín. I am working!

**Caitín** You should not be chasing the girls, Mr Davey, if you are at work

**Maire** It's sorry I am, Sean for her bad manners, but she must be dancing now and then

**Caitín** We are going fishing. Will you help us launch the currach?

**Sean** I have to take these plans to father

**Caitín** The currach is but below on the strand

**Sean** I will then, b b but quickly, for Da himself is steaming with a rage against the quarry

*They turn to go. Maire starts singing. Sean stretches out his hand*

**Sean** Caitín... are not the jetty foundations surely beautiful; a level line of even stones with not a chink between them, rising from the rippling sand

**Caitín** Look above on the hill, Sean. Can you see...

*They exit*

### **Interlude 3**

*Maire's song is a benediction upon Caitín and Sean that lifts into the next scene*

**Maire**

*In russet sunlight, the long-pawed hare  
Lurks in sandy scrapes beneath the chough grass  
Waiting as the quivering shadows turn  
To leap mad circles by the evening walls*

*Sharp upon the nestling thatch  
The blackbird whistles of his brambled nest  
Where water oozes from the hill  
There is a green bed for worms*

*I will dance with the hare  
I will sing with the blackbird  
For my life is in this moment  
And joy surges in my blood*

### **Scene 4**

A Party on the Jetty, early Summer

*Evening, six weeks later. Caitín and Sean are sitting, feet dangling, on the end of the jetty works by the crane, gazing out across a calm sea. A burst of laughter on the wind*

**Caitín** Martan has been brewing with the yellow meal

**Sean** Four weeks pay they were having today. Three months into the building and not once has their pay come on time

**Caitín** There'll be dancing soon. Mauris is above, bringing his fiddle to the jetty

**Sean** Mauris is a g g good man. He it was who wrote memorials to Dublin with the priest to petition for the jetty. He comes most days to talk with father

**Caitín** Da says he has put money to the jetty

**Sean** He bought the two barrows. When the jetty is finished he's wanting to raise money for boats for the island. Surely engineering will save us all

**Caitín** Look, there's a seal beyond, out in the bay

*A lone fiddle starts up in the far distance*

**Sean** The b b boys would say it is your Maire going fishing

**Caitín** You're not believing she's a seal?

**Sean** A seal is it? Nor a whale nor a ghost from the shee. That's old talk from the g g gossips and has no place in our world

**Caitín** There's many boys out in the sunshine say they don't believe, but speak differently at night by the fireside corners

**Sean** None of it I will have. An engineer must believe what he sees with his eyes

**Caitín** It is a long way you can see today

**Sean** The sun is going to America

**Caitín** Sometimes I feel it pulling me, as if the end of this jetty is the beginning of all

**Sean** Oh Caitín, that is the land to build railways. Free to go wherever you like across the open plains. There's no fighting sharp bends and steep hills as you must in Ireland, no arguing with the landowners

**Caitín** I've heard that a man has but to ask for land in America and he is given it. Your own land, with no agent coming twice a year for money

**Sean** There is so much to build there, and all new. There I would be John Davey drawing my plans in my big workshop with men to work for me. Surely they must need big engines in such a big country.

**Caitín** Your own fields... but I would miss the sea and the boats

*Sean covers Caitín's eyes*

**Sean** Do you see the ships out there? See them steaming out across the western ocean? Did I tell you? My Da has shown me how a propeller works. The blades are sloped like this and as they spin they push the water out behind. I've tried it with an oar in a currach

*The fiddle has grown a little louder. Sean demonstrates how the propeller pushes through the water by pushing Caitín through his arms, and they find themselves dancing a strange propeller dance*

**Caitín** Restless you are, Sean Mike

**Sean** Now it is happening, and I need to be there

*Fiddle music and laughter louder still. Caitín grabs Sean's wrist in a whirlwind and they really dance*

*Maire enters with Patch and Brigid. Brigid is more drawn than ever. Patch is carrying an earthenware bottle and Maire a small broken rush basket. Patch passes the bottle to Brigid, but Maire intervenes, producing food from her basket*

**Maire** You be eating some of this, Brigid. It will keep you better than the yellow meal and a lot better than Martan's potín. There's nothing left of you between breaking and carrying the stone

**Brigid** Sure a body cannot live on the yellow meal alone, and a bit of fish lasts long. But I'll not be missing Martan's brew either Patch Mór, so you be sure to leave a drop

**Maire** If he's wasting money earned by breaking his back, he's surely enjoying it

**Brigid** All my money is going on the yellow meal. I've nothing to pay the Landlord's agent when he comes for the rent, but it's better than being dead from hunger. Sure, Patch Mór there's life in my feet yet. Let's show these children a dance or two before the sun rises on the eastern world

*Patch and Brigid dance. Maire watches. Ruairí enters with a bottle. He takes a swig. He is not drunk*

*After a while, Brigid falls. Patch and Ruairí both try to catch her. Ruairí reaches her first and revives her with a swig from his bottle. She coughs*

**Ruairí** It is better to do this with the yellow slop the English sell us. Surely you cannot eat it

*Brigid appeals to Maire who moves over to her. Ruairí stands to confront Patch*

**Brigid** Maire...

**Ruairí** *(To Patch)* We are destroying ourselves for your jetty

**Sean** The jetty will bring food and stop you drowning on the tide

**Ruairí** Food! Yellow meal from another land not meant for Irish stomachs

**Maire** The world will seep in through your jetty like a gathering flood to drown us all.



- Sean** But is it not good to m m meet the world. America is so near. It is jetties, ships and railways are bringing the world together. They will bring an end to hunger.
- Maire** Young you are, Sean, and full it is of the future. You see America, but I see the village leaving, and friendships shattered, and tales untold by cold hearths. Other people will be standing here, people who know not the hare upon the hillside nor the seals in the cave, and the stories will have gone. Look out there. What do you see?
- Sean** I see the Black Rock
- Maire** You are a good boy, but you see only stones
- Caitín** I can see a seal
- Maire** I see the ocean, I see fish and birds and whales, I see the great weeds of the deep and the crawling crayfish. I see their lives from the spawning of their eggs to the sinking of their bones upon the sand
- Ruairí** I see boys too weak to save themselves and pull their currach through the tide. I see them drowning. Dead, Maire Mara, from hunger
- Maire picks up her basket and offers it*
- Maire** Will you—
- Ruairí** I came to speak with Patch
- Maire puts down the basket*
- Patch** What is it you're wanting?
- Ruairí** The agent's man was here yesterday
- Patch** Do you think I did not see him?
- Ruairí** You had a deal to tell him
- Patch** And what would I be telling the agent's man?
- Ruairí** Surely someone who talks long hours of every day to the English Michael Davey must have something to say to the agent's man?
- Patch** (*Threateningly*) Is it you are suggesting—
- Brigid** Patch is one who'd see the agent floating face down in the tide

**Ruairí** The agent would be knowing how much we are paid so he can send his men to steal and call it rent. You it is talks with Mr Davey. Surely one of you has told the agent what he pays us

**Patch** Mr Davey hates the agent quite as much as we ourselves

**Ruairí** No, not us much as we ourselves. The agent will not burn Mr Davey's roof above his head

**Patch** You chase the wrong man. Michael Davey—

**Sean** My father pays more than the government rate. He would not have you starve

**Ruairí** You are mistaken. He would be having us starve slowly, and bleed work from us the while to build his jetty

**Patch** The wrong man you're accusing. Michael Davey is with us

**Ruairí** Michael Davey is with the English and paid by the English, the same as is the agent. Surely it would be a fine thing to complain to the English agent about the English engineer and set them at each other's throats like mad dogs

**Brigid** Leave this Ruairí Dearn, you speak before his son

**Ruairí** And will his son stand on his feet and fight for his father? I'll have no English speaking man starve me and my family

*Sean shrinks back*

**Ruairí** No, he'll not fight

**Patch** Then you had better be fighting me. Mr Davey is a good man

**Maire** It's not each other you should be fighting, nor Mr Davey. Put down your fists

*Maire moves between them*

**Ruairí** Out of this, banshee!

*Ruairí pushes Maire out of the way and Patch lands a punch on his face. Ruairí is brought down. He lies a moment before standing dizzily. Laughing ironically he goes over to Maire's basket, kicks it violently and exits.*

**Brigid** Fools men are to waste what they have in fighting

*Caitín runs to her father*

**Patch**            There's no hurt to me Caitín

**Brigid**            Take a care tonight, when the drink is in the boys

**Patch**            It's hoping I was that coming as a family, people would see there is no harm in us...

**Brigid**            No good can come of this, Patch Mór, no good at all

*Patch shoots her a pained look, then turns to Maire. Brigid exits, and Sean, unsure what to do, follows*

**Patch**            Come with me to the priest

**Maire**            No, Patch, No

**Patch**            Maire...

**Maire**            I love you Patch. I love Caitín

**Patch**            Then come with me to the priest

**Maire**            I love the sea

**Patch**            Then go. I will not have you unhappy

**Maire**            I cannot go

*Maire turns away*

**Patch**            Come from this, Caitín

**Caitín**            I will watch the sun into the sea, Da, and then I will come

*Maire continues her song. It fits strangely to the distant jig, like pennillion.*

*Pulling on rough oars  
My love's breath blends with mine  
Lazy in the tide swirls  
Seals roll about me*

*Patch exits. Caitín gazes at the sunset*

*Sean enters and moves up to Caitín. Snatches of music and laughter drift over from the shore*

**Caitín**            Is it something you've lost Mr Davey

**Sean**            Will you be coming for another d d dance along the shore?

- Caitín** Rather I would be watching the ocean
- Sean** Come - it's a reel
- Caitín** I'll not be talking with a boy who will not fight for his father
- Sean** I would have been fighting
- Caitín** You would not
- Sean** Your Da was fighting Ruairí before me, when he was after calling Maire a banshee
- Caitín** I'll not be talking with you. I want to watch the ocean and see the things Maire sees
- Sean** Maire sees too much
- Caitín** She sees what is around us. She sees under the ocean. Perhaps you see too little
- Sean** It's herself she should see. She has such strange ways, so people notice her. I have heard Ruairí's boys laughing and saying they might be throwing her to the fishes and watching her swim like a seal. Perhaps they will now their Da has taken a beating
- Caitín** Those boys are all blather. Besides, my Da will stop them
- Sean** There is no pleasing her. She hates the jetty. She is blind to the good that it will bring
- Caitín** She grieves for the fishes and the birds and the stories by the hearth
- Sean** And do I not grieve for my mother? My mother is dead beneath the Eastern shore for want of a jetty
- Caitín** I am sorry
- Sean** She does not care for p p people - she cares only for her dancing hare
- Caitín** You will not fight for your Da. Don't be telling us we care not for people. Have I not lost a mother and a baby brother too? You care for nothing but your ships and engines. Dead things without a beating heart
- Sean** I thought you understood. I thought you saw the future as I do, a future that's exciting! B b but all you see are rotting potato fields, ripped currachs, and lives shadowed in d d dark huts

*Caitín is in angry tears*

**Caitín**        This is my life Mr John Davey and you will never understand it

*Sean turns away, breaking and angry in his turn. The music rises as the lights fade*

**Interval**

## Interlude 4

*Darkness. We hear the sea, but with softer waves than at the start of the play. The firelight grows, and Brigid is again telling tales in her hut, with the cast lying propped on the floor downstage. Perhaps Patch is fishing upstage. Music underscoring*

**Brigid** In human skin, with the salt wind on her lips, she watched her husband fishing

It was a good catch the two boys were after having that day for the herring were driven in by seals, and had swarmed in the far bay - surely the water was boiling with them, caught they were between the seals and the rocks. They had but to throw the net and haul it till the boat was near swamping.

We shall not go hungry this month says one

We shall not be needing food where we are going if we load but one more fish says the other

So they pulled for home with the waves lapping at the gun'les, and they stopping to bale every few strokes to keep afloat. And as they rowed a seal kept pace with them, an old bull seal with sad, staring eyes; and when they stopped, he stopped

There is one of your family following, says the second boy, for his friend it was had taken a seal for his wife

My family are on the hill above, says the first

Say what you will, the fairies are in this, says the other. Throw him a fish, for we have taken what is his

But the seal would have no fish and followed on, and as he followed the waves increased and they threw more fish at him to make him go away, and still he followed, till the last herring was thrown over. And at that moment he reached them and a wave caught the boat and threw her upon her end and they would surely have drowned had they been but one fish heavier upon the water

**Caitín** Would the bull be killing them?

**Brigid** Surely he was after saving them, for if they drowned, the sealskin would be lost for ever and the old bull never see his wife again

*We hear sea and seabirds, and Maire's song builds from the underscoring as she casts nets from the currach. At the end of the song, lights and music fade into the next scene*

**Maire**

*Waves slap her forefoot  
Bows lift to the wind  
The boat skin sighs against her ribs  
Easing to receive the tumbling fish*

## **Scene 5**

At the jetty works, late Autumn

*At the jetty works, five months on. Brigid is breaking stone and Patch enters with a creel*

**Patch** If the world was right, it's now we should be lifting the last of the potatoes and setting by the seed for planting

**Brigid** They're saying there will be little blight next year, but how are they knowing that?

**Patch** They're wanting us to plant again so they don't have to pay us relief to work upon the jetty

**Brigid** Planting is it? Plant stones for surely there is no potato left upon the island

**Patch** The landlord and his agent would have us plant stones... And they would have us eat them

**Brigid** There's some will pay the agent with stones when he comes for the rent

**Patch** And be paid back with English bullets

*Patch drops his creel*

**Brigid** Is it true the agent will come with a mighty force of soldiers?

**Patch** Let him. They will find no food about us, for what we have shall be hidden. We must keep living through the winter

**Brigid** We will, with money for the yellow meal and Maire's fish

**Patch** Surely there is less fish than before. Hard it is for Maire to launch the currach in this weather. And harder still from the far bay

**Brigid** Away from the boys?

**Patch** It is. Since the night they tried to throw her from the jetty she has kept herself hidden from them

**Brigid** You put up a rare fight that night Patch Mór. It's a wonder if Ruairí's boys are not still feeling their bruises

**Patch**           Worse it gets. Day by day worse. Long ago I was thinking that as the days moved on they would come to like her in the village. I would lead her to the priest if she would but come, for she is a dear gentle soul

**Brigid**           She is, yet she has the wild sea in her, as you know, Patch Mór

*Mike enters with a metal bar*

**Mike**            I have just received this new iron unloaded from the hooker

*Mike slots the iron into the hole. Patch examines it*

**Patch**            It is good iron. Soft enough to bend and strong enough to hold

**Mike**            Months I've waited for this iron, and sent back the first load

**Patch**            That load was brittle as an old tooth.

*Mike rattles the bar in a hole. They both give their weight to the bar and Patch grins with satisfaction*

**Patch**            Good it is to see the jetty near its fullest length

**Mike**            And most of it above the power of the water. Working day and night at the last spring tide has seen to that, even if it near destroyed us. Now we have the depth, I shall bring hookers in with quarry trash to fill the middle, it will save a deal of carrying stone

**Brigid**            Sure we seem to have been carrying stone a lifetime

**Mike**            Eight months now, Brigid

**Patch**            Mr Davey says we shall have it finished in not much beyond the year

**Mike**            Surely it is the finest work I've built. There's no better around the whole coast of Ireland. See there, the water in its lee is a fishpond! The Galway boatmen are a fount of happiness about the pier and they come in crowds, getting in the way.

**Brigid**            I hear some Galway hooker men have written to the Board of Works asking that you do not build a slip alongside of the jetty for the currachs

**Mike**            They have, and the Board agreed and have instructed me to cut the rock instead and make a sheltered pool for the big boats

**Brigid**            Surely that is a bad thing for the island boys

**Mike**            They still can launch the currachs off the beach, for they will gain the shelter of the jetty there



**Brigid** I say it is a shame, for should not the island boys' needs be foremost?

*Sean enters with a letter for his father*

**Sean** A letter here from Dublin, Mr Davey, brought in the hooker with the iron

*Mike looks at the seal*

**Mike** Thank you, Mr Davey. From the idiot scribes of the board of works. No doubt they tell me that the pulleys I have sent for repair will be mended by the end of next year

*Mike breaks open the letter and reads*

**Patch** And how is Mr John today?

**Sean** F f fine I thank you

*Patch looks at him then shoulders his creel*

**Brigid** Fighting off the island girls I'm sure, now you no longer walk the strand with Caitín

**Sean** My father has had sent here a book of m m mathematics and I spend my evenings in learning

**Brigid** Surely you are looking pale, for mathematics is no way to put blood in a boy's cheeks

**Sean** I need the mathematics for my engineering

**Brigid** Learning is a terrible thing if it takes the life from you

**Patch** *(Over his shoulder)* Leave the boy, Brigid. He has time enough ahead

**Brigid** That is something we none of us know, Patch Mór

*Mike, who has been reading intently, explodes, waving the letter violently*

**Mike** This is the agent's work. Him and the sneaking rats he sends around to spy on me!

**Sean** Father?

**Mike** I'll read you this letter Sean, and I care not who else hears it because it is the foulest lie, and anyone who knows me will agree

*He reads in English*

**Mike** I am directed to inform you that the board has received a report from Mr Russel, the Marquis of Coningham's agent, of you absenting yourself from your duty as well as being frequently intoxicated,

**Sean** Father...

**Mike** and they have in consequence directed Mr Roberts esquire of Galway to inquire into the truth of this report.

**Sean** Father be...

**Mike** It will be proper for you to disprove these statements so prejudicial to your character and if you are unable to do so, the board will be obliged to dismiss you from their service.

**Sean** Father, you must be slowing your reading. *(He turns to Patch and Brigid)* These are all lies

**Mike** The agent, may he rot in hell, threatened me a month gone by because I would not drop your pay to starve you back to work upon his fields. And now he complains to Dublin that I am drunk and idle, and they are to investigate my conduct

**Patch** *(under his breath)* Ruairí Dearn...

**Brigid** It's dead the agent wants us, dead or evicted which is much the same, so he can rent the land without our houses on it

**Mike** He wants the jetty works closed and that's an end to it. Already he has written to the board to complain I paid you by the day and not by each load of stone. If I paid you by the rates I am supposed to, I'd loose you all within a month, not to his fields but to the coffin. Well Seanín, if he wants a fight then I am ready

*Sean is visibly upset*

**Mike** Come on boy they shall not shift us that easily. I'll nail this letter to a post and let any man who's ever seen me drunk, or not about the works from dawn to dusk come and tell me to my face. Unless Mr Robert's is in the agent's pay we shall have nothing to fear.

**Patch** *(To Brigid)* Ruairí it is has done this

**Brigid** Ruairí would never be speaking to the agent

**Mike** Ruairí Dearn?

*Patch nods*

- Brigid** We cannot be knowing, Patch Mór
- Patch** We can be...
- Mike** Whoever has done it, it is only what that devil agent is wanting to hear
- Patch** I'm fearing the agent will have his way with the jetty as he will with the rents
- Brigid** We should be fighting him
- Patch** When the agent comes for his rent, Brigid, which he will do as soon as we have a fine day, he will come with fifty English rifles hard behind his back
- Brigid** He'll get no rent from me. I must keep money to buy the yellow meal if the jetty works are finishing
- Mike** You will loose your roof
- Brigid** I cannot eat my roof, Mr Davey

## Scene 6

In Patch Mór's cottage, a few days later

*In Patch Mór's cottage. Patch and Caitín are looking out of the doorway, and Maire is sitting near the hearth. The agent and a force of soldiers have marched past outside. We hear shouted commands. Fife and drums underscore the whole scene, providing the sound effects and blending into Maire's song*

- Patch** Reaching Brigid's house now are the last of the soldiers, but her door is barred
- Maire** She will be making them break it down
- Patch** I would have hidden her on the hill where we hid her chickens and her money, for the house is lost, but she was for putting up a fight
- Maire** One woman against forty rifles. Is that a fight?
- Patch** The agent and his men are shouting through the door
- Maire** Forty soldiers who landed at the jetty from a big boat and did not even splash their polished boots. Coming they used to be in twos and threes in hired currachs from the coast when the weather was summer fine. Now they can land a hundred at a time in the winter storms
- Patch** They've brought up heavy timber from the works to ram the door. Where is the village!

**Maire** Hiding in their houses like us, Patch Mór

**Patch** Where were they when we hid her chickens?

**Caitín** Frightened they are. She eats with us, Da

*Patch stares out*

**Patch** The priest is there alone, talking to that devil agent

**Caitín** Look! Sean and Mike and Mr Mauris with them walking up the strand

**Maire** All good men and all so wrong. They it is who made it easy for the army

**Patch** It's not on the jetty you can blame the army but on the English devils who send them

**Maire** And did not English devils send the jetty?

*Patch turns back to Maire appealing with open arms, leaving Caitín watching at the door*

**Patch** Now the weather turns for Spring I shall leave the jetty and fish with you. I cannot stand this coldness one day longer—

**Maire** No, Patch, No. They are telling me Ruairí will be evicted today. A man with a family. He has no work and no money. They are telling me someone spoke against Ruairí to Michael Davey and he was thrown off the jetty works

**Patch** I had to be telling Michael. And the work was after killing him...

*Exasperated and confused, Patch turns away. Dull crashing thuds come from outside*

**Caitín** Breaking her door they are. Sean is shouting at the agent

*More crashes*

**Caitín** The soldiers are turning outwards and raising their rifles. Sean!

**Patch** Come from the door Caitín

**Caitín** Who is it they're shooting at? No-one is there

**Patch** Surely it is to frighten us all inside our houses

**Caitín** Michael Davey is shouting now, and Sean is running over here. Sean!

*Sounds of splintering and raised voices*

*Sean enters*

**Caitín** Well Mr John, is it visiting you are?

**Sean** A b b b

**Patch** Come in from the door, boy

**Sean** b blessing on us all. My father sent me from the soldiers, but he must stay and argue with the agent! I am a m m man now, cannot I argue with the best?

**Patch** You are better in this house, for who is knowing what might start them off

**Caitín** A man now is it? Too much a man to greet Caitín when you pass herself upon the road

**Sean** You told me you d d did not want to see me

**Caitín** I did. But I did not say you could not greet me on the road. That is not being good mannered

**Sean** G g good day to you Caitín

**Caitín** I do not wish to speak with you Mr John Davey

*Outside, the door is smashed down*

**Caitín** The peelers are inside now. All gone in with guns, and left the soldiers on the door... They are out with her cooking pot and spoons...

**Patch** Dear God, I cannot stay here and listen

*Breaking free from Maire, he exits*

*Maire begins to sing, her song rising above the military music and taking it over*

**Maire**

*No bitter rain no screaming wind  
No choking mist no savage sea  
Can blow my heart from this dear land  
Or drown the love I feel for thee*

*Though soldier's arms and foreign tongues  
May burn my house and steal my soil  
They light a spark that flames with wrongs*

*For thy dear freedom shall I toil*

**Sean**            B b bayonets they have

**Caitín**            Oh Da! Da!

**Sean**            Mauris is shouting to him

**Caitín**            Why must he run at the soldiers?

**Sean**            I should be there

**Caitín**            Stay Sean. It'll do no good... They're smashing her stools

**Maire**            It is her hearth. They have fouled her hearth

*Music*

*Caitín slowly lowers her head into her hands and begins to rock backwards and forwards*

**Maire**            They have broken the warmth of her fire

*Music*

**Maire**            They have destroyed her welcome

*Music*

**Maire**            There she gave life to her family

*Music*

**Sean**            Caitín...

*Caitín ignores him*

**Sean**            Caitín...

*Maire goes over to Sean and gently turns him to face her*

**Maire**            This is her village, Seanín

*Sean drops his head and turns to look out of the door again*

**Sean**            They are taking her clothes...

**Maire**            She owns but little, and that little will be trampled. But it is her hearth they have destroyed, her hearth Seanín. That is the crime

**Sean** Her hearth

**Maire** She has kept that hearth warm through darkness, famine, and joy. But now it is destroyed. There will be no more stories at her hearth

**Sean** I am angry that they treat her so, but now it is you give me deeper anger against the men who break her hearth

**Maire** Hold to that anger Seanín, for it is powerful. And learn that just as men with rifles break upon her hearth, even so, young man, do your jetty and your ships that laugh at storms begin to destroy my sea and its stories

*Sean stares at Maire, but says nothing. There is a burst of shouting. Caitín comes out of herself and looks again*

**Caitín** They have dragged her out and handed her to Mr Mauris

*Sean continues to stare at Maire*

**Caitín** They are throwing rags upon the eaves

**Sean** Dear God

**Maire** They will destroy what they cannot use

**Caitín** Tarred rags they are, and they're setting them alight

**Sean** The thatch is dry today, for the night was cold and clear

*They watch the thatch catching fire*

**Caitín** Mauris is taking Brigid towards the strand

**Sean** The flames have reached the pitch already. In this wind there will be no stopping of them

**Caitín** Surely the bothín is destroyed

**Sean** It will take the rafters

**Caitín** The soldiers are going

*The crackling flames are now audible. They watch for a few moments more, then Patch and Mike burst in. They are carrying a few of Brigid's tattered belongings*

**Patch** If there is a God in heaven let him throw that agent to the deepest pits of torment

**Caitín** She will be living here with us? Sure no-one else will take her in

**Patch** When the army's gone she will come here. I'd be taking her now but Michael would not let me. And he's right. What point is there in having our roof burnt as well?

**Mike** Mauris is bringing her to the jetty

**Patch** She can use our clochan by the shore where we keep the nets, until the agent leaves the island

**Patch** There's half a dozen more evictions.

**Mike** If ever there is a man on whom I could do a murder it is that agent. He lies about my drunkenness to Dublin. He tells me my jetty is the ruin of the land and will not rest until he puts an end to it. He says I pay too much to spite him. I tell him even paying more than Dublin permits, the people cannot earn enough to eat to have the strength to carry stones upon their back to earn their wages. And he wants them to work in his fields for less again. I tell him they are starving. He says 'Then they can eat rats!'

**Sean** Where is it the soldiers are going now?

**Maire** To Ruairí Dearg's. The sky will be flaming red today

*The crackling flames grow louder. Maire sings*

*There is a crash of a collapsing roof beam*

**Maire** They have destroyed her stories

## **Interlude 5**

*Maire's song continues into the interlude, less frantic now. Sean watches her. Fade out into next scene, keeping the sea sounds. Brigid, Mike, Patch and Sean have formed a tableaux upstage – old Ireland*

**Maire**

*Walls that crumble into broken turf  
Spiked with rotting roof beams where the stories flowed  
The hare leaps dances on the stricken stones  
Where furious feet flew*

*Grassy gullies lead to sunken steps  
Where children staggered their first faltering pace  
Now lost in brambles, bracken, briars  
The blackbird hops for blackberries*



## Scene 7

On the end of the Jetty, New Year 1849

*Caitín is at the end of the jetty on the uncompleted stonework. She adopts a pose much as Sean did in scene 1. She is on the deck of a steamship, waving goodbye to the tableaux upstage*

**Caitín** Fare thee well, old Ireland, for I am off across the Western Ocean to the place where land is free

The ropes are cast, the ship is from the jetty

Now Mr Davey, will you be showing me round this fine ship!

Indeed I shall, Miss Kate

And where will you be taking me first?

Sure I am taking you to see the firebox where the c c coal burns at the heat of a hundred d d devils.

Why, that's a power of kindness, Mr Davey

*Sean enters unseen and watches in a mirror of Scene 1*

**Caitín** And now it is to the engine I am taking you, Miss K K Kate.

Will you be helping me down the ladders like a fine gentleman?

Indeed I will, for here is my arm. Be observing as you go down that this ship is b b built of m m metal and yet it f f floats

**Sean** And see below you the great shaft spinning, the cogwheels flying and the steam hissing

**Caitín** Sean Mike!

**Sean** Right you were in m m most things but wrong to make me stammer when I talk of engineering

**Caitín** And what is making you think I was speaking of you? There are surely plenty of fine young men who would be talking of engineering

**Sean** I I I

**Caitín** If it's thinking you are that a girl would want you, Sean Mike with your clothes covered in oil and quarry dust and your head after shutting itself inside a mathematics book, then you're madder than a hare boxing at the moon. Why, when the strand is full of good strong boys smelling of the

sea who can pull a currach through the fiercest storm would any girl be looking after you?

**Sean** And would any of those b b boys be taking Caitín to America aboard the fastest ship in all the world?

**Caitín** It is not me that asked you out upon the jetty. Why was it you came?

**Sean** I I I

**Caitín** I I I s s s saw you K K Caitín

**Sean** I had... I had to check the—

**Caitín** Seanín... Would you really be going to America?

**Sean** If I cannot build railways in Ireland

**Caitín** And would you take your Da

**Sean** He'll not be leaving till he's built a jetty in every b bay along the Western Coast

**Caitín** Would they be having hares in America?

**Sean** I'm not knowing, but it's m m most things they have in America

**Caitín** For I would miss the hare...But I would not be missing the soldiers and the agent, or the last breaths of my Ma as she took the fever...

**Sean** The ways of our Ma and Da cannot be our ways

**Caitín** Brigid reminds me of my Ma. Good it is she is under our roof. She is laughing once again, and yesterday we had an egg from her chickens

*Pause. They look at each other*

**Caitín** Soon the jetty will be finished

**Sean** Soon it will, for it is near its full height and we lack but the capping stones to tie the inner and the outer walls together, keyed across the top they are with—

**Caitín** Do not be showing me again the holes and the iron bars Sean, for you have done that a full score of times

**Sean** I was thinking that you liked to hear—

**Caitín** I do, Seanín, but only once

**Sean** I'm thinking...

*Caitín looks at him intently*

**Sean** I'm thinking it is sad we shall be finishing this jetty before the summer's full

**Caitín** Why sad, Mr John?

**Sean** W we must leave for other work

**Caitín** Why, so you must

**Sean** I I I

**Caitín** Mr John! Perhaps you are too fond of Inishvickilane strand to part from it. There's many feel the same

**Sean** It is not the strand... Caitín Patch, w w w would you be going to America with me one day

**Caitín** Not with you Mr John Davey... but I might with Sean Michael if he were to ask me as the years go by

*Caitín begins to sing. Slowly at first, then faster and faster. Sean joins in. She grabs him and they are whirling round to a reel*

**Caitín** Sean Mike Sean Mike! We are dancing like the hare

*They dance some more*

*Michael Davey strides out to them*

**Mike** Here you are. You should not be confusing work with recreation, Mr Davey. Good morning Caitín

**Caitín** Mr Davey...

**Sean** I I had a message for Caitín's Da

**Mike** Then you have walked past him to get here, for Pdraig is working on the facing by the hookers

**Sean** I shall be seeing him directly

**Mike** No matter. I have had another letter from Dublin. Mauris brought it in with him from Galway

**Sean** *(half joking)* Is Mr Roberts dismissing us?

**Mike** I conduct myself with the utmost correctness, and the jetty is one of the best he has seen along the coast

**Sean** Then all is well

**Mike** Alas, all is not well

*Patch enters in turmoil*

**Mike** and not because the agent called me drunkard

**Patch** Mr Davey! What is it I'm hearing—

*Mike pulls a letter from his pocket*

**Mike** Listen! Listen to the Dublin fools!

*He reads in English*

**Mike** We are directed by the Lord Lieutenant to instruct you that all work on the Inishvickilane jetty should cease within the next month. It is of great importance to secure by all possible means the immediate cultivation and sowing of the land.

**Patch** Madness...

*Mike holds up his hand and continues reading*

**Mike** The people should not be allowed to indulge in the idle hope that the present system of relief, either by the means of public employment or by gratuitous distribution of food can be perpetuated. The only means by which another famine can be averted is by endeavouring, during the coming—

**Patch** It is what the agent threatened

**Mike** It is. And it seems he has more friends in Dublin than ourselves

**Sean** What is there to be doing?

**Mike** I shall write to the Board—

**Patch** What help are letters!

**Mike** Listen! I shall write explaining that the jetty is nearly finished, and is at peril from the storms until the capping stones are laid, and they will take it to committees and consultations and inspectors and commissioners, and will let me have an answer by the middle of the summer. But we shall have no more wages to pay out beyond the ending of the month... and you will starve again

**Caitín**           What does the English say?

**Sean**             That we are to stop building the jetty and send people back to work upon the land

**Caitín**           But there is nothing to plant! Da... how will we buy meal?

*Patch holds Caitín in real fear of the famine*

**Patch**           Mr Mauris will be seeing the relief committee and perhaps there will be meal to keep us alive for the spring planting

**Sean**            Are they not wanting a jetty!

**Mike**            They are not interested. We are a long way from Dublin... Well, they must be paying my wage until they have decided what to do. We may yet save this jetty, boy, if it's finishing it with our bare hands alone

*Mike exits. Sean, going with him catches Caitín's eye as he passes and stops, not knowing what to do. He indicates his retreating father, Caitín nods, and he exits*

**Caitín**           We have Maire's fishing, Da. Now you can go out with her in the currach as you promised. She is sad that you do not fish with her...

*Patch cannot reply*

*Brigid enters*

**Brigid**           I thought I might be finding you out here. The news is fair flying round the works. Who can see beyond the ending of a week in these times. I thank Mary for each dawn and each dusk as they fall upon me, for there are many who can no longer see them

**Patch**            I am starting to like the working on this jetty...

**Brigid**           We must trust on the relief committee

**Caitín**           Maire and I will take the currach out for fish

**Brigid**           Fishing with Caitín will surely put the laughter back on Maire's lips. See, Patch Mór, nothing it is troubles the young. We should be learning from them; they do not take their worries past the day

**Patch**            Indeed, Brigid, we should put the past behind us

**Brigid**           And are you pleased with the boys, Caitín?

**Caitín**           Why should I be pleased?

**Brigid** I saw you turning young Mr John Davey into Sean Mike on the ending of the jetty

**Caitín** He came with a message for Da

**Patch** A message for me is it?

**Caitín** He was forgetting to tell me, so I know it not

**Brigid** Likely it was a message for your ears alone Caitín

**Caitín** Then my ears alone shall keep it, for to tell you Brigid is to bring a month of teasing round about my head

*Caitín grabs Brigid by the hand and whirls her round then exits*

**Brigid** Freedom is a powerful thing, Patch Mór

## **Scene 8**

By a Clochan on the Jetty approach, early Spring

*On the jetty approach road, besides a clochan. Sean onstage, Caitín enters*

**Sean** Whist Caitín, I thought you n n never would be here

**Caitín** We are going fishing and Maire is impatient for the tide. I do not run errands for any boy

**Sean** It's not an errand that I want.

**Caitín** Brigid was saying you were impatient to see me. Is that not an errand?

**Sean** There is something that I want to show you – in this clochan

**Caitín** I'll not have you show me anything, Sean Mike, that cannot be shown out here under the broad sun

**Sean** This is no time for t t teasing. Earnest, I am

*Sean beckons Caitín into the clochan and holds out a folded sealskin*

**Caitín** Holy Mary, what is it?

**Sean** A sealskin...

**Caitín** Dear God...

*Caitín and Sean look at each other for a moment without speaking*

- Sean** Your Da it was threw it under a creel of stones in the jetty infillings
- Caitín** Da!
- Sean** I was after seeing him last night as the light faded from the sky. In darkness I pulled it out and hid it here
- Caitín** Da... You're not thinking...?
- Sean** I told you, that is the talk of the old people by the winter fires...
- Caitín** Then why is it you are wanting me to see it?
- Sean** I don't know what to think
- Caitín** What is it we do?
- Sean** We must be showing it to her
- Caitín** Is it mad you are!
- Sean** We must be giving it her to choose. If she is a seal, she should be free, if she is n n not, she will laugh at our foolishness and no harm is done
- Caitín** You are believing the old stories
- Sean** I I I...
- Caitín** You tell me they are nonsense
- Sean** If they are nonsense, then Maire will care n n nothing for an old sealskin
- Caitín** You're blustering, Sean Mike, blustering like all the village boys because you don't know what to think
- Sean** Give it to her to choose.
- Caitín** It cannot be true...
- Sean tries to take the sealskin*
- Sean** I could bury it again in the jetty infillings. Nobody would know
- Caitín** You will not
- Sean** Perhaps it is right to b b bury the past in the new jetty, for the world is moving
- Caitín** Not buried in the jetty. Maire would be hating that

*They are both tugging at the sealskin*

**Sean** Then let me give it to her

**Caitín** You will not

**Sean** Bury it or give it to her. We must decide Caitín. Either we believe the story or we do not

*Above their struggle, coming down the wind Maire can be heard singing cheerfully. Sean and Caitín do not notice*

**Caitín** You are cruel, John Davey

**Sean** I must believe what I see

**Caitín** You are cruel

**Sean** I am not cruel

**Caitín** Let me have it

**Sean** I found it

**Caitín** You'll give it to her

*A childish tug of war ensues*

**Maire** *(Calling from off)* Caitín! Caitín!

**Caitín** Hide it

**Sean** We've not—

**Caitín** Hide it!

*Maire enters and they are caught with the sealskin behind their backs. Neither want to let go. They back away. Maire is aware of the sealskin from the moment she enters, but she does not show it openly*

**Maire** Where is it you've been, girl. Is it fighting with Sean Mike, for it did not sound like kissing you were in here

*Sean and Caitín speak across each other*

**Caitín** *(nervously)* Sean will be talking. Little have I seen of him these last few weeks with his Da driving him like a madman trying to make the jetty safe against the storms



**Sean** Caitín is after showing me the d d diving gulls... sh sh showing me the diving gulls and teaching me of fish

**Maire** You would do well to watch them, for they show you the old ways

**Sean** I know, I know... Caitín is teaching me to love the hare upon the hillside and the gannets in the tide... And yet the big ships will come. We must be ready. None of us can stop the world. It's driving on the reins I want to be, Maire, not sitting backwards in the cart

**Maire** Those of us who're sitting backwards can see what we're losing as it passes by. Did your Ma tell you stories at your hearth?

**Sean** She did

**Maire** Promise me you'll not forget your stories by the fire, nor the language that you heard them in

**Sean** I will not forget... I wish it was you were not sad, Maire

**Maire** Sad? I am never sad. To watch quietly is not to be sad... Come Caitín, we shall be missing the tide and your Da not yet come to help us

**Sean** Maire...

**Maire** Seanín?

**Sean** There's something we've found that we're wanting to show you

**Caitín** Sean Mike!

**Sean** It's only an old sealskin

*Sean brings it out from behind his back*

**Caitín** Sean!

*Maire looks, then takes it from Sean's hands. Caitín sinks in blind despondency*

**Maire** Why, so it is

**Sean** We found it... in—

**Maire** Dry it is, but still useful. Look, Sean how the shape will beat your iron ships, for it moves with the water

*Sean smiles weakly*

**Maire** I think I have seen it before.

*There is a pause. Caitín, who has been expecting Maire to turn instantly into a seal, slowly raises her eyes and begins to breath again*

**Sean**            Shall we be launching your currach.

**Maire**            Indeed we shall. Patch can find us on the strand. Between the tide slackening and the wind blowing up we have but a short time

**Sean**            Where is it you're fishing today?

**Maire**            The herring's all gone from the black rock, hauled into the Galway boats, but they've not yet found the mackerel. It's off the east of the island the mackerel will be running today, for there is a powerful wind coming before long. There's a swell breaking on the point

*Maire hands the skin back to Sean, who folds it up and places it back in the wall*

**Caitín**           Will you not be taking the skin?

**Maire**            Taking it? Why, it is safe where it is

*Caitín smiles nervously at Sean*

**Caitín**           Then we should not take it?

**Maire**            For what? Leave it in the clochan

**Caitín**           *(much happier)* We must be fishing

**Maire**            Be on down to the currach. I shall call at Michael Davey's to fetch your Da

**Caitín**           It's a wonder what takes him there when there's no more money in the jetty. It's fishing he should be with us, or planting oats with Brigid

**Sean**            Perhaps I could be fishing with you today. A few hours only?

**Maire**            Half the tide at most

**Sean**            I have worked every hour of daylight these last few weeks. Come, you can show me how to find the mackerel

*Sean and Caitín and Maire exit arm in arm. Maire hums gently as she walks. Her song continues as the lights dip and Patch enters.*

## **Scene 9**

Outside Michael Davey's hut, immediately afterwards

*Lights back up*

- Maire** So it's here I find you, Patch Mór
- Patch** Michael Davey had a power of things to tell me
- Maire** Half the tide is run already
- Patch** I cannot be coming with you today
- Maire** No, you cannot
- Patch** There is surely a wind blowing from the west tonight and we must tie down the crane
- Maire** Then ...
- Patch** Nor can I come tomorrow. For that is what Michael was talking of. He likes my work and wants me as a ganger. I can learn, Maire...
- Maire** But there is no money for the jetty
- Patch** Mauris has had letters from Dublin. He is sure that money will come in the end of all to finish the jetty, and we need but a few more weeks work to make it safe against the storms

*Maire does not reply*

- Patch** Maire, but be patient for this could be the saving of us. Michael Davey would be taking me with him to his next work. We would be away from the village, away from the boys and their fighting and calling you a witch, their shouting after Caitín. I've had no-one from the village in our chimney corner for a year. They will not enter our house for fear of the fairies. They will not speak with Brigid because she eats with us
- I could be earning enough for all. We could be living where people would be talking to us...

- Maire** So you have chosen

*Patch holds Maire close. She does not resist*

- Patch** It's sad I make you
- Maire** No, not sad. You do not make me sad... Why should I be sad? Caitín and I will go for the mackerel ourselves. That will make me happier than the world. You see to the safety of your crane

*Patch goes to leave, then turns*

- Patch** I'm sure the mackerel will be leaping into the currach

**Maire**            You're a good man, Patch Mór

*Maire is singing happily*

## **Interlude 6**

*Maire's song carries over through the interlude. She goes to the clochan and picks up the skin, heading first upstage away from the sea, but finally she turns, drawn to the end of the jetty. The feeling should be of peace rather than frantic activity to start with, but the sea and wind gradually increases until we are in a full storm with Maire's singing rising above all other noise. It is important to keep the ambiguity right through this scene. A mad woman drowning, or a seal wife?*

**Maire**

*All knowledge lost in lust for boiling fish  
The seals dive deep  
Black rock shines white upon an oily swell  
The gulls glide inland  
Small signs of storm creep up when you least expect  
Waves tumbling, breaking confusion  
My frame shudders as it slams the water  
And slides into the tide*

## **Scene 10**

By the clochan, later

*It is a tempest of huge proportions. We are still by the clochan. It is dusk*

*Maire is on the edge of the jetty, the rest of the cast are depicted upstage*

**Mike**            The crane, it's going to take the crane. Get some men, Patch the jib has broken loose

**Patch**            But we had tied it

**Mike**            A storm I was expecting, but not this hurricane

**Patch**            Suddenly, from nowhere, the world has become foam

**Mike**            Sean! Help us pull out the loose gear!

**Patch**            Keep clear of the waves girl. They're breaking right across the road

**Caitín**            Da, the currach's gone

**Brigid** Caitín, Caitín, where is Maire? Have you seen herself?

**Mike** Maire! Beyond the crane at the end of the jetty! We'll never reach her past the sea

**Patch** Maire!

*Maire steps into the sea holding onto the jetty, reluctant to let go*

*The storm is rising in fury. There is a crash of falling masonry*

**Caitín** In this sea... Where's Sean? I must find Sean

*Caitín casts wildly about her. Sean is there*

**Caitín** You've killed her!

**Sean** I showed her a sealskin, that is all

**Caitín** Sean!

**Sean** She has to choose, Caitín. We all of us; we all have to choose

**Caitín** *(Sobbing)* You don't believe...

**Sean** It is not mattering what I believe, Caitín, it is what she believes

**Caitín** Maire!

*Maire lets go of the jetty*

**Brigid** Mary and all the saints, what has she done?

**Caitín** She's going back to the sea, Brigid... she's going back to the sea

**Maire**

*Cliffs crack in sliding shale  
Stone by stone  
Grinding through ten thousand years of gales  
Trickling to sand  
Hare quietly crouching in lee of dripping rocks  
Through generations of thunder  
Man's noisy trumpets and impotent fury  
Drum past, lost on the wind  
All that we play for will tumble then silently  
Slide into the tide*

*Sean points*

**Sean** Look the crane!

*A crash rises above the storm. Maire exits*

**Sean** The crane is gone and taken part of the jetty

**Mike** It's breached the stone - we'll not get past

**Brigid** Her story...

**Mike** It's hopeless. The water is washing the rubble out of the core and blowing the walls apart like an eggshell. There'll be nothing left in ten minutes

**Brigid** Patch, oh Patchín

*Brigid moves towards her storytelling position*

**Patch** She was laughing. Mike, was she not laughing

**Mike** She was laughing. She was laughing and waving at the storm

**Brigid** It is her story...

**Patch** Maire, stones, all gone...

**Brigid** Diving deep she was, below the storm to where the sand stirs clouds along the bottom. Out through tasselled forests past the hiding fish...

**Mike** A year's work, eh boy, all lost because of Dublin fools... and another drowned...

*Mike shakes his fist at the sea*

**Mike** You'll not beat me!

**Caitín** She goes back to the sea, Da. She goes back to the sea.

**Brigid** Gliding through the rippling rocks a shadow rose before her. The old bull seal it was who waited; waited to swim with her along the golden edges of the Western Ocean.

## **Interlude 7**

*Maire enters in apotheosis, singing joyfully over and over again*

**Maire**

*I will dive with the seals*

*I will soar with the kittiwakes  
For my life is in this moment  
I will dance with the hare  
I will sing with the blackbird  
For life surges in my blood*

*Sean grabs Caitín's hand*

**Sean**            Look, sheltering in the lee of the clochan. It is a hare

**Caitín**           Be dancing little hare, when the sun shines on the hillside, be dancing

\* \* \* \* \*

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