

MOMENT OF GRACE

by R. T. Bowersox

Draft 11
June, 2020

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Pau 3-680-609

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CAST OF CHARACTERS
(In order of appearance)

LIAM...50s, Irish through-and-through; second generation owner of the Swan and Thistle.

JOEY...Late 50s, a salesman of household paper products; kind of a curmudgeon.

PAULIE...Early 60s, an academic; sophisticated, highly educated: Quick with a story; not arrogant, but sure of himself in almost any situation.

BOBBY...Late 50s, an actor; good-looking, aging well; considers himself a player, especially in the realm of amore; a hail fellow, well met, with a personality to match.

MARGARET...50s, still beautiful, but distressed -- her husband's just died; a strong, traditional Irish-American woman and wife who has just had the earth turn to sand beneath her feet.

MARK...40s, an artist; quiet, reflective, observant like a wary cat; seemingly unsure of himself, though it's the situation, not the man.

TOMMY...Early 60s; the deceased; only briefly on stage, but a presence throughout the play; an Irish-American sensibility, including the manner of speaking.

PLACE: Philadelphia

TIME: About 1992

The play takes place in one act, one continuous scene.

"The heart has its reasons of
which reason knows nothing."

Blaise Pascal

--

The Swan and Thistle,
Philadelphia. Late afternoon.
The quintessential Irish Pub --
all woods and mirrors,
dartboards and whiskeys. A
long, highly polished bar runs
mid-downstage right to left of
upstage center, a row of leather
barstools on the floor in front
of it.

Behind the bar, a huge Guinness
mirror behind glass shelves
with every conceivable type of
spirit lined up like soldiers.
A cash register sits low and
dead center on the back bar.
Centered on the highest shelf,
shoulder to shoulder, are four
bottles of 65-year-old Knappogue
Castle 51 Irish Whiskey.

Running along the stage left
wall are a booth or two --
benches on either side of a
built-in table, separated by a
floor to ceiling divider. On
each table, the requisite salt
and pepper, ketchup, napkin
holder, and menu. (For smaller
theaters, these can be combined
into one booth).

On the upstage wall, just
slightly behind the the end of
the bar is a swinging door to
the kitchen. Angled off the
stage left wall behind the end
of the booth is the entrance
door to the bar. A hallway to
the WC is downstage right,
leading offstage.

Almost every bit of wall real
estate is covered in mismatched
framed photos of people, rugby
games, Mummers marching. A
"Specials" board advertises
Corned Beef, Stew, Bangers and
Mash, etc. A dartboard hangs
extreme downstage right, along
with a large poster of a buxom
beauty holding a tray of beers.

LIGHTS UP.

LIAM stands behind the bar. In the upstage side of a booth sits MARK, sketching on an artist's sketchpad.

Liam looks through checks. He looks at one, then pulls it close to his face, trying to determine what was written on it.

LIAM

(Irish accent)

Jaysus, Bridgit. How'm I supposed to read this?

Liam wads the check, tosses it away. He sets the rest of the stack onto the shelf next to the cash register, as he turns at the sound of the door.

JOEY enters, swings onto a barstool.

LIAM

Good day to ya, Joey. What're you havin'?

JOEY

(another Irish tongue)

Two fingers 'a Bushmills, Liam, if you please.

Liam reaches behind himself without looking, grabs the bottle, pours a shot in front of Joey.

LIAM

You been up Chandler's, I'm supposin'.

JOEY

I have.

Joey downs the shot, points at the glass. Liam pours another.

LIAM

Crowded, is it?

JOEY

Out the door. Like everybody in Philadelphia's cryin'.

Joey moves to the dartboard,
tosses a few.

LIAM

And Margaret?

JOEY

Never moved from the corner 'a the coffin. Her sisters on
either side of her, wringin' hankies for her.

LIAM

Jaysus.

JOEY

Yeah.

LIAM

How'd he look? Tommy.

JOEY

You never look good layin' in a coffin, Liam.

(beat)

He was thin, you know? The cancer wasted him.

LIAM

He went quick.

JOEY

Hardly a month, fer Christ's sake. Pancreas it was. Kills
ya like that.

(snaps his fingers)

Don't give ya time to settle nothin'.

LIAM

Jaysus.

JOEY

Yeah.

LIAM

Paulie there? Bobby?

JOEY

Whattayou think?

LIAM

(shrugs)

Just wonderin'. Nice service?

JOEY

(moving back to the
bar)

Yeah...you know.

(MORE)

JOEY (CONT'D)

Priest tellin' tales about Tommy, the truth of which was colored long ago by previous tellin's through Bushmills and Guinness.

(sips at the shot)

Sad, it was.

LIAM

Katie there too?

JOEY

Oh, yeah.

LIAM

She do any singin'? Lass has a nice voice, you know.

JOEY

Oh, Lord! *Danny Boy* she sang. But she changed it to "*Tommy*" *Boy*, you know, in honor of her Da. Not a dry eye in the place.

LIAM

Rough.

JOEY

Yeah. Jaysus. You know, I'm tellin' my daughter she can't even come to my funeral. I don't want none of that maudlin shite passin' over me.

LIAM

You don't want us rememberin' ya?

JOE

Not like that, anyway. Just lay me down the end of the bar there. Open a case a' Knappogue and pour for everyone 'til you got one bottle left. Then bury me, shower the last bottle onto the dirt above me and be done with it.

LIAM

(twinkle in his eye)

Be glad to soak your grave with the good stuff, Joey, but if it's all the same to you, would you mind terribly if I passed it through me kidneys first?

They both laugh heartily as the door to the bar opens.

PAULIE enters, a folded New York Times under his arm. He removes a fedora and hangs it on a wall hook near the door.

LIAM

Well, there he is...himself at last.

PAULIE

Good day to you, too, Liam. Is the sun shining for you today?

LIAM

It's dimmed a bit today, Paulie, you know?

PAULIE

I do.

(slides onto a stool)

Joseph.

Joey raises his glass in greeting.

LIAM

(to Paulie)

What'll it be?

Paulie points to Joey's glass.

PAULIE

Whatever this old reprobate is having.

(to Joey)

That was a swift and artful escape, my friend. From the front row, too.

JOEY

Aah...Don't like hangin' 'round those kinds of...you know.

PAULIE

He was a comrade, Joseph. A compatriot since we crawled in diapers. He deserved to know he'll be missed.

JOEY

He don't know anything at this point does he, now? Anyway, I was there, eh? Canceled all my afternoon appointments to be there too, I did.

PAULIE

(sarcastically)

How good of you.

JOEY

Not a wise thing to do in this economy, Paulie. Sales is about service. I'm not there, somebody else will be.

Paulie grabs his glass and paper, moves to the DS table, starts crossword in pen.

PAULIE

Not today, Joey, okay?

JOEY

I'm just sayin'. Business is business. Bobby still up Chandler's?

PAULIE

Last I saw. Filling some lovely's ear.

JOEY

With what's the question. He comin' down?

PAULIE

I assume so. That's the agreement, isn't it?

JOEY

The man's always late.

PAULIE

He can't help it. The curse of the physically attractive. He gets sidetracked.

JOEY

(aghast)

He's trollin' for skirts at a *funeral*?

PAULIE

The man's incorrigible, what can I say?

JOEY

Led around by a couple ounces a' flesh ever since he discovered what he could do with it. No responsibility whatsoever.

(points at his glass)

Liam, if you will.

PAULIE

And I as well, my fine friend.

Liam pours. Joey hands Paulie the glass. They sip.

PAULIE

Not bad.

(points to the Knappogue)

But it's that elixir sitting up there that I'm awaiting. Sadly so, but nonetheless...

Joey and Liam turn and gaze at the bottles of Knappogue.

LIAM

Been up there thirty-five years this month, you know.

PAULIE

That long already?

LIAM

It is. You boys had me Da put those bottles up there when I was eighteen, just startin' to work here out 'a school. I remember it clear.

JOEY

Had to be in our cups that day, makin' a fool agreement like that. It's a sin, you ask me, leavin' that sweet potion sittin' there callin' to us all these years.

PAULIE

Like the Sirens, they are.

(off Joey's blank
look)

The Sirens?

(still blank)

The Odyssey? Greek literature?

(blanker)

Why do I bother?

JOEY

Who's fool idea was it, anyway?

PAULIE

Tommy's, of course.

LIAM

I remember my Da tellin' me those bottles were not to be touched. Ever. I wasn't even allowed to dust 'em down 'til I was near thirty.

PAULIE

Your Da was a good man, Liam. I miss him still. To Clancy.

JOEY AND LIAM

Clancy.

They raise their glasses, then
down the contents.

LIAM

(turns to the
Knappogue)

Can't believe we're actually bringin' one of those beauties down today.

All three men fall silent.
But the moment is short-lived,
as the door bursts open, and
in walks BOBBY, big as life.

BOBBY

Hello, boys! You haven't started without me now, have you?

JOEY

Couldn't blame us if we had, Bobby. Christ, where ya been?

(beat)

On second thought, forget it. We already know. What's her name?

BOBBY

Since you ask, Joey, her name is Cheryl, and she's gorgeous. A raving beauty. She was sitting over in the back corner at the viewing, all by herself. Turns out she was with Tommy at the shipping firm. An expediter, whatever that is.

JOEY

Oh, Jaysus! He's sniffin' around after family now!

BOBBY

She's no such thing, Joey. No relation at all.

(moves to the bar,
picks up the shot
glass Liam has
poured for him)

I was just sittin' there, waiting my turn to kneel at Tommy's side, minding my own business, you know, and I happen to look over, and she's staring at me, right? And not just glancing, either. Really checking me out. I figure maybe she'd seen me in that Off-Broadway thing I did last month, or on that *Law and Order* I was in--

JOEY

For two seconds five years ago.

BOBBY

Come on, Joey! I was there, on the screen, big as life, doin' a scene with Jerry Fuckin' Orbach! Doesn't matter how long. They re-run it all the time. Anyway. So I go up, pay my respects to Tommy, then I wander over and sit down next to her. She looks up at me, smiles real nice, you know? It was...a...a *moment*.

JOEY

Sure it was. A "moment", which is about how long it'll take you to move on once you've bedded her.

(points to Bobby's
crotch)

It's a wonder you ain't worn that thing down to the nub by now. Assumin' it's still workin', old as you're gettin'. As we're all gettin'.

PAULIE

Don't be including me in your troubles there, Joseph. I, for one, am still in the game.

JOEY

Uh-huh.

PAULIE

I'm serious. The older I get, the more I find myself *admiring* women, you know? Of all ages. And not just from an aesthetic perspective.

JOEY

Come on...!

PAULIE

I'm not dead. The plumbing still works. And God knows I have more experience than most of the young studs out there...thinking all it is is slamming some pipe and flushing the tubes.

JOEY

What's yer point?

PAULIE

I'm just saying that at a time most men are giving it up, I'm still interested in getting it up.

BOBBY

My sentiments exactly. Nothin' like fallin' in love.

JOEY

Fallin' in love. When'd you ever do *that*? You fall in love once, Bobby, and that only if you're lucky. Like my Jenny, God rest her soul.

LIAM

Amen.

JOEY

Thank you, Liam.

(to Bobby)

Nah, what you do with women...flittin' from one to another like a bee in clover...that ain't love, Bobby. It's a form of masturbation.

BOBBY

Whattayou know about it?

JOEY

I know what I know.

BOBBY

You don't know squat. Love doesn't come in only one color.

JOEY

Loved you like a brother all our life, Bobby. But don't be mistakin' that love for approval.

BOBBY

(to Paulie)

Why've we put up with him all these years?

PAULIE

Guys, guys, come on. It's all good.

(rising, to Joey)

Tell me you'd pass it up, Joey.

(referring to poster
of girl)

Be honest, now -- some gorgeous vision winks at you, let's
you know something's up -- tell me you aren't thinking the
same thing Bobby is. Or me. Or Liam.

(indicates Mark)

Or that fellow in the booth there.

(to Mark)

Right, my friend? You're male. You're thinking it too. We
all do.

(Mark says nothing.

Paulie moves on)

Some part of us imagines them naked. Or we watch their hips
move when they walk and translate the motion to imagining
sex with them. It's genetic, Joey. We're programmed for
it. You can't tell me if she offered, you wouldn't consider
it.

(Joey shakes his
head. Paulie returns
to his seat)

The young man still lives on the inside, despite the old man
on the outside. Just sayin'.

After a moment:

BOBBY

So...Are ya?

PAULIE

Am I what?

BOBBY

You know...

(indicates an
erection)

PAULIE

(as if: "What, are
you kiddin'?!")

Yeah!

BOBBY

Yeah?

Yeah. PAULIE

Yeah? BOBBY
(interested)

Yeah. PAULIE

Yeah. JOEY
(derisive)

Yeah! PAULIE

Bobby and Joey look directly
at Paulie.

Yeah. JOEY AND BOBBY
(definitive)

Yeah. PAULIE
(finality)

Bobby and Joey glance at each
other. No telling if they
believe him or not. Paulie
puts his nose back in the NYT.

Yeah. PAULIE, JOEY, BOBBY

A moment of silence.

LIAM
(after a beat...he's
heard it all before)
So, you boys finished? Want to get on with it?

Paulie looks up from the paper.
Bobby and Joey shrug. Paulie
stands, joins the others at
the bar.

We're all here. Good a time as any. PAULIE

Liam turns, looks at the
Knappogue bottles.

LIAM

Which one?

BOBBY

Tommy'd say they were all his.

JOEY

Probably could have drunk 'em all--

BOBBY

And still be standin'...

Hearty laughs.

PAULIE

(pointing)

Make it that first one on the end, there, Liam.

Liam reaches up and gingerly lifts the first bottle in the row, carries it to the bar, carefully dusting it with a cloth during the following:

JOEY

Tommy could drink, couldn't he? Man was a horse.

BOBBY

(laughing)

Oh, God! Remember that time -- Liam, you'll love this -- New Year's Day a few years back? We're down Broad Street watchin' the Mummers--

JOEY

Oh, God!

BOBBY

And we're all four sheets to the wind, a' course --

PAULIE

Hell, we were blind!

BOBBY

And Tommy's walkin' backwards--

JOEY

Staggerin's more like it--

BOBBY

--tellin' us some fuckin' story, bumpin' into people, cursin' them 'cause they had the brass to be in his way...forget he's walkin' backwards not even lookin'...And he keeps bumpin' into people and they're gettin' pissed and he's gettin' pissed, right? And suddenly, he's shoved hard from behind--

PAULIE

Something you did NOT do to Tommy sober, much less besotted!

JOEY

We could see who it was but were too stoned to say anything right off, and then it was too late.

BOBBY

Right. 'Cause he's had it, and we can see he's gonna do somethin' but before we can stop him, he whirls around like a madman, and without even lookin', he throws a right cross--

They're all laughing now.
Even Mark is smiling.

JOEY

Like Muhammad Ali, he was!

BOBBY

--And he slugs a mounted crowd control copper's horse square in the snout! Punches a fuckin' horse, for God's sake! Knocks the horse back two steps!

PAULIE

The horse rears up, drops the Mountie on his keister.

BOBBY

Cop pops up, pulls his gun, both hands out, aimin' right at Tommy, you know, like he's gonna drop him where he stood. Tells him to "freeze"...

PAULIE

So Tommy, not dropping a beat, spreads his arms and says "It's New Year's Day, officer! It's ten degrees out here! I can't get more frozen."

Big laugh.

LIAM

He spend the night courtesy a' Philly's finest?

JOEY

Nah. The cop was Irish. Tommy starts laughin' that big laugh of his. Cop starts laughin' too. Tommy offers him a swig a' Bushmills--

BOBBY

Which he takes, on duty or no--

JOEY

And he waves us on.

PAULIE

But not before suggesting heartily that Tommy keep his eyes front and give wide berth to members of the equine community.

BOBBY

God, what a ripper he was!

Mark looks down at this, his smile fading. The boys' laughter trails off into individual sadnesses.

Liam sets the bottle of Knappogue on the bar, lines up four shot glasses.

LIAM

Boys.

Paulie points at the glasses.

PAULIE

One for you too, old friend.

Liam smiles and adds another glass.

LIAM

Thank you, Paulie. So who's gonna do the honors?

The boys all turn to the bottle.

BOBBY

You do it, Paulie. You're the oldest.

PAULIE

What's that got to do with it?

MARGARET enters, steps halfway through the door, a wrinkled hankie still in her hand, dabbing at her eyes and nose.

PAULIE

I think Tommy'd want the house to handle it. Liam, if you would, sir?

As Liam pulls at the seal, Margaret steps all the way in and lets the door close behind her.

MARGARET

Figures I'd find you all here, bellies to the bar. You couldn't even wait 'til his body's cold in the ground?

Everyone turns to the sound.

PAULIE

Margaret!

Mark's head snaps up at the name. He slowly rises to his feet, his eyes locked on Margaret as Paulie moves to her.

MARGARET

Honestly!

PAULIE

Margaret, dearest. Come in, come in.

MARGARET

Leavin' me there on my own, with my sisters hoverin' over me like crows. Handin' me hankies soaked through with their own tears. You'd think it was *their* husband died!

Paulie indicates a chair at the table.

PAULIE

Come on, dear, sit with us a moment.

MARGARET

What were you all thinkin'?

PAULIE

(to Liam)

A glass of water, Liam.

MARGARET

You're his best friends. You'd think you'd stand by him in his last hours above ground for more'n five minutes.

Paulie sits next to her, holding her hand. Bobby takes the water from Liam, sets it in front of her, squats near her.

BOBBY

Hiya, Maggie. How you doin'?

MARGARET

(sharply)

How would you think I'd be doing, Robert?

This backs Bobby off. He returns to the bar, a bit sheepish.

PAULIE

The viewing over, is it?

MARGARET

No, no. Still a line out the door.

JOEY

Lot of folks loved him, Margaret.

MARGARET

Don't know half of them. It's like there's a whole part of his life filled with people I never met.

She looks around, notices Mark standing at the end of the bar. Mark, suddenly self-conscious, slowly sits, picks up his pad.

PAULIE

They'll want to be seeing you, darling, know them or not. Shouldn't you still be there?

MARGARET

Shouldn't you? I mean, I know you all spent half your life in here. Could probably have bought the place, all the money you've left on that bar. But there's such a thing as respect, Paulie.

PAULIE

That's why we're here, truth be told.

MARGARET

And how's that?

Paulie, Joey, and Bobby exchange glances.

MARGARET

Well?

Finally, Paulie rises, steps to the bar, picks up the bottle of Knappogue.

PAULIE

Tommy never told you about...?

MARGARET

He did not. We never discussed his drinking.

PAULIE

It was after Tommy's dad passed. You remember how torn up he was.

MARGARET

I do. But that was a long time ago.

PAULIE

It was.

(glances at Liam)

Thirty-five years. The four of us came here to the Swan after the funeral that day. You were home with the babies, if I remember.

(off her nod)

It was a proper wake, I suppose. But at the end of the night, when it's just us four left, Tommy gets philosophical...you know how he could...

(off her hand wave)

...and he says "Where was the ceremony? Where was that moment of significance?"

MARGARET

Sounds like Tommy.

PAULIE

He thought something special should have been done, you know?

Paulie carries the Knappogue to the table, sits again with Margaret.

PAULIE

As it happens, Clancy had just come into a case of this Knappogue...

JOEY

(to Liam)

Fell off a truck, right?

Big smiles all around.

PAULIE

So Tommy buys four of them. Aged thirty years at the time, and now, what--?

JOEY, BOBBY

(quickly)

Sixty-five.

PAULIE

Sixty-five.

Paulie takes the Knappogue back to the bar.

PAULIE

And he lines 'em up on that shelf there, one for each of us. And we take a solemn oath that night: this whiskey is not to be touched until such a day as one of us passes. On that day, one bottle comes down, which we savor along with the memories of that one of us who's shuffled off the mortal coil. And there they've been sitting, those bottles, untouched. Until today. And that's why we left the viewing, Margaret, why we came here to the Swan. To honor that oath. To honor Tommy's wishes.

Margaret rises, moves to the boys.

MARGARET

Just like him, isn't it? Make up some sorry excuse for you to sneak down here and wet your whistles. Even in death he's doin' for you.

JOEY

Aw, now, Margaret--

MARGARET

I swear to God, if he could have found a way to get out of that coffin up the block just now, he'd sure as Christ have left me sitting in that parlor too. He'd be standin' right next to you right now, tellin' lies and drinkin' all night. All cut from the same cloth, you are.

PAULIE

There's not a one of us here wouldn't give anything for Tommy to be standing next to us right now. God, I wish it were so, but it's not.

A sad smile cracks the corner of Margaret's mouth as she nods.

PAULIE

(picks up the Knappogue)

Why don't you stay a minute and join us? Maybe we could look at this, in a way, as him being with--

MARGARET

Oh, for the love of God!

Margaret moves to the table, gathers her things.

PAULIE

What?

MARGARET

Have any of you ever given thought to what opening one of those bottles means? It means one of you is dead! You ever think of that? It's ghoulish. Like you're drinking his blood, for the Lord's sake!

PAULIE

Margaret, dearest. Of course it's not. It's a--

MARGARET

I don't care what it is! That bottle right there means my Tommy is gone! And you can't wait to open it and drink him away. Jesus! You've waited thirty-five years for one of you to die so you can drink that fucking whiskey!

BOBBY

It's a celebration, Maggie...you know...

PAULIE

It's a new tradition --

MARGARET

To hell with your tradition! It's not mine! My tradition was my marriage! My tradition was my Tommy! I'll have no part of this. Not now. Not ever.

Margaret moves to the door.
Paulie goes to her.

PAULIE

Margaret, please!

Margaret glares at Paulie a second or two, then falls onto Paulie's chest. He puts his arms around her.

MARGARET

Aw, Paulie. It's left me hollow, it has.

PAULIE

I know, dearest, I know.

They stand, silently holding one another, a quiet moment between bereaved friends.

Bobby rises. He unfolds a scrap of paper from his pocket.

BOBBY

(to Liam)

Give us a quarter, there, Liam. I need to make a call.

Joey spins on his stool as
Liam flips a quarter to Bobby.

JOEY
Which one ya callin', lover boy?

BOBBY
Not that it's any 'a your business, is it?

JOEY
(to Liam)
Meets one, calls another. Jaysus.

BOBBY
Plans change is all. Don't get your shorts in a twist.

As he moves past, Bobby points
to the Knappogue and the glasses
set on the bar.

BOBBY
(to Liam)
Why don't you pour those beauties and we'll raise 'em to
Tommy when I get back.

Bobby goes to the phone in the
corner, dials, utters a "*Bonnie!* -
Hey, baby!", and turns into
the call.

Joey rises.

JOEY
Me kidneys is barkin'. Watch me money, there, Liam.

LIAM
Who here's gonna--?

JOEY
Just keep an eye on it.

As Joey passes Mark, he stops
and claps Mark's shoulder.

JOEY
And set one up for our friend here. Tommy would have included
everybody in the place, now wouldn't he?
(to Mark)
You'll join us, right, friend?

Mark is surprised, but nods
agreement. Liam pours the
Knappogue into the glasses.

Paulie looks at Margaret.

PAULIE

You want me to walk you back?

MARGARET

Not really.

Paulie leads her to the table.
They sit.

PAULIE

You didn't come here looking to jaw us out, did you?

MARGARET

Not entirely, no.

PAULIE

Didn't think so. You couldn't have known we'd be here.

MARGARET

Where else would the three of you be?

PAULIE

Still. You weren't really looking for us, were you?
(off her head shake)

Why, then? What's here?

MARGARET

God knows. I suppose I thought...I thought maybe...Tommy...in some way. I mean, I know for certain that isn't him down the block, layin' in that box. Not anymore.

PAULIE

Well, if you're looking for his spirit, he left a lot of it here.

MARGARET

My house is full of his spirit. His smells, the memories, things that meant a lot to him. To us. I have all of that I need.

PAULIE

What then, darling?

MARGARET

The last few days, my heart's been screaming in pain, and that's natural, right?

(off Paulie's nod)

But I'm hearing the echo of somethin' else in there too, something I'm only now aware of 'cause I'm hearing that scream. It's like seeing something that's more clear if you don't look at it, you know? Like a ghost.

(MORE)

MARGARET (CONT'D)

And it feels like it's a part of me, and that frightens me, Paulie, not knowin' what that is. I can take the loss of Tommy...I know my grievin' will lessen eventually. But what is this other? I need to know what that is. So I came here. Maybe here is a better place to find out, I'm thinkin'.

Paulie takes her hand.

PAULIE

Might be. Maybe we're all looking for a bit of Tommy in our own ways. Maybe being together right now is what we all need.

A pause as Margaret considers.

MARGARET

(quietly)

He was different near the end, Paulie. Quiet, you know? Somewhere else. I felt like I lost him before he was gone.

PAULIE

He was leaving us, Maggie. It was all part of the passage.

MARGARET

I don't know. Felt like more'n that.

PAULIE

Like...?

MARGARET

Like...Like he was lookin' at somethin' else, even when he was lookin' me square in the eye.

PAULIE

The morphine, maybe...

MARGARET

Maybe.

(beat)

I saw that look once before...fifteen, twenty years ago it was. He come to me in the kitchen one day after work -- he'd moved up from the docks by then, into the front office with all the suits...and skirts -- and he said he wanted to talk to me about somethin'. I turned to him, saw that same look I saw last week, and I knew I didn't want to hear whatever it was. I turned to my stove and told him if he wanted dinner on the table he'd best hold his tongue and let me get to it.

PAULIE

Why did you stop him?

MARGARET

It wasn't for me to hear.

PAULIE

But if you wanted to...

MARGARET

(sharply)

It wasn't for me to hear.

(beat)

I keep thinkin' now... was it some kind of truth he was gonna tell me? I mean, if you don't allow someone his truth when he needs to tell it, can you ever really know them? Are you shuttin' a door that may never be opened again? It makes me feel like I missed something... or misplaced it.

Margaret smiles, grabs Paulie's hands and holds them. They sit in silence a moment. Then:

MARGARET

(forced brightness)

How's Lisa?

PAULIE

Oh, she's fine.

MARGARET

Still seein' her, then?

PAULIE

Well, you know. She's down in Lexington, got her life going on. I've got mine here. We see each other when we can.

(beat)

It's all good.

MARGARET

How's it "good"? You can't make a life together 'less you're *together*, you know?

PAULIE

Don't you be worrying about me and Lisa, now, Margaret.

MARGARET

I'm just sayin', Paulie. What are you waitin' for? You've been dancin' around each other a long time.

PAULIE

Maybe we like to dance. But there's more to think about than where your feet go when you're trying to figure out love.

MARGARET

Well, you spend all your time figurin', before you know it, the music's gonna stop. Take her hand. Spin her through a waltz while you still can.

PAULIE

Wish it were that simple.

MARGARET

Love *should* be simple, don't you think? Like dancing?

PAULIE

Should be. But sometimes it's difficult deciding who's going to lead, you know?

Joey suddenly bursts out of the WC, makes his way along the bar to Liam, waving a roll of toilet paper.

JOEY

What the hell is this?

LIAM

I'd say it's a roll 'a murphy tickets. What do you think it is?

JOEY

I think it's an indiction that the quality of service in this pub's goin' to hell, is what I think.

PAULIE

What in Jesus' name are you ranting about, Joseph?

Joey takes the roll to Paulie.

JOEY

Feel that, Paulie.

PAULIE

What am I supposed to be feeling?

JOEY

That's medieval torture, is what that is. Sandpaper for your arse.

(to Liam)

Where'd you get this? Not from me.

LIAM

No...

JOEY

Where, then?

LIAM

Fella had a deal, is all. Saved me a little money, don't ya know?

JOEY

And it cost me the outer layer 'a skin in a very delicate place! What are ya doin' buyin' from somebody else? I give you the good stuff for next to nothin'!

LIAM

So I saved a few extra bucks this week. Jaysus. Tickets is tickets, Joey.

JOEY

They most certainly are not! I been sellin' papers thirty year now--facials, napkins, towels, wipes, sanitary. Believe me, I know.

(unwinding the roll)

For instance...did this come from raw pulp or recycled paper? One's a hell of a lot softer than the other, and you can almost read yesterday's headlines on this shite. And what grade? I sell ya premium. This's barely economy! It's not creped -- another indiction you're in for a rough swipe. And it is most definitely NOT air-injected, and it was force-dried, makin' it even rougher. And I'm not gonna get into whether it's sanitized or not--

LIAM

For the love 'a God, Joey...

Bobby's been watching all this from the phone in the corner.

BOBBY

(into phone)

Look, sorry about tonight, I...No, no, I will, I'll call ya. Yeah.

JOEY

The love a' the Almighty got nothin' to do with it...

Bobby hangs up and walks around the bar.

BOBBY

(to Joey)

What the hell's goin' on, Joey?

(to Paulie)

What's he doing?

PAULIE

Educating Liam, it appears.

LIAM

Makin' a hell of a mess is more like it.

Bobby starts picking up the toilet paper.

BOBBY

Come on, Joey. We're not here for this.

JOEY

Oh. I s'pose we're here fer makin' sweet with some honey on the phone?

This gets Bobby. He's up in Joey's face in a heartbeat.

BOBBY

Least I ain't afraid of goin' for it, like some old men I know.

JOEY

Oh, you think so? You don't know what yer yappin' about.

BOBBY

No? When's the last time you had a conversation with a woman wasn't just a customer?

Joey dismissively waves Bobby off. Bobby shoves the wad of toilet paper he's collected into Joey's hands.

BOBBY

These shit tickets aren't ever gonna be as soft as the skin on a woman's throat, Joey. And no business deal -- no matter how profitable -- is gonna warm you like her arms will. But maybe you've just forgotten since Jenny--

Joey shoves the wad back at Bobby.

JOEY

You'll stop right there, old son--

Paulie rises.

PAULIE

Gentlemen! Please! This is not the time or place to be pounding chests. And let me remind you...

(indicates Margaret)

...there's a lady present.

JOEY

Wasn't me started it.

(sheepishly)

Apologies, Margaret. Not meanin' no disrespect.

MARGARET

None taken. But you know, Joseph...

(a smile)

You *could* use your hand.

JOEY

Sorry, love?

MARGARET

Your hand. Like your ancestors did. Wash it in the river after. Softer than any paper, it is.

Joey turns to see Paulie and Bobby very amused at his expense.

Liam clears his throat.

LIAM

Knappogue's ready, if you boys are.

PAULIE

Absolutely. Grab a glass.

The boys grab glasses. Joey holds one out to Mark, who sets down his pad and moves to them. Paulie offers a glass to Margaret.

PAULIE

(to Margaret)

Margaret...?

MARGARET

I told you, no, Paulie. But you go ahead if you must. I'll excuse myself.

Margaret rises, moves to the bar, holds out her hand to Liam.

MARGARET

Liam, if you please.

Liam hands Margaret what's left of the roll of toilet paper. Margaret looks directly at Joey.

MARGARET

Thank you.

Margaret walks into the WC.
Joey catches Liam smiling.

JOEY

(to Liam)

Don't say a fuckin' word.

PAULIE

Gentlemen, your attention a moment.

(beat)

This is not something I'd ever hoped to be doing. In fact,
I was kind of hoping you'd be drinking *my* bottle before I
had to be drinking any of yours, but you see...

(beat)

We've all lost a best friend, haven't we?

(to Mark)

You'd have loved him too, I've no doubt.

Mark looks down into his glass.

PAULIE

So let me offer the first of our salutations tonight...not a
"Goodbye", but a "See you soon enough". It's a little
something I learned from my grandfather--

JOEY

You gonna get to it before this sixty-five-year-old treasure
evaporates?

Paulie throws Joey a withering
glance, then raises his glass.
The others follow.

PAULIE

There are good ships,
And there are wood ships,
The ships that sail the sea.
But the best ships are friendships,
And may they always be.
So here's to other meetings,
And merry greetings then;
And here's to those we've drunk with,
But never can again.

(beat)

To Tommy Kelley!

They all push their glasses
together, Mark the last to add
his to the clinking group.

Tommy Kelley!

ALL

They all toss back the Knappogue, all but Mark holding it in their mouths a moment to savor the taste, then swallowing. Mark swallows quickly, then smothers a cough.

Bobby walks a few steps toward the end of the bar, his arms stiffening at his sides, then pumps his fist like a tailback who just made a touchdown.

Yeah!

BOBBY

Oh, my sweet Lord!

JOEY

Indeed. Indeed.

PAULIE

Joey wipes his finger inside the glass, then sucks it. Bobby continues his walk down the bar during the following:

Thank you, Thomas Kelley!

JOEY

Gentlemen, I can tell you true -- I've never poured anything like that in my life, much less tasted it.

PAULIE

Man had foresight, that is for sure.

JOEY

Well, now, havin' finally tasted that, I can tell ya...Them three bottles left up there are gonna make it right hard for me to keep wishin' the rest of ya good health.

A hearty laugh.

JOEY

(a quick glance to
Mark)

Some of ya, anyway. Don't really know ya, friend, but ya don't have a bottle up there, so long life to ya.

Bobby has reached the booth.

He notices Mark's sketchpad,
begins to look through it.
Mark is still turned to the
group.

PAULIE
Pour us another, will you, Liam?

LIAM
Gladly.

PAULIE
(to Mark)
You'll have another?

MARK
I suppose. Thank you.

PAULIE
(holds out hand)
Name's Paulie.

MARK
(taking his hand)
Mark.

PAULIE
Where you from, friend?

MARK
Chicago originally. New York the last twelve years.

JOEY
Bit of a way to come fer a drink.

MARK
Considering I just returned from Florence, you could say
that.

PAULIE
Florence! The gem on the Arno! What drew you there?

MARK
The art. I'm an artist. No better place to study it.

Paulie indicates the table for
them to sit. They do.

PAULIE
No argument there. Giotto, Michaelangelo, DaVinci, Dante,
Raphael. The birthplace of the Renaissance. I've walked
those streets many times thinking how much of today's culture
we owe that sparkling city. Were you there long?

MARK

Two months.

PAULIE

Not nearly long enough, eh?
(off Mark's head
shake)

What brings you to Philadelphia?

MARK

I...came to see a friend.

PAULIE

Well, now you're meeting new ones.
(raises his glass)

To new friends!

They all drink, though Mark
just sips.

Bobby suddenly stops his
flipping through Mark's pad,
looks hard at a page.

BOBBY

What the hell?

Bobby looks up at Mark, as
Mark turns to his comment.

BOBBY

What's this, then?

Bobby turns the sketchpad to
the others. On it is an
exquisite charcoal drawing of
a handsome man in his early
60s, instantly recognizable to
all.

Margaret returns at that moment,
sees the drawing. Her hand
moves to her mouth in a mix of
surprise, joy, despair, and
pain.

Mark immediately sets down his
glass and moves toward Bobby,
reaching for the pad.

MARK

That's...that's mine. I'm sorry. I didn't mean for you--

BOBBY
(holding onto the
pad)

This's Tommy!

(moves away from
Mark)

You guys see this? It's Tommy.

Mark tries to reach around
Bobby to grab the pad, but
Bobby turns his back, flips
another page. Another drawing
of Tommy in a different pose.

BOBBY
Here's another one.

MARGARET
Let me see.

MARK
Please! Those are private--

BOBBY
Private? Not here, brother.

Bobby flips another page, and
this one stops him dead.

BOBBY
(almost to himself)
Jesus H. Fucking Christ on the cross!

Mark can see the drawing over
Bobby's shoulder. He freezes.
His eyes slowly close. His
head drops.

JOEY
What, Bobby?

Bobby looks up to the boys,
then back to Mark. When he
does, Paulie takes the pad
from him. He and Joey look at
it.

JOEY
What the livin' hell...? He's nak--

Paulie stops Joey with a look.
As he does so, he lets the pad
fall in front of him.

On it is a fully nude, very revealing drawing of Tommy.

Margaret strains to see the pad.

MARGARET

That was my Tommy, wasn't it?

BOBBY

Sure looks like him.

MARGARET

(puts her hand out)

Let me see it.

Margaret moves to Paulie, reaches out for the pad, but Paulie turns it away from her.

PAULIE

Margaret, I don't think...

MARGARET

You don't think what?

Paulie hands the pad to Mark.

PAULIE

(to Mark)

Put that away.

Mark quickly takes the pad, folds it closed, moves back to the booth.

MARGARET

(to Paulie)

That was Tommy, wasn't it?

PAULIE

Yes, it was, but--

MARGARET

Then let me see it!

PAULIE

Margaret--

MARGARET

(to Mark)

Those are pictures of my husband! I want to see them!

Mark turns to her.

MARK

I was going to show...I mean...I brought one or two for you,
but--

MARGARET

Then give them to me!

PAULIE

You'd best do so, friend.
(pointedly)
Pick nice ones.

MARK

Yes. Of course.

Mark pulls two drawings from
the back of the folio, hands
them to Margaret.

MARK

I thought these...

Margaret delicately takes the
drawings and returns to the
table, gazing at them.

PAULIE

Mark, yes?
(off his nod)
You knew Tommy?

MARK

I did.

BOBBY

Pictures yours?

MARK

I drew them, yes.

BOBBY

All of them?

MARK

Yes.

JOEY

Even that nak--?

MARK
(quickly)

Yes.

JOEY
He hired ya, then, did he? Drawin' somethin' for Maggie,
like?

MARK
(beat)
No.

A glance passes between Joey
and Bobby.

PAULIE
No coincidence you're here, I take it.

MARK
(shakes his head,
then...)
He said this was a favorite place of his, that I should...come
by.

PAULIE
You know he's passed?

MARK
I do.
(to Margaret)
I'm sorry. My condolences, Mrs. Kelley.

MARGARET
(looks up)
How did you know my Tommy?

Mark moves to her. He takes a
deep breath. A fond smile
crosses his face.

MARK
I knew him...a while. We met in New York.

MARGARET
New York? He handle your shipping for something, did he?
You were a customer?

MARK
No. We just happened to meet.

MARGARET
You were friends, then? He never mentioned anyone from New
York.

MARK
No, I don't suppose he would.

JOEY

Why's that, now?

PAULIE

Where did you say you met Tommy?

MARK

I didn't, but...it was an art museum.

BOBBY

Art museum? You're kiddin'.

MARK

The New York Museum of Modern Art.

BOBBY

In New York?

PAULIE

No. In Cincinnati. Jesus, Bobby.

JOEY

What the hell was he doin' there?

MARGARET

(to Joey)

He went to New York every month on company business. You know that.

JOEY

I know he did, darlin'. I meant what was he doin' at an art museum.

Mark takes a deep breath.

MARK

That day, he was looking at an Edgar Degas. *After the Bath: Woman Drying Herself.*

BOBBY

He was lookin' at pictures of women in their bathrooms?

PAULIE

Bobby, please.

(indicates Margaret)

MARGARET

Tommy went to an art museum?

(to Paulie)

Did he, Paulie?

PAULIE

Never knew him to.

MARK

He went to exhibits as often as he could.

PAULIE

Sounds like you know that for a fact.

MARK

(nods)

It's how we met, as I said.

MARGARET

And how was that, again?

MARK

I was working in another wing of MOMA that day, sketching some things. I walked through the Degas exhibit on my way out. I came into the room, noticed a man standing in front of the painting. It was Tommy. I didn't think anything of it...wouldn't have noticed at all, except he was standing so still. Like a statue. Didn't even blink, staring at the painting.

LIAM

They have a bar there? Maybe he was...you know...knowin' Tommy.

Joey and Bobby crack a smile.

MARK

I looked at one or two other paintings in the room, then happened to glance back at *After the Bath*. He hadn't moved. Not an inch. I was suddenly drawn to his stillness more than the painting. It was magnetic.

Joey and Bobby share another look.

MARK

I walked up next to him, stared at the painting for a few minutes. Not a sound in the place...so quiet I could hear his breathing. "What do you think?", he suddenly says. "Erotic or painful?" Because the woman in the painting is nude, you see, but also twisted in a very uncomfortable way. "It's not erotic," I say, "at least not to me. And there are easier ways to dry yourself." He laughed. That soft laugh he sometimes had, you know?

BOBBY

Didn't know Tommy had a soft anything.

A withering glance from Paulie.

MARK

We walked the rest of the collection: *Dancers in the Wings*, *At the Cafe des Ambassadeurs*, *Ballet From An Opera Box*, two dozen others...beautiful, moving paintings, so in the moment, so intimate, free, full of life. Degas is amazing that way. Tommy asked me about each one. He was so engaged in them. Asked me a million questions, had me read the tour guide to him, tell him everything I knew. He had such a...I don't know...a *need*...to know about them. Right then. A hunger. Like it meant everything to him. It was fascinating.

MARGARET

Tommy wanted to know about art?

Mark nods. Margaret glances up at Paulie.

MARGARET

We talking about the same Tommy?

MARK

When we finished, we walked out together. He stood on the curb, looking at his hands, with that same stillness. He had a little smile at the corner of his mouth when he glanced back up at me.

(beat)

His eyes...I don't know...sadness, peace and joy, certainty and uncertainty all at once. I don't know how long we stared at each other, but then he smiled again and shook my hand. "Thank you", he said, and then very quietly asked if I would like to grab a bite to eat somewhere.

(beat)

I said yes.

(a long beat)

I never said anything but yes to him since.

A long silence.

JOEY

All right, all right, all right. Hold on a minute there. What are you sayin'?

MARK

I'm sorry?

Joey rises, begins to move toward Mark.

JOEY

What the fuck are you tellin' us here?

Paulie stops Joey.

PAULIE

Pretty clear what he's telling us, Joey.

JOEY

Not to me.

PAULIE

Think about it.

Joey and Paulie stare at each other a moment. Realization lights in Joey's face.

JOEY

Awwww, no! Huh-uh! No, no, no! Not Tommy!

BOBBY

What? Is he sayin'...?

(off Paulie's shrug)

Bullshit! I don't believe it!

MARGARET

What are you talking about? He and Tommy what?

(to Mark)

Who are you? Why are you here?

MARK

I'm here because I made a promise.

MARGARET

A promise? To who?

MARK

Tommy. He asked me to come, asked me to promise that I would.

MARGARET

Why?

MARK

He wanted me to be here...with all of you.

PAULIE

Again, the question is why?

Mark takes another deep breath.

MARK

He said he wanted all those he loved dearly to be together when...

(indicates the
Knappogue)

MARGARET
Loved? *Dearly?* Are you saying he loved...?
(to Paulie)

What...?

(to Mark)
I don't even know you.

MARK
I feel like I know you. All of you. Tommy talked about you
all the--

MARGARET
Who the hell ARE you?!

Mark drops his head, takes
another long deep breath.

MARGARET
WHO?! ARE?! YOU?!

Mark looks up.

MARK
Tommy and I were lovers for the last months of his life. I
consider him the love of my life.

JOEY
WHAT?!...

BOBBY
Fuck me!

Joey moves aggressively toward
Mark.

JOEY
...Jaysus, Mary and Joseph! I don't fuckin' believe it!
You're lyin'!

Paulie blocks Joey.

PAULIE
Joey...

JOEY
(wrenching away)
No! I'll not let him...!

PAULIE
Come on, Joey.

JOEY

(turning to Paulie)

What? You believin' this little shite? You believe Tommy'd cheat on...?

(indicates Margaret)

Not to mention...

(indicates Mark,
then to Paulie)

You believin' this, are ya?!

PAULIE

I don't know what to believe at this point, Joey, but we'll not sort it out with anger.

The breath goes out of Margaret.
She leans on the table.

MARGARET

What...?

Mark takes a step toward
Margaret.

MARK

I know it must be hard for you--

Bobby rises menacingly...

BOBBY

Stay away from her, ya bastard!

...but Paulie holds him back.

PAULIE

Bobby...both of you. Come on.

Bobby backs off reluctantly.

MARGARET

Are you telling me that my Tommy was...? That he...? How dare you!

MARK

I'm sorry. It's what Tommy--

MARGARET

(straightening up)

To hell with your "sorry"! How dare you come in here with this...this...LIE! You expect me to believe that the man I was married to for almost 40 years -- the father of my children, the provider of my home, my friend, my protector, *MY man* -- was someone else entirely? That--

MARK

No, no, that's not--

MARGARET

--Tommy could play house with you in New York -- while he was *dying*, not to mention -- without any of us having the slightest idea? We've known him all his life, you little son of a bitch!

Margaret grabs her handkerchief
and purse.

MARGARET

Goddamn you for this!

(to the boys)

And all of you as well. I hope you're proud of yourselves.

JOEY, PAULIE, BOBBY

Us?!

MARGARET

You had to get down here, didn't you? To drink your goddamn whiskey. And look what it's got you: None of us will be able to think of Tommy again without the memory of this day blackening all others. Goddamn all of you!

She moves to the door, pulls
it open.

PAULIE

Margaret!

MARK

I didn't come here to destroy his memory. I came--

Margaret whirls.

MARGARET

Well, congratulations, sonny. Because that's just what you've done.

MARK

I came to--

But she's out the door and
gone.

PAULIE

(to Joey and Bobby)

One of us should go with her.

JOEY

I'll go.

(MORE)

JOEY (CONT'D)
 (glancing Mark's
 way)

I need some fresh air washin' over me a while.

Joey takes his money off the
 bar, moves to the door.

JOEY
 And cap that Knappogue 'til I get back. You'll not be
 drinkin' that without me, now.

Joey exits.

MARK
 I'm...sorry...

BOBBY
 What'd ya expect? Hugs and kisses all around? Should've
 just stayed away.

PAULIE
 Leave it be, Bobby.

BOBBY
 Well, he should have!

PAULIE
 Sounds a little funny coming from a guy with a different
 girl every night.

BOBBY
 We're not talkin' about me, Paulie! We're talkin' about
 Tommy Kelley, for God's sake! This is about Margaret! And
 us!

(indicates Mark)
 We don't even know this guy. You think any of this shit is
 true?

PAULIE
 I don't know what to think, Bobby.

BOBBY
 Yeah, well I do.
 (pointing at Mark)
 He's a lyin' little fuck.

PAULIE
 Come on, Bobby.

BOBBY
 Why should we believe--?

PAULIE

Believe what? That Tommy could find love with--?

BOBBY

He had love! With Margaret! With us!

(gestures to Mark)

That ain't love! That's...that's...

PAULIE

What, Bobby? Immoral? Dishonest? You just made a call to a girl you had a date with tonight, blowing her off because you met someone else an hour ago that turned your head.

BOBBY

(glancing at the
phone)

How'd you...?

PAULIE

Bobby. I've known you over forty years. Not too many of our habits we don't know about each other.

BOBBY

It ain't the same. I didn't shit all over someone else's marriage--

PAULIE

No. You've only been serially replacing Nancy -- the first "love of your life" -- since *she* walked out on *you* thirty years ago for doing just that.

BOBBY

Screw you, Paulie. What do you know about it? I don't see you wrapped up in Lisa's arms right now.

PAULIE

(beat)

Right.

(beat)

Look, forget it. It is what it is and we have no say in it. We don't have to justify what Tommy did; we just have to accept it.

BOBBY

Right. It's "all good", huh? Jesus, you could've rationalized Hitler.

PAULIE

Look, Bobby. Love is the realm of the heart. It's an involuntary reaction. It's autonomous.

BOBBY

What's that supposed to mean?

PAULIE

It means....the heart loves, period. *It* decides. We can't control it despite any belief we can. Most of us sabotage the purity of its voice in our own ways. Maybe Tommy just decided not to.

BOBBY

Listen who's preachin'. You hear your heart talkin', you try to correct its grammar. Love is flesh and blood, Paulie, touch and feel. It ain't an "idea"...a "concept". You try to make it that, and you wind up where you are with Lisa: a thousand miles apart, takin' about it instead of livin' it. You think too much.

PAULIE

(almost to himself)

Probably my problem.

BOBBY

We all got 'em, don't we?

Bobby pulls a pack of cigarettes from his pocket.

BOBBY

You got a match there, Liam?

Liam tosses Bobby a pack of matches, points to the door.

LIAM

Take it outside. Don't want my own air fouled.

BOBBY

It's a bar!

LIAM

(still pointing)

Outside.

Bobby waves him off, exits as he lights the smoke.

A long beat. Liam goes back to polishing his bar.

MARK

This is not how I imagined things would go.

PAULIE

Don't mind Bobby. He doesn't like hearing his hero had feet of clay, that's all. Kept Tommy on a pedestal, always looked up to him.

MARK

Wasn't hard to do, was it?

Paulie smiles, picks up one of the drawings Margaret left on the table.

PAULIE

(to Mark)

Nice likeness. Recent?

MARK

Just before I went to Florence. Last time I saw him, actually.

PAULIE

Makes me feel like I've already forgotten what he looked like.

MARK

It's the detail. Most of us don't really look at one another. It's more just glances.

PAULIE

Just enough to recognize.

MARK

Right. But an artist will look very directly at you. Take it all in, see the tracks life's left on your face.

Paulie studies the picture a moment more, then hands them to Mark.

PAULIE

Looks like you got to know him pretty well.

MARK

He made it easy.

Paulie moves to the bar, points at the Knappogue.

PAULIE

A taste, please, Liam.

LIAM

Joey...

PAULIE

It's just a taste. We won't kill it before he's back.

Liam shrugs, begins to pour.

Paulie
 Hopefully.

Liam smiles.

Paulie
 (to Mark)
 Must have been hard for him. Tommy, I mean.

Mark
 I don't think he felt guilty, if that's what you mean. "No apologies, no regrets" is what he said.

Paulie
 Sounds like Tommy. But Tommy being who Tommy was...
 (beat)
 ...it's a little unexpected.

Mark
 I don't think he expected it either. I mean, I didn't. What you just said -- about the heart? I asked him once, why me? And his answer was "Because I don't have time to second-guess my heart anymore."

Paulie
 His was a big heart. Must have been a loud voice.

The door suddenly opens.
 Margaret enters, followed by
 Joey and Bobby. She crosses
 directly to Mark.

Paulie rises.

Paulie
 Margaret.
 (to Joey as she
 passes him)
 Everything all right?

Joey
 She looked in at the coffin, then turned on her heel and came straight back here.

Paulie
 Margaret?

Margaret ignores Paulie, faces
 Mark.

Margaret
 I want to know why you came. Why you didn't keep your little secret hidden and leave us clean with our memories?

MARK

I told you. I made a promise to Tommy.

MARGARET

So you said. So now you're here. Get on with it.

Mark reaches into his jacket,
and pulls out an envelope.

MARK

I came to deliver this.

MARGARET

And what is that?

MARK

It's a letter from Tommy, written a day before he died. It was at our...my...apartment when I got back from Florence, three days *after* he died.

(beat, then quietly)

I didn't think he was that sick.

MARGARET

Well, you weren't takin' care of him, were you? Watchin' him slip away a minute at a time, so doped up he couldn't open his eyes.

MARK

He never said a word to me. I would have thought--

Margaret holds out her hand.

MARGARET

Okay. You've brought your little letter. Give it to me and leave.

MARK

Actually I'm supposed to read it.

BOBBY

You're kidding.

JOEY

Really, sonny, just leave it and move on. You've done enough damage already.

BOBBY

Damn straight.

MARK

Look, this isn't any less awkward for me. And if it had been anyone other than Tommy, I can pretty much guarantee you I wouldn't be standing here. But it *is* from Tommy, and I made the promise, and I'd like to keep it. I...need to.

PAULIE

This is what Tommy wanted?

MARK

According to this letter, yes.

BOBBY

How do we know that's even from Tommy? Maybe this is all bullshit.

MARK

It's handwritten. In that awful...

(small smile)

scrawl...he had.

(holds out the letter)

You'll recognize it, I'm sure.

MARGARET

This is ridiculous. What is it you *really* want here? You think by waltzing in here with this cockamammie story that we'll all just wrap our arms around you like you're family?

MARK

I just want to do what he asked of me. Then I'll leave.

MARGARET

(to Paulie)

My husband writes me a letter, and I have to listen to a stranger read it to me?

MARK

Actually, it's to everyone.

PAULIE

You've read it?

MARK

(nodding)

It came addressed to me, but...well, you'll understand.

An extended silence. Glances shoot around.

PAULIE

Margaret?

Margaret looks at Paulie a moment.

MARGARET

Seems Tommy's made the decision for us all again, doesn't it?

She pulls out a chair and sits at the table, setting her purse on it, wringing the ever-present handkerchief.

PAULIE

Robert? Joseph?

Bobby shrugs, sits on a stool. Joey turns to the bar.

JOEY

Well, I'll not be listenin' to anything without another taste of Tommy's Knappogue. A proper pour, Liam, if you will.

BOBBY

Me as well.

Liam pours for everyone except Margaret, slides a glass to Joey, hands one to Paulie and Bobby, lifts his own. It's obvious he's not offering one to Mark.

PAULIE

(to Mark)

It appears the floor is yours, sir.

Mark opens the envelope, unfolds the pages inside. Emotion catches in his throat. He clears it quickly, looks up at the others, then down again at the page.

MARK

It begins...

(beat)

"Mo Chuisle--"

JOEY

Oh, Jaysus! Seriously, now?!

BOBBY

What?

JOEY

You expect me to listen to this shite?

MARK

I'm sorry?

JOEY

Tommy s'posed to have written a letter to this one, and he starts it "Mo Chuisle"?

BOBBY

What, Joey? What's "more..." whatever?

LIAM

Mo Chuisle. It's ancient Gaelic.

PAULIE

It means "my Darling, my Blood". It's a powerful term of endearment.

Margaret turns into the table.

MARGARET

This isn't happening. Dear God.

JOEY

Jaysus.

Joey turns into the bar, his back to the room, sips his whiskey.

PAULIE

(to Mark)

You'd best go on.

Mark looks again to the letter.

MARK

"I've always been straight with you, and you me..."

As Mark begins to read, a special spot comes up on the far DS corner of the stage, where TOMMY KELLEY enters. He's tall, an older handsome man, though wan.

The lights on the main stage dim as Tommy enters, to showcase him against the darkened stage. All action stops except for Tommy.

Tommy takes over the letter from Mark:

TOMMY

...so I won't start pulling punches now.

(MORE)

TOMMY (CONT'D)

I'm dyin' and more than likely will be gone by the time you read this. The morphine don't give me much 'a the clear, so I figure I'd better get this done while I got the chance. Forgive me for not telling ya how bad it was, but this cancer's been eatin' me so fast, I figured why bother? Besides, I want you to remember me as I am in your drawin's, and not as I am now, gutted and grey. But enough of that. I have somethin' I need to ask of you.

The lights reverse, going dim on Tommy, coming up full on the stage. The actors unfreeze.

MARK

This next section describes...

(indicates the Swan)

this place...and how you all will be here, and about the Knappogue and the agreement.

(smiles)

He says I should join in the toasts, even if I don't like the taste of whiskey.

JOEY

Don't like whiskey?

(to Bobby)

Just keeps gettin' better, don't it?

PAULIE

Is there more?

MARK

Yes.

Mark looks at the page and begins to read again. The lights dim on the main stage as they rise again on Tommy, who takes over voicing the letter:

TOMMY

I have not told anyone about you and me. Not that I'm ashamed or nothin'. I just couldn't find the right time; it's not somethin' you toss on the table durin' dessert, you know? And the drugs, the pain...too much in the way, and time has gotten too short. So I need ya to help me explain it. You are someone I love unquestioningly. Lord knows I didn't expect to, but that's the way it played. And I love all of them the same, and you will need each other when the time comes. So be Degas: just simply tell the truth. Read this to them; it will be more alive that way. Please promise me you'll do this for me. It is the last and only thing I will ask of you.

Again, the lights change --
dim on Tommy, up on stage.
Action resumes on stage.

MARGARET

That's it? That's all he wrote? "Be Degas?" This is all he has to say to me after 38 years of marriage?

MARK

No. There's another page to all of you.

Mark turns to the letter's second page, but it's Tommy that continues. The lights alternate again.

TOMMY

My dearest Margaret, my lifelong friends. By now you know who Mark is. I certainly don't expect acceptance, but I hope that you will at least try to understand. Because I'm no different...I'm still your Tommy. I'm still the man you met on the playground or the rugby fields. I love you no less. I would give my life for any of you no less swiftly than I would have. I'm just...a *richer* Tommy. Because in a moment of grace, when I heard the faint voice of my heart, I did not drown it out with reasons to stop listenin'. Maybe it's lookin' square in the face of the Reaper as I was, knowin' he was countin' my last days, but I was suddenly aware of a love...in a form and a person I never expected, but...there was no denyin' what it was. And I found myself askin' why? Why now, at the end of the road? What am I supposed to do with it? Then, in that same moment of grace, I realized: I'm supposed to listen. That's all. Just listen and accept it. It's a gift, ya see. So I did. I know that followin' your heart sometimes means someone may feel betrayed. Ya can't get around that, and I'm so very sorry for it.

(beat)

But goin' over it now, a few months down the way, and maybe hours from the end, I'm startin' to think that so many of us have stopped listenin' to that voice in our heart when it calls. We allow others to tell us to ignore it, not to listen, that we can't listen. That it's a sin. But I'm sittin' here dyin', wonderin' -- how is love a sin? In whatever form it comes? How is giving it or receiving it a transgression? And now I'm tellin' you: I see no sin in hearin' that voice, and no damnation in followin' it. Love is a moment of grace...it is a blessing from whatever God there is. Do I -- a man -- deny this gift because I say I must? I only wish I had had the time to tell you this face to face, but I'm only now comin' to understand it. And time is too short. Please don't blame Mark.

(MORE)

TOMMY (CONT'D)

He did nothing but love me, like you have, and that part of me you loved is as much alive in him as it is in you. So fill the rest of your lives with whatever love you can find, no matter where or when it appears. Open your hearts and listen carefully. For in that small voice, you may not only find what I have, but you will also hear me calling. My love to you all."

An extended silence. The lights go down on Tommy as he quietly exits, and come full up on the main stage.

Mark looks up from the letter.

MARK

It's signed simply, "Tommy".

Mark folds the letter and places it in front of Margaret, but she violently pushes it away and turns from him.

Mark moves back to the bar, sits, takes another sip of whiskey with a very shaky hand.

Joey turns forward, whiskey in hand.

JOEY

Love, he says. We're s'posed to all hug each other now? Sing Kum Ba Ya?

PAULIE

I don't think that's what he was saying, Joey.

JOEY

No? What then? Jaysus, Mary, and Joseph, I'll not have a dead man who betrayed his wife and friends tellin' me what love is. Just because I've tolerated Bobby's bullshit for near fifty years, now I'm s'posed to bend 'im over and--

BOBBY

Hey!

PAULIE

Joseph!

(indicates Margaret)

For God's sake!

MARGARET

No! Leave him be. It's the truth he's tellin'. There's right and there's wrong. We live by our understanding of that. We accept it or this all falls apart.

JOEY

My point exactly.

MARGARET

You can't just change the rules whenever you've a mind to. Love is constant or it's not.

MARK

He said his love for you hadn't changed--

MARGARET

I heard what he said. Just justifying making room for you is all he was doin'.

(disparaging)

"A voice in his heart." Jesus. Was that voice still callin' my name, I wonder?

MARK

I'm sure it was--

MARGARET

(rises and faces
Mark)

Doesn't seem like it. And where was this heart when all the real work was bein' done, because love is more than sayin' "yes".

MARK

I know that. So did he--

MARGARET

Love is commitment, young man. Expectations. Obligations. *Being there*, plain and simple.

Margaret picks up one of the drawings of Tommy as if speaking to him.

MARGARET

Love has *rules*: there's things you do, there's things you don't do. You're there to do for each other. Period. That's it.

JOEY

(carefully)

Beggin' yer pardon, Margaret, but you'll be speakin' for yourself there.

MARGARET

I thought we saw eye to eye on this.

JOEY

Some. Not all. It ain't that complicated, far's I'm concerned. It ain't about rules or roles. It goes deeper than that.

(beat)

See, if I wanted someone to clean my house and wash my clothes, I'd get myself a maid. If I wanted someone to correct my grammar, I'd go back to school. If I wanted someone to watch over my ethics, I'd go back to church and give myself over to a priest. But that ain't love.

PAULIE

What is love to you, Joey?

Joey considers a moment.

JOEY

Jenny was. If you ask me what love is, that's what I'll tell ya.

Margaret rises, moves to Joey.

MARGARET

Tell me.

Joey considers Margaret for a moment, then speaks, his voice possessing a palpable intimacy for the first time.

JOEY

She was someone soft and close. Someone who wanted to touch me, who got pleasure from doing it...who, when she came into a room, found a way to use a touch to let me know I was the first thing she wanted to relate to in that room now that she was in it. She was someone who wanted me to touch her in that same way. Someone who was perfectly happy to sit and look into my eyes and not say a word and let what I saw in hers be everythin' we said to each other for however long we sat there. That's what love was to me. Just that.

(beat, then to Mark)

So don't be tellin' me I need to be hearin' any voice from what little heart I got left.

MARK

Sounds like you've already heard it.

JOEY

Yeah, well, it's been mute since six-twenty-two the night of January fourteen two years ago. It will not be speakin' again.

Paulie reaches out, squeezes
Joey's shoulder. Joey turns
to Bobby.

JOEY

I need a smoke.

BOBBY

Didn't know you still smoked.

JOEY

Just give me one.

BOBBY

I'll go with you.

JOEY

Just give me the smoke, Bobby, and leave me be a while.

Bobby hands Joey the pack, and
he quickly exits.

BOBBY

Touchy.

MARGARET

He loved her.

(sits)

Now she's gone. I can relate.

BOBBY

Doesn't mean he has to--

PAULIE

Maybe if you listened a little harder yourself to what Tommy
was tryin' to tell us, you'd have a better idea of what Joey's
feeling.

BOBBY

Hey. I know what love is, buddy. I have no trouble fallin'
in love.

PAULIE

Uh-huh.

(beat)

You know, I'm thinkin' Joey was right.

BOBBY

About what?

PAULIE

About you and love. Only it's not masturbation. It's drug
addiction.

BOBBY

Bullshit. What the hell you know about it? I hear that little voice too. It talks to me a lot.

PAULIE

I'm sure it does. But I suspect with you it's just triggering the chemistry of love: adrenalin, serotonin, endorphins, testosterone. A pretty face'll do that, and it's a high like no other. But it doesn't last, Bobby, so eventually you have to move on to the next young beauty who triggers the biological opiates you crave.

BOBBY

Crave? Bullshi...

PAULIE

Which is why I say you're addicted to the *drugs* of love, Bobby, not the *state* of love. All of which is to say that, that bein' true, I suspect Cheryl will more than likely not be "the one".

BOBBY

Yeah? You the great lover, are ya? That why you and Lisa can't get closer'n a thousand miles, is it?

PAULIE

That situation's a little more complicated than using infatuation to stroke an aging ego!

BOBBY

Yeah, well, bein' afraid to get some skin in the game ain't my idea of paradise either. Give me doin' over thinkin' any day.

PAULIE

Fuck you, Bobby.

Bobby snorts and waves Paulie off.

BOBBY

Yeah, fuck me. Look, clean your own house before tellin' me mine's dirty.

(to Liam)

I'm starvin'. You have any food back there?

LIAM

There's some corned beef in the fridge, bread and mustard in the cupboard.

Bobby moves to the kitchen.
Liam hollers after him.

LIAM

And don't be makin' a fuckin' mess in there!

Paulie stares into his glass.
A beat later, he shoots the
contents, sets his glass in
front of Liam. After a moment:

MARGARET

How do we know?

PAULIE

Sorry?

MARGARET

How are we supposed to know who "the one" is? If thirty-
eight years of marriage doesn't count...

PAULIE

It does, it does.

MARGARET

Not to Tommy, it seems. So how do we know? Where do we
stop? Why shouldn't we all just be like Bobby, there,
flittin' from flower to flower?

(viciously to Mark)

Or that one, stealin' in the back door, takin' what isn't
his?

Mark stands, defensive now.

MARK

That's unfair. I didn't--

MARGARET

No. What's unfair is you makin' my whole life a goddamned
lie--!

Paulie steps between them, one
hand backing Mark off.

After a moment:

MARGARET

Why wasn't I enough, Paulie? Can you answer me that?

PAULIE

It wasn't your fault, Margaret.

MARGARET

Whose fault was it then?

PAULIE

Why does there have to be any fault at all? Things just happen.

MARGARET

Was there something I lost track of?

PAULIE

No. You loved each other. Love isn't perfect.

MARGARET

It was for a while.

(beat)

Mark overhears the following and slowly stops his packing and turns to listen.

MARGARET

God, he was so beautiful. First time I saw him was playing rugby after school. Caught my eye right off. He saw me too, I think, oglin' him. He runs over, standing with his hands on his hips, hair fallin' down over his forehead, doing his best Errol Flynn. He says, "I'm Tommy Kelley, of the Cork Kelleys. Would you be the girl I'll be takin' to the dance Saturday night, then?" Bold as you please. How do you say no to that?

PAULIE

You don't.

MARGARET

But he was so sweet. Showed up spit-shined and all polite and proper. For a while, anyway. He was a real wild one, for sure.

(off Paulie's smile)

And he was such a romantic. You know he never forgot my birthday? Or Valentine's Day? Thirty-eight years, he never missed a one. I could always expect flowers, you know? A bright bouquet on my birthday, another Mother's Day, a dozen red roses on Valentine's. And there was always a little handwritten note that made me feel like the most loved woman on earth. A poem or something that made me think he'd spent hours on it. Once it was just a single word -- "Us". That was all. Just..."Us". But I knew what he meant.

Paulie takes her hand, squeezes it. She looks at him.

MARGARET

Where'd that all go, Paulie?

PAULIE

No one's said it's gone.

Margaret throws an angry glance
at Mark.

MARGARET

He did.

PAULIE

You still have it here.
(indicates his heart)

MARGARET

Do I? Ironic, isn't it? I come here looking to find some
little bit of the Tommy I loved so long and lost two days
ago, and I find out I probably never knew him at all.

Beat.

MARK

He didn't love you any less or me any more.

MARGARET

I wasn't talking to you.

MARK

He loved the both of us passionately. He said so many times.

MARGARET

(rising quickly to
bar)

I said I wasn't talking to you!
(to Liam)

Water, please, Liam.

Liam hands her a glass.
Margaret takes a long pull.

MARGARET

(almost to herself)

He should only have loved one of us. That's the way it's
supposed to be. It was wrong. No other way to look at it.

MARK

How can love be wro--?

MARGARET

(to Mark)

And I'll tell you this: he knew it too.

MARK

Knew what?

MARGARET

The shame of it.

MARK

Tommy was not ashamed of anything.

MARGARET

No? Then why'd he keep you hidden from the rest of his life?

MARK

Hidden?!

MARGARET

What would you call it? Didn't see you sittin' at my dinner table on a Sunday evening. He never spoke your name to me. To anyone. No, he knew. He knew morally he should have been faithful. To *me*.

MARK

It wasn't man's morals he found himself listening to. It was his own heart.

MARGARET

Oh, here we go with that "heart" thing again.

MARK

Yes. The heart. It doesn't intellectualize, it doesn't moralize. It just connects. We need to listen to it more. That's what Tommy learned, what he wanted you all to know. Even your friend there...

(indicates Paulie)

...understands.

PAULIE

(to Mark)

Don't bring me into this. You're on your own here.

A loud crash comes from the kitchen -- pots, pans, and utensils scattering on the floor.

LIAM

Jaysus, Mary, and Joseph! What the hell is he doin'?

Liam drops his towel and heads for the kitchen. Paulie rises.

PAULIE

(to Liam)

I'll join you, there, Liam. I could use a bit of that corned beef.

Paulie and Liam exit into the kitchen. After a moment:

MARGARET

The heart, is it? So we should all just go out and bed whoever we want, whenever we want, is that it?

Mark rises, moves toward Margaret.

MARK

No--

MARGARET

To hell with marriage? To hell with loyalty? Long as *the heart* tells us to?

MARK

That's not--

MARGARET

No? What else, then? Explain it to me.

MARK

The pure and simple act of feeling love for another person, that's all.

MARGARET

He was supposed to love only me!

MARK

Love isn't a finite commodity. We aren't given only so much of it. Shouldn't we share it as much as possible?

MARGARET

There's such a thing as *loyalty*!

MARK

Which was never in question, I can assure you. You were incredibly important to him.

MARGARET

But not *everything*. And that's...

Margaret's voice catches. Her eyes well up. She brings the handkerchief to her mouth.

MARK

I think that at the end, Tommy decided it was better to share love whenever possible than reject it because it was inconvenient morally or culturally.

MARGARET

But that's all we have to separate us from the barnyard!
Morals define who we are. Culture controls the chaos. Lose
those, we lose ourselves.

(beat)

We lose our souls. Can't you see that?

MARK

I see that I was the recipient of the love he had in him.
As you were. Is it so bad that he shared it between us?

MARGARET

Yes! For God's sake, yes! It made a mockery of all I
believe. Of all I thought we believed together.

MARK

He opened himself to more than traditional beliefs.

MARGARET

How convenient for him. For *you*. Let me ask you: How would
you feel? If the shoe were on the other foot?

MARK

What we shared was always tempered with the knowledge that
you were as much in his life as I was. Maybe more so. I
was willing to--

MARGARET

But every minute spent with you was a minute *not* spent with
me! Every kiss he gave you is a kiss I did not receive.
Those are moments lost to me forever. Stolen. Taken without
permission.

MARK

His love for you didn't diminish because he felt love for
me.

MARGARET

He was my *husband*! We took vows! We made promises to one
another! We agreed to live by certain rules.

MARK

Sometimes rules stop making sense.

MARGARET

But they're what we have, for better or worse. You can't
just change them when they're inconvenient.

MARK

Sometimes you have to. Maybe I understood what Tommy was
feeling more than most, see, because the rules *never* worked
for me. From my earliest memory, the "rules" told me that
what I felt when I felt love was somehow wrong.

(MORE)

MARK (CONT'D)

But one day it dawned on me that there really *is* no right or wrong -- that it's just the praise or blame of others. That blind adherence to rules is just that: being blind. I was *allowing* myself to be limited, *allowing* myself to be defined by others and *their* perspective. So I opened my eyes. And I saw that life could be what *I* wanted it to be. All it took was the courage to make it so. Sometimes you may have to fight to change some of the rules; sometimes they just fade away on their own.

(picks up Tommy's
letter)

And sometimes...a moment of grace allows you to simply move through them.

MARGARET

Moment of grace. Just a way of putting the responsibility onto some grand plan.

MARK

Or explaining how courage was found.

Margaret studies Mark a moment.

MARGARET

You're telling me that Tommy's actions were a *courageous* act?

MARK

For him. *Especially* for him.

(beat)

Maybe what we need to do is respect what Tommy felt was right for himself.

MARGARET

You want me to respect an adulterer! That's what he was, you know.

MARK

In one context, yes. But remove that context, he was simply a man who found the ability to love more than one person.

MARGARET

(rising, to bar)

Don't try to justify the picture to me by changing the frame. Everything we do has consequences.

MARK

(rising)

I wouldn't be here if that weren't true. Tommy changed my life...for the better. Because he simply chose to love me.

MARGARET

And that simple act changed my life as well. And not for the better, I'm thinking. It's brought cloud to everything, hasn't it? Every memory, every thought, every word.

MARK

Clouds clear.

MARGARET

Not always.

MARK

(beat)

Look. I'm sorry, Margaret. If I'd known in the beginning--

MARGARET

But nothing changed when you did know, did it?

MARK

No. But by then--

MARGARET

Yeah. By then the heart was singin', wasn't it?

MARK

Is it possible that Tommy was given a gift in the last few months of his life? A gift that he had the courage to share? Should we look at it that way?

MARGARET

And what gift would that be?

MARK

The ability to love without boundaries. He loved both of us. Equally.

MARGARET

And he made victims of both of us. A cuckquean on the one side, the stain of the jezebel on the other.

MARK

We're victims only if we accept it. I don't choose to be defined that way.

MARGARET

Depends where you're standing, doesn't it? For me, it's a shorter view ahead than behind. Which makes what was back there so much more valuable. And so much more a loss. You, you're young. Love still has possibilities.

MARK

I'm not so sure.

Why not?
MARGARET

Because he was so...
MARK

Mark picks up one of the drawings of Tommy, holds it up between them, looks sadly at it a moment. Margaret takes it from him, does the same.

Yes.
MARGARET

A long beat as they both look at the drawing.

He was...something...wasn't he?
MARGARET

Margaret and Mark lift their eyes from the drawing and look steadily at one another for several beats. Then Mark looks at the drawing again.

Do you think maybe we're looking at this in the wrong way, you and I? Maybe at this point we just need to listen to what *our* hearts are saying to *us* about Tommy. All the rest is no longer our concern, is it?
MARK

Mark raises his eyes to Margaret again, and they stare at each other for several more beats.

Joey enters from outside. He notices Margaret and Mark looking at one another, watches a moment.

What's this, then? I miss somethin'?
JOEY

Nothing you'd be interested in, I'm thinking.
MARGARET

Joey moves to the bar, picks up the bottle of Knappogue.

A bit shorter than when I left it. Where is--?
JOEY

Liam emerges from the kitchen,
followed by Paulie and Bobby.

JOEY

Oh, there ya are.

LIAM

(to Bobby)

I told ya don't be makin' a fuckin' mess in there, didn't I?

BOBBY

(to Liam)

Well, if you kept the place neat, Liam, instead of just
stackin' things willy-nilly.

LIAM

So now it' my doin', is it?

BOBBY

Technically.

LIAM

Unbelievable.

Liam takes the bottle from
Joey, holds it up toward Paulie
and Bobby.

LIAM

(to Paulie and Bobby)

Boys?

PAULIE

Absolutely. There enough for everyone?

Liam checks the bottle.

LIAM

I believe there is.

PAULIE

Then pour away, my friend.

(looking to everyone)

One more raisin' of the glass for Tommy?

JOEY

Why we're here, ain't it?

Paulie moves to Margaret.

PAULIE

Margaret? You'll join us this time?

MARGARET

No. I'm not...No.

(beat)

Anyway, I should be getting back to the...you know. People waitin', like you said.

PAULIE

Give us a second, then, darlin'. We'll walk you back, right boys?

JOEY

Sure'n we will.

BOBBY

You bet.

JOEY

(to Bobby)

We're goin' back for Tommy, now, you know. Not Shirley.

BOBBY

Cheryl.

JOEY

Whatever.

BOBBY

(somewhat irritated)

And what do you care? What's the harm in a coupla birds with one stone?

JOEY

Jaysus. One track mind. Yer hopeless.

BOBBY

I got a feelin' about this one, Joey. She's different.

PAULIE

You hearing your heart talking to you, are you?

JOEY

Like a thousand times before.

BOBBY

(to Joey and Paulie,
with a glance to
Mark)

Might be a little clearer this time, you know?

JOEY

Uh-huh.

BOBBY

Least I'm willin' to listen.

Joey waves him off as Liam
fills the last glass and sets
the bottle down.

LIAM

Boys.

Everyone picks up a glass.

PAULIE

I've already said my piece. Up to you fellas now.

BOBBY

You go, Joey.

JOEY

I ain't much for this kinda thing.

(to Bobby)

You say it for the both of us.

BOBBY

Not sure what to say...I mean, he was a brother, wasn't he?
One a' the Musketeers. Always had each of our backs.

PAULIE

That he did.

BOBBY

Treated each of us the same, different as we are. And I do
know this for sure: It was Tommy kept us all together, kept
bringin' us back around when life pulled us apart a ways.
And he's doin' all that again today, isn't he? Brought us
back together like he's in this very room...

(glances at Mark)

...tryin' to tell us something he thinks we should know,
right or wrong havin' no standin' in it at this point I
figure. He wasn't perfect. But neither am I. He was our
Tommy, that's all. And I for one am gonna miss that son of
bitch somethin' awful.

(raises his glass)

To Thomas Kelley.

ALL

Thomas Kelley!

They all take the shot, then
are silent a moment in their
own thoughts. Paulie is the
first to move, setting his
glass on the bar.

PAULIE

(to Margaret)

You ready, dear?

MARGARET

In a moment.

PAULIE

We'll wait for you outside, then?

MARGARET

That will be fine.

PAULIE

Come on, boys. Let's go say goodbye to our friend.
(turns to Mark)
Maybe see you again sometime.

MARK

You too.

They shake hands. Paulie turns
to Liam, extends his hand.

PAULIE

Thank you, sir. Sorry to be leaving you so soon.

LIAM

You'll be back.

PAULIE

Undoubtedly. May be with these reprobates, may not.

JOEY

(to Liam, pointing
at Paulie)

That'll be the donkey steppin' on its own tail there.

Liam begins to pull off his
bar apron.

LIAM

You know, I was just thinkin', Paulie...why don't I close up
a half hour, come down Chandler's? I'd like to be payin' my
respects as well.

PAULIE

He'd like that. We'll be outside.

LIAM

Be right with ya.

As Liam pulls off his bar apron,
he picks up the bottle of
Knappogue, shakes it.

LIAM

There's one or two left in here, Paulie. You want it?

PAULIE

Nah. Leave it on the bar there for Tommy. He'd appreciate that.

Liam smiles, sets the bottle on the bar, goes into the kitchen. Paulie moves toward Joey and Bobby, who wait at the door. As he joins them and they open the door...

JOEY

You headin' back to Princeton after, Paulie?

PAULIE

You know, Joseph, I was thinking about taking a drive down to Kentucky for the weekend. Lexington is kind of pretty this time of year.

BOBBY

Isn't that where Lisa's livin' these days?

PAULIE

I believe it is, Robert. I believe it is.

And they're gone. Mark has been packing up his drawings and putting on his jacket during this. He finishes and turns to Margaret, who sits quietly in thought at the table.

MARK

I'm not sure what to say, except that--

MARGARET

You don't need to say anything. I mean...what can we say?
(she rises)
Thank you for the drawings.

MARK

He'd want you to have them, I'm sure.

An awkward moment, then Mark indicates the door.

MARK

I guess I'd best be going. I can catch the last train back if I hurry.

MARGARET

Yes.

They smile at one another,
then Mark makes for the door.
Just as he pulls the door...

MARGARET

Mark...

He turns to her, holding the
door. Margaret speaks without
looking at him...her eyes on
the drawings of Tommy.

MARGARET

Would you...Would you like to join us down the block? Say
goodbye?

Mark's body shakes, a sob
catching in his throat.

MARK

I...I would like that very much.

MARGARET

We'll see you there then, okay?

Mark wipes a tear from his
cheek, nods, exits.

Liam emerges from the kitchen,
comes to her.

LIAM

Ready, Maggie?

MARGARET

I'd kind of like to stay a moment, if you don't mind.

LIAM

No, no, not at all. You're all right?

MARGARET

Yes. I'm fine. I just want to breathe in the place a bit
on my own. Share the air he was in a moment longer, you
know?

LIAM

Stay as long as you like. Me and the boys will wait outside.

Margaret touches Liam's arm.

MARGARET

You're a fine man, Liam. Just like your father. Thank you
for being such a good friend to my Tommy.

LIAM

No thanks necessary. He was an easy man to love.

MARGARET

It appears so, doesn't it?

Liam considers Margaret a moment, then...

LIAM

You know, I've never married, though I've loved a few women in my time. And standin' behind this bar long as I have,
(he moves to it)
you eventually hear every shading of what love is. But I'll tell ya what I've come to think, if you want to hear it.

Margaret nods. Liam picks up the bottle of Knappogue, begins to pour the last of the whiskey into two nearby glasses.

LIAM

Love is like this here Knappogue. It fills these two glasses just the same, gives the same to both, don't play favorites. And if the hand is steady, and fair, then each glass gets the same. What comes out of the bottle is pure; what goes into the glass is pure. Does it really matter that there's another glass if yours is full? Ain't that all that *does* matter?

Margaret studies Liam a moment, then smiles. He smiles back.

LIAM

We'll be outside.

Margaret nods. Liam exits. Margaret is left alone. She's immobile for several beats, then stands and takes a very long, deep breath, holds it for several long moments, then lets it seep out.

She picks up one of Mark's drawings of Tommy.

MARGARET

Ah, Thomas! Always takin' the hardest road, aren't you?
(beat)
That's you been callin' in my heart, isn't it? Remindin' me.

(MORE)

MARGARET (CONT'D)

(beat)

Well, I hear you. I may not be able to travel that road you chose, but whatever we were to each other,

(a deep, emotional
sigh)

I choose that we are still. That's what *my* heart is sayin'.

Margaret gathers her things and moves to leave. But she stops, seeing the Knappogue and glasses Liam has left. She studies the drawing for a few seconds then ever so slowly moves to the bar.

She props the drawing of Tommy up against the bottle of Knappogue. She then picks up one of the two shot glasses, slowly raises it, considers a moment.

MARGARET

God love you now, Thomas Kelley.

Margaret throws back the shot, holds it a moment in her mouth, then swallows without a flinch.

She sets the glass in front of the drawing, next to the still-full glass. She turns to the door.

Margaret stops, goes back to the bar, and sets her crumpled handkerchief next to the items there. Then she very deliberately walks to the door and exits.

The lights in the pub slowly fade to black except for a special that illuminates the bottle, drawing, shot glasses and handkerchief, which sit bathed in light for several moments before it, too, fades to black.

THE END