

**Pato** No shame in thinking about things and worrying about things, I'm saying, and 'nut-house' is a silly word to be using, and you know that well enough, now, Maureen.

**Maureen** I do.

**Pato** *goes over and sits across the table from her.*

**Maureen** In England I was, this happened. Cleaning work. When I was twenty-five. Me first time over. Me only time over. Me sister had just got married, me other sister just about to. Over in Leeds I was, cleaning offices. Bogs. A whole group of us, only them were all English. 'Ya oul backward Paddy fecking . . . The fecking pig's-backside face on ya.' The first time out of Connemara this was I'd been. 'Get back to that backward fecking pigsty of yours or whatever hole it was you drug yourself out of.' Half of the swearing I didn't even understand. I had to have a black woman explain it to me. Trinidad she was from. They'd have a go at her too, but she'd just laugh. This big face she had, this big oul smile. And photos of Trinidad she'd show me, and 'What the hell have you left there for?' I'd say. 'To come to this place, cleaning shite?' And a calendar with a picture of Connemara on I showed her one day, and 'What the hell have you left there for?' she said back to me. 'To come to this place . . .' *(Pause.)* But she moved to London then, her husband was dying. And after that it all just got to me.

**Pato** *(pause)* That's all past and behind you now anyways, Maureen.

*Pause. Maureen looks at him a while.*

**Maureen** Am I still a nut case you're saying, or you're wondering?

**Pato** Not at all, now . . .

**Maureen** Oh no . . . ?

*She gets up and wanders back to the kitchen.*

**Pato** Not at all. That's a long time in the past is all I'm saying. And nothing to be ashamed of. Put it behind you, you should.

**Maureen** Put it behind me, aye, with that one hovering eyeing me every minute, like I'm some kind of . . . some kind of . . . *(Pause.)* And, no, I didn't scould her oul hand, no matter how doolally I ever was. Trying to cook chips on her own, she was. We'd argued, and I'd left her on her own an hour, and chips she up and decided she wanted. She must've tipped the pan over. God knows how, the eej. I just found her lying there. Only, because of Difford Hall, she thinks any accusation she throws at me I won't be any the wiser. I won't be able to tell the differ, what's true and what's not. Well, I *am* able to tell the differ. Well able, the smelly oul bitch.

**Pato** You shouldn't let her get to you, Maureen.

**Maureen** How can I help it, Pato? She's enough to drive anyone loopy, if they weren't loopy to begin with.

**Pato** *(smiling)* She is at that, I suppose.

**Maureen** *(smiling)* She is. It's surprised I am how sane I've turned out!

*They both smile. Pause.*

**Pato** I *will* have to be off in a minute now, Maureen.

**Maureen** Okay, Pato. Did you finish your tea, now?

**Pato** I didn't. The talk of your mother's wee, it did put me off it.

**Maureen** It would. It would anybody. Don't I have to live with it? *(Sadly.)* Don't I have to live with it? *(Looking straight at him.)* I suppose I do, now.

**Pato** *(pause)* Be putting on some clothes there, Maureen. You'll freeze with no fire down.

*Pause. Maureen's mood has become sombre again. She looks down at herself.*



**Maureen** (*quietly*) 'Be putting on some clothes'? Is it ugly you think I am now, so, 'Be putting on some clothes . . .'

**Pato** No, Maureen, the cold, I'm saying. You can't go walking about . . . You'll freeze, sure.

**Maureen** It wasn't ugly you thought I was last night, or maybe it was, now.

**Pato** No, Maureen, now. What . . . ?

**Maureen** A beauty queen you thought I was last night, or you said I was. When it's 'Cover yourself', now, 'You do sicken me' . . .

**Pato** (*approaching her*) Maureen, no, now, what are you saying that for . . . ?

**Maureen** Maybe that was the reason so.

**Pato** (*stops*) The reason what?

**Maureen** Be off with you so, if I sicken you.

**Pato** You don't sicken me.

**Maureen** (*almost crying*) Be off with you, I said.

**Pato** (*approaching again*) Maureen . . .

**Mag** enters, waving papers, stopping **Pato's** approach.

**Mag** Eh? Here's the papers now, Difford Hall, if I'm such a senile owl hen. Eh? Who wants an owl read, now? Eh? Proof this is, let alone pegging sinks at me! (*Pause.*) Eh?

**Pato** Maureen . . .

**Maureen** (*composed. Gently*) Be going now, Pato.

**Pato** (*pause*) I'll write to you from England. (*Pause. Sternly.*) Look at me! (*Pause. Softly.*) I'll write to you from England.

*He puts on his jacket, turns for a last look at Maureen, then exits, closing the door behind him. Footsteps away. Pause.*

**Mag** He won't write at all. (*Pause.*) And I did throw your owl dress in that dirty corner too!

*Pause. Maureen looks at her a moment, sad, despairing but not angry.*

**Maureen** Why? Why? Why do you . . . ?

*Pause. She goes over to where her dress is lying, crouches down beside it and picks it up, holding it to her chest. She lingers there a moment, then gets up and passes her mother.*

Just look at yourself.

*She exits into hall.*

**Mag** Just look at yourself too, would be . . . would be . . .  
(**Maureen** shuts the hall door behind her) . . . more in your line.

*She is still holding up the papers rather dumbly. Pause. She lays the papers down, scratches herself, notices her uneaten porridge and sticks a finger in it. Quietly.*

**Mag** Me porridge is gone cold now. (*Loudly.*) Me porridge is gone cold now!

*She stares out front, blankly. Blackout.*

*Interval.*

## Scene Five

*Most of the stage is in darkness apart from a spotlight or some such on Pato sitting at the table as if in a bedsit in England, reciting a letter he has written to Maureen.*

**Pato** Dear Maureen, it is Pato Dooley and I'm writing from London, and I'm sorry it's taken so long to write to you but to be honest I didn't know whether you wanted me to one way or the other, so I have taken it upon myself to try and see. There are a lot of things I want to say but I am no letter writer but I will try to say them if I can. Well, Maureen, there is no major news here, except a Wexford man on the site a day ago, a rake of bricks fell on him from the scaffold and forty stitches he did have in his head and was lucky to be alive at all, he was an old fella, or fifty-odd anyways, but apart from that there is