

## Scene One

**Black.**

**A slow air is playing on a fiddle. The door is open to the outside. It is dark.**

**Callum** Is it breaking ? Or is it me ?

There's freckled light.

It's black. A country night. No edge where darkness ends. No exit signs.

I'm stumbling.

Stumbling on. Grasping at straws I know are gone.

So. We've arrived. Now what ?

**The lights come up. A cottage.**

**Peter is playing the fiddle. Callum is walking around the large room. He touches the soft curtains and feels the sofa from behind.**

**Peter** Can I stop ?

**No reply.**

**Callum is at a window. He looks out. Closes the curtains.**

**Joseph arrives in the doorway with bags.**

**Petr stops playing.**

**Joseph** Is no-one gonna help the old man ?

**Peter puts the fiddle down.**

**Joseph** Bin waiting by the boot. These plastic bags are like cheese-wire on ya fingers.  
**Peter** I'll get them.

**He walks over.**

**Joseph** Don't murder yerself on my account.

**He struggles over to the kitchen area and puts the bags on the worktop.**

**Peter** Is there more ?

**He walks all the way to the door. Joseph lets him get right there before...**

**Joseph** That's the lot.

**Peter** You should have waited for me.

**Joseph** I could wait all day.

**Peter** I've only been a few minutes.

**Joseph** That wind'd slice ya to bits.

**Peter** It's quite exposed isn't it.

**Quiet.**

**Joseph** Why don't ya close that door ?

**Peter walks over and does so.**

**Peter** It's meant to be clearing up for the morning.

**Joseph** We'll get a fire going.

**Peter** There's no coal. And I had to have the chimney sealed. Birds were getting in.

**Joseph** I suppose the central heating's on

**Peter** Yes.

**Quiet.**

**Peter** I've been looking forward to this. It's been years since we were all away.

**(Wait)** We'll get some drinking done. Eh, Dad ? Good food. Perhaps a bit of music.

**(To Callum)** Do you like the cottage ?

**Joseph** It cost a bob or two.

**Callum** Yes.

**Joseph** Why a man'd need two homes.... I don't know. Unless he had two wives. He'd do well t'keep 'em apart.

**Peter** **(To Callum)** We should come up, the two of us..... for a weekend. In the summer.

**Callum** It seems very peaceful.

**Joseph** We'll soon put a stop to that.

**Peter** I did some of the work myself. More or less rebuilt the gable at that end. The floor's slate. Welsh. Did it right. I can shutter it up when I'm not here. During the week. There's a lot of places left empty around here. A lot of squatters. I'll be shutting up for winter when we've finished. It's a bit bleak up here, winter.

**Callum** I bet it's beautiful.

**Peter** I might come up for the snow. You must come, Callum. Bring some of your friends.

**(Callum looks at him.)**

**Quiet.**

**Callum** I asked him to play just now.

**Joseph** Aye.

**He looks at Callum who looks away. Quiet.**

**Peter** (To Callum) Are they letting you drink now ?  
**Joseph** They are on a weekender with me.  
**Callum** Could have one, I suppose. I'm not meant to.  
**Joseph** If you listened to all them doctors told ya t'avoid... you'd never get outa ya cot.  
**Peter** I bought lemonade. You could have a shandy.  
**Callum** (After a moment) I could have lemonade.  
**Joseph** He's got ya on lemonade now. You watch him, son. He'll have ya on spring water before the weekend's out. And I'd not trust his fiddle playing either. That music's for the melancholy, son. I'd not touch it with a barge pole.

**Callum** It's beautiful.  
**Joseph** And it'd break yer heart. Ya can have too much of the sweetness.  
**Peter** Nonsense.  
**Callum** (Beginning to panic.) Have I been ?  
**Peter** 'Course you've been.  
**Callum** I haven't  
**Peter** You have.  
**Callum** No I haven't.  
**Peter** You have.  
**Callum** I can't remember.  
**Peter** It's your medication.  
**Callum** Why can't I remember ?  
**Peter** You medication.  
**Callum** I don't remember.  
**Joseph** For Christ sake. Maybe he hasn't.

**Small quiet.**

**Callum** You took me, Dad. (Wait) "Lemonade." I could have a lemonade. (Laughing) Am I a cartoon ? Scribbled. I was scribbled. They didn't tell me. Features out of kilter. "Kilter." Cartoon scribble. But the background's real. "Got a flea in his ear !" I have. He's got a top hat and big eyes. My cartoon chum. Whistles tunes. A ball head on twiggy legs. In here. In me ear. Deeper some days. I say all that..... but I know it's me.

**Quiet.**

**Peter** You must remember. With your mum. The four of us. You'll remember that pub. The Landlord said he'd never heard such fiddle playing. I'm not a great player... but this fiddle'd make a clown sound good. It's a beautiful tone. He could hear it. He knew his fiddles. He knew it was a quality item. Worth every penny. Your mum thought not. I nearly didn't take it with us. Your mother didn't like to. I knew it'd open doors for us. Like in this pub.....

**Joseph** Pub doors are always open.  
**Peter** Doors of experience, Dad.  
**Joseph** O.  
**Peter** Heaven's got pubs like that, Callum. Such warmth. People talking. Swapping stories. The sweet smile of the Madonna grinning down on us from above the row of spirits behind the bar. The Gin dripping from her smock. And the music.

Musicians coming out of the woodwork. The music's in them, Callum. Right at the heart. If they couldn't play they'd sing or lilt. Six or seven of us in the end. A joy to play. To be there. You remember. Jigging around the floor. Alison in your arms. Knocking tables. Spilling drinks..... and it didn't matter. All those faces laughing. .... did they have Sky TV ? I like a pub with football.

Joseph

**Small quiet.**

Peter

You should have played, Dad. It's in your soul.

Joseph

There's only shite in me soul, thankyou very much. That's why I'm so sure of the smell of it.

**Quiet.**

Callum

I'll put the shopping away. **(He goes to the kitchen area at the back of the room. He unpacks the shopping.)**

Joseph

You shouldn't've let him sit in the back on his own.

Peter

I thought it'd ease him in.

Joseph

He spends enough time on his own. Gasing at his navel.

Peter

He wanted to.

Joseph

You can't be soft on him.

Peter

We can't push him around.

Joseph

He's threatening to discharge.

Peter

He can. He's voluntary now.

Joseph

Then you think on. Where's he goin' to go to ? With you ? You'd spoil him in a week.

Peter

We'll have to see how the weekend goes. All of us.

Joseph

Awkward beggar he is. **(Shouting up)** I say... Awkward beggar you are.

**Callum smiles.**

Peter

You take no notice, son.

**Joseph picks up a bag and spills out party stuff, including a large "Happy Birthday" banner. Peter hurriedly tries to put it all abck without Callum seeing.**

Joseph

Why's this all a secret ?

Peter

You know what she's like. She wants to make it nice for him.

Joseph

I don't think the lad's goin' to give a damn either way. He's got more on his mind.

Peter

Please, Dad. Let her have a surprise party if she wants one.

Joseph

It's ridiculous. He's a grown man.

**Quiet.**

Peter

He came through the door behind me. I was talking. I put the bags down. When I looked back..... He was staring.... like he was looking for something... with all his attention. Looking 'round the room. I said his name..... nothing.**(Imitating a**

**child's voice.)** "Play a song, Dad.... play me a song." "Later, Callum, let's get the things in..." "Now, Dad, play now." Still as snow. "Play, Dad. Play." I took it out. Played. My fingers couldn't..... He's walking around. Touching. Feeling.**(Wait)**  
**(Wait. Becoming emotional)** Christ, it comes back.

**Joseph**

That's enough of that.

**Quiet.**

**Peter**

**(Shouting up)** Leave something out for tonight. **(Callum holds something up)**  
Fine ! Wasn't too busy was it ? **(Shouting up)** I say, the shop.... wasn't too busy ?

**Callum**

**(Walking back to them.)** No.

**Joseph**

I'm sure we coulda shopped local

**Peter**

We could drive down to the village... but there's only a craft shop and an indian take-away.

**Joseph**

We coulda had a curry.

**Peter**

You don't eat curry, Dad.

**Joseph**

How do you know what I eat ?

**Peter**

You eat what mum puts in front of you.

**Joseph**

You'd be suprised what I eat.

**Peter**

You turn your nose up at pasta.

**Joseph**

Anyway, I'd've eaten curried dog if it'd saved me lugging quite so much stuff in on me own.

**Peter**

Most of it's beer.

**Joseph**

I still end up doing all this family's donkey-work.

**Peter**

Well, you're still as strong as a donkey.

**Joseph**

Ya would've said 'shire-horse' twenty year ago.

**Peter**

You could still wrestle me to the ground.

**Joseph**

Sure I could.

**Callum**

You could probably break me in your fingers.

**Quiet.**

**Joseph**

You've a fine boot in that car.

**Peter**

Twelve cubic feet. One of the largest rear storage capacities of it's class.

**Joseph**

And leg room. Yer could probably fit a shire-horse in there.

**Callum**

And a little pony in the back. Lying down.

**Small quiet.**

**Peter**

Well, you get what you pay for.

**Joseph**

Aye.

**Quiet.**

**Joseph**

**(To Callum)** So, yer had a queer turn just back there did ya ? All that jibbering.

**Peter**

Dad.

**Joseph**

But ya feel alright now ?

### Callum nods.

**Joseph** And d'ya get any warning it's on it's way ?  
**Callum** **(After a pause)** It wasn't a turn, Grandad, I was just thinking.  
**Joseph** Thinking ? What were you thinking ?  
**Callum** Just out loud.  
**Peter** Now leave him alone, Dad. He's here for a rest from the Head-shrinkers.  
**Callum** It's alright.  
**Joseph** I'm only showing interest.  
**Peter** But he's here for a break.  
**Joseph** Maybe if you took more interest.  
**Peter** I'm not discussing it.  
**Joseph** I say we have to keep his mind engaged. He's no vegetable. No matter what damn shite they pump into him. I'll talk to who I like about what I like.  
**Peter** All I'm saying is, we don't have to go on and on.  
**Joseph** I wasn't going on. Aren't we his family ? Can't we help ?  
**Callum** Keep the razor-blades out of my reach.

### Quiet.

**Callum** Why did you have to bring me out, Dad ?  
**Peter** **(After a moment)** We didn't bring you out, Callum. We all agreed this. You and the doctors. You've been there a long time.....  
**Callum** .... seventeen months.  
**Peter** .... You want to leave/ We're all very pleased that you feel that strong now. This weekend's your chance.... and our chance, to see how we all feel about things. And we can see where we go from there.  
**Callum** Where I'll go ?  
**Peter** Yes.

### Quiet.

**Joseph** Did they throw you a good party the other week for your birthday ?  
**(Peter throws him a glance.)**  
**Callum** It was last month.  
**Joseph** So long ?  
**Peter** I'm sorry we couldn't get up.  
**Joseph** Better late than never. Eh, son ? **(Peter looks at him again.)**  
**Joseph** Ya see. We're fighting over you already.  
**Peter** **(Taking the bag with decorations)** I'll start supper, should I ?  
**Joseph** I'll tell yer what. I'll do it.  
**Peter** There's some cooking involved.  
**Joseph** I'll amaze you both. I've conquered me fear and loathing of the kitchen. Retirement has mellowed me. Sure, I'm a dab hand. **(Wait)** You do have a micro-wave don't ya ? **(To Callum)** I'll rustle ya up a banquet. Put some meat on them bones of yours. Ya don't eat well enough from what I can see. Yer Granma says the same. She says ya need fish. Brain food. **(Wait)** Not that I'm casting aspirations on a person's brain. **(Wait)** If it's micro-wavable, it's yours. Where's the kitchen ?

**He goes up to the kitchen area.**

Yer Granma's promised to get away in the morning. She would've come tonight with us but the car's full... and she sees Irene on a Friday as a rule. Besides, she imagines the men might appreciate some time. And I think they might.

**Callum**

And Alison ?

**Peter**

She'll get away when she can. She had an appointment.

**Callum**

I've not seen her.

**Peter**

You will.

**Callum**

What appointment ?

**Peter**

I don't know.

**Joseph**

Yer sister'll be here.

**Callum**

And Grandma.

**Joseph**

God willing ! We've just got to survive until tomorrow night. And make sure we leave no pots on the drainer. That'll be the test. I guarantee it.

**Quiet.**

Are Micro-chips OK ?

**Black.**