

# **SAINT SOMEBODY**

By

Rita Anderson

# SAINT SOMEBODY

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SAINT SOMEBODY

*Dedicated to the memory of my father, William Norton, and to his  
mother—my grandmother—Mary O'Connor,  
neither of whom lived to see my plays.*

## SAINT SOMEBODY

### CHARACTERS

**ERIN.** Nurse in charge, under Sister Kathleen. Jaded. 30s.

**EILEEN.** A novitiate. 19.

**SR. KATHLEEN.** Hardnosed nun who hobnobs with Colonel, but her moves are strategic. 50s.

**FREDERICK DEE.** Wounded African-American soldier, intelligent, a poet. 18.

**MULLIGAN.** Hard-drinking artilleryman, heart of gold. 27.

**COLONEL.** Pampered leader who resents being in the field but needs it to advance. 35. Suffers from Munchausen-by-Proxy. [Also plays **DEAD UNCLE PADRICK**, a ghost.]

**SETTING.** Camp of the Irish Brigade (69<sup>th</sup> from NYC) at Gettysburg. Fictionalization of real events that transpired July 2-5, 1863.

**NOTE:** Except for FREDERICK DEE, characters speak in brogues that match their stations in life, but language is adapted for clarity (*historification*). It does not necessarily reflect the diction of the period, and the term Buffalo Soldier (not an official title until 1866) is used.

## SAINT SOMEBODY

*SAINT SOMEBODY* was nominated for the John Cauble Outstanding Play Award, and it had a Staged Reading at the Kennedy Center. Mélange Theatre Company first produced it in Austin, TX, at Trinity Street Playhouse. *SAINT SOMEBODY* received multiple award nominations from the B. Iden Payne Arts Council, and the play made it to the 2020 Final Ballot for “Outstanding Original Script (Drama).”

Mélange Theatre Company – Austin, Texas (Nov-Dec 2019)  
Director, Christina J. Moore

**ERIN.** Erin Una Olson  
**EILEEN.** Madison Murrah  
**SR. KATHLEEN.** Johanna Whitmore  
**FREDERICK DEE.** Matrex Kilgore  
**MULLIGAN.** Nate Dunaway  
**COLONEL.** Aaron Black

*SAINT SOMEBODY* was included as a STAGE ONE Reading produced by The Filigree Theatre on January 22, 2018 at Austin Film Society’s ‘Austin Studios.’ The reading was directed by Elizabeth V. Newman (Artistic Director, The Filigree Theatre).

The CAST is as follows:

**STAGE DIRECTIONS.** Sarah Danko  
**ERIN.** Amelia Turner  
**EILEEN.** Abigail Rose  
**SR. KATHLEEN.** Bernadette Nason  
**FREDERICK DEE.** Chris Proutt  
**MULLIGAN.** Nicholas Weindel  
**COLONEL.** Randall Harrison

## SAINT SOMEBODY

**The following material is presented in preshow slides, as spotlit monologues, or in a manner of your company's design that is in keeping with the show's integrity. It may also be used in the program as a dramaturgical side:**

“All persons held as slaves within any states . . . in rebellion against the United States shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free . . . [And] such persons of suitable condition [African-American men] will be received into the armed service of the United States.”

*The Emancipation Proclamation, January 1, 1863*

“Once let the black man get upon his person the brass letters, U.S.; let him get an eagle on his button, and a musket on his shoulder and bullets in his pocket, and there is no power on earth which can deny that he has earned the right to citizenship.”

Frederick Douglass

“Roughly one million slaves were freed and 180,000 African-Americans enlisted for the Union Army, which had never allowed black soldiers. 40,000 of them died: 10,000 in battle and 30,000 from illness or infection.”

“Some 3,000 middle-class white women served as nurses. Dorothea Dix, superintendent of Army nurses, put out a call for responsible, maternal, volunteers who would not distract the troops or behave in unseemly or unfeminine ways. Dix insisted that her nurses be *past 30 years of age, healthy, plain almost to repulsion in dress, and devoid of personal attractions*

SAINT SOMEBODY

# SAINT SOMEBODY

ACT I  
SCENE 1

*Lights up on a sultry 87 degrees at Gettysburg, July 2, 1863. The Union's Irish Brigade has set up camp near The Wheatfield, suggested with three primary tents. Foremost is the large medical tent. Anchored to a tree DSL is the COLONEL's private tent. It has a bed, stores of whiskey, and there are signs of a dog's presence. On a dresser that is overrun with pill bottles, he has a kerosene lamp and framed pictures of home, and one authentic art piece is hung from the tent walls. DSR, MULLIGAN's communal tent sags messily. The tents are filthy canvas universes unto themselves, each with a different air that permeates the action there. Overall, the environment portrays a fatigue that is in the fabric and items that populate these worlds. ERIN, an experienced nurse who has been hardened by life, is trying to reason with EILEEN, a novice who has little medical training and no stomach for blood—although both women are covered in it. The scene opens on this, the medical unit, bursting with noise and confusion.*

**ERIN.** Can't take him, Eileen. The answer's, *No.*

**EILEEN.** But Miss Erin, I can't turn away a wounded man.

**ERIN.** Where'll you put him? And there's no rations. We're moving faster than they can find us. Nothing, Eileen, till they get supplies through the lines, assuming they're even trying.

**EILEEN.** Sooner give up me own board then send him to a sure death, Miss Erin. We are called to help the helpless—no matter the color of his uniform. (*Beat.*) Or his skin. (*Erin turns to stare at Eileen.*)

**ERIN.** What on earth are you saying, Eileen? And you're not listening. There's no room.

**EILEEN.** Sure, isn't *that* what they told Joseph and the Blessed Virgin--and she bursting with the Savior?

**ERIN.** You can't be serious.

**EILEEN.** It's one poor soul, Miss Erin. And I'll care for him meself.

**ERIN.** You're more deluded than the Colonel, you are, with these witless remarks.

## SAINT SOMEBODY

**EILEEN.** Now that's a really mean thing to say.

**ERIN.** We're stealing maybe three hours sleep a night as 'tis. I'm so fecking tired I'm after seeing me dead Uncle Padrick wandering about in his grave clothes. His mouth popping like a fish.

**EILEEN.** But I'll not sleep at all, if I spurn this soldier.

**ERIN.** I need you, Eileen. What's left of you. Not enough arms to go round for our own boys, as rapid as they're expiring around us. And forgive me for noticing, Eileen, but your Heaven doesn't seem to be providing for what Hell has produced.

**EILEEN.** There's no need to curse, Miss Erin, and . . . please don't be angry, but he's already here. (*Erin peers out but sees nothing.*)

**ERIN.** So now the afflicted are popping out of the woodworks?

**EILEEN.** Mulligan found him near the rocks be Devil's Den, although I shudder to mention it.

**ERIN.** Should've figured. All Mulligan brews is trouble.

**EILEEN.** Thought it was kind of him, Christlike even.

**ERIN.** Mulligan's working on getting into your knickers, you mean. --That's a new angle.

**EILEEN.** Miss!

**ERIN.** Like we need one more layer a trouble around here.

**EILEEN.** To care for others. Why does it have to be *trouble*?

**ERIN.** We're at war, little sister, or haven't you noticed? And they've seen fit to allow us potato-pickers into their fight because they need bodies to soak up the bullets. (*Eileen pales.*) Do not kid yourself, Eileen. The Union sent in the Irish to be human sandbags. (*MULLIGAN enters, hoisting FREDERICK DEE, who limps and is covered in a dirty blanket.*)

**MULLIGAN.** The bad wolf got you crying again, Miss Eileen? She's a mean one, Erin is. With none a the fine trimmins the Creator meant for a woman to have. Where shall I put him? (*Eileen helps Frederick Dee get settled.*)

**FREDERICK DEE.** (*To Erin.*) Sorry, Ma'am. For the inconvenience.

**MULLIGAN.** Settle down, soldier. That ain't Holy Mother Mary herself standing there before ya. No need to be begging for her forgiveness. Ya had nowheres else to go, now did yas?

**ERIN.** Get away from him now, Mulligan. Sure, you're liking to infect him with your very presence. Lord knows the last time you had a proper bath.



## SAINT SOMEBODY

**MULLIGAN.** Oh, I stood in line for one, Miss, I did! (*Beat.*) But they were *fresh* out of “proper baths” out there on the front.

**ERIN.** We’ve barely set up camp.

**MULLIGAN.** Talkin’ bout the action I saw at Fredericksburg. When 1,200 Irish--fighting alongside Meagher (*Pronounced “MAR.”*), when we had twice the leader and manpower we got now--charged the wall ‘gainst murderous rifle fire till our guns got too hot to hold.

**ERIN.** Save your yarns for the pub. --Eileen, wash up and let’s have a look at your visitor. (*Erin removes the blanket, startled to find a “negro.”*)

**MULLIGAN.** Act like you never seen a negro before.

**ERIN.** Segregating the troops wasn’t my idea, Mulligan. Got nothing to do with the rules.

**FREDERICK DEE.** I prefer the term, *a man of color*.

**ERIN.** “A man of color”? What does that make us then, *blank*?

**FREDERICK DEE.** Ma’am?

**MULLIGAN.** Oh, she puts the tender sex to shame, this’n. Pay her no mind, Frederick Dee.

**ERIN.** Frederick Dee, no less!

**FREDERICK DEE.** Named after Mr. Frederick Douglass. Not that I’m worthy to carry such a fine name yet, but I plan to be.

**MULLIGAN.** He’s a Buffalo Soldier. --That’s what the men call ‘em. Fellas like Frederick.

**FREDERICK DEE.** Don’t care for that nickname either, if you don’t mind.

**ERIN.** It’s kind of regal really. I saw a buffalo once and—

**FREDERICK DEE.** And they’re creatures, Ma’am. I am a man. (*Eileen brings Frederick Dee water and a crusty chunk of bread, which he devours.*) Oh, thank you.

**ERIN.** Go easy on that bread.

**EILEEN.** I’ll make some more tonight.

**ERIN.** With what flour? (*Eileen changes her mind and refills Frederick Dee’s water cup, instead.*)

**EILEEN.** (*To Frederick Dee.*) I think you’re brave to have survived what you’ve had to. And I’m ready, Miss Erin. Where should I start? (*Erin approaches Mulligan.*)

## SAINT SOMEBODY

**ERIN.** Get out of m'tent this instant, Mulligan. Got more work to do now, thanks to you.

**EILEEN.** Thank you, Mr. Mulligan, sir. (*She escorts him out.*) And I'll be by with an update, soon as we know how your . . . friend is doing.

**ERIN.** Saints preserve us, *Mister* Mulligan--and she'll do nothing of the kind. I'm keeping her as far from your "pup tent" as the North is from the South, so help me—

**MULLIGAN.** You're an angel of mercy and grace, Miss Eileen. And you're welcome to drop by mine for any reason, at any time, despite what she says. (*Mulligan exits.*)

**EILEEN.** I am sorry, Miss.

**ERIN.** Not as sorry as we're gonna be.

**EILEEN.** If the Colonel finds out, I know.

**ERIN.** To devil with the Colonel.

**EILEEN.** Miss Erin!

**ERIN.** I am more concerned with the wrath of Sr. Kathleen.

**EILEEN.** Sr. Kathleen! Oh, how could I have forgotten? (*She crosses herself as Erin readies instruments.*)

**ERIN.** Perhaps the injury will be minor, and Frederick Dee'll be gone before Sr. Kathleen has time to notice. Soldier? (*Points at him impatiently.*)

**FREDERICK DEE.** My leg, Ma'am. It's my leg. (*She tries to touch his leg. He winces.*)

**ERIN.** Help us out here. Is it boot rot or were ya shot?

**FREDERICK DEE.** Neither, no, Ma'am. (*Erin looks closely and steps back.*)

**EILEEN.** That bad?

**ERIN.** Have to clean it proper. Looks like wool from his uniform and what all's embedded in there. (*Beat.*) --And the wound is deep.

**EILEEN.** You get tangled in wire or something?

**ERIN.** It may be too angry for me to suture.

**EILEEN.** Sr. Kathleen has the best stitch, doesn't she, Miss Erin? But I don't suppose she—

**ERIN.** And, thankfully, the Colonel should be deep into his whiskey, this close to supper. --So I'm afraid I'm all you got, soldier.

**FREDERICK DEE.** Frederick Dee, Ma'am.

**ERIN.** And I'm no seamstress. --Eileen, get rags and the chloroform.

## SAINT SOMEBODY

**EILEEN.** Yes, Miss. (*When Eileen exits, Erin confronts Frederick Dee.*)

**ERIN.** Come clean with me, now. What're we dealing with? Fence wrapped round your ankle, me arse.

**FREDERICK DEE.** It's bad, isn't it? And almost a week after happening. (*Erin investigates the wound.*)

**ERIN.** How did you get caught in an animal trap?

**FREDERICK DEE.** Since they let *us* in the war last year, my friends and I have wanted to get mustered into service. But we got tired of waiting so . . . we formed an *unofficial* regiment. I uh--. I wasn't quite 18.

**ERIN.** Then where did you get uniforms? And the gun?

**FREDERICK DEE.** Done a lot of lying lately—which I'm not proud of—but my friends and me were just trying to get to the 54<sup>th</sup> out of Massachusetts.

**ERIN.** What for?

**FREDERICK DEE.** Why to enlist, of course!

**ERIN.** Well, what does any a this have to do with your leg?

**FREDERICK DEE.** Never did make it to the 54<sup>th</sup> but we sure found trouble.

It was night—which was the only way to travel after Jefferson Davis swore to *enslave* or *execute* all black prisoners of war on the spot. Next thing you know, we're drowning in shell fire, mixed in with a white unit. I shouted out, but my buddies were--. They were dead. Every last one. So I. I. Grabbed a rifle and I . . . I *found* a uniform. Was dark as your worst fear out there and there was so much smoke. Choking me out. And the smell of bodies on fire and--. I hadn't eaten, Ma'am. I haven't eaten. (*Eileen returns in a flush, feigning cheerfulness. Erin changes topics.*)

**ERIN.** Probably a trap farmers set for foxes. Can be glad it wasn't to catch bear.

**EILEEN.** A trap? So, you got separated from your unit, Frederick Dee? (*Erin motions for Frederick Dee to be silent about that. He changes topics.*)

**FREDERICK DEE.** Poured what salt I had to disinfect it, but I wasn't wasting my canteen on this—and there was no other water, or I'd have made mud and packed it.

**EILEEN.** Work a bit with your medical unit? Because that's sound advice in a rough spot, isn't it Miss?

**FREDERICK DEE.** Learned from my Granmom. She was amazing. Knew every herb in the woods.

**EILEEN.** So, like a medicine woman?

**ERIN.** Or a midwife.

## SAINT SOMEBODY

**FREDERICK DEE.** And I've read every book I could get my hands on. I am *going* to be a doctor, when this war's over and we're all truly free.

**ERIN.** Eileen, you returned empty-handed.

**EILEEN.** I put the kettle on for tea, Miss, but. There is no chloroform.

**ERIN.** 'Tis what it is. Clear away the rest a his trousers then. (*Eileen moves nervously to Frederick Dee, who holds onto the waistband of his pants.*)

**FREDERICK DEE.** (*To Erin.*) Uh. I'd rather you did it, Ma'am.

**ERIN.** She's young, she is. But she's seen far worse than your naked hindquarters.

**EILEEN.** (*Blushing.*) Miss! Erin has a *gift*, it seems, for saying the wrong thing at the worst time.

**ERIN.** The both of yas need to quit and get on about your business. Matins is around the corner, and I have to eat. (*Eileen begins to undress Frederick Dee.*)

**FREDERICK DEE.** Be careful with that, please, Miss. (*Erin comes to help.*)

**ERIN.** You'll have to be less tender, Frederick Dee, or we'll not get through this. (*Eileen holds up an old statue that is dressed in the formal habits of a Catholic nun. She has signs of the stigmata on her forehead and the palms of her hands. The statue is larger than seems comfortable to carry for long.*)

**FREDERICK DEE.** Mother made me take it--so she must be worried because I was never allowed before to so much as touch it. It was wrapped in a cloth, but I used that to make a tourniquet for my leg.

**EILEEN.** It's a treasure--and she's a nun like me!

**FREDERICK DEE.** Studied her face every night since I left home. After prayers, of course. And, if you don't mind my saying, Miss, she looks like you.

**EILEEN.** Please call me Eileen.

**ERIN.** Plodding through a battlefield with no food or water but you toted a religious statue? What are you, superstitious?

**EILEEN.** Why, he's a *believer*, Miss Erin! I knew we had to care for him. It's a *sign*, surely.

**FREDERICK DEE.** She has kept me safe—and I've managed to keep her in one piece. (*Erin laughs and roughly takes the statue. Frederick Dee and Eileen gasp.*)

**ERIN.** Not saying I believe in your rubbish, but I knew the saints once. Had the first hundred names memorized from a book of the saints me ma bought for my first communion.

**FREDERICK DEE.** And with all due respect, Miss Erin. But you look a bit like my mother.

## SAINT SOMEBODY

**ERIN.** I look like your mother? Pale as I am with nary a freckled mark!

**EILEEN.** Surely, he meant it as a compliment.

**ERIN.** Not so sloppy, Eileen, and pass the scissors. (*While Erin and Eileen clean the wound, Frederick Dee pulls out a worn picture from a tired leather journal. He hands it to Erin as proof.*) What's this now? Lord, what else have you got hiding up under there? You wouldn't be chance, have any ether or sulphur drugs, now would you?

**FREDERICK DEE.** The statue, Mama's picture, and my journal. It's all I've needed—that and my hope for freedom. That's why this war is so important.

**ERIN.** Glory be! She's fair as a dove. (*Eileen takes the picture.*)

**EILEEN.** Miss Erin, that could be you. (*Erin does something that makes Frederick Dee yank back his leg.*)

**FREDERICK DEE.** Yeowww—ch!

**ERIN.** It'll hurt much worse if we have to take this leg.

**FREDERICK DEE.** Sorry. (*He reluctantly puts down his leg.*)

**ERIN.** Eileen, hold him. (*Frederick Dee bites his lip and Eileen asks him questions to take his mind off the pain.*)

**EILEEN.** So, your mother then, Frederick Dee. Tell me about your Mother.

**FREDERICK DEE.** Mother's baptismal name is Colleen.

**ERIN.** And I suppose you're the new Black Irish. Don't you have the worst of it then, the scourge of both worlds?

**EILEEN.** Miss Erin!

**ERIN.** It's an evil, bloody world, Eileen. Don't tell me t'isn't. —And stop squirming. (*Eileen, who has been lying across Frederick Dee's chest, stands beside him now, holding and rubbing his hand.*)

**EILEEN.** And . . . (?) And your father, Frederick Dee. What about him!

**FREDERICK DEE.** Father met Mother on the boat coming over.

**ERIN.** On the flight--during famine?

**EILEEN.** And it was love at first sight?

**FREDERICK DEE.** Owwwwwww!

**EILEEN.** Look at me. I'm here, Frederick Dee. You can do this. —And, your father and mother, how did they meet? (*Frederick Dee bears the cleaning.*)

**FREDERICK DEE.** My father worked that vessel. Mama's family was gone so she traveled alone—that is, with *her*. (*He grips Eileen's hand and holds the statue*

## SAINT SOMEBODY

*in the other, which he lifts for emphasis.*) A rich Irish family paid to bring Mother over so that they could have a maid.

**ERIN.** Of course, a *maid!* That's all they think we're good for.

**FREDERICK DEE.** But Mama got so sick from the voyage and malnutrition that she almost died. Onboard, they stopped feeding the sick. Saw it as a waste of time. So, my father fed her from his rations. Saved her life. Course, he's gone now.

**EILEEN.** You're doing so well. --And what a beautiful story.

**ERIN.** Losing her family and coming over here to be a slave?!

**EILEEN.** An indentured servant. --And Miss Erin meant nothing by that, Frederick Dee.

**ERIN.** That's all I can do till the water's boiled. (*Erin drops tweezers and scissors into a metal pan, then wipes her hands.*) And there's nothing romantic about it, Eileen. Can't imagine what horrors lied in wait for a couple of mixed races. (*At that, Eileen and Frederick Dee, who are still holding hands, let go and look away sheepishly.*)

**FREDERICK DEE.** It's Mother who taught me to read, and I *will* be a doctor. When this war is over.

**EILEEN.** Do you know any Shakespeare, Frederick Dee? I love Shakespeare. My favorite is: "Love all, trust a few." (*Frederick Dee nods, and he finishes the quote with Eileen, who beams back at him.*)

**EILEEN/FREDERICK DEE.** "Do wrong to none."

**FREDERICK DEE.** And here's another one I like: "The better part of valor is discretion, in the which better part I have saved my life."

**EILEEN.** It's lovely! "The better part of valor is discretion . . ."

**ERIN.** "In the which *better* part YOU have saved YOUR life." More than pretty, Eileen, it's wise. And you did the right thing, Frederick Dee. It takes no particular bravery to wind up dead. (*Eileen leafs through his journal.*)

**EILEEN.** Shall I try to get these letters out to your mother?

**FREDERICK DEE.** Is there a way?

**ERIN.** Help clean up, Eileen. --And there aren't any doctors or nurses of color, Frederick Dee, not in the war or otherwise.

**FREDERICK DEE.** There are seven colored doctors serving the Union, but I've heard as many as nine. (*Erin picks up the statue.*)

## SAINT SOMEBODY

**ERIN.** So, who is she then? The family's patron saint—and your lucky charm? (*Frederick Dee smiles, sitting up. Then, because Erin is being insulting, maybe even blasphemous, Frederick Dee "introduces" the statue to Eileen.*)

**FREDERICK DEE.** Miss Eileen, this is Saint Somebody.

**EILEEN.** Saint *Somebody*, yes, but who?

**ERIN.** What difference does it make? They'll saint just about anybody, nowadays. With enough money to oil the right hands.

**EILEEN.** And enough *miracles* to their credit! You need miracles to be called a saint. (*Loud sounds of the COLONEL are heard OS. Erin motions for Eileen to disappear with Frederick Dee.*)

**ERIN.** Story hour's over. Get Frederick Dee back to Mulligan's before himself stumbles in, drunk as a judge and gunning to destroy us all.

**EILEEN.** But I can't leave you alone with him. Remember last time? If Sr. Kathleen hadn't walked in, the Colonel would've had the both of us for his supper.

**ERIN.** You'll have problem enough on your hands with Mulligan.

**FREDERICK DEE.** Thank you, Ma'am.

**ERIN.** You're not out of the woods yet, but go. You both. (*Eileen helps Frederick Dee, and they exit. Singing, Colonel swaggers in with a riding crop, blazed for glory. OS the kettle begins to boil.*) Colonel! Was just going in to clean up for supper. (*Beat.*) And prayers.

**COLONEL.** Then why is the kettle on? (*He bars her way.*) And tea? How can you drink hot drinks in this inferno?

**ERIN.** Old habit, Sir, I suppose.

**COLONEL.** Why haven't you checked on Daedalus? Told you he was feeling poorly.

**ERIN.** Still?

**COLONEL.** His nose is dry, and I swear he's losing his fur.

**ERIN.** Well, Dr. Callaghan's down and the sick in the unit are so plentiful, with medicine low as 'tis. (*Colonel cracks his whip and a tray of surgical instruments clangs to the floor.*)

**COLONEL.** I don't ration tea to the staff, Miss Erin, but if it's a tea party you're having, then invite me and I might look the other way. May even have a special something, if you take my indelicate reference. (*In what is almost an obscene gesture, he flashes open his smoking jacket to reveal a flask. He waves it in her*

## SAINT SOMEBODY

*face.*) To spice up that cup a ol' Ireland—maybe even the evening. (*The kettle is at a throttling boil when SR. KATHLEEN enters.*)

**SR. KATHLEEN.** There ya are, Colonel! Looking all over, hoping to have a word.

**COLONEL.** Good evening, Sr. Kathleen. But now is not a good time. (*She imposes herself between Erin and Colonel.*)

**SR. KATHLEEN.** (*To Erin.*) Where is Eileen? You two are to stay together.

**ERIN.** Put her to work. You say she won't survive if I keep coddling her.

**SR. KATHLEEN.** And shut off that infernal kettle already like we don't have enough noises rattling our nerves. I'll talk to you later, after prayers. Now, go.

(*Beat.*) Trained my staff better than this, Colonel, I promise you. (*Relieved, Erin exits. Colonel deflates.*) Shall we dine together then, Colonel?

**COLONEL.** I have lost my appetite.

**SR. KATHLEEN.** (*Conspiratorially.*) Perhaps, I'll have to exercise my bounden Christian duty then and give you a chance to win back what you've lost. At cards?

**COLONEL.** Been practicing, Sister. It's only fair to warn you. Why, at Harvard—before I descended here into Hades—there wasn't a man on the yard who could beat me at cards.

**SR. KATHLEEN.** I want to hear all about it, Colonel. Shall we retire, then, to your quarters? (*She starts to lead him out, but he breaks free.*)

**COLONEL.** First, I'm saddled with this ridiculous assignment—and you! And this insolent, impertinent brood! The Irish Brigade, indeed.

**SR. KATHLEEN.** (*She stands tall with pride, as if calling roll.*) We're the 69<sup>th</sup> regiment out of New York City, Colonel, not that there aren't five of us, all told.

**COLONEL.** Sr. Kathleen, I do believe your roots are showing. (*He means to chastise her, but she works to hide her anger instead.*)

**SR. KATHLEEN.** So they are, Colonel, but the formation of the Irish Brigade is an historical precedent. Why not be proud that you were among the first to serve?

**COLONEL.** Bravo! So, we have a handful of hooligans from the Lower East Side, while Generals Lee and Longstreet have 75,000 men lined up outside of Gettysburg, waiting to slaughter us.

**SR. KATHLEEN.** Have you forgotten your Bible, Sir? This is a David and Goliath tale in the making. (*She addresses the invisible masses, relaying the tale with a flourish.*) Irish history is made of a people fearless in danger, and peerless in battle. Why, a year ago, at The Seven Days' Battles, Meagher's men advanced to the front



## SAINT SOMEBODY

and let the enemy know that re-enforcements had arrived. Saved the Fifth Corps from destruction and, in saving them, we saved the army!

**COLONEL.** Confederates still mowed down our boys like corn before the sickle.

**SR. KATHLEEN.** We're all making sacrifices for our adopted country, Colonel. My hero's Irish Molly of the 88<sup>th</sup>, trailing her husband to battle and cheering from the sidelines—be swinging her big girl bonnet. "Hurrah for the Irish Brigade. Boys, three cheers for the Union!" And we've *never* lost a flag, Colonel. Although we have captured a few.

**COLONEL.** We're vastly outnumbered, do'ya hear me? *(He drinks from the flask.)* They hold us in reserve for the heavy fighting. Suicide missions is what they are, Sister. And, the 69<sup>th</sup> infantry? The 69<sup>th</sup>! They're trying to make me a laughingstock.

**SR. KATHLEEN.** Three-hundred dollars could've bought you out of service. *(He glares at her accusation.)* --Is what I heard, Colonel. No, this is a poor man's draw, I'm afraid. Like everything.

**COLONEL.** These so-called soldiers are drunkards. *(He tries to strut but stumbles.)* Illiterates! Live or die, what do they care? My family are Hibernians! But I need war service to advance. Father said it'd make me a man. --Am I not a man, Sister? *(She answers obliquely but he accepts it.)*

**SR. KATHLEEN.** Well. There are men, Colonel. And, then, there are Men.

**COLONEL.** Miss Erin must take another look at Daedalus. His tongue is still so splotchy and he's barely wagging his tail. Perhaps some more medicine? *(Although puzzled as to how the statue got there, Sr. Kathleen studies Saint Somebody, recognizing it as a new addition. Then, she rests it on a cabinet, visible but safely out of the way, where it will stay.)*

**SR. KATHLEEN.** Colonel, as the most experienced medical professional in the unit, perhaps I could--. *(He stamps his foot like a petulant child.)*

**COLONEL.** I said Miss Erin! --She has a way with him. Daedalus will only "speak" to her.

**SR. KATHLEEN.** I will speak to Erin.

**COLONEL.** *Do.* One kind word is all I'm asking. Is that too much to ask in this savage place?

**SR. KATHLEEN.** Bring the dog by in the morning.

**COLONEL.** Daedalus is too ill to move, Sr. Kathleen. --I don't think you grasp the gravity of the situation. He's in a fragile state. No, Miss Erin will have to come to my quarters. Perhaps, after supper?

## SAINT SOMEBODY

**SR. KATHLEEN.** And interrupt our game?

**COLONEL.** (*Drinks from his flask.*) You drive a hard bargain.

**SR. KATHLEEN.** Not a tall, Colonel. But if you'd rather postpone the rematch . . .

**COLONEL.** If anyone knew how many times you've bested me, I could never survive the shame. Where did a Sister of the cloth learn to play cards?

**SR. KATHLEEN.** Begging your pardon, Sir, but you must allow women a little mystery with which to cloak themselves, but I can share that I wasn't born in a convent.

**COLONEL.** You'll send Miss Erin by in the morning? To look at Daedalus? He hasn't eaten a bit a that steak I gave him. (*She tucks her arm into his elbow and steers him OS.*)

### SCENE 2

*Mulligan sings outside his group tent, drinking something strong from a tin cup. Erin walks by, wiping her face with a towel. He changes to a love song but, when she sees his stare, she tries to change direction.*

**MULLIGAN.** Heard the Colonel feeds that mutt a his steak—while we starve on watery soup with mealy bones. Out here in this furnace of a countryside, ready to spill our guts for a country that hates the very look of us.

**ERIN.** In your case, Mulligan, it's the *sound*.

**MULLIGAN.** Is it always the hard word then, Miss Erin—and you with your beautiful name, bearing the legacy of the Emerald Isle itself? (*She dries her hair. He whittles an arrow.*) Got a reputation to uphold. Ya know, we're usually known as some pretty happy folk.

**ERIN.** I'm not burning up in these filthy petticoats? Not tired enough, after mopping up all that blood that's getting spilt, that I gotta worry bout wounding the feelings of a soldier like yourself, ha? Aren't enough hours in the day.

**MULLIGAN.** (*He offers her his seat.*) Then, take a lovely load off.

**ERIN.** Have you seen Eileen? She's a child, Mulligan, and I'd like to think you've enough decency to leave her—and *her* reputation—intact.

**MULLIGAN.** Tell ya, if you sit a minute.

**ERIN.** I'm not in a bargaining mood, and I'm too tired to talk.

## SAINT SOMEBODY

**MULLIGAN.** (*He taps the seat.*) Then, I'll do all the talking. Happy to "oblige," as our Yank comrades say.

**ERIN.** How is Frederick Dee? --You and I both know that there's more to his story than he's letting on.

**MULLIGAN.** So, he's a deserter.

**ERIN.** No, he was never officially enlis-- . . . (*Beat.*) Never mind.

**MULLIGAN.** Who can blame him? There's more reasons to desert this war than to stay.

**ERIN.** That wound a his is mortal.

**MULLIGAN.** And in this heat, it's getting gamey. If the other guys weren't so bad off themselves, they would've chucked him.

**ERIN.** Wish I had something, at least, to break his fever.

**MULLIGAN.** (*He holds up his tin cup.*) Offered him some a my best pain killer, but he said he never touched the stuff. Can't sleep meself until I've hit a magic amount.

**ERIN.** So, you haven't seen Eileen?

**MULLIGAN.** Never said that.

**ERIN.** Find another soul to torture then. Good night. (*She turns to go.*) Miss Eileen's in with him now. Frederick Dee. (*Erin tries to storm the tent, but Mulligan pulls her to him.*) You smell like sunshine on a rock. After the rain.

**ERIN.** And you smell like a mule. Let me go. (*He does, bowing in apology.*)

**MULLIGAN.** But you'll not bother those two. They're not hurting anybody.

**ERIN.** You left Eileen alone with Frederick Dee?! For how long?

**MULLIGAN.** Was I not just after telling you, they're *surrounded* by the huddle of bodies in there, praying they'll soon be miserable enough to sleep?

**ERIN.** You don't understand.

**MULLIGAN.** Understand quite a bit, for a pig-shite mule of a man, I do.

**ERIN.** What it's like for us. To be here. Against our family's wishes, but losing our brothers and our fathers and our. . . Unable to do anything but stem the flow of pain.

**MULLIGAN.** Sure, isn't that the greatest gift of all, in a place like this? To hold the hand of a dying man and remind him of home.

**ERIN.** I meant with pills. When we got them.

**MULLIGAN.** So, who'd you lose, Miss Erin, that took any loving mercy for a stranger out a your heart?

**ERIN.** I'm going in and I'm getting Eileen, before it's too late.

## SAINT SOMEBODY

**MULLIGAN.** But nothing will save Frederick Dee. He's got another two, maybe three days left on this wretched earth, and a painful end it's looking to be. Leave him her tender mercies.

**ERIN.** That's what I'm trying to do. Preserve Eileen's tender mercies. (*He sits as Erin enters the tent. She watches a moment but retreats.*)

**MULLIGAN.** A downright mortal sin, isn't it?

**ERIN.** (*Confused.*) They're reading the Bible.

**MULLIGAN.** To one another, yes. I listened for a while, until the sweetness broke my heart. So, I came out here. To this (*He holds up the bow/arrow.*) And this! (*He lifts the tin cup in toast.*) My foul company. (*Erin snatches the cup from his hand and drinks it down. She shakes it until he fills it. She drains it again, holds it out.*) Where's a wee thing like you puttin it? Now, sip this because it's all you'll get. Tonight. Who knows how long this war will last and I don't mean to be the only sober Irishman in't.

**ERIN.** (*Beat.*) His name was Thomas Mulloy. We were to be married. (*Mulligan sits, whittling.*) Oh, he talked shiny like you and I was as silly as Eileen, then. Had her faith too, well, maybe not *her* faith, which seems like it could carry her through the murderous things that're bound to destroy her, except she hasn't been around long enough to be ruined by them yet.

**MULLIGAN.** A truer word was never said.

**ERIN.** Tommy and me courted longer than most cause we were saving up to have a better start than our folks.

**MULLIGAN.** You are a smart one, Miss. I'll give ya that.

**ERIN.** And like her (*She points at the tent where Eileen is.*) I set me days in praying rosary and attending the high holy masses—when even the hearth was too cold for a cup a tea.

**MULLIGAN.** All been there, haven't we? Sure. Our childhood notions in no way preparing us for the hard road ahead. --And, much as I enjoy your ruminating, Miss, but what happened to your beloved?

**ERIN.** He bought into Colonel Corcoran's recruiting appeal. Pure shite! Sure, I'd like to strangle that rascal with these two hands, dragging so many a our boys from one war to another.

**MULLIGAN.** I remember the poster: "Irishmen, you are now training to meet your English enemies."

## SAINT SOMEBODY

**ERIN.** (*Drinks down her cup.*) That was over two years ago. So much for this short and glorious war. (*Faint strains of “Amazing Grace” rise.*)

**EILEEN/FREDERICK DEE.** (*OS.*) “When we’ve been there 10,000 years. Bright shining as the sun. We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise. Then when we’d first begun.” (*Mulligan closes his eyes and hums along. Erin speaks as if in a daze.*)

**ERIN.** Eileen and Frederick Dee. They’re singing hymns.

**MULLIGAN.** Kind of lovely. That they have something so strong to hold on to. I’ve lost that innocence meself.

**ERIN.** (*She shivers, despite the heat.*) It is a fire to stand against in the cold. (*She wrings her hands. He watches her carefully.*)

**MULLIGAN.** So, you followed him? Your Tommy boy?

**ERIN.** There was nothing to follow. Except his funeral. After I’d worn out me knees, begging for a miracle.

**MULLIGAN.** Oh, there’s no bargaining with the Divine.

**ERIN.** I insisted we wait. Until we were married. And Tommy left. No warmth, no comfort. (*She laughs. He hands her his own cupful, which she downs.*)

**MULLIGAN.** Days pass as slow as torture. When you’re waiting for something. (*He moves to stand beside her. She matches his gaze.*)

**ERIN.** It was like watching the color drain from the last sunset.

**MULLIGAN.** Aye, that’s painful poetry, there. (*Beat. Beat. Erin breaks away.*)

**ERIN.** But the war continued.

**MULLIGAN.** I dunno, Miss. The Irish are so used to fighting, it may never end.

**ERIN.** And when Tommy died so did my faith.

**MULLIGAN.** But love doesn’t just stop.

**ERIN.** No, it haunts you forever.

**MULLIGAN.** Numb is what I am. Heart’s as empty as m’cup.

**ERIN.** (*She paces on the verge of something.*) Give me something to stop this pain!

**MULLIGAN.** (*He stands closer, upset that he can’t offer her more comfort.*) Gave you the last of mine, Miss Erin. I’m dry. (*Their eyes lock. Then Erin grabs him to her and lifts her skirt, almost frightening him with the ferocious embrace. He kisses her back savagely and they grind for a moment, until he thinks better of it and takes her by the hand into the shadows behind the tent.*)

## SAINT SOMEBODY

### SCENE 3

*At the same time, across camp, Sr. Kathleen and Colonel play cards in his tent as faint music plays in another part of camp. The whiskey flows, and she is letting him win.*

**COLONEL.** More brandy cake, Sr. Kathleen?

**SR. KATHLEEN.** Your generosity knows no bounds, Colonel. *(She crosses to the edge of the tent. Closing her eyes and listening to the music, she gathers her habit skirts and sways.)* Do you play, Colonel? I used to, the violin. --And music is still a passion I can *wholly* enjoy, ha. *(Beat.)* Art is so necessary to keep the heart alive, don't you think? I know you must agree. *(She points at the painting.)* How did you acquire the Delacroix, Colonel?

**COLONEL.** It's an investment. Parents gave it to me after Harvard Law, and I brought it to protect it from looters. Still any man's war, is it not? *(His answer displeases her, although it does not surprise.)* How is Daedalus?

**SR. KATHLEEN.** I administered more drops and I put something *extra* in his food out there. For when he's ready. *(Aside.)* We should all sleep so soundly.

**COLONEL.** Going to go in then to say good night to him. *(He exits. Sr. Kathleen hurriedly empties several pill bottles on his dresser into her pockets, redistributing the remaining pills to cover her tracks. Colonel returns.)*

**SR. KATHLEEN.** Resting peacefully, I trust?

**COLONEL.** But you must have Miss Erin come by in the morning. To check on him. *(We hear the distant sound of cannon fire. Then the camp is filled with the sound of soldiers readying themselves at a moment's notice. Mulligan rushes in, half-dressed from being with Erin.)*

**MULLIGAN.** Fire, Colonel, Sir! *(A lie.)* The men and me were three sheets to the west wind when--.

**COLONEL.** Who was keeping guard? Why wasn't one of you men--.

**SR. KATHLEEN.** I'll wake my ladies. *(In goodbye.)* Colonel. --And round them up, Mulligan. I am no rousing Fr. Corby, but I will lead you boys in prayer before you go.

**MULLIGAN.** The men and I thank you for the blessing, Sr. Kathleen.

**SR. KATHLEEN.** And I'll see if we can't pull together a mean breakfast. Colonel, I hate to keep asking but when can we expect provisions?

## SAINT SOMEBODY

**COLONEL.** No time for breakfast. Besides, they'll fight better without it. Makes them lean and mean. (*Sr. Kathleen exits. Colonel stuffs the last brandy cake in his mouth, talking while chewing.*) A blessing?! We need nothing short of a miracle. Get out of my sight, Mulligan. (*Colonel exits.*)

**MULLIGAN.** (*To Colonel OS.*) Will you be riding out with us, Colonel? The men'll want to know.

**COLONEL.** (*OS.*) Of course, I will. Be leading from the rear. Now get out. I have things to attend to.

*Mulligan is leaving but sees the steak in the dog bowl. Looking around, he grabs a handful of it and eats it in exit.*

### SCENE 4

*Lights up low on a lull at camp just before dawn of July 3rd. The air has a cold bluish-tinge. A dog's low growl becomes a lonely howl. A kind of fog rolls in as DEAD UNCLE PADRICK enters in tattered grave clothes. Erin enters to empty the latrine bucket and she disappears back into her tent. The apparition wants to speak to her, but it has no words or the ability to speak them. Lights shift.*

### SCENE 5

*Later that day, July 3. Lights up on the medical tent. The men are at battle. Eileen and Erin frenziedly prep.*

**ERIN.** The way the Colonel swoons over that dog! It's unnatural. And I swear, if the Colonel puts his paws on me one more time . . .

**EILEEN.** How can Sr. Kathleen spend as much time as she does with him? Doesn't she see what we see?

**ERIN.** There's *nothing* wrong with that dog. The Colonel just uses it to get attention.

**EILEEN.** Where do you want these? (*She holds a tray of medical instruments.*) How much longer, do you think? Till the men are back?

**ERIN.** War's not a job that keeps business hours, Eileen.

## SAINT SOMEBODY

**EILEEN.** (*She puts the instruments down, afraid to ask the next question.*) Then, I'd like to check on Frederick Dee. If it's alright.

**ERIN.** I don't like this sudden fascination a yours. As if war's not rough enough, loneliness sets in. And once a soldier starts looking for comfort--.

**EILEEN.** Sure, I know my birds and my bees, Miss. (*Frederick Dee enters with a stick for a crutch. Eileen all but knocks over the instruments to run to him.*) What are you doing out of bed?

**ERIN.** Frederick Dee! Are you trying to get us killed?!

**FREDERICK DEE.** I'm sorry. Just wanted to be of some . . . assistance. (*He points at Saint Somebody and smiles.*) And don't worry. We've got someone watching out for us.

**EILEEN.** Technically, it's not the saints themselves who come to our aid.

**ERIN.** (*She speaks the next line to let Eileen know that Erin knows Eileen broke protocol and was in the men's tent.*) Heard him last night, you both. Reading the Bible and throwing a regular hymn sing. Think Frederick Dee knows how heaven operates, Eileen. (*Beat.*) How are you feeling, Frederick--?

**EILEEN.** (*She answers for him, in a rush.*) He's fevered and his pulse is doing strange things. --So, you should go lay down. Like Miss Erin says. Sr. Kathleen may be *old* but she moves like the wind.

**ERIN.** She and the Colonel had another card game last night. They'll both be sleeping that off for a while yet.

**EILEEN.** Should keep my opinions to meself, but I don't understand how a Sister can behave, well, the way she does with him.

**ERIN.** She is by his side, constantly—and I can't abide the sight of him.

**FREDERICK DEE.** Do you need help here--or maybe in the dining fly? I could peel carrots or potatoes. (*Erin and Eileen laugh.*)

**ERIN.** Oh, doesn't that sound delicious—a boiled potato and fresh, stewed carrots!

**EILEEN.** Smothered in creamy butter. And I would love an egg.

**ERIN.** A proper fry with real tea. Or juice and jam!

**FREDERICK DEE.** Won't lie. I am starving.

**EILEEN.** Sorry, Frederick Dee. There's nothing like that here, not for months. (*Sr. Kathleen enters. They freeze.*)

**ERIN.** Sr. Kathleen! I can explain.

**SR. KATHLEEN.** Am I to assume, then, that *this* is the owner of our newest statuary?



## SAINT SOMEBODY

**FREDERICK DEE.** I'm wounded, Sr. Kathleen, and these gentlewomen let me sit for a spell. And yes, Saint Somebody's mine. But I've rested and will be on my way.

**SR. KATHLEEN.** She's a sight for sore eyes, Saint Somebody! And you'll not rob me a my blessing, kind sir: "He who welcomes strangers at times entertains angels." Erin, have we nothing to offer our guest?

**EILEEN.** *(She interrupts again to answer.)* Sr. Kathleen, he's burning up. I wish we had some--.

**SR. KATHLEEN.** *(She takes the pills from Colonel's tent out of her pocket and hands them to Eileen.)* Group these by color and shape. And give him two of those to start with.

**ERIN.** Where did you get the medicine? *(Loud sounds of the unit returning are heard.)*

**SR. KATHLEEN.** Hurry. *(To Erin.)* Where are you keeping the gentleman?

**EILEEN.** Mr. Mulligan's tent, Sr. Kathleen. I can help him.

**SR. KATHLEEN.** And Dr. Callaghan? *(Erin shakes her head.)* No, Eileen. Have a feeling I'll need you and a host of angels, here, in a minute. *(Erin runs out, and then back in.)*

**ERIN.** There are hundreds shot, Sister. Hundreds.

**FREDERICK DEE.** I can help.

**EILEEN.** You can barely stand.

**FREDERICK DEE.** Work from a stool then. What you have there is fine.

**SR. KATHLEEN.** *(Beat.)* You have training?

**EILEEN.** He wants to be a doctor.

**ERIN.** But the Colonel? *(As if cued, Colonel stumbles in. Frederick Dee hides.)*

**COLONEL.** I'm hit! Took a liquid line of fire, Sister, and it cost us, but we held the bastards back. I got to say, the excitement's got my adrenaline rushing—which is probably helping to mask all this pain that I'm in.

**SR. KATHLEEN.** Here, Colonel. Let me.

**COLONEL.** I want *Erin*. And, I won't be treated in here like a dog in the street. Take me to my tent.

**SR. KATHLEEN.** It's just that I need her, Colonel, the few girls I have. --At least let her stay until we can get these men through triage.

## SAINT SOMEBODY

**COLONEL.** My welfare isn't top priority? Did you not see me barely able to walk in here a minute ago?

**SR. KATHLEEN.** Where are you hurt, Colonel? I don't see any blood. (*Beat.*) Luckily.

**COLONEL.** Sprained my ankle. It may be broken. –And, someone had better find my horse! (*Erin, Eileen, and Sr. Kathleen share a glance. Then Sr. Kathleen sighs and signals for Erin to go. Erin nods but moves to Eileen first.*)

**ERIN.** (*Whispers.*) Find out . . . if Mulligan is okay.

**EILEEN.** Mulligan?

**COLONEL.** Miss Erin, let's go. The pain is killing me. (*Reluctantly, Erin goes to his side and he leans on her heavily. They exit.*)

### SCENE 6

*Immediately after, Erin and Colonel enter Colonel's tent. This is an attack that has been threatening for a long time. It's a battle scene behind the lines and it should have a red feel: blood heat like a macabre ballet in that there's a succession of violent movements, lights, and sounds which show that the Colonel is in full possession of his strength. Colonel takes Erin from behind and by surprise. She deeply scratches his cheek, but he overpowers her to bind her hands, stuff a rag in her mouth, and then he rips open the bodice of her dress. . .*

### SCENE 7

*Lights up, hours later July 3rd. A happy Eileen rinses a plate outside of Mulligan's tent when Erin hobbles by, clutching closed the front of her dress.*

**EILEEN.** You okay, Miss Erin? Frederick Dee shot us a rabbit! And it was delicious. (*Beat.*) We missed you at dinner.

**ERIN.** I'm not hungry.

**EILEEN.** Not hungry? How can that be, Miss?

**ERIN.** Just is. Stop fussing. (*She tries to steady herself, but her hands tremble.*) I'm tired. And I need to wash up.

**EILEEN.** Miss, you didn't ask after Mulligan. Men say he was groggy from the start. Like he was half asleep. --And he's been shot but isn't conscious yet. But you

## SAINT SOMEBODY

should've seen Frederick Dee holding court over the operating room! He's a natural-born doctor, and he's feeling better. Surely, he's turned a corner, what with the medicine that heaven provided through Sr. Kathleen. Sure, we missed you in there, the way you hold us all together. But the men that're standing to tell the tale say it was a miracle out there today. Heaven even saw fit to throw the Colonel from his horse haha! Frederick Dee's showing up has brought us such luck, Miss Erin! And there's a powerful saint watching over him. Oh, the Lord works in mysterious ways, tis true. Tis true. (*Eileen is lost to her rapture. Erin starts to limp away.*) Miss Erin, thought Sr. Kathleen said the Colonel wasn't bleeding? Or anything (*Sr. Kathleen has wandered onstage and, unseen, overhears the exchange.*)

**ERIN.** He wasn't, Eileen.

**EILEEN.** So then, how did it go—and why did it take this long? (*Beat.*) And, goodness, Miss Erin! What happened to your dress?

**ERIN.** Mind your business, Eileen. I haven't wanted to say this, but you've turned into quite the gossip. (*Eileen is devastated by the charge as Erin exits. And so does Sr. Kathleen--but in the opposite direction.*)

## SCENE 8

*Moments later, Sr. Kathleen storms into Colonel's tent.*

**SR. KATHLEEN.** Colonel, I'd like a word! (*She lights his lamp and inspects the tent, downing a giant draught of whiskey.*) Colonel? Daedalus? Sir, this won't keep another moment. (*Beat.*) Where are you? (*She means to confront him about Erin's condition, but he and the dog are gone.*) Even your bed things are gone. What have you done with them? And why? (*But the missing evidence confirms her suspicions.*) Oh, the snake was sneakier than all the other creatures in the kingdom! (*She addresses heaven.*) Sure, you're in great demand but short supply. --Where do you go when we need you the most? First my husband, and sons. Now, my girls. Will you leave me with nothing, then? Not even my pride. (*As pain becomes anger, Sr. Kathleen knocks over the lamp, setting the Colonel's tent on fire. She pockets the medicines and takes out a knife that is strapped to her calf to cut his tent from the tree.*) Heaven help you, Colonel, if I ever set eyes on you again. For as the blessed

SAINT SOMEBODY

Virgin crushed the cursed head of the snake under her heel, so shall I thee! (*She grabs the whiskey, a wheel of cheese, and the painting in exit.*)

**END OF ACT I**

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