

IRISH GOODBYE

A dark comedy By

Tom Dugan

IRISH GOODBYE

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IRISH GOODBYE

This play is dedicated to Marion Dugan

I miss ya, Ma

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Notes from the playwright

The trap here is to play these characters as New Jersey stereotypes. They are not. These are intelligent people with a lot of heart, in a desperate situation.

Please keep in mind: self-pity is even less interesting on stage than it is in life. In other words - hurry up, pace is everything!

“/” indicates an interruption of thought.

An “Irish goodbye” is when you abruptly leave a party without telling anyone.

IRISH GOODBYE

IRISH GOODBYE by Tom Dugan was first produced by The Alliance Repertory Company in Los Angeles, CA. on July 14, 2024. It was directed by Tom Dugan. The set design was by Christopher Petersen; the lighting design was by Rebecca Petersen; the sound design was by Steven Shaw; the costume design was by Amy Dugan; and the production stage manager was Dina Franklyn. The press representative was Philip Sokoloff; the dramaturg was Andy Hubbell. The cast was as follows:

Sandy Anica Petrovic
Barney JP Hubbell

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A Dark Comedy for Two Actors

Characters

SANDY (early 30s, Irish Catholic) – Runner-up for Ms. New Jersey 1972. A smart, beautiful single mother struggling to make ends meet, she can drink most men under the table. Beneath her flirtatious, outgoing demeanor lies a deep vulnerability.

BARNEY. (mid-60s, open ethnicity) – A lonely ex-cop haunted by a tragic past. Despite his imposing exterior, he has a congenial sense of humor and a surprisingly gentle heart.

Time

December 24, 1983, 8:00 PM.

Place

O'Brien's Tavern, on the grounds of St. Gertrude's Catholic Cemetery, in a small New Jersey town.

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The setting is the interior of O'Brien's Tavern, on the other side of the train tracks that cut through the back of St. Gertrude's Catholic Cemetery, in a small New Jersey town. It's a family bar barely holding onto the frayed threads of its former glory. Behind the bar, on a brick wall, are shelves filled with bottles, an old 1960's radio, a mirror, crucifix, landline telephone, and collection of framed photos.

Left of the brick wall are stairs leading up to the second-floor residence, and a back door with a transom window above. In front of the bar are bar stools and a faded rug. A bathroom door is stage right. A round cocktail table and a couple of chairs holding a winter coat and brown paper bag are stage left. On the table are the remnants of dinner. Downstage right is a low ottoman bench. A front door, and some windows and booths are indicated downstage center.

SOUND CUE – Bing Crosby's "Adeste Fideles" plays, as an approaching freight train toots its horn, then grinds to a halt.

At rise – An imposing man, BARNEY (mid 60's), sits at a table left finishing his dinner. SANDY O'BRIEN, a beautiful woman (early 30's), wearing blue jeans and a red sweater, is on the telephone behind the bar.

SANDY. Yeah, ok, ... I understand. Did I sign all the papers right? Ok then, please call me when it's done ... yes, I'm sure. *(Remembering.)* Oh, Uncle Otto, you're ok to drive? Good. Alright... I love you too. *(She hangs up the phone, takes a pack of cigarettes out of her pocketbook, goes to light one, then decides against it. She stares into space for a couple of beats, then...)* Fuck it! *(She decisively grabs a bottle of vodka and a shot glass and pours. She goes to take the shot but is distracted by the lone customer at the table left. She turns off the radio.)*

(SOUND CUE – out)

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SANDY. *(She calls over to the customer.)* How's the ankle?

BARNEY. I'll live.

SANDY. You're not going to call a lawyer, are ya?

BARNEY. It's not a big deal. It just surprised me, that's all.

SANDY. Yeah, you let out quite a yell.

BARNEY. You step on a welcome mat, you don't expect to fall through the porch. It was like a trap door or something.

SANDY. I didn't realize the wood had rotted that much. I'll put some plywood over it tomorrow. Just be careful on the way out.

BARNEY. Yeah, fool me twice, shame on me. Thanks for helping me climb outta that hole.

SANDY. I heard you yell/

BARNEY. / I apologize for the language. I don't usually talk like that in front of a lady/

SANDY. / Oh please, I've heard worse. When I opened the door and saw you way down there, I thought you were like some Christmas elf or something.

BARNEY. A Christmas elf?

SANDY. *(Referring to the front door.)* Yeah, there you were, waist deep in the broken wood. Looked like you were three foot tall.

BARNEY. *(He finds this amusing.)* I've been called a lot of things in my life but/

SANDY. / But you're doing okay?

BARNEY. It's not like I broke it or anything. I'm just a little shaky.

SANDY. *(She pours a second shot, then pulls a bag of frozen peas up from beneath and places the bag on the bar. Indicating offstage left.)* Tell ya what, when you leave, go out the back door just to be safe.

BARNEY. Okay.

SANDY. Yeah, I'm planning a lot of renovations in the spring. Ground's too hard now. Gotta wait until the thaw.

BARNEY. Oh good. Maybe you should fix that sign too? I think the bulb's out. Wasn't sure you were open.

SANDY. Yeah, I got a neon light guy over in Carteret who's gonna take care of that, there's a special kinda gas you have to use.

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BARNEY. *(He reaches for his coat off the back for his chair.)* Well, I guess I'll be going/

SANDY. / Oh no you don't. You took quite a spill.

BARNEY. I'm fine. It just surprised me, is all. *(Barney stands but is unsteady. He sits back down. Sandy. crosses with the shots.)*

SANDY. You're not so fine. I don't want you blackin' out while you're driving home. Merry Christmas.

BARNEY. What? Oh, no, thank you.

SANDY. What do you mean, "No, thank you"? A girl offers you a shot, you take the shot.

BARNEY. But I don't usually/

SANDY. / Come on, live a little. It'll help settle your nerves.

BARNEY. Maybe you're right. My doctor tells me I need to be careful.

SANDY. Yeah?

BARNEY. Yeah, sometimes I have these nervous spells.

SANDY. Yeah?

BARNEY. Yeah, my nerves are kinda shot.

SANDY. *(She offers the toast.)* Well, Adeste Fideles! (* a- dess – day - fee - day – luss.) *(She takes the shot.)*

BARNEY. Okay. What you said. *(Barney takes his shot, then washes it down with his water.)*

SANDY. Let me see the ankle. *(She takes the brown paper bag from the chair at table left and places it on the floor. Barney puts his foot on the chair and lifts his pant leg.)*

BARNEY. It's nothing.

SANDY. It's swollen. Here, put this on it. *(She grabs a bag of frozen peas she left on the bar and tosses it to Barney.)*

BARNEY. What? Oh, no thank you.

SANDY. Just do it.

BARNEY. Oh, alright. *(Barney puts the bag on his ankle.)*

SANDY. So, I don't think I've seen you here before.

BARNEY. Yeah, never been. Driven by it a thousand times but/ *(Sandy shakes Barney's hand. She feels his trembling.)*

SANDY. / Better late than never. Welcome to O'Brien's Tavern. Still a little shaky there. *(Barney strains his eyes to read a plaque on the wall.)*

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BARNEY. I'll be fine. I'm surprised you're open on Christmas Eve.

SANDY. *(She retrieves a tray from the bar and clears Barney's dinner and the empty shot glasses.)* Some people got nowhere else to go so...

BARNEY. Yeah.

SANDY. Yeah.

BARNEY. Yeah. *(Breaking the awkward silence.)* I was just reading the plaque over there/

SANDY. / Which one?

BARNEY. The beauty queen?

SANDY. Yeah, runner-up, Ms. New Jersey 1972.

BARNEY. Sandy O'Brien. Wow, she must really be something. *(Off Sandy disgusted look.)* I meant no offense.

SANDY. Life has a habit of taking its toll on a girl, even a beauty queen.

BARNEY. *(He doesn't catch on, then ...)* Oh damn, it's you. Oh boy. I...I...I'm so sorry, I just / please accept my apology/

SANDY. / Yeah, yeah, yeah/

BARNEY. / It's just that my eyesight is terrible/

SANDY. / Uh huh/

BARNEY. / That photo is a little faded, so naturally/

SANDY. / Come on, knock it off. You're making me sound pathetic. I'm not pathetic.

BARNEY. Of course not. You're a beautiful woman, it's just with/

SANDY. / Shut up, will ya?

BARNEY. It's nice to meet you, Ms. O'Brien.

SANDY. Sandy, and you are?

BARNEY. Barney.

SANDY. Barney, as in Barnard, like Saint Bernard?

BARNEY. You can just call me Barney.

SANDY. So, you from around here, Barney?

BARNEY. Originally Wisconsin, been in New Jersey for fifty years though. Winfield Park.

SANDY. *(She crosses behind the bar with a tray.)* Oh yeah, "Shoe Box City"? Is that a trailer park or...?

BARNEY. No, it's low-income housing, but it's nice.

SANDY. Really?

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BARNEY. Yeah, it's actually the smallest town in Jersey.

SANDY. Well, there's a Jeopardy question you'll never hear. So, what are you doing over here on Christmas Eve? *(She clears the stuff off the tray to below the bar.)*

BARNEY. Business. I had a delivery.

SANDY. So late?

BARNEY. Don't know if you've looked out the window but the snow is pretty thick out there.

SANDY. *(As she crosses from behind the bar off left to throw out a bag of garbage, she returns glancing out "the windows" out center then crosses back behind the bar.)* Yeah, the trains even stopped, clearing the tracks, I guess. Your family must be worried. You wanna use the telephone?

BARNEY. No family. How about you? You got family?

SANDY. Yeah. My daughter Dixie.

BARNEY. She's not home on Christmas Eve?

SANDY. Um, no, she, she had a thing/ the um, um, the Girl Scouts are singing carols at the old folks' home up the tracks.

BARNEY. That's adorable. So, are you like a den mother or something?

SANDY. *(She finds this amusing.)* Used to be.

BARNEY. What happened?

SANDY. Oh, I'm not going to bend your ear with my problems/

BARNEY. *(He attempts to stand.)* / Oh, look at me nosing in on your family life/

SANDY. / Sit, sit, sit/ *(She crosses in front of the bar and sits on bar stool right.)*

BARNEY. / I don't want to ruin your holiday or anything.

SANDY. *(Referring to the empty bar.)* Yeah, I got more customers than I can handle. Just relax, will ya? You're not ruining anything. Okay so a couple of months ago, I'm on the committee planning how to decorate the town for Christmas, you know? They didn't really like my idea much. I got a lot of ideas, I'm kinda like an idea person.

BARNEY. Okay, so what was your idea?

SANDY. I'm kinda like an original thinker, you know what I mean?

BARNEY. Okay.

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SANDY. So, all these ladies/ everybody's like 20 years older than me/ they were throwing out the same old tired, boring decoration gimmicks, you know, like Mrs. Reddie wanted to wrap the streetlights with red and white ribbon, to make 'em look like candy canes.

BARNEY. Right.

SANDY. Mrs. Davis suggested spraying snow on the windows downtown, ya know, very standard, unimaginative stuff, right?

BARNEY. Sounds like it.

SANDY. (*With enthusiasm, she moves to bar stool center.*) So, now it's my turn, so I get up and/ I put a lot of thought into this/ so I get up and pitch my idea.

BARNEY. Which was?

SANDY. Which was "Catch, Decorate, and Release."

BARNEY. "Catch, Decorate, and Release," I'm with ya.

SANDY. Yeah, so the idea is this, we'd catch a whole bunch of squirrels in town/ humanely.

BARNEY. Squirrels?

SANDY. Yeah, so we'd decorate them with Christmas colors, you know red, green, gold, with like a powder or something, so it doesn't harm them. Sprinkle a little glitter on their tails maybe, and perhaps even affix some antlers made out of pipe cleaners, to their little heads. Then release them, back into the town. Ya know, to frolic and spread good cheer.

BARNEY. (*He considers this.*) I see, "Catch, Decorate, and Release." How'd that go over with the Girl Scouts?

SANDY. My daughter barred me from any more meetings.

BARNEY. They didn't go for it, huh?

SANDY. Deafening silence. Dixie stormed out of the room.

BARNEY. Mmm, perhaps the antler idea was a bridge too far?

SANDY. Perhaps. I guess I can kinda see her point.

BARNEY. Yeah?

SANDY. Yeah, um, also I think I might have been a little high that night.

BARNEY. Oh, with the marijuana?

SANDY. (*She finds this amusing.*) Yeah, with the marijuana. That doesn't make me a drug fiend, by the way.

BARNEY. No, no, I don't judge.

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SANDY. *(She crosses behind the bar, busying herself washing and drying glasses.)* Good, because I get some of my best ideas when I'm stoned. I guess that wasn't one of 'em. But hey, it coulda been worse, Dixie could have quit the Girl Scouts altogether.

BARNEY. So, you were sacrificed for the greater good.

SANDY. That's the right way to look at it. I like that.

BARNEY. Sounds more noble.

SANDY. Yeah, noble, that's me!

BARNEY. But she enjoys the Girl Scouts?

SANDY. She complains a lot.

BARNEY. Yeah?

SANDY. Sure, but she's thirteen, that's her job. *(Barney finds this amusing.)* She complains, but she still goes. I think she just stays for the uniform.

BARNEY. The uniform?

SANDY. Yeah, she loves the uniform.

BARNEY. That's really funny that you should say that. My son was the same way. Really attracted to uniforms. Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, Little League, ROTC. He was kinda insecure, but those uniforms made him stand up a little taller.

SANDY. I thought you didn't have family.

BARNEY. Oh, um, well, after high school, this was fifteen years ago now, he wanted to volunteer for the Army. His mother, she's a lot younger than me, forbid it. Made me promise I wouldn't let him join.

SANDY. Uh huh.

BARNEY. Took the wind out of his sails, ya know? Started smoking and drinking, hanging with a bad crowd. He was a good kid, but he was heading for trouble, broke my heart, you know? So, I drove him to enlist.

SANDY. Oh...bet your wife didn't love that.

BARNEY. Yeah, we split up over it.

SANDY. I'm sorry. It sucks when people leave.

BARNEY. Didn't mean to dump all that on you... Christmas makes you think about/

SANDY. / So, your wife just walked away?

BARNEY. Didn't even say goodbye.

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SANDY. So, how did your son do in the war?

BARNEY. Um, well...he was killed immediately, Tet Offensive, some town I can't pronounce.

SANDY. Oh my God...So, you two went through all that grief alone, without each other to lean on?

BARNEY. Yeah. Guess it would have been nice to have someone to/

SANDY. / Lean on.

BARNEY. They say you come into this world alone and you go out alone. But in between, I always hoped someone would come along to, um/

SANDY. / Lean on.

BARNEY. Last time I saw her was at the funeral, just across the street, at Saint Gertrude's Cemetery.

SANDY. No way! My whole family is over there. *(She crosses to the down right "window." Barney stands carefully and crosses down right as well.)*

BARNEY. No kidding? *(Sandy and Barney both look out the "window.")*

SANDY. Most everybody's buried around that big dogwood tree, opposite the church there.

BARNEY. How 'bout that. My son's just to the right of that, in the back by the fence.

SANDY. When I was in high school, during Vietnam, my dad would take me to some of the military funerals there. He was a veteran, he'd help organize things.

BARNEY. So maybe you were at my son's funeral?

SANDY. Could be.

BARNEY. How about that. *(They contemplate this.)*

SANDY. Hey, have you seen that Vietnam Wall they just put up in DC?

BARNEY. I'm planning to.

SANDY. So, you were saying about the last time you saw your wife.

BARNEY. *(He crosses up stage left to his table, Sandy follows.)* You don't want to hear my sob story.

SANDY. Hey, I'm asking. So, your son's funeral...

BARNEY. Well, my wife wouldn't look at me, talk to me. Nobody would. I stood in the back.

SANDY. That's pretty rough.

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BARNEY. I guess I don't blame her.

SANDY. So, you haven't seen your wife in fifteen years?

BARNEY. No.

SANDY. So, you're in the dark about where she went, what she did?

BARNEY. Well, that's the thing. I'd visit his grave/ Bobby, my son's name is Bobby. *(He pulls out his wallet, takes out a photo, and shows Sandy.)* This is when he was ten. Over the years, I'd go to mass at Saint Gertrude's, light a candle, ya know, then I'd visit his grave. Not all the time, ya know, just on special occasions, his birthday, Easter, Christmas...when it rains...I mean I'd hate to think of him over there in the wet ground, all alone, ya know? I mean he's just a kid, ya know? I want him to know that his father still loves him.

SANDY. Sure.

BARNEY. Well, I guess my wife/ my ex-wife was visiting too.

SANDY. If you never saw her again, how'd you know she was visiting?

BARNEY. That's the thing. She'd leave flowers and a card. In the cards she'd tell him what was happening in her life, you know?

SANDY. *(She proceeds with caution.)* You read her cards?

BARNEY. Yeah, sometimes the snow, the rain would mess up the ink, but more often than not I could make out most of it. She had remarried, had a baby, a little girl...she's a lot younger than me/

SANDY. / Yeah, you said. So, you...you read her cards?

BARNEY. Yeah, I read her cards. You think that was wrong? Like, I'm a bum for doing that?

SANDY. No, no. I mean, what do I know? I don't know nothin'.

BARNEY. You don't give yourself enough credit, you got a lot on the ball.

SANDY. Yeah, I'm a friggin' genius. So, you read the cards, and...?

BARNEY. It made me feel close to them, like I still had a family, you know?

SANDY. Okay...

BARNEY. Only today, like I said, I was in the area, making a delivery, and so I stopped across the street. This card said she was moving to Oregon.

SANDY. Oh, I hear it's nice there/

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BARNEY. / Yeah, she and her new family were moving to Oregon, so she didn't know when she'd be back to visit.

SANDY. Oh. *(Barney is about to elaborate but stops himself.)* What?

BARNEY. Only, only, after she signed the card...

SANDY. Yeah?

BARNEY. She wrote a P.S. ...

SANDY. ...and?

BARNEY. It said, "I forgive you, Barney." *(They both take a moment to consider this.)*

SANDY. So, all of these years, she knew you were reading those cards?

BARNEY. Yeah.

SANDY. Like maybe all along she was writing to you too?

BARNEY. Like, um...yeah.

SANDY. Oh, man, that's, that's/ *(The sadness hangs in the air. Wanting to change the mood, Sandy crosses behind the bar, pours another couple of shots...)/* How's the nerves?

BARNEY. *(Barney holds up his hand that isn't trembling as much.)*
Better.

SANDY. The ankle?

BARNEY. The swelling's going down.

SANDY. Should I swap that out for a fresh bag?

BARNEY. *(He checks the bag of frozen peas that he's left on the chair next to him.)* No, it's still cold.

SANDY. Ya know, it would probably work better if you actually put it on your ankle.

BARNEY. Okay. *(He complies.)*

SANDY. So, are you a mailman, or...?

BARNEY. Huh?

SANDY. You said you were delivering stuff...

BARNEY. Oh right, no I don't work for the post office, wish I did. They got good benefits. I just work for a private company. Hey, the corned beef was great, thanks. How much I owe ya?

SANDY. Forget about it. I need another shot, how 'bout you?

BARNEY. Oh no, I couldn't possibly.

SANDY. On the house?

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BARNEY. I try to shy away from the hard stuff.

SANDY. Oh, then how 'bout a beer?

BARNEY. *(After some thought.)* You got any white zinfandel?

SANDY. *(She's amused.)* White zinfandel?

BARNEY. My doctor says it's okay to have a little white zinfandel, from time to time.

SANDY. You didn't strike me as a zinfandel man. Sure, one white zinfandel coming up. *(She pours the wine.)*

BARNEY. Thank you for dinner.

SANDY. Kind of a tradition. Every Christmas Eve and most Fridays. Glad someone was here to eat it.

BARNEY. It was good. You know, every time I try to make corned beef it comes out like a brick. What's your secret?

SANDY. My dad's recipe.

BARNEY. Send my compliments.

SANDY. Dead.

BARNEY. Oh, I'm sorry. When did he/

SANDY. / November 11, 1970.

BARNEY. Oh, so it's been a while.

SANDY. Thirteen years. Veterans Day. He and my Uncle Otto were arm wrestling/ my dad had a heart attack and died right there. Kinda my fault. *(Pointing to an unseen booth.)*

BARNEY. What? Why would you blame/

SANDY. / Doesn't matter.

BARNEY. Is your mom still with us?

SANDY. *(She glances at her watch.)* Not sure/

(She takes one of the shots. Barney doesn't understand but just goes with it. Sandy, eager to keep the conversation going, crosses with the other shot and Barney's wine.)

SANDY. / Hey. hey, you know what?

BARNEY. What?

SANDY. My mom was on Broadway!

BARNEY. Oh really? Broadway. She was a star?

SANDY. Chorus. She was a dancer, and a damn good one. Dance captain.

BARNEY. What's that?

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SANDY. Like the lead dancer. Legs up to here. *(The two silently toast, Sandy takes the shot. Barney sips his zinfandel. Putting her shot glass on the bar, she sits.)*

BARNEY. Wow. Broadway huh?

SANDY. Yep, late 40's, those were her glory days.

BARNEY. I bet she had some fun.

SANDY. You have no idea. She performed in the first Tony Awards, was on the Ed Sullivan Show, met President Truman... *(She looks to see that the coast is clear, then...)* My mom boinked Marlon Brando.

BARNEY. You're making that up!

SANDY. Cross my heart. They were in acting class together. They had a thing.

BARNEY. Did your dad know?

SANDY. Of course not. Besides, it was before they met.

BARNEY. How about that. Why'd she quit dancing?

SANDY. Blew her knee out, right in the middle of "Sit Down You're Rocking the Boat." But the good news is that her future was sitting out in the audience. A distinguished gentleman came backstage to see how she was. She asked him if he was a doctor, and he said, "Even better, I'm a bartender." They were married soon after.

BARNEY. So, your dad just liked what he saw and went after it? Just like that. I admire that, it takes guts.

SANDY. My dad was a badass.

BARNEY. Yeah?

SANDY. He lied about his age to get into World War One.

BARNEY. Did he see action?

SANDY. Plenty. Ever hear of The Lost Battalion?

BARNEY. No.

SANDY. Well, you should look it up. Then in World War Two, he was too old for the Army, so he lied about his age again. He served in both wars.

BARNEY. So, when did your family buy this bar?

SANDY. They didn't buy it, they built it. Used to be the old mortuary for Saint Gert's Cemetery. My Dad bought the building, lived upstairs, and he and my Uncle Otto turned the cellar into a pub.

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BARNEY. What year was that?

SANDY. Thirty-three.

BARNEY. So, fifty years ago?

SANDY. Yeah, beginning of the month we had a little party, my mom, Uncle Otto, Dixie, and me. Looking at old photos, telling stories, it was great. That was the last time my mom came downstairs.

BARNEY. Wait, you said 1933, that was during Prohibition, wasn't it?

SANDY. Yep, and the Depression. Started out as a speakeasy. They had balls back then. I'm a little vague about the details, but my dad and Uncle Otto officially opened O'Brien's Tavern on December 5, 1933. There's a plaque over there. They were ready the day Prohibition ended. Big party. We've been whooping it up ever since.

BARNEY. *(He crosses down right to the unseen plaque.)* I always wanted to own my own business. When did you take over?

SANDY. When my dad passed away. My mom and I have been running the place since. Only job I ever had. How 'bout you, you always been a delivery guy?

BARNEY. Just for the past few years.

SANDY. What did you do before that?

BARNEY. Cop. *(He immediately regrets giving up that information.)*

SANDY. A cop? Really?

BARNEY. Yeah, but that's all over now.

SANDY. Why'd you leave the force?

BARNEY. It's ancient history, you don't want to listen to some old guy telling war stories/

SANDY. / Come on, hey, I've been spilling my guys, let's hear about you. Besides you're not so old. You're kinda cute.

BARNEY. Oh boy, it's been a long time since a lady said that to me.

SANDY. No kidding, you got a little something.

BARNEY. Well, I/

SANDY. / So, why'd you leave?

BARNEY. Oh, after my son died and my wife left, I hit a rough patch/ got into a little trouble/

SANDY. / Trouble?

BARNEY. Excessive force.

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SANDY. Oh.

BARNEY. Things got a little out of hand. I had to retire.

SANDY. (*Slightly alarmed, she crosses behind the bar.*) A little out of hand, right.

BARNEY. (*Wanting to change the subject.*) But all that stuff is in the past. I don't like to dwell on the negative things. Tell me more about you. Um, so, so, so what, you never married then?

SANDY. (*She's hurt.*) Well, that's a hell of a thing to say! Of course I was married. My daughter's legitimate/

BARNEY. / Oh no, I didn't mean/

SANDY. / My daughter is not a bastard child, or a bitch child, or whatever you'd call it.

BARNEY. I didn't mean to cast aspersions.

SANDY. I think you did mean to cast, um, dispersions or whatever you said/ Why don't you talk like a regular person?

BARNEY. I apologize.

SANDY. Forget it, forget it, please forget it! No need to apologize, it's me, it's all me, I do that sometimes. I'm sorry, it's just/ I quit smoking/ it's been a long day/

BARNEY. (*He makes to leave.*) / Well, don't let me keep you up/

SANDY. / No, sit down please. Just, just forget I said that. It's Christmas Eve. Let's just keep having a nice visit here, okay? (*Barney is uncertain whether to leave or stay.*) Harley.

BARNEY. (*Barney misunderstands.*) No, my name is Barney.

SANDY. That was my husband's name.

BARNEY. (*Wine in hand, he sits on a barstool.*) Oh, Dixie's father.

SANDY. Harley was my husband. Actually, his name was Normand.

BARNEY. Normand.

SANDY. I know, right, what an awful name, Normand?

BARNEY. Not really, I had an uncle/

SANDY. / So, I changed it. I called him Harley, because he had a motorcycle.

BARNEY. Oh, he rode a Harley Davidson.

SANDY. No, but what was I supposed to do, call him Yamaha?

BARNEY. Of course. How did you guys meet?

IRISH GOODBYE

SANDY. *(She cleans up behind the bar.)* The 7-Eleven up the tracks. He'd come roaring in. It was freezing, but he'd be wearing just blue jeans and a brown leather jacket, and I was/

BARNEY. / A beauty queen.

SANDY. Runner-up.

BARNEY. Who came in first place?

SANDY. Ever heard of Meryl Streep?

BARNEY. Of course!

SANDY. Me too. Wasn't her.

BARNEY. Oh.

SANDY. Sometimes if a guy is drunk enough, or I am, I say it was her. But it wasn't. Wish it was, makes a better story.

BARNEY. What was your talent?

SANDY. Well, as you know, I am an idea person.

BARNEY. Antlers on a squirrel.

SANDY. Yeah well, it was more than that. Perhaps I didn't describe it clearly/

BARNEY. *(Amused.)* / No, no I think I got it all.

SANDY. Okay, so my talent in the competition thing was that I pitched an idea for a highly marketable product.

BARNEY. What was the product?

SANDY. Sandy's Panties.

BARNEY. Sandy's Panties?

SANDY. That's right. A line of men's underwear, designed to provide a bit more...structure.

BARNEY. Structure?

SANDY. Yep. Here it is, are you ready?

BARNEY. I'm ready.

SANDY. You ready?

BARNEY. I'm ready.

SANDY. Ok, here goes... "Sandy's Panties – it's like a bra for your balls." *(She anticipates a positive response from Barney.)*

BARNEY. You actually said that out loud in front of all those people?

SANDY. My motto has always been "Go big or go home."

BARNEY. So, you went big.

IRISH GOODBYE

SANDY. And I went home.

BARNEY. Who finished first?

SANDY. Vicky Sama, she played “Proud Mary” on the accordion.

BARNEY. A classic.

SANDY. But I kicked her ass in the swimsuit competition. Miss Piscataway said I looked like Ali Macgraw (*or whomever the actress may resemble*)... I think maybe she had the hots for me / but in any event, blue jeans and a brown leather jacket. Harley was older than me, and very long/

BARNEY. / Long?

SANDY. Hey, hey, don't be gross! Have some friggin' class, will ya? He had long arms, long legs, long hair/

BARNEY. / I wasn't talking about his/

SANDY. /Well, everybody had long hair then.

BARNEY. And you fell in love?

SANDY. I was pregnant.

BARNEY. So, Normand did the right thing?

SANDY. Harley. It all happened pretty quick.

BARNEY. How'd your parents take it?

SANDY. (*As she talks, Sandy grabs two bottles of Jameson and a funnel, she empties one bottle into another, and puts the empty into the trash behind the bar.*) My mom didn't love it, but she's a practical person so... My dad...made him old.

BARNEY. How so?

SANDY. He wanted me to be his little princess, like *Father Knows Best*. My dad was, was... providence... pervasive?

BARNEY. Provincial?

SANDY. Yeah that! I was a real handful...thought I knew all the answers. You know the drill. He didn't deserve that.

BARNEY. Teenagers, they can break your heart.

SANDY. It won't be long before Dixie turns on me completely.

BARNEY. I heard somewhere that grandchildren are your reward for not killing your children.

SANDY. That's perfect! Did you make that up?

BARNEY. Heard it on the radio. Did your father and Harley get along?

SANDY. No!

IRISH GOODBYE

BARNEY. No?

SANDY. No, I was his little girl, and Harley was...blue jeans and a brown leather jacket.

BARNEY. Not good enough for his little princess?

SANDY. The long hair didn't help, and I was pregnant. That's what made my father old. That, that whole time was just terrible, unhealthy. My dad died...unexpected...just before my daughter was born.

BARNEY. Did Harley pitch in to help run the bar at least?

SANDY. No. Look, he was a bad guy, okay? Gambler. Couldn't be trusted with the cash register.

BARNEY. Did he treat you and your daughter okay?

SANDY. As long as my mom was around, he did. My mom was a force of nature.

BARNEY. I bet.

SANDY. Harley was afraid of her. *(She indicates below the bar at her feet.)* She keeps a shotgun filled with rock salt behind the bar.

BARNEY. *(He peers over the bar.)* Rock salt, wow that's old fashioned. So, your mom kept your husband in line?

SANDY. Until last year, she got real sick.

BARNEY. With what?

SANDY. Breast cancer, it's all the rage around here.

BARNEY. I'm sorry.

SANDY. As soon as she got sick, things changed. He started...abusing Dixie and me. Our doctor told me that my husband displayed symptom of being a, um...a guy who doesn't know right from wrong?

BARNEY. A sociopath?

SANDY. Yeah, how did you guess that?

BARNEY. It was a thing on *60 Minutes*. So, he hurt you guys?

SANDY. Yeah, one night it got so bad, I thought that was the end for my daughter and me. My mother heard the commotion upstairs, too weak to get out of her hospital bed, she called the cops.

BARNEY. Yeah?

IRISH GOODBYE

SANDY. He was on top of Dixie. I'd broken a pool cue over his back to get him off her. He grabbed it from my hand, held the jagged end against my neck. *(She shows Barney a scar on her neck.)* Dixie was screaming, it was a big relief when the police walked in.

BARNEY. Your mother did the right thing.

SANDY. We never called the police before, you know? Wanted to keep my private business private, but... Anyway, now the whole town knows our business. Lost a lot of customers.

BARNEY. They'll forget eventually. *(Sandy sits on the Ottoman down center.)* But your husband is out of your life now? He doesn't give you any trouble?

SANDY. Dead.

BARNEY. Your husband is dead now?

SANDY. Soon after he was arrested, his motorcycle smashed into a wall doing 70.

BARNEY. *(Barney stands.)* Yeah? When was that?

SANDY. About a year ago, November.

BARNEY. *(He considers this.)* Huh.

SANDY. What?

BARNEY. No, it's just, I think I remember reading about it in the Star Ledger, maybe?

SANDY. It was in the Star Ledger?

BARNEY. Could have been the Jersey Journal.

SANDY. *(She opens the ottoman and retrieves some Christmas stockings marked "Dixie," "Sandy," "Otto," "Mom," and a bag of goodies.)* Really, I didn't know that. Yeah, yeah, it was Thanksgiving Saturday. No skid marks.

BARNEY. Huh?

SANDY. No skid marks, like he didn't even try to stop. He never struck me as suicidal, but, there were a lot of things I didn't know about him. *(on the down low.)* We just told Dixie that he left town. All the cops gave me were his blue jeans and brown leather jacket. Said that was all that was left of him. Maybe that's all there ever was of him to begin with. *(She crosses to the bar.)*

IRISH GOODBYE

BARNEY. (*Barney sits on a bar stool.*) Yamaha/ Do you ever worry about your daughter and the sociopath thing?

SANDY. No.

BARNEY. I mean, is it hereditary?

SANDY. Doesn't matter.

BARNEY. Why doesn't it matter?

SANDY. They're not actually related.

BARNEY. What do you mean?

SANDY. (*A confession*) Harley isn't Dixie's father.

BARNEY. Oh, I'm sorry I didn't mean to stick my nose into your personal/

SANDY. / It's alright. I mean look, it's not like I'll ever see you again. Feels good to get all this off my chest.

BARNEY. (*He laughs.*) So, I'm like that, am I?

SANDY. Yep.

BARNEY. Okay, okay, fair enough. In that case, who is Dixie's father? (*Sandy refills his wine.*) Oh no, I should be getting along/

SANDY. / Another sip won't hurt ya/ how's the nerves?

BARNEY. Pretty good, I think the wine is helping. Plus, it's nice to talk with somebody.

SANDY. It is, isn't it?

BARNEY. I'm not usually comfortable with people, but I am with you.

SANDY. Back at ya, Barney. Come here, come here, come here, help me be Santa Claus. (*She gestures for him to help fill and hang the "Dixie" stocking on the front of the bar. Barney complies.*) So, Dixie's father... It's rather complicated, but in a nutshell... Dixie's dad is actually the only man I ever loved. Still love him, but he's gone forever.

BARNEY. Why?

SANDY. He was older than me. I'd known him all of my life. He used to pick on me when I was a kid, because I was chubby. He had a nickname for me, which I hated.

BARNEY. What was the nickname?

IRISH GOODBYE

SANDY. Doesn't matter. I'd laugh it off, but then I'd cry myself to sleep at night. Hated that damn nickname. That hook, there. *(She gestures to the hooks on the underside of the bar. Barney hangs a stocking. They repeat the process with the next two stockings.)*

BARNEY. Sounds cruel.

SANDY. Yeah, but he had a rotten childhood so... Anyways, we hadn't seen each other in years. So, after I finally graduated high school, he got a job here as a bartender. I'd had that growth spurt.

BARNEY. Growth spurt?

SANDY. Yeah, it was funny. First few of years in high school, I was invisible, 'cause/

BARNEY. / You were fat/

SANDY. / Fuck you! I wasn't fat, I was chubby!

BARNEY. Whoops, sorry.

SANDY. Then the summer after my junior year the "equipment" showed up. Came back to school and I was every teacher's favorite.

BARNEY. Even the female teachers?

SANDY. Hated my guts.

BARNEY. Not fair. *(Sandy and Barney fill and hang the "Sandy" stocking.)*

SANDY. I never really met fair, you? Anyway, they had a point. My senior year, I was "dating" the history teachers/

BARNEY. / You dated your history teacher?

SANDY. *(She makes the plural sound.)* Teacherssss.

BARNEY. Teachers? How many?

SANDY. Just the two.

BARNEY. You dated two history teachers at the same time?

SANDY. But I only slept with the one...no wait...never mind.

BARNEY. You slept with both of the history teachers?

SANDY. *(She strains to remember the details.)* Yeah, but separately...except for that once.

BARNEY. Wow, high school is different now.

BARNEY. *(Sandy fills the "Otto" stocking with many small bottles of cognac. The clink of the glass catches Barney's attention, he pulls out one bottle.)* Is your Uncle Otto on a liquid diet?

IRISH GOODBYE

SANDY. Sort of. Anyway, the secret got out. They both lost their jobs. One of them had a wife and kids...still feel shitty about that.

BARNEY. *(He returns the bottle into the stocking and hangs it.)* How old were those teachers?

SANDY. Early forties, I guess. I never thought of myself as a homewrecker, but...

BARNEY. They oughta be ashamed of themselves.

SANDY. Hey, I was just happy that someone was being nice to me, ya know?

BARNEY. They were the grown-ups, not you. So anyways, after high school, this bartender noticed you weren't fat anymore?

SANDY. Chubby! I was never fat, I was chubby! But yes, he took notice of my...developments. Never heard that damn nickname again. It took a minute, but then this...bartender and I really hit it off.

BARNEY. *(He hands Sandy the fourth stocking marked "Mom.")* Oh, you forgot your mom's stocking. *(This takes Sandy by surprise. She's upset. Sandy quickly hides the stocking in the goodie bag and puts the goodie bag in the ottoman down center, she then sits on the ottoman.)*

BARNEY. So, how old was the bartender?

SANDY. Wait, what?

BARNEY. How old was the bartender? Are you okay?

SANDY. What, oh right. Yeah, yeah, I just/ never mind/ the bartender, let's see, this was 1969 because the Mets won, are, are you a Mets fan?

BARNEY. Yankees.

SANDY. *(She crosses to "window" downstage left.)* Yeah, I don't blame you. So, I was like nineteen, and he, the bartender I mean, was probably twenty-five or six.

BARNEY. Okay.

SANDY. Yeah, he was...he was...man, we were like electricity together. Like magic. Like we wanted each other, like it was an emergency or something. Couldn't get enough of...I mean, wow. Did you ever feel that with someone?

BARNEY. Grace.

SANDY. What?

BARNEY. Grace, my wife's name is Grace. I felt that with her.

IRISH GOODBYE

SANDY. Grace, that's a pretty name.

BARNEY. You remind me of her a little.

SANDY. Oh, yeah?

BARNEY. She always looked real cheerful.

SANDY. *(She crosses behind bar.)* Looks can be deceiving. Anyways, my dad found out we were "a thing" and um...

BARNEY. And?

SANDY. My father banished him from our universe, never to return. He joined the Navy.

BARNEY. Yeah?

SANDY. Vietnam.

BARNEY. Your father hated him that much.

SANDY. My father loved him that much.

BARNEY. I don't understand.

SANDY. Dixie's father is my first cousin Danny.

BARNEY. *(Surprised, Barney spills his wine on the bar. Sandy quickly grabs a rag and wipes it up.)* Oh, I'm sorry. That was really clumsy/

SANDY. / No biggy, happens all the time.

BARNEY. Oh, look at me coming in here and throwing wine everywhere/

SANDY. / Relax. It's okay really. Are your nerves coming back? Here...
(She refills Barney's wine glass. Barney is deeply concerned, and it ain't about spilling the wine.)

BARNEY. So, so, you guys are first cousins?

SANDY. Yeah.

BARNEY. That's, that's...

SANDY. Oh Christ, now you think I'm some kind of hillbilly.

BARNEY. I don't, I don't/

SANDY. / It's not illegal, by the way.

BARNEY. It's not? *(He downs his wine; Sandy fills it up again.)*

SANDY. No, it isn't...it's just a little creepy. But I don't care. Other than Dixie, he's the best thing that ever happened to me.

BARNEY. So, did your dad know you were pregnant with your first cousin's baby?

SANDY. God no! He thought it was Harley.

IRISH GOODBYE

BARNEY. (*Pretending not to remember Danny's name.*) Does your cousin, um, Danny, did you say his name was? (*Sandy nods.*) Did Danny know that he's the father?

SANDY. No. He walked out of here without even saying goodbye, joined the Navy. I thought he might come back for my dad's funeral, but nope.

BARNEY. (*Curious as to how much she knows.*) You have any idea what happened to him?

SANDY. He wrote me a couple of letters, then nothing...there were rumors that he's in the mob now, but who knows?

BARNEY. Who told you that?

SANDY. Bunch of years ago/ after that big gangland murder in Perth Amboy, remember?

BARNEY. (*Avoiding the subject.*) Doesn't ring a bell.

SANDY. Oh, come on, you read the papers, it was all over.

BARNEY. I think maybe...

SANDY. You'd have to be living under a rock not to have read about it. It was a Mafia vendetta thing. They killed somebody's whole family as retribution for some offence. Gambino or Zamboni/ whatever.

BARNEY. I guess sometimes things can get a little out of hand.

SANDY. A little out of hand is when a drunk stumbles into the ladies' room. These people had their heads blown off.

BARNEY. Yeah, it is a violent world.

SANDY. Okay, whatever, not long after that, a couple of goons walk in here asking my mom and me about my cousin Danny/

BARNEY. / Goons?

SANDY. Gangsters.

BARNEY. Even after all those years?

SANDY. Yep.

BARNEY. What did you tell 'em?

SANDY. I told 'em the truth. We had no idea what happened to him, but my mom, being my mom, added that Danny was always a good boy, who never, ever got into any trouble.

BARNEY. Was that the truth?

SANDY. (*Exiting left.*) Of course not, he was fucking his first cousin!

IRISH GOODBYE

BARNEY. *(Barney is very worried.)* Aw, crap! *(Sandy returns with an artificial Christmas tree. She hands it to Barney along with a few boxes of lights, garland, and ornaments.)*

SANDY. Here, set this up right there, will ya? *(Indicating left of bar. Barney helps set up the Christmas tree but is deeply concerned.)* Even as a kid Danny was always getting into fights. I remember once he got his teeth knocked in. Since he disappeared, we sort of assumed Dear ol' Cousin Dan was in the mob. A few times a year I see a couple of guys in a sedan parked over by the tracks, just staring at the bar.

BARNEY. Who are they?

SANDY. Not sure but one of 'em looks like Luca Brasi.

BARNEY. That big guy from *The Godfather*?

SANDY. Yeah.

BARNEY. *(This is bad news for Barney, he curses under his breath.)* Rat's ass!

SANDY. For all I know, they're just city inspectors taking a cigarette break. But you know what? Everybody in New Jersey thinks everybody else is in the mob - makes a better story. *(She picks up the brown paper bag off the floor and hands it to Barney.)* Here, get this bag out of the way, and let's move the table. *(Barney sets the brown paper bag aside and they move the table and chairs to make more room for the tree.)*

BARNEY. *(Feigning casual curiosity.)* So, when your cousin left, he didn't know you were pregnant?

SANDY. At that point, I didn't even know I was pregnant.

BARNEY. So, who knows that Danny is the father?

SANDY. Just my mom and I, and you.

BARNEY. *(More very bad news.)* And me?

SANDY. When I was young, it used to bug me because I had some romantic ideas, but now it's been my experience that everybody is out for themselves.

BARNEY. *(Calculating the danger he might be in, Barney peers out the down right "window.")* I see.

SANDY. Well, let me ask you an honest question. Isn't everybody out for themselves?

BARNEY. I suppose they are.

IRISH GOODBYE

SANDY. Thank you.

BARNEY. *(Under his breath.)* Oh boy.

SANDY. Still coming down?

BARNEY. Yep, no change, but still, my nerves are gone so I should get going/ *(He quickly grabs his coat and heads for the back exit.)*

SANDY. / What are you kidding? You got a death wish? Stick around, keep a lady company, why don't ya?

BARNEY. I just remembered I have a thing. *(Sandy is fighting her emotions.)*

SANDY. Look, I realize you don't know me from Adam, but, but I'm having a pretty bad day/ I quit smoking and...I'm expecting a call...and um ...would you mind staying just a little bit longer? I really don't want to be alone right now. Please? *(She breaks down.)*

BARNEY. *(Conflicted.)* I, I, I/

SANDY. *(Pissed off, she crosses behind the bar to dry her eyes.)* / Forget it, forget it, go, go!

BARNEY. Oh, I'm so sorry. Are you okay?

SANDY. No. No, I'm not. It's just that people suck, that's all! Go ahead, run away from the crazy girl/

BARNEY. *(Making a choice between his own safety and being a good guy, Barney takes the high road and puts his coat down.)*/ No, I don't think you're crazy at all. I think you're wonderful. I don't usually get to talk with people as nice and as beautiful as you. It's like a privilege, you know? I'll stay. I just thought maybe you had holiday plans/

SANDY. *(Laughing through her tears.)*/ Yeah, I've been invited to the Vatican for midnight mass.

BARNEY. I'll, I'll stay awhile.

SANDY. *(Composing herself.)* Really?

BARNEY. Sure, sure.

SANDY. *(She crosses giving Barney a big hug.)* Thanks. Thank you. It's just that...you want some eggnog? Plenty of rum. *(She crosses behind the bar.)*

BARNEY. Sure, sure, I'll have a taste, but no rum for me.

SANDY. One virgin eggnog coming up! So now you think I'm a pathetic girl, don't you? *(She sets up two glasses and pours the eggnog.)*

IRISH GOODBYE

BARNEY. No, I don't. I think that you are a little lonely right now and, believe you me, I understand that.

SANDY. Thanks.

BARNEY. Hey, this zinfandel. This is real good.

SANDY. Orson Welles' favorite.

BARNEY. Really? Is he a customer?

SANDY. No, the commercial, "We will sell no wine/

SANDY & BARNEY. *(together)* / before it's time."

BARNEY. *(As Sandy pours rum into her eggnog.)* Of course, of course. You should be careful about a hangover/

SANDY. / "Clear to clear, never fear."

BARNEY. Come again?

SANDY. *(A dirty joke)* I like the sound of that.

BARNEY. What?

SANDY. *(She hands Barney his eggnog.)* Never mind. Vodka and rum are both clear alcohol, I'll do fine. If you mix it with scotch, cognac, or tequila, then you're in trouble. So, so, tell me more about you.

BARNEY. Nothing to tell.

SANDY. Come on, come on/

BARNEY. / I don't. I mean not like you! Your story could be a movie. Me, I'm just a regular schlub.

SANDY. Ok so, let's hear your "regular schlub" story! Everybody's got a story, you know how it works, it's like eggnog. *(Ignoring his request, she adds rum to Barney's eggnog.)* It can be a little boring, so you pour in some rum to spice it up. Make a better story. So, you said you had a wife and a son who died in Vietnam...that was pretty, um/

BARNEY. / Sad?

SANDY. Yes, but it also made me want to listen more. Like I wanted to lean into it/ I felt, it was/

BARNEY. / Compelling?

SANDY. *(She's getting more familiar with Barney.)* Yeah, compelling! If I hang out with you, I might start to sound smarter. I think smart guys are sexy. Come on, say something sexy.

IRISH GOODBYE

BARNEY. (*Amused.*) Well, it's not so sexy but I had a second job as the night manager of the Little King restaurant on Route 22. Does that get your motor running?

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