

NIGHTTOWN

By SUSAN MOSAKOWSKI

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Characters:

Leo Kettle Inmate who thinks he's a murderer.
Caesar McCarthy Inmate who thinks he's James Joyce.

Set:

A sanatorium in Dublin. One large room with two beds. Behind each bed billowing white curtains.

Scene 1

Joyce sits at the edge of his bed watching Leo sleep.

JOYCE

(Springs to Leo's bedside.) Get up! *(Rips the blanket from Leo's bed.)*
We're going to Nighttown.

LEO

(Tears the blanket from Joyce.) I'm warning you, don't ever touch my blanket again.

JOYCE

You said that last night.

LEO

And I'm saying it tonight! Get away from me. We're not going anywhere.

JOYCE

How do you know?

LEO

It's the middle of the night.

JOYCE

So.

LEO

So we never go out in the middle of the night, you're having delusions.

JOYCE

Nothing wrong in that. Man cannot live by bread alone.

LEO

I guess it's on account of those delusions that they put you here.

JOYCE

They didn't put me here because of that.

LEO

Oh no?

JOYCE

No. They put me here because I didn't agree with them.

LEO

What did they want you to agree with?

JOYCE

The other thing.

LEO

What other thing?

JOYCE

The thing I wasn't agreeing with. Ahhh Jesus son of Mary, is that seaweed stuck to your neck?

LEO

Spinach.

JOYCE

Spinach?

LEO

We had spinach and potatoes for dinner, remember? Ahh, you don't. Okay, who gives a piss, but that's why spinach is on my neck.

JOYCE

You fecking stink.

LEO

So what if I do?

JOYCE

Like dead fish!

LEO

Your mind is as porous as a cork.

JOYCE

Ah doesn't matter, another raft out to sea, another dirty soul sluicing down the Styx.

LEO

Go to bed.

JOYCE

I will, to get away from you. (*Gets into bed.*)

LEO

And don't forget to hold your nose in case you're overcome with your own perfume.

JOYCE

That's no way to speak to a poet.

LEO

That's the only way to speak to a poet, loud and clear out the back end.

JOYCE

You're disgusting.

LEO

And a good night to you, too, sir.

JOYCE

I can open up the world for you, Bloom.

LEO

There's no Bloom, here. The name's Leo Kettle.

JOYCE

You'll come around, Poldy.

LEO

Don't ever ever call me Poldy, or Leopold. I'm a Leo!

JOYCE

Be quiet before the white-coats come out.

LEO

You'll want them here to save ya if you call me that again.

JOYCE

All right, Bloom.

LEO

I'm not playing with ya. I'm not Leopold Bloom, and you're not Mr. James Joyce.

JOYCE

I've been told that I look like him.

LEO

Doesn't make you him. What's your real name?

JOYCE

I don't know.

LEO

Maybe if you knew, you would know why they locked you up.

JOYCE

I'm not locked up.

LEO

No? That's funny, I thought we were in the same room together and that I was locked up. Now how can it be that I'm locked up and you're not?

JOYCE

I don't know. It's a snot-green sea to me.

All day I hear the noise of waters
Making moan,
Sad as the sea-bird is, when going
Forth alone
He hears the winds cry to the waters'
Monotone.

The gray winds, the cold winds are blowing
Where I go;
I hear the noise of many waters
Far below;
All day, all night I hear them flowing
To and fro.
To and fro.

(Pause.)

LEO

I killed a man.

JOYCE

You killed a man?

LEO

I killed him in the snot-green.

JOYCE

In the snot-green?

LEO

In the snot-green. I just thought I should let you know that before someone else tells you. *(Gets into bed.)* And that's all I'm telling ya, until I know you better. *(Pause.)* I smell flowers.

Leo falls fast asleep. Joyce goes to his bed and sits and watches him. He smells flowers, too.

Fadeout.

Scene 2

Joyce and Leo sitting up in bed.

JOYCE

It's going to be a lovely day, I can feel it.

LEO

You think?

JOYCE

Most definitely. *(Pause.)* Anything you'd like to talk about first thing this lovely morning on this lovely day?

LEO

No, I can't think of anything in particular.

JOYCE

Another night has passed . . .

LEO

Yes it has.

JOYCE

I think that since we know each other a little more than we knew each other yesterday, you might like to talk about things that, let's say yesterday, you didn't want to talk about.

LEO

No, I can't say that I do.

JOYCE

(Rips the blanket from Leo's bed.) All right then, get your lazy ass out of bed and put on your suit.

LEO

Get your hands off my blanket! Why should I put on my suit?

JOYCE

We're going out. My dear mother would always say to me, 'Better that you have your Sunday best on, so that you're ready for anything, and with clean underwear for insurance, you can face all of life's calamities, and then some.'

LEO

I'm fine the way I am.

JOYCE

Cooperate with Sunny Jim.

LEO

Oh, now it's Sunny Jim.

JOYCE

It is. My father and mother called me that when I was knee-high. Sunny Jim caught the ball, yes he did. Look, Sunny Jim got good marks in school, yes he did. Sunny Jim's a smart boy. Yes indeed. Where's Sunny Jim? Not in the pub, John Joyce. My son can't be drinking in the pub.

LEO

(Interjects.) Of course he is.

JOYCE

What! He is? Get my Sunny Jim out of that woven den of inebriation. Get him. I was got. Went to confession, was restored to my original sinful place and have sallied forth and dallied on since. *(Pause.)* I'm hungry.

LEO

I could go for some pork kidneys.

JOYCE

Me too! Now you're coming around. *(Calls out as if ordering.)* Pork kidneys for Mr. Bloom, and one for his companion and gad about town, Sunny Jim. We've got a big night ahead of us, a big night indeed.

Joyce takes off his robe, finds a toupee in his suitcase, and fits it to his head.

LEO

What are you doing?

JOYCE

I'm getting on with it.

LEO

You're putting another man's hair on your head. Don't go out in the world with a fake crown.

JOYCE

You're right. Maybe I shouldn't get on with anything. Let's see.

LEO

You don't see nothing, because if you did, you wouldn't be wearing that rug.

JOYCE

That's the problem I don't see a fucking thing anymore. I don't see anyone coming until they're right on my doorstep, toe at the crack. My eyesight is so bad; it's hard to tell what I'm seeing and what I'm not.

LEO

Put on some glasses.

JOYCE

I could be standing at the edge of a dream. I often feel as though I'm being watched.

LEO

It's the nurse.

JOYCE

It's not Eurycleia.

LEO

Is that her name, is it?

JOYCE

I'm afraid that someone is dreaming about this very room, revealing my secrets, and that I will be eviscerated by a prying eye.

LEO

Nobody is watching. Nobody would want to spend that much time watching you if they didn't have to. I mean, the whole night watching you is a long time.

JOYCE

Help me get to Ithaca.

LEO

You ask me that every night, and every night I say the same thing. I can't help you because I don't know where it is. We're in Dublin, man.

JOYCE

Dublin! City of heathens, ingrates, and illiterates. They want to dump my books into the sea, but I'll forget about that and I'll show you Nighttown. You look good in that suit, mate.

LEO

You too.

JOYCE

Let's go.

Joyce starts off at a brisk pace. Leo follows.

LEO

(Stops.) Well, where is it?

Joyce stops. Drops on the edge of the bed. Both sit. Long pause.

JOYCE

Why'd you do it?

LEO

Do what?

JOYCE

You know! You can't tell me that you've murdered a man without giving me the details! How can I live with that?

LEO

I don't know you well enough.

JOYCE

You know me fine. How'd you kill him?

LEO

Piss off.

JOYCE

(Pause.) Did you use a knife?

LEO

No.

JOYCE

A gun?

LEO

No.

JOYCE

Poison?

LEO

YOU have a fecking boring imagination!

JOYCE

And you're a fecking liar. You didn't kill anybody. Why don't you go somewhere else. What keeps ya here?

LEO

The same thing that keeps you here. I didn't agree with them. When they fished me out of the River Liffey they told my wife that I tried to commit suicide. It wasn't suicide, I said, it was murder. They didn't believe me. They said you had to have a body to have a murder, and there was no body except mine, so it must have been that I was trying to do myself in. I tried to tell them that I murdered my wife's lover. I put an end to her cheating--as much as I love her--with that man, that cad. They did it in my own house, in my own bed. It was too much for any man, so I decided to put an end to him. I followed him one night as he was leaving Davy Byrne's Pub, and when he was crossing O'Connell Bridge, I ran up behind him and with my bare hands and with superhuman strength coursing in my veins I threw him over the railing and jumped in after him to make sure he wouldn't come up. But something happened, we struggled, and later they pulled me out. The police reported it as a suicide. But I would never kill myself, that's the Lord's work. I told them they were wrong, but they told me to go home with my wife and get some attention. So I was put in her custody. I felt so bad. I said, I have to arrange a funeral for him. But she said, there wasn't a body, there was nobody to have a funeral for. She said that I must be off my head because she was always faithful to me, always faithful, but I knew that he came to see her. She told me I was acting ridiculous, that everyone knew that Mr. So and So was alive, and that he was never her lover, and she would not dignify my accusations. And she told me to get into bed and I would be better soon. Soon. But I had too much to do. I notified his family that I would take care of the burial. I chose a nice coffin, and flowers, and then I went to the papers and put the obituary in. I couldn't say much about him, but I did my best. They were very nice about it. Mr. Crawford, the editor, recognized me. He said, "Mr. Kettle, how are you feeling these days?" I told him I was fine, just fine, and that I wanted to do right by Mr. So and So, and Mr. So and So's family. He just smiled. The funeral was the next day. I thought for sure that the body would come round by then, but it never arrived. I waited and waited, not even the family showed.

JOYCE

Nobody likes to go to a funeral without a body. It's good when the corpse shows up, gives everyone a focus.

LEO

You're right about that, keeps the conversation going, cause you can always turn the talk to the one that isn't there.

JOYCE

You could say, Oh why did he die? Or why did he have to go so young? and so forth and so on. So what happened?

LEO

I waited the whole night, and early the next morning my wife arrived with a doctor and a policeman, and they brought me here. They thought it might be a good thing, because my wife said I was screaming and yelling about a no good son of a bitch and they thought that some peace and quiet would do me good.

JOYCE

I think they were right. And now you're here with me and all we've got is peace and quiet and there's not even a dead body around.

LEO

Fancy that.

Blackout.

Scene 3

Leo paces around the room.

LEO

I don't know that I should be sharing a room with a man who doesn't even know his own name. Makes me uneasy.

JOYCE

Oh it does? You know what makes me uneasy? Murder makes me uneasy. I think you should be thinking about your own affairs. Don't be worrying about me, because I'm already worrying about me. *(Pause.)* Eurycleia tells me that you're not eating your meals.

LEO

I won't eat with the likes of them. Lining up like pigs to the trough, squealing at the sight of cooked flesh in gravy.

JOYCE

If you don't eat, you'll get weak, and you won't be able to take the journey.

LEO

I don't know nothing about a journey.

JOYCE

You will.

LEO

Keep it to yourself. All I'm asking for are discriminating dinner mates, not squealers that will eat anything that is washed upon their plates. I'll bet that they'd even eat their own kind if they were hungry enough.

JOYCE

They have an appetite.

LEO

That's a nice way of putting it--ripping the flesh from the joints of mammals, but what's worse, is how they talk, the way they tear and mangle words with their stupid tongues. I can't stand speaking with them. I just nod and grunt.

JOYCE

I've been told that if you don't eat, they will make you.

LEO

Is that so? Hunger begins in the mind, not the belly. I want to see my wife.

JOYCE

Does she want to see you?

LEO

No. Says she wants no part of me. After all those years, you'd think she'd understand why I had to do what I did.

JOYCE

Then you're free, to meet Molly.

LEO

Free? Produce the keys to this purgatory. Come on! *(Pause)*
Windbag! That's what you are. I don't want Molly, I want my own
wife.

JOYCE

You may as well be holding the wind.

LEO

(Pause.) What does this Molly look like?

JOYCE

Well, she has full lips, and perfect teeth.

LEO

She must stand out in a crowd.

JOYCE

And she has large dark eyes. And her form is . . . have you been to
the National Museum?

LEO

I've had a peek.

JOYCE

Good for you. Well, if you've ever seen those Grecian Statues,
perfectly developed, then you would recognize my Molly.

LEO

It must be chilly for her.

JOYCE

And she has a very big voice.

LEO

Likes to yell, does she?

JOYCE

No, she likes to sing. My prima donna.

LEO

On second thought, maybe I will have something to eat. A cheese sandwich.

JOYCE

Eurycleia!

LEO

Gorgonzola.

Blackout.

Scene 4

Leo sits against the headboard of the bed.

JOYCE

Zeus is the head doctor. If he takes a special interest in you, he'll take your case, otherwise it goes to one of the lesser ones. You, he'll be interested in. You'll most likely have a session once a week, and then later, group sessions, where you can act out. Athena is often there, and we have some kind of physical activity: dancing or singing. I enjoy singing. I should have been a professional. Do ya sing? No, you don't look the type. You look like a runner, perhaps you should see Hermes. Then, after the evening meal we can read in our rooms, or in the library--if you have privileges--and take care of that withered organ, your brain, and there you have your typical day. Do you have any questions?

LEO

Tell me, does the entire professional staff have Greek names?

JOYCE

They do.

LEO

I see. I never asked to come here. And I certainly don't have to be a part of it if I don't want to.

JOYCE

You're right. Put them out of your mind. There is no external world. The world is not a solid place--it's simply our shadow.

LEO

I don't give a flying piss if it's a shadow or solid, I'm walking in this infernal geometry, and I don't see an end in sight; however, I am beginning to see why they put you here. Keep going on about there is no external world and they'll throw away the key. I only hope that I can get out before that happens.

JOYCE

Forget about time! We can pluck ourselves from this cell of time and space by using our imagination.

LEO

Then what are you waiting for? Sprout some wings and fly this coup. Or is it that you can only forget certain things? (*Pause.*) Who are ya?

JOYCE

I don't want to talk about him.

LEO

Him? I mean you! There's no him, here.

JOYCE

Exactly. There is no him. Nobody. Out of the infinity of possible lives, I arise. No matter if I am like another, or unlike another. Time and place have come to a point; it is this day, it is here; the hour is striking; and I have risen from beneath the chaos of appearances, and I walk in the shadows as a shadow next to the shadow that I call him.

LEO

You are a frightening person with too many shadows. I never asked to come here.

JOYCE

Tell it to Zeus.

LEO

I'll not tell him anything. (*Pause.*) What have you got there?

JOYCE

Soap.

Soap? LEO

Molly's soap. JOYCE

Give it here. Smells like lemon. LEO

It is lemon. JOYCE

Smells nice. Where'd it come from? LEO

Your pocket. JOYCE

Not *my* pocket. LEO

You're right; it was nobody's pocket. JOYCE

It's a firm soap. LEO

She uses it every day in her bath. JOYCE

Does she? LEO

Says it makes her skin soft. JOYCE

Feels nice and smooth. LEO

Like skin. JOYCE

LEO

I'd like to take a bath with her soap.

JOYCE

Why don't you? It'll take a load off your mind.

LEO

Did ya know that it's a scientific law that a solid body immersed in water undergoes a loss of weight equal to the weight of the water displaced?

JOYCE

Then you better watch yourself. Don't go too deep and don't splash too much because if you do, you won't weigh a thing and you'll be sucked down the whirlpool of the drain.

LEO

Then nobody would be left in the tub.

JOYCE

That's right! All there'd be left is the soap.

LEO

Molly's soap.

JOYCE

Molly's soap.

LEO

It's melting in my hand. Nothing is solid, neither soap nor hand.

JOYCE

Eurycleia! Towels for Mr. Bloom.

Blackout.

Scene 5

Joyce sits against the headboard of the bed, reading.

LEO

What time is it?

JOYCE

Dawn.

LEO

It's dusk.

JOYCE

Midnight.

LEO

Midday.

JOYCE

Twilight.

LEO

It's three o'clock.

JOYCE

Three o'clock it is.

LEO

What have you got there?

JOYCE

Sweets of Sin.

LEO

Sweets of Sin, what kind of book is that?

JOYCE

The kind Molly likes. She'll read anything by Paul de Kock.

LEO

Paul de Kock. Give it here.

JOYCE

Get your own.

LEO

I don't have library privileges.

JOYCE

If ya stopped acting up, they'd give ya some. *(Pause.)* All right. I'll read you a bit: "All the dollar bills her husband gave her were spent in the stores, on wondrous gowns and costliest frilles. For him! For Raoul!"

LEO

Let me see that.

JOYCE

(Continues to read.) "Her mouth glued on his in a luscious voluptuous kiss while his hands felt for the opulent curves inside her deshabile. You are late; he spoke hoarsely, eying her with a suspicious glare."

LEO

(Grabs the book and reads.) "The beautiful woman threw off her sable-trimmed wrap, displaying her queenly shoulders and heaving embonpoint." *(He reads silently on.)* Oh, Oh, Jesus son of Mary, you can't mean that she actually reads this, not this part.

JOYCE

She does, she likes the good parts.

LEO

When are you going to see her?

JOYCE

Soon. *(Pause.)*
She lives on Eccles Street, beyond those rocks.

LEO

What rocks?

JOYCE

There. It's hard to keep them in focus, particularly with the dark clouds and all. It's a roaring world swirling between those rocks.

LEO

You're having delusions.

JOYCE

They kind of stick out of the water, like breasts.

LEO

I prefer the breasts in this book. They're real.

JOYCE

You have a small mind.

LEO

And yours is filled with rocks.

JOYCE

I'm seeing breasts.

LEO

Are you sure?

JOYCE

Positive. Follow me to the promontory and I'll point them out to you.

LEO

Go yourself.

JOYCE

I've already seen them. I want you to see them. (*Grabs the book from Leo.*)

LEO

Give me that!

JOYCE

I want us to be looking at the same thing, at the same time.

LEO

Breasts?

JOYCE

Breasts.
Joyce and Leo scan the horizon.

Blackout.

Scene 6

Joyce sits. Leo paces.

LEO

I knew she was cheating, I knew it. I tried to put it out of my mind but then friends would ask, "How's the Misses?" And I could tell from their eyes and the tone in their voices that what they really wanted to know was: How was I? the stupid cuckold who went to work each morning while his wife cleaned the house and got herself ready for a day of love. I tried not to hear the ridicule in their voices: *poor sot, can't even take care of his wife.* That son of a bitch! I'd kill him again if I had the chance.

JOYCE

Put that behind you, you have to chart a new course.

LEO

My house was corrupted. My family corrupted.

JOYCE

It happens to everyone.

LEO

Yours too?

JOYCE

Mine, too.

LEO

I thought you couldn't remember who you were, or where you came from?

JOYCE

I can't, but Zeus told me that I had such a bad childhood, I buried everything, like a treasure at the bottom of the sea. So I must surmise that I had a rotten house--decayed--not fit for nobody or

nothing. That's when I made up my mind to leave. You and me, we're like Hamlet.

LEO

Hamlet?

JOYCE

Yes, fleeing our Denmark.

LEO

You are an actor! Admit it! This is Dublin, not Denmark. I'm just trying to work it all out and see my wife again.

JOYCE

She'll not see you now, and maybe never again.

LEO

Her voice is in my mind. She keeps calling me back to her arms.

JOYCE

Don't stoop to that thrilling voice.

LEO

Maybe if I were more like him, she would be satisfied.

JOYCE

You can't be him and *you*. I've tried to be him and me, and it doesn't work. The ship has only one captain. *(Pause.)* The wind is kicking up.

LEO

We're in a closed room, there's no wind here.

Leo and Joyce begin to rock as if they're on deck of a ship.

JOYCE

I can smell the salt spray.

LEO

It's getting chilly. *(Gets under his blanket.)* I remember my wife on cold nights, whispering, *come closer, warm my toes. Come closer. Closer.*

Leo intoxicated by his memory.

JOYCE

KETTLE!

LEO

Give us a touch. God I'm dying for it. Dying for it she would say,
and I would scream for her to stop.

JOYCE

Eurycleia! WAX!

LEO

Stop it! Stop it, but she just laughed and laughed and laughed. I
couldn't make her stop. *Give us a touch.*

JOYCE

Quiet that voice!

LEO

I can't. She won't stop.

Joyce sings Galway Bay to calm Leo. The sound of the sea drowns him out.

Blackout.

Scene 7

Joyce and Leo at the pub.

JOYCE

What'll it be?

LEO

Ill have a wine of the country.

JOYCE

Guinness coming right up. Here's to ya.

LEO

Ahh, but that's good.

JOYCE

Thirsty were ya?

LEO

Never lets up since I've been here.

JOYCE

Here, in the nationalgymnasium-museum-sanatorium and suspensorium of Dublin.

LEO

Is that our address?

JOYCE

Yes it is.

LEO

No wonder I never get any mail.

JOYCE

Are you expecting mail?

LEO

I'd like a letter from my wife, but it'll never come. *(Pause.)* She'll never forgive me.

JOYCE

What else could you have done?

LEO

I felt as if I was being driven to the act of murder.

JOYCE

That's the key, driven to the act by the green-eyed monster.

LEO

What do ya mean?

JOYCE

It was a crime of passion. Everything is permissible if one is driven, I mean you didn't have any choice in the matter, did ya?

LEO

I don't know if I did or didn't. I'd like to think that I had a choice in all of it, that I wasn't unconscious out of my gourd or something. How can a person get any satisfaction out of what they're doing if they don't know what they're doing, particularly if you're killing somebody.

JOYCE

All right then, you were conscious; you are just a cold-blooded murderer.

LEO

When you put it that way, it sounds so bad. My poor mother would roll over in her grave.

JOYCE

Then you're insane.

LEO

I'm not insane.

JOYCE

We're running out of possibilities. We must make it to Ithaca.

LEO

Stop with that infernal rock. It doesn't exist. It's inside your mind.

JOYCE

Yes it is, a rock in my mind.

LEO

It's a stone in your eye.

Blackout.

Scene 8

Joyce and Leo doing their daily exercises

JOYCE

She has a boyfriend.

LEO
She had a boyfriend.

JOYCE
I'm talking about Molly.

LEO
Oh no, not her too. Oh Jesus. What's his name?

JOYCE
Blazes Boylan.

LEO
Blazes Boylan. What kind of name is that?

JOYCE
That's his name. I don't know anything else about him, except he sings.

LEO
Sings does he?

JOYCE
Yes, with her.

LEO
Must be very enjoyable.

JOYCE
She's at the beach now.

LEO
What's she doing there?

JOYCE
She's sitting on the rocks.

LEO
She likes rocks does she?

JOYCE
I don't know if she likes rocks or not, but she does seem to like to sit on them.

LEO

I see.

JOYCE

Ya see Jack squat. I got one for ya. What kind of perfume did your wife like?

LEO

Muskrat scent I suppose.

JOYCE

You don't know, do ya? Molly likes opoponax.

LEO

Opoponax. Has a ring.

JOYCE

It loops around your senses, and intoxicates the soul. Why don't ya go to the beach and see her.

LEO

I don't know.

JOYCE

You don't have to talk, just look.

LEO

What would my wife say?

JOYCE

You don't have a wife, not in the real sense anymore. Come on, I'll introduce you.

LEO

You said she had a boyfriend. I don't want to throw another one off the bridge.

JOYCE

There aren't any bridges around here.

LEO

I won't play second fiddle.

JOYCE

I haven't asked you to play second fiddle.

LEO

Don't get so uppity.

JOYCE

You will never make the journey because that sodden soul of yours is dragging you to the bottom of the sea. You have too much hate in your heart. Take a lesson from Prometheus. When he ceased to hate Jupiter he was unbound. Love rules from its awful throne of power, not hate. Love Blazes Boylan.

LEO

Blazes Boylan? I've never met the cad. Why am I listening to you, to a man who can't bear to look at his real self in the mirror.

JOYCE

Every day is a mirror. Day after day we walk through that mirror, meeting the eyes of old men, young men, wives, widows, children, ghosts, but always, in the end, we're meeting ourselves. I've met myself and I said goodbye.

LEO

And what did he say?

JOYCE

Who?

LEO

You know who I'm talking about. Did he say it was alright to forget about him? No I don't think so. He's right behind you, walking down the same road you're walking, ready to take his place at the head of the line. What's your name?

JOYCE

Sunny Jim, Mr. Bloom.

LEO

Okay, Sunny Jim. Just remember that if you're pushed in the gutter by your man, you'll know who I mean.

JOYCE

No, I don't know who you fucking mean, because I threw him over the bridge like you did with Mr. So and So a long time ago. I imagine that their unfound bodies are floating around together.

LEO

I need to get out of here. I'm drowning.

JOYCE

It's the whirlpool, mate. It's sucking you down. Shed those clothes man, and swim for it.

LEO

I'll not take off my clothes.

JOYCE

Here, take Ino's veil. Make it your lifebelt, it is not mortal. You cannot, now, be drowned or suffer harm.

LEO

Your mind has left you.

JOYCE

Take it!

LEO

What about you?

JOYCE

I'm with you. *(Ties the veil around his waist.)*

LEO

Now what?

JOYCE

Now we pray to be washed upon that beach. Keep your eyes on the rock.

LEO

I don't see it! *(Rips the veil off.)*

JOYCE

Don't do that!

LEO

Eurycleia!

JOYCE

She's off today.

LEO

OFF! She can't be off. Without her we'll be lost!

JOYCE

The fog is rolling in. Wrap the veil around you.

LEO

Why couldn't they find the body?

JOYCE

The water is rising!

LEO

It must be out there.

JOYCE

Tie it!

LEO

They need to go deeper.

JOYCE

I'm leaving! (*Stalks off.*)

LEO

NO! Don't leave without me!

Leo chases after him.

Blackout.

Scene 9

Leo perched alongside Joyce's Bed.

JOYCE

What are you doing?

LEO

Keeping watch.

JOYCE

What are you talking about?

LEO

There's a man out to sea, and I'm watching him.

JOYCE

You're talking off your head.

LEO

Who are ya?

JOYCE

James Joyce.

LEO

Liar.

JOYCE

All right, I'm not.

LEO

Don't play games with me.

JOYCE

Okay. Then I am.

LEO

I've requested a room change.

JOYCE

What!

LEO

I can't bed beside someone who doesn't know who they are. How can I trust ya? I want a transfer.

JOYCE

You won't find anyone as accommodating as me.

LEO

I'll take my chances.

JOYCE

Don't go.

LEO

It's too late.

JOYCE

You would abandon Sunny Jim?

LEO

I'm abandoning nobody.

JOYCE

Don't call me nobody!

LEO

Then what should I call ya?

JOYCE

I don't know. At the first home they called me Jimmy, and at the next, I was Bobby. I never knew my real name, first or last, never saw a birth certificate. I went from home to home and each time they were calling me something new. It happened in school, too. I was called Patrick, Willy, Brian, Seamus, Sean, and so forth. At one school a teacher even called me Charles. After a time she realized that there shouldn't be a boy named Charles in her class, and what was I doing there, and wasn't I really that boy Malcolm that everybody was looking for. I said I didn't know, and she rapped my knuckles with a ruler and sent me out in the hall. I was bleeding all over the floor, so I went outside to bleed on the grass,

and the headmaster saw me out there and pulled me into his office by my ear and rapped my knuckles for playing hooky. I told him it wasn't so, and he rapped my knuckles for lying, then he rapped them for bleeding. He didn't even ask me my name. He said that the good sisters would know what to do with me. And so I was taken to the Sisters of Mercy. When I got out, I had no choice but to become an actor.

LEO

I knew it!

JOYCE

Nice names actors have. Hamlet, Othello, Caesar, King so and so. For a time I went by the stage name of Caesar McCarthy. And then one night, it all came to an end. The stage manager was calling "Places," and suddenly my dressing room door was forced open by three police officers and I was taken away. And I heard people calling: "Where's Caesar?" and then they were yelling at me: "Caesar! Caesar!" and I couldn't stop yelling: "Caesar's gone!" It was clear that I would have to get rid of Caesar. As long as he was alive, I was a dead man.

LEO

Why?

JOYCE

Cause he was going to prison, and he was never getting out.

LEO

What did he do?

JOYCE

He was betrayed.

LEO

We're in the same boat.

JOYCE

You could say that. *(Pause.)* After a few days, they untied my form-fitting jacket, and gave me some soup. A very nice person, who seemed to be always at my bedside, asked if I would like a book to read. I said I would, that I fancied the one she was reading. So she gave me her copy of *Ulysses*. It was apparent that me and

Mr. Joyce were kindred spirits. We both love to sing and we both like bow-ties. That Caesar character couldn't control himself. I don't have that problem.

LEO

What did Caesar do?

JOYCE

He tried to strangle somebody.

LEO

Who?

JOYCE

His wife. Don't be looking at me that way. Come on, the ship will be setting sail.

LEO

I'm not ready. I don't want to leave Eurycleia.

JOYCE

Grown men don't need nurses.

LEO

When they don't have wives or mothers they do. I want my nurse.

JOYCE

She's my nurse, too.

LEO

Okay, *our* nurse, I don't have a problem with that.

JOYCE

The tide is moving out. We should sail.

LEO

I'll not go until I say goodbye to Eury.

JOYCE

EURY! Since when is it Eury? Don't you touch her. Don't ever touch her. She's known me longest, and she's known me best. She's mine and I won't lose her to another man, you, you Blazes Boylan. You Cassio!

LEO

Don't be calling me names.

JOYCE

Then stop acting like them. I'll kill her before giving her up to the likes of you, and don't think I wouldn't. I know how to do it. I was with Caesar when he played Othello. Night after night he killed his sweet Desdemona. When they dragged me from the theatre that night they said that I tried to strangle my wife. Imagine that. They said my wife was in hospital but that I couldn't see her. I cried, oh how I cried. I told them that it was Caesar, he was the murderer, he practiced every night. I wasn't going to go to prison. And you know, at my trial, the judge agreed with me. He said that I should come here instead, and work things out with my Desdemona complex. Okay, time to move out. Get your suit, get your hat.

LEO

I'm not ready.

JOYCE

Why not?

LEO

Things have not hatched with me yet.

JOYCE

You're not a chicken. Or are you? Its time we find Molly. I'll not leave you here with the nurse, alone. Come on, mate.

LEO

I don't have a mate.

JOYCE

If you came with me you'd have one.

LEO

I'll wait for my wife.

JOYCE

You'll be waiting till the cows come home.

LEO

I'll wait.

JOYCE

You'll be alone.

LEO

I won't be left alone!

Both wait in silence.

JOYCE

Are ya done waiting?

LEO

No.

JOYCE

Take your time. *(Pause.)* Are you ready?

LEO

You can't intimidate me.

JOYCE

I'm leaving! I'll find Molly myself.

LEO

You're not going nowhere. *(Joyce disappears under the bed.)*
What are you doing, crawling under the bed? *(Pause.)* Am I the last sane man standing in this infernal bin. *(Long pause.)* If I didn't know better, I'd say that I was dead, and gone to heaven, but this is not heaven. Not a chance heaven could look like this. All the priests would be damned if they lied about a thing like that. Heaven must have rolling hills, rainbows, and music, and so forth and so on, not men lost under the beds. *(Pause.)* What if I'm forgotten? Then everyone will think that nobody is here, and then there'd be two nobodies here sharing a bar of soap. That's bad. Eurycleia! It's so still. *(Pause.)* I must be dead and I haven't even said my confession. It's all happened so quick, didn't feel a thing. *(Beat.)* Dear God, if you can hear, me, you must forgive me for killing that no good son of a bitch. I couldn't help myself, really. You know that I was driven. Don't ya? *(Beat.)* Who goes there? What's your name? What? I'm not going to kill any ox. What land of salt? Wait. Oh no, I'm going off my head, talking to ghosts, I

need to get out of here. I'd do anything to atone for walking down that murderous path. I'd change my ways, I would. I'd become a new man.

JOYCE

How about Bloom?

LEO

Bloom. Yes! Right here. I'm Bloom! Mr. Bloom.

JOYCE

Mr. Bloom, stop that confessing. You're scaring the bejesus out of me. *(Hands him a derby.)* Try it on.

LEO

Fits, doesn't it.

JOYCE

It does. Check the starboard side.

LEO

Aye.

Blackout.

Scene 10

Sitting bedside, face to face.

LEO

Now why are we putting on our shoes, anyway?

JOYCE

You'll need your shoes in Nighttown.

LEO

You don't need shoes in a brothel.

JOYCE

You can't go in and meet the girls without any shoes on.

LEO

Let's go. *(Puts on shoes.)* Is this it?

JOYCE

It is.

LEO

Quite a place.

JOYCE

You're going to like the girls.

LEO

Where are they?

JOYCE

I don't know. They're usually already here. Bella lines them up.

LEO

Maybe we should have a look at *Sweets of Sin* while we're waiting.

JOYCE

I didn't bring it. Molly has it.

LEO

Molly. I wonder what Molly would think if she knew I was here, in this house of ill repute. Serves her right. She's probably carrying on with him right now. Blazes Boylan! I'd like to rip him from her bed.

JOYCE

You can't kill a man over a woman that you don't even know.

LEO

I do know her. Any woman who reads *Sweets of Sin* is the one for me, but I'm not going to kill that bull Boylan. I've seen the inside of Hades and it doesn't look good.

JOYCE

How did ya know you were in Hades?

LEO

The soap in my pocket was melting. And I saw a ghost.

JOYCE

Was his name Teiresias?

LEO

I didn't catch his name.

JOYCE

Was he blind?

LEO

I don't know, it's hard to tell with ghosts.

JOYCE

What did he say?

LEO

He was blabbering about an ox, and the land of no salt. Nonsense, he was speaking nonsense.

JOYCE

It *was* Teiresias.

LEO

You weren't there. How can you know?

JOYCE

I'm trying to give you some perspective.

LEO

I don't need another pair of eyes. (*Beat.*) Where are the girls? No matter, I'll hallucinate them for us. Whoa, who do we have here? Flora. Flora is a pretty name. I already smell the flowers. Sit on my lap and tell me all about it. I love your knickers. Oh and who do we have here? Another flower, oh let me guess, is your name Lily, or Rosie? No. It's Gerty. Dirty Gerty. Don't pinch! I want you to meet my friend, he doesn't hallucinate, but he's a lively person. Wears clean underwear. Have a peek.

JOYCE

Get away. I'm sure the girls will be coming soon.

LEO

They were already here.

JOYCE

They weren't! This is my brothel and my girls and they haven't arrived yet.

LEO

Give me *Sweets of Sin* while I wait for you to catch up.

JOYCE

I don't have it.

LEO

Ahh what have we here? (*Finds it under Joyce's bed.*)

JOYCE

Bug off.

LEO

Go to bed.

JOYCE

I'll wait, thank you.

LEO

Suit yourself.

Leo gets into bed with Sweets of Sin.

Joyce discovers a handkerchief in his pocket. It triggers thoughts of Desdemona.

He throws his blanket around his shoulders like a cloak and, as Caesar, advances to the bed and reenacts the death of Desdemona.

Blackout.

Scene 11

Joyce sprawled out on the floor.

Get up. LEO

Leave me alone. JOYCE

I saw him last night. LEO

Who? JOYCE

Caesar. LEO

Don't joke with me. JOYCE

I'm not. LEO

Where was he? JOYCE

Right here, in this room. LEO

Liar. JOYCE

I talked to him. LEO

About what? JOYCE

LEO

Your wife.

JOYCE

What did he say?

LEO

He said that he hoped that she would wait for him.

Sound of sea, sound of Irish reels.

Blackout.

Scene 12

Leo fences with Joyce's cane.

JOYCE

What are you doing with my sword?

LEO

I have to get rid of her suitors.

JOYCE

What are you talking about?

LEO

Molly, and the Blazes Boylan's in her life. I have to be done with them.

JOYCE

Stop your big talk about sending men to their death. It's not in your nature.

LEO

What do you know about nature? You aren't comfortable in your own skin.

JOYCE

I could say the same for you, Mister.

LEO

Bloom.

JOYCE

All right, Mr. Bloom, be Mr. Bloom. Mr. Bloom does not kill anybody, or for that matter, either does Mr. Kettle.

LEO

You know damn well what Mr. Kettle is capable of.

JOYCE

I talked to Eury.

LEO

Eury, is it now? And what is that supposed to mean? I talked to Eury.

JOYCE

I talked to her about Mr. Kettle when she brought us some buns and coffee.

LEO

I never saw any buns or coffee.

JOYCE

Did you know that the word coffee comes from the Arabic word for wine?

LEO

No.

JOYCE

I thought we could have some bread and wine. A communion of minds so to speak.

LEO

I don't know that we can have a communion of minds.

JOYCE

You spoke to Caesar didn't you? We must have a communion of minds, because I know Mr. Kettle and you know Caesar, and we both know of the alleged crimes each committed. And look where we've ended up, paying for their mistakes. We deserve better, we need to get out.

LEO

You know nothing about Kettle.

JOYCE

Eury told me everything.

LEO

What everything!

JOYCE

Kettle is innocent of drowning a man. Kettle never committed that crime. You need to tell the doctors that you know you didn't do it, and you'll be set free.

LEO

You're lying! I took care of that cad. I defended my honor. When they find Mr. So and So the matter will be settled.

JOYCE

They have found Mr. So and So.

LEO

I knew it.

JOYCE

He's outside, in the waiting room.

LEO

He can't be outside.

JOYCE

Eury says he comes once a week hoping that you might talk to him. He's very sorry about what happened; he feels responsible for your attempted suicide.

LEO

I don't want his pity. It wasn't suicide!

JOYCE

Okay. Your foot must have slipped off the railing.

LEO

(Long pause.) I didn't slip.

JOYCE

Tell the doctors that you know you're innocent of murder.

LEO

Am I? I've committed the crime in my mind a hundred times; all that is left is the deed. If I go back I might find him and finish the job, and I'll find myself at the end of a rope for murder. I have to save myself. I'm staying.

JOYCE

Go home. Go back to your wife.

LEO

She doesn't want a coward for a husband. You go. Go home.

JOYCE

Zeus won't let me, wants to talk to Caesar some more. They're afraid that Caesar might go after the wife again. *(Pause.)* Now go.

LEO

No. *(Pause.)* I want to see Molly.

JOYCE

Ya want to see Molly?

LEO

I do.

JOYCE

Really? Now I must remind ya, that there will always be suitors, but you are the one she wants.

LEO

You think Molly really wants me?

JOYCE

I know she does. Deep down you're the one she dreams about.

LEO

Dreams about me?

JOYCE

You're the last person that she thinks about before closing her eyes.

LEO

Fancy that.

JOYCE

Are we still in Dublin?

Sounds of the sea and wind. The sails billow.

Blackout.

Scene 13

Leo throws off his blanket.

LEO

Ahh no, NO! What's Plumtree's Potted Meat doing in my bed?
Did you put it there?

JOYCE

It was Boylan. Likes to eat it with Molly.

LEO

Boylan! He doesn't deserve to live.

JOYCE

Love Blazes Boylan.

LEO

Messing up my bed like that. I'll not love him. That Boylan probably thinks that he's her one and only lover, poor sot, he's the last in a long line of them and I mean long. First there was Mulvey, then Penrose, and Bartell d'Arcy, then Professor Goodwin, professor of philosophy I'm told, much good it did him in bed, and then there was Julius Mastiansky, John Henry Menton, and Father Bernard Corrigan--a priest mind you--don't look so shocked, and Maggot O'Reilly--name suits him--followed by Valentine Blake Dillon. What kind of a man has a name like Valentine? Oh and here's a good one: an Italian organ grinder, I bet, and last but not least, Blazes Boylan. I've made my peace with those poor bastards. They are nothing to Molly, not in the end. I've vanquished them.

JOYCE

You did. Like a gentleman. They weren't worth the time of day,
and certainly not to murder. (*Hands Leo his derby.*)

LEO

You're right.

They walk downstage.

JOYCE

I never believed that you were a murderer. (*Beat.*) Here we are.
7 Eccles Street.

LEO

7 Eccles Street?

JOYCE

This is where Molly lives.

LEO

Where is she?

JOYCE

Upstairs, where the lamp is burning.

LEO

Upstairs.

JOYCE

Shishh. She's sleeping.

LEO

Sleeping.

JOYCE

With the light on.

LEO

With the light on.

JOYCE

That's all.

Blackout. (*Sound of footsteps running up stairs.*)

Scene 14

Joyce waits for Leo to approach.

JOYCE

Well, what did she say?

LEO

She said a lot of things. We talked about this and that, about funerals and so forth and so on.

JOYCE

You haven't been in her bed for how long?

LEO

Like I said, we talked about a lot of things.

JOYCE

So you said.

LEO

She said, yes.

JOYCE

Yes.

LEO

Yes.

JOYCE

Yes. That's it!

LEO

That's it. *(Pause.)* The breeze is kicking up, Mr. Joyce.

JOYCE

Did you call me Mr. Joyce?

LEO

I did.

Mr. James Joyce? JOYCE

I did. LEO

Do you see that blasted rock? JOYCE

I do, Mr. Joyce. LEO

Say it again. JOYCE

I see the blasted rock! LEO

No! The Mr. Joyce part. JOYCE

I do, Mr. Joyce. LEO

Perfect. This is perfect. Mr. Joyce, Mr. Bloom, Molly upstairs
. . . a beautiful house, and my life just on the horizon. Perfect. I've
located myself in this infernal geometry. Get ready to hoist sail.
Mr. Bloom. JOYCE

Ready. LEO

You know, there's a bit of the artist about ya, Bloom. JOYCE

Thank you, Mr. Joyce. LEO

Fadeout.

THE END