

A BRIEF MORALITY PLAY

Act I

[Dimly-lit pub, smoky, but without evident clientele. Surly muscular person, perhaps failed lightweight, is mopping bar. TV is tuned to "Jeopardy". ED enters carrying fiddle case.]

ED: Hi there ... is the manager around?

BT: [in heavy non-specific Latino accent] Maybe. Who is it that wants him?

ED: My name's Ed Fenster. I wanted to talk to him about the possibility of starting up a little session here some night during the week ...

BT: A session of what?

ED: You know, Irish music. Irish traditional music. Just a few musicians sitting around playing, nothing noisy ... [confused] I thought this is ... used to be ... an Irish bar ...

BT: Hey, the Owner, he don't care for music, Irish or any other kind. He just buy this place and no time to change the name or the decorations. He come from Honduras - say all the green Irish stuff, it hurt his eyes. [Leans closer across the bar; lowers voice.] Listen, man - what he really like is cockfights. You know anything about cockfights?

ED: Uh ... no, except that they're illegal.

BT [straightening up, after muttering something under his breath] Hey, man - I tell him you stop by, okay?

Act II

[Trendy pub somewhere in a formerly gritty, now fashionable neighborhood. Lots of pink and silver furnishings. Fresh flowers on all the tables. Bartender's hair is parted in the middle and he may be wearing nail-polish. Judy Garland's greatest hits on 1950-ish jukebox. ED enters.]

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ED: Hi there ... is the manager around?

BT: No, I think he's down at the tanning salon. Can I help you? I'm a ... very close friend of his.

ED: Well, maybe you can. My name's Ed Fenster and ...

BT: Oooo ... is that an instrument case of some sort you're carrying?

ED: Well, yes, it's a fiddle case.

BT: A fiddle case - how quaint! But I bet you really have a machine gun in there. DA-DA-DA-DA-DA-DA! That's from Cody Jarrett, you coppers! They'll never take me alive, will they, Ma? DA-DA-DA-DA-DA....!! Oh, I just adore that movie!

ED: ... er ... sorry to disappoint you, but it really is just a fiddle case. Actually I play Irish music with a ...

BT: IRISH music? Like what they play in "Riverdance"? Oh my god - I've seen that eight ... no, nine times. And my special friend Ben was in here the other night raving about "Lord of the Dance"... and that's the kind of music you play? How throbbingly exquisite!

ED: Well, the kind of music we play isn't actually the same as what you hear in "Riverdance". It's a little more sedate, more traditional ... and we don't all wear tight black pants, heh-heh ...

BT: [*turning away quickly*] I'll tell him you stopped by.

Act III

[*Interior of what looks like a real Irish pub. Lots of Harp and Guinness posters. Copy of 1916 Proclamation is hung proudly outside the men's room. At least six posters advertising benefit dances of one sort or another are tacked or taped in various locations. BARTENDER is facing away from us as curtain rises but somehow you know he's from There. Our hero ED, looking a little wearier, enters.*]

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ED: Hi ... is the manager around anywhere?

BT: How do you know I'm not the manager?

ED: Uh ... well, I don't. Are you?

BT: And if I was, why would I be telling you?

ED: Look, it's been a long day. I'm not here for an argument. I just want to know if you'd be interested in having some musicians in here for a session some night ...

BT: We've got music in here five nights a week now - why do we need more, would you tell me that?

ED: Well, maybe the traditional music would draw a different kind of crowd ...

BT: Maybe it would and maybe it wouldn't. And if it did, maybe they'd come and sit here all night and never spend a penny. Then maybe they'd want to do some kind of set-dancing, and they'd be up scaring the bejayzus out of our regular patrons, and then when the cops came and started asking questions about our cabaret license, they'd all disappear like scared little mice, and we'd have our asses in a sling for two club sodas and a night of diddly-diddly...

ED [*after three seconds of what could be mistaken for silent prayer*] You know, you're right. And of course if you lost your license then you couldn't afford to keep giving us the five hundred dollars you promised to pay me, the retired cop, the first day I came into this godforsaken little hole and talked to this ignoramus bartender who just happened to have two joints badly hidden behind the cash register and a bunch of illegals washing dishes...

BT [*chokes visibly and turns a whiter shade of pale*]: ... So when do you want to start, Mr Mr ... ??

ED: Just tell the Manager I stopped by. [*exits chuckling, content to leave morbid Fear clinging to every wall of the pub*]

THE END