

take much skill. It isn't being pretty they go for. It's more being on your own and small.

HELEN. If it's being on your own and small, why so has Cripple Billy never had his arse groped be priests?

BARTLEY. You don't know at all Cripple Billy's never had his arse groped be priests.

HELEN. Have you ever had your arse groped be priests, Cripple Billy?

BILLY. No.

HELEN. Now!

BARTLEY. I suppose they have to draw the line somewhere.

HELEN. And you, you're small and often on your own. Have you ever had your arse groped be priests?

BARTLEY. (*Quickly*) Not me arse, no.

HELEN. D'ya see?

BARTLEY. (*To Helen*) Do ya have any Fripple-Frapples, Mrs.? (*Helen starts at him, puts the boxes down on the counter and exits into the back room.*) Where are you going, Mrs.? What about me sweches, Mrs.?

HELEN. You've done it now, haven't ya?

BARTLEY. Your cut aunty's a mad woman, Cripple Billy.

HELEN. Mrs. Osbourne isn't Cripple Billy's aunty at all, any ways. She's only his pretend aunty, same as the other one. Isn't that right, Billy?

BILLY. It is.

HELEN. They only took him in when Billy's man and dad went and drowned themselves, when they found out Billy was born a cripple-boy.

BILLY. They didn't go and drowned themselves.

HELEN. Oh aye, aye....

BILLY. They only fell o'erboard in rough seas.

HELEN. Uh-huh. What were they doing sailing in rough seas, so, and wasn't it at nighttime too?

BILLY. Trying to get to America be the mainland they were.

HELEN. No, trying to get away from you they were, be chance of be death, it made no differ to them.

BILLY. Well how the hell would you know when you were just a baby at the time, the same as me?

HELEN. I gave Johnnypatteen a cheesy prairie one time and he told me. Wasn't it him was left there holding ya, down be the waterside?

BILLY. Well what did he know was in their heads that night? He wasn't in that boat.

HELEN. Sure didn't they have a sackful of stones tied between themselves?

BILLY. That's pure gossip that they had a sackful of stones tied between themselves, and even Johnnypatteen agrees on that one....

BARTLEY. Maybe he had a telescope.

HELEN. (*Pause*) Maybe who had a telescope?

BARTLEY. Maybe Johnnypatteen had a telescope.

HELEN. What differ would having a telescope have? (*Bartley thinks, then shrugs.*) You and your fecking telescopes. You're always throwing telescopes into the fecking conversation.

BARTLEY. They do have a great array of telescopes in America now, d'know? You can see a worm a mile away.

HELEN. Why would you want to see a worm a mile away?

BARTLEY. To see what he was up to.

HELEN. What do worms usually be up to?

BARTLEY. Wiggling.

HELEN. Wiggling. And how much do telescopes cost?

BARTLEY. Twelve dollars for a good one.

HELEN. So you'd pay twelve dollars to find out worms go wiggling?

BARTLEY. (*Pause*) Aye I would.

HELEN. You don't have twelve hairs on your bollocks, let alone twelve dollars.

BARTLEY. I don't have twelve dollars on me bollocks, no, you're right there. I saw no sense. (*Helen approaches him.*) Don't, Helen.... (*Helen punches him hard in the stomach.*) Hurt me ribs that punch did.

HELEN. Feck your ribs. Using that kind of fecking language to me, eh? (*Pause*) What was we talking about, Cripple Billy? Oh aye, your dead mammy and daddy.

BILLY. They didn't go drowning themselves because of me. They loved me.

HELEN. They loved you? Would you love you if you weren't you? You barely love you and you *are* you.

BARTLEY. (*Winded.*) At least Cripple Billy doesn't punch poor lads' ribs for them.

HELEN. No, and why? Because he's too fecking feeble to. It'd feel like a punch from a wet goose.

BARTLEY. (*Excited.*) Did ye hear Jack Ellery's goose bit Patty Brennan's cat on the tail and hurt that tail....

HELEN. We *did* hear.

BARTLEY. Oh. (*Pause.*) And Jack didn't even apologise for that goose's biting and now Patty Brennan....

HELEN. Didn't I just say we fecking heard, sure?

BARTLEY. I thought Billy mightn't have heard.

HELEN. Sure Billy's busy thinking about his drowned mammy and daddy, Bartley. He doesn't need any of your days-old goose-news. Aren't you thinking about your drowned mammy and daddy, Billy?

BILLY. I am.

HELEN. You've never been on the sea since the day they died, have you, Billy? Aren't you too scared?

BILLY. I *am* too scared.

HELEN. What a big sissy-arse, eh, Bartley?

BARTLEY. Sure anybody with a brain is at least a biteen afraid of the sea.

HELEN. *I'm* not a biteen afraid of the sea.

BARTLEY. Well there you go, now. (*Billy laughs.*)

HELEN. Eh? Was that an insult?!

BARTLEY. How would that be an insult, saying you're not afraid of the sea?

HELEN. Why did Cripple Billy laugh so?

BARTLEY. Cripple Billy only laughed cos he's an odd boy. Isn't that right, Cripple Billy?

BILLY. It is, aye. Oh plain odd I am. (*Helen pauses, confused.*)

BARTLEY. Is it true you got nigh on a hundred pounds insurance when your mammy and daddy drowned, Billy?

BILLY. It is.

BARTLEY. Jeebies. Do ya still have it?