

THE CRIPPLE OF INISHMAAN

ACT ONE

Scene 1

A small country shop on the island of Inishmaan circa 1934. Door in right wall. Counter along back, behind which hang shelves of canned goods, mostly peas. An old dusty cloth sack hangs to the right of these, and to the left a doorway leads off to an unseen back room. A mirror hangs on the left wall and a table and chair are situated a few yards away from it. As the play begins, Eileen Osbourne, mid-sixties, is placing some more cans onto the shelves. Her sister Kate enters from the back room.

KATE. Is Billy not yet home?

EILEEN. Not yet is Billy home.

KATE. I do worry awful about Billy when he's late returning home.

EILEEN. I banged me arm on a can of peas worrying about Cripple Billy.

KATE. Was it your bad arm?

EILEEN. No, it was me other arm.

KATE. It would have been worse if you'd banged your bad arm.

EILEEN. It would have been worse, although it still hurt.

KATE. Now you have two bad arms.

EILEEN. Well, I have one bad arm and one arm with a knock.
 KATE. The knock will go away.
 EILEEN. The knock will go away.
 KATE. And you'll be left with the one bad arm.
 EILEEN. The one bad arm will never go away.
 KATE. Until the day you die.
 EILEEN. I should think about poor Billy, who has not only bad arms but bad legs too.
 KATE. Billy has a host of troubles.
 EILEEN. Billy has a hundred troubles.
 KATE. What time was this his appointment with McSharry was and his chest?
 EILEEN. I don't know what time.
 KATE. I do worry awful about Billy when he's late in returning.
 EILEEN. Already once you've said that sentence.
 KATE. Am I not allowed to repeat me sentences so when I'm worried.
 EILEEN. You *are* allowed.
 KATE. (Pause.) Billy may've fell down a hole with them feet of his.
 EILEEN. Billy has sense enough not to fall down holes, sure. That's more like something Bartley McCormick'd do is fall down holes.
 KATE. Do you remember the time Bartley McCormick fell down the hole?
 EILEEN. Bartley McCormick's an awful thick.
 KATE. He's either a thick or he doesn't look where he's going proper. (Pause.) Has the egg-man been?
 EILEEN. He has but he had no eggs.
 KATE. A waste of time him coming, so.
 EILEEN. Well it was nice of him to come and *not* have us waiting for eggs that would never arrive.
 KATE. If only Billy would pay us the same courtesy. Not with eggs but to come home quick and not have us worrying.
 EILEEN. Maybe Billy stopped to look at a cow like the other time.
 KATE. A fool waste of time that is, looking at cows.

6

EILEEN. If it makes him happy, sure, what harm? There are a hundred worse things to occupy a lad's time than cow-watching. Things would land him up in hell. Not just late for his tea.
 KATE. Kissing lasses.
 EILEEN. Kissing lasses.
 KATE. (Pause.) Ah, no chance of that with poor Billy.
 EILEEN. Poor Billy'll never be getting kissed. Unless it was be a blind girl.
 KATE. A blind girl or a backward girl.
 EILEEN. Or Jim Finnegan's daughter.
 KATE. She'd kiss anything.
 EILEEN. She'd kiss a bald donkey.
 KATE. She'd kiss a bald donkey. And she'd still probably draw the line at Billy. Poor Billy.
 EILEEN. A shame too.
 KATE. A shame too, because Billy does have a sweet face if you ignore the rest of him.
 EILEEN. Well he doesn't really.
 KATE. He has a bit of a sweet face.
 EILEEN. Well he doesn't really, Kate.
 KATE. Or his eyes, I'm saying. They're nice enough.
 EILEEN. Not being cruel to Billy but you'd see nicer eyes on a goat. If he had a nice personality you'd say all well and good, but all Billy has is he goes around staring at cows.
 KATE. I'd like to ask him one day what good he gets, staring at cows.
 EILEEN. Staring at cows and reading books then.
 KATE. No one'll ever marry him. We'll be stuck with him 'til the day we die.
 EILEEN. We will. (Pause.) I don't mind being stuck with him.
 KATE. I don't mind being stuck with him. Billy's a good gasar, despite the cows.
 EILEEN. I hope that the news from McSharry was nothing to worry o'er.
 KATE. I hope he gets home soon and not have us worrying. I do worry awful when Billy's late in returning. (The shop door opens and Johnnypattemake, an old man of about the same age as them, enters.)

7