

You Are Now Entering Free Derry

A 10-Minute Play in Two Scenes

By Dennis Corcoran, 2009

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CAST

SEÁN:	Young man, mid thirties
AISLING:	Young woman, mid thirties. Séan's wife and Cate's mother.
CATE:	Sean and Aisling's daughter, teen, 16 years old.
MAMIO:	Sean's mother, in her 80s. Fiesty, now mostly bed-ridden.
SOLDIERS 1, 2, 3:	British Army Paratroopers, part of occupation force.
LIEUTENANT:	Platoon leader, Paratroopers.

PRONUNCIATION GUIDE/GLOSSARY

Seán	Shawn	Irish for John
Aisling	Eye-sh-ling	Irish woman's name, means Vision
Mamio	Mammy-O	Common Irish nickname for "grandma"
Séamie	Shay-me	Nickname for Séamus, James in Irish
Craic	crack	Irish for fun, lots of laughs
Óg	oak	Irish for young
Aine	Ahn-nyah	Irish for Ann
Seán is ainm dom	Shawn iss annum due	Irish for My name is Séan
Maidin maith	Mah gin my	Good morning
Mo stóirín	Mow sh-tore-een	My sweet treasure
Bí curamach	Be cur ah mach	Be careful
Mo stór	Mow sh-tore	My treasure
Agus	Ah-gus	And
Ar aghaidh	Air eye	Onward
Chun bua	Hun boo-ah	To victory

SCENE

A house in the Bogside neighborhood of Derry, Northern Ireland. Aisling is standing at the sink washing dishes, wiping the counter, boiling water for tea, etc. It is Sunday morning, early. It is around 1972.

Seán bursts in from off stage thru front door, closes it, then rests, back to wall, breathing heavily, flushed, agitated tone.

AISSLING

[Startles. Turns from the sink toward the door when Seán bursts in]

Oh, geez, Seán! You scared the bejabbers out of me ...

[She sees he's upset, crosses, puts hands on shoulders, looks closely]

What's wrong, love?

SEÁN

[In excited, worried tone of voice]

The Brits are rounding up all the men in the Bogside - boys, too. I just saw 'em put Séamie Óg in an armored van and drive off.

Christ, Aisling ... Séamie's only 16 – same as our Cate.

AISSLING

[She takes Seán by the arm, leads him to the kitchen table]

Come on, Seán, sit down here. Have some tea. Maybe they won't bother us. You haven't done anything wrong now, have you?

[He sits. She hugs him from behind, then puts spoon in cup, gets kettle from stove, pours tea, returns kettle, then sits across from him]

SEÁN

I was just up at Matt's killing time, you know, just joking around ... couldn't be more harmless than that ...

AISSLING

Then you've nothing to worry about ... it's those damned IRA hooligans they're looking for ... Aw, Matt's not a part of that crew, is he?

SEÁN

I don't think so ... I doubt he'd tell me if he was ... (pause, sipping tea)

It's scary, though ... I mean, think about it ... you're minding your own business, enjoying some craic with friends, suddenly you're lifted off the streets, locked up in the barracks and them kicking the shite out of you ... and for what ?

AISSLING

Don't tell Mamio, please? It'll worry her sick ...

SEÁN

Hell, I'm more worried she'll bring the Army down on us ... she may be 85, bedridden and all, but she's a damned hell raiser if there ever was one ...

[pause]

but, you know, I'm proud of her ... she's a force to be reckoned with ...

Remember that day, her cooking at the stove, listening to the radio news ... back when the boys were blowing up the Brit's border posts ... her waving that wooden spoon round like a sabre and yelling, "Send them back to hell," ... "blow all their bloody arses back to where they come from ... "

AILSING

Me ma and da – God rest their souls - talked about her all the time ... Said she could start a revolution all on her own ...

Sure, you're right, though, Seán ... she's known in these parts ...

CATE

[Cate enters kitchen, just risen, a severe case of bed head, groans, scratches head, walks to table, sits ...]

Maidin maith ...

SEÁN

Maidin maith ... did you sleep well?

CATE

[Groans, goes to cupboard, get a cup, pours herself tea, sits again]

Yea, well enough. What's going on with you'se this morning ...? Up so early and all?

AISLING

They're raiding the Bogside again ...

CATE

It's constant these days, isn't it? A raid every two weeks ... the useless fecks ...

SEÁN

[snaps at her ... they've forbidden foul language in the house'

Éist do bhéal!

AISSLING

We were just reminiscing about Mamio ... recruiting for the IRA in the Civil War, always sticking her neck out over things ...

SEÁN

Speaking of which ... did you hear about Liam O'Donnell?

AISSLING

You mean him keeping a horse in his house? Up on the 2nd floor with him? Aine said she saw the damned animal with its head out the 2nd floor window the other day ... like some overgrown house cat ...

CATE

Aw, you gotta be kidding ... a horse in his house? On the 2nd floor? I've been up there. There's only his bedroom. I mean, it's a wee house. Is he ?

[Seán nods, then laughs heartily]

Aw, that's disgusting, da. I mean sure, he's a bit simple, but he's ...

[Two loud thuds on door of the house. They all tense immediately]

AISSLING

Oh, shite, Séan. Cate, into the back with you now! Hurry!

[Aisling jumps up, shoves Cate off into back room. Séan follows and shoves Aisling off stage, too ...]

SEÁN

Off with you, love. You and Cate stay in there with Mamio ... Be absolutely quiet, now ... and KEEP HER QUIET, you hear ...!

[Three rapid thuds on door. Séan walks to door, pauses, opens it. Three soldiers push their way in, rifles raised, pointed at Séan]

SEÁN

Lovely Sunday, eh, lads?

SOLDIER 2

Fuck you and your "lovely Sunday", you fuckin' mick ...

SEÁN

Me name's Séan. Séan is ainm dom to you ...

SOLDIER 1

Fuck you, mick. And if you spew out any more of that Irish shite, I'll bloody you good.

[They push Seán against kitchen wall. Soldier 1/2 go into bedroom.
Soldier 3 shoves rifle butt under Séan's chin, pressing hard into his throat.]

SEÁN

Hey, you can't

[Soldier 3 slams rifle butt into the left side of Séans face.]

SEÁN

Shite ... (grimaces in pain). What did ya ...

SOLDIER 3

Shut up, fuck ... I'd love an excuse to splatter your brains all over the wall ...

SEÁN

(yelling ...) Hey, me ma, wife and daughter are the only ones in there.

SOLDIER 3

Oh, and I suppose your Irish women-folk are all bloody saints, then ... right, mick?

[Séan begins speak. Soldier 3 repeatedly hits him in head / face with rifle butt. Séan falls, dazed. Soldiers 1/ 2 emerge dragging Mamio across floor by wrists. She's cursing them as they drag her ...]

MAMIO

Would you all rot in hell ...! That's all you'se are good for, beating old women ...

LIEUTENANT

[enters, looks around, then addresses Mamio]

Shut up, you old hag ... enough of your screechin' ...

[She stops yelling ... he addresses one of the soldiers dragging her

Leave the old bitch where she is ... we've no use for her ...

[he then turns to Seán ...]

As for you, you're coming back to the barracks with us ... we'll treat you to some of the Queen's hospitality ... *[with disgust]* ... see what kind of a rebel you are ...

[Addressing soldiers ...]

Put him in the truck ... and be quick about it – we've got a lot to do yet this morning ...

[They leave, Soldiers on either side of Séan, each holding an arm. Lights dim. Off stage Cate and Aisling have changed cloths. Mamio leaves as soon as lights dim. Cate and Aisling enter, take places at kitchen table. Dirty dinner plates and glasses set on table. Lights come up]

CATE

[Worried tone]

He's gone almost a month now, ma. What are they doing to him, do you think? He's going to come home sometime soon, isn't he?

AISSLING

[Reaching over, giving her a hug ...]

Your da will be fine, love ... He can take care of himself ... besides, they don't dare hurt him, he's done nothing wrong. I'm thinking they're just holding the lot of them 'til they figure out who's IRA and who's not. Your da'll be OK, love. He's a good man ...

[Mamio enters from bedroom ... wearing shawl, walking with a limp, slowly ...]

MAMIO

Maidin maith, mo stórin ...

CATE AND AISSLING

[They speak at same time ...]

Morning, Mamio ...

MAMIO

[Mamio sits at table, she has a black balaclava - ski mask - in her hand ... Aisling pours tea for her ... She lays balaclava on table in front of Cate. Cate and Aisling both startle, stiffen ...]

And I wouldn't suppose this belongs to either of you'se, eh?

AISSLING

Where'd you find that?

[Mamio is silent ...]

AISSLING (cont.)

Cate, where'd she find that?

[Cate doesn't look up or answer ...]

AISLING (cont.)

Oh, no. No NO! No, Cate ... you've not joined the IRA have you? Aw, tell me that's not so.

[Aisling stands at table, horror on her face ... looking at Cate. Cate and Mamio both looking down at table ... silence.]

MAMIO

Leave 'er be, Aisling, love. She's doing what needs to be done ...

AISLING

Oh, Christ ... Needs to be done? Fighting and killing...? ... She's just 16 ...

[turning toward Cate]

AISLING (cont.)

Cate, love, you're a beautiful young women ... with everything ahead of you ...

CATE

[Cate jumps up, angrily ... turns to Aisling ...]

Everything ahead of me, is it? BULLSHIT! Me da's locked up. For all we know, they've killed him already ... or worse ...

[... tears in her eyes, voice cracking ...]

CATE (cont.)

Nóra's da is in there, too. So are a lot of the other men in the Bogside. And some of the boys, too. Séamie's not come out ... Paddy's in there ... Liam ...

How can I sit around here like this, doing nothing, when the whole fucking world is coming down around me?

[All are silent ... Cate staring angrily, intently at Aisling ... says, still yelling ...]

CATE (cont.)

Will you answer me that, ma?

[Aisling bursts into tears, collapses back into her chair, puts her head down on table sobbing ... Cate eases up, leans over back of her chair, exhausted ... Mamio looks up at Cate, then at Aisling ...]

MAMIO

Aisling, love. Be easy ...

We women have to grow up fast ... It's always been that way ... you've been lucky, but look around you ... Seán's gone ... they're beseiging us in our own homes ... we've got no choice but to fight back ... in better times, Cate'd have a different life, maybe the one you hoped for her ... but not here ... not today ...

Cate's just doing what many of us had to do ...

AISSLING

[Sobbing]

Mamio ... Mamio ... I've lost Seán ... no telling if I'll ever see him again, or in what shape he'll be in ... I can't lose me Cate, too ... (turning to Cate) ... I can't lose you, Cate ... you're all I have ... and for what ...? This isn't our fight ...?

CATE

Whose fight is it, then?

Don't you see? ... I have to help on the barricades. Da would be there if he could ... Other girls are out there, day and night, one or two even younger than me ... I'm doing this for us, ma, for you ... and Mamio ... and da ... and Aine and Liam and Séamie and

AISSLING

They'll kill you, love ... They don't care that you're just a young girl ... Don't do this, please ... Cate, please ...

CATE

Ma, I gotta go ... gotta get down to the wall ...

[Aisling pulls away, rises ... backs up to sink, face in hands ...]

CATE (cont.)

Ma ... Ma

[She walks over to Aisling ... Aisling raises her head, looks at Cate ... Cate gives her a tight, long hug ...]

AISSLING

Don't go, Cate ... please ...

CATE

I have to, ma. But we're going to win ... you'll see. There's no turning back this time I'll not live like you and da and Mamio have had to ... In America, they're marching – hundreds of thousands are marching all over the South ... don't you see, ma ... it's our time ... we have to do this ...

We're going to take back our land, bit by bit ... have you seen the wall over on Lecky Road? "YOU ARE NOW ENTERING FREE DERRY". That's us, ma ... FREE DERRY ...

MAMIO

She's right, Aisling ... There are times when you have to stand ... no matter the cost ... No matter your age ... no matter man or woman ...

CATE

Give me a kiss, ma. I gotta go ...

[they kiss ... Cate crosses to table, picks up balaclava ... she runs over to Mamio and gives her a kiss and hug ... turns again toward Aisling ...]

AISSLING

[Aisling and Cate walk toward each other, they meet in middle, embrace]

Cate, love ... please ...

CATE

I'll be back tonight, ma. Promise ...

AISSLING

God keep you safe ...

[Cate walks toward the door ...]

MAMIO

God speed, love. Stand tall ... We're here praying for you ... Bí curamach, mo stór ... Agus, ar aghaidh chun bua! (she raises her fist into the air, a show of defiance ...)

[Cate pulls balaclava over her head, runs out door ... Mamio and Aisling embrace,... Mamio strokes Aisling's hair. They stand like this for a long pause. Then there's a sudden burst of machine gun fire ... Cate's voice is heard making a loud, horrifying yell of pain ...]

AISSLING

Oh, Jesus, no ...! (Mamio holds Aisling, she sobs, lights to black.)

THE END