

**THE DYING REBEL**  
**By Dennis Corcoran**

## SCENE

Aine, “Annie”, is outside a book shop in city center, Derry, Ireland, looking in the window. She paces slowly by the windows scanning the titles and book jackets. She has a definite limp, pain evident in her body movement. She’s thin. Average height, long hair, now graying but obviously once dark and beautiful. With her is a young girl, a teen. They hug, put their heads together every so often as they look in the window. They enjoy each other’s company – like best friends or sisters or a mother and daughter. Little laughs. Smiles, at times. At times, frowns, but mutual, as though they share each other’s thoughts.

It’s a cold. The stone of the building, the streets, of the recent rain in puddles on the walkway and road, the grey of the sky, all paint a somber picture which gives focus to, frames, if you will, the gentle laughter and warmth which the woman and girl share as they window shop.

Across the street, a man in his 50s walks along not heeding the woman and girl. His head is down, arms tight to his body to protect him from the cold. He, too, is walking slowly, seemingly lost in thought.

He stops at a bus stop and turns to wait, now glancing across the street, then up the street in search of the bus, then across again. His curiosity is aroused by the woman and girl. He catches a glimpse of the woman’s face and seems to recognize her. He catches another glimpse is sure he knows her. He pauses, pulling something from memory. At that moment, she notices the man too. At first she glares – who is this rude lout. Then she realizes she may know him. Slowly, they each come to confirm in their own minds that this person across from them is someone from their past, someone special, someone long gone from their lives but never far from their thoughts.

He begins to cross the street. She turns to the girl, whispers something to her. The girl glances at the man then turns and walks away down the street. The woman then begins to approach the man who has stopped at the curb.

As they come within speaking distance, they each pause, study each others’ faces for a moment. Words seem impossible to utter. Then she speaks, hesitantly at first, then more assured.

## CAST

**Aine “Annie” McGinley**  
**Andrew O’Doherty**

Woman, in her 50s.  
Man, in his 50s.

**AINE**

Andrew ...? [beat] Andrew ... ?

**ANDREW**

Annie ... it's you ... it's really you?

**AINE**

Oh, my god. *[They approach and embrace. She then exclaims.]* You've no hair! Bald as a stone! You'd frighten off cats with the looks of ya.

**ANDREW**

*[Andrew laughs and says with bravado]* Well, and the same to ya, love ...

**AINE**

Didn't granny Doherty teach you any manners? Commentin' on a woman's hair, especially after it's gone a bit gray and all?

**ANDREW**

If that was me worst breach of wisdom come from me mammy's knee, I'd be a bloody professor ...

**AINE**

Oh, right! And we both know the likelihood of that situation!

**ANDREW**

Geez, Aine ... what is it? 35 years or so ...? God ... *[steps back, looks at her]* Lord, me heart's pounding in me chest like a bloody school boy.

**AINE**

Mine, too ... we best act our age. We were just kids back then. Got a few years on ourselves now.

**ANDREW**

Yeah, we do. *[long beat]* I remember the first time we talked like it was this morning. God, I'd had my eye on you for months but never could muster a word.

**AINE**

Yeah, big, brave rebel - couldn't even talk to a wee lass.

**ANDREW**

Wee lass, me arse! I remember you hurling them pavers - geez, like a pro! You had a hell of an arm on you, Annie McGinley. Remember taking down those two paras at the barricade near Lecky Road? [*They laugh*]

And you had a beautiful arse on you, too, if you don't mind me saying.

**AINE**

I'll slap you backwards, Mr. O'Doherty, if you don't keep a civil tongue in your head.

**ANDREW**

I don't know if it was the way you hurled 'em pavers or the way you swung them hips of yours but I know when I'd see you, I'd damn near swallow me own tongue.

**AINE**

Is that why you never said a word? I damn near crippled me self trying to get your attention and you some god damned mute staring like a deer in the headlights.

**ANDREW**

Now look who's being uncivil? Half the boys joined up back then just to get a shot at ya. As soon as word got out Annie McGinley was IRA, we had to beat recruits away with hurlies - especially the Gallagher brothers. Christ, do you remember the Gallagher brothers?

**AINE**

Remember 'em? How could I forget 'em? They made me life hell. Me on the barricades, gas cylinders flying like hail stones, and those two grabbin' at me arse! I walloped Jimmie a good one, one night. Christ, us trying to throw the Brits out and all he's got on his mind is getting in me pants.

**ANDREW**

I took care of them for you. I'll bet you never knew that?

**AINE**

Oh, Jesus, no. What did you do to them? Andrew - what'd you do?

**ANDREW**

Nothing much. Just told 'em you were my girl, so if they knew what was good for them, they'd best back off and leave you alone.

**AINE**

So, you're running around Derry telling everyone **but me** we're an item?

**ANDREW**

Just defending your honor.

**AINE**

Honor, me arsel!

**ANDREW**

I'd say more admired than honored.

**AINE**

*[They laugh]* Look at the two of us - you bald as a stone and me gimpy and old. We should act our age.

**ANDREW**

Speak for yourself, Ms. McGinley. I'll act any way I'm able, as long as I'm able, if you don't mind.

**AINE**

And I'd expect no less of ya, Andrew O'Doherty. *[Long beat]*

**ANDREW**

*[pointing to a bench]* Let's us old folks take a wee breather here, eh?  
*[they sit, long beat]* So, how have you've been, Annie? God, I've thought about you so many times over the years.

**AINE**

I heard you went to America when you got out? I see your brother Paul now and again. He says you never were one for the writing.

**ANDREW**

Aye, never was. Didn't call much neither. Couldn't, really. For a while there I wasn't legal - figured a call from me was a kiss of death.

**AINE**

Heard you married an American girl, couple of kids. Made a good life for yourself over there, have ya?

**ANDREW**

I suppose.

**AINE**

You don't sound convinced.

**ANDREW**

It's just that I miss this place.

**AINE**

You've got to be out of your mind. You've missed nothing here, be sure of that. *[beat]* You know Martin's a big shot these days – for all the difference that makes.

**ANDREW**

Yeah, I talked to him yesterday. Good seeing him again *[long beat]* America's fine. People are spoiled, though, you know. Wouldn't know hard times from a howitzer - bitching about everything all the time. And religious bigots – Jesus, Annie – the ones there make this crowd look like pikers. But I got a good job and a decent-enough place. People treat me OK. *[looks at her with a big grin and slaps her on the thigh]* Some of 'em even say I'm some kind of fucking hero – now, how about that?

**AINE**

Always said there was something wrong with them Yanks. *[long beat]*

**AINE (cont.)**

I had a real thing for you back then, you know. But a hero - that's a laugh. I did everything but strip naked to get your attention. What a waste - just another shit-for-brains Fenian bastard, as best as I could tell.

**ANDREW**

I miss this place, Annie. Sometimes it gets real bad. I don't let on, but I've cried many a time, missing me Ma and Da, lifting a few with me mates. It isn't the same there. This is home, always was, always will be.

**AINE**

I know. As hard as it's been at times, I've never wanted to leave. I hate this shit hole but I can't imagine living anywhere else. *[laugh, a pause]* Dominic still keeps a horse in his house - can you believe that? He's well into his 60s and not a jot more sane today than he ever was.

**ANDREW**

*[laughing, then somber]* Yeah. No one back there understands that - how I could be missing people like Dominic, places like O'Donnell's and all. Honest to god, Annie, it tears at me innards sometimes.

**AINE**

But you got a wife and kids, no stench of peat hanging in the air, sunshine - yeah, tell me about that, huh? Remember how we used to talk about going on vacation to Spain when all this was over?

**ANDREW**

Aye, I sure do. When we were victorious. Free. Off to sunny Spain to bask in the sun and glory. God, we were fucking nuts then.

**AINE**

Nuts, maybe, yeah, but that kept me going a long while in there ...

**ANDREW**

Seriously?

**AINE**

Yeah. I dreamed of you all the time. I'd picture us in some quaint mountaintop village, sun pouring down on us like honey, air sweet with the smell of olive and cedar, us drinking some rich red wine, making love right there, bare-ass naked, in the open air, in the town square - sometimes just us, sometimes others around, not paying us any attention, just enjoying themselves, maybe a bit envious. I'd imagine at times we were so much in love – such passion, oh my god the passion. Damn near takes me breath away just thinking about it - sharing everything – everything. *[long beat]*

**ANDREW**

Jesus ... your mates ever get tired of you moaning? *[feigning passion]*  
Oh, Andrew ... Andrew.

**AINE**

*[Angrily]* Fuck you, Andrew O'Doherty ...

**ANDREW**

I didn't mean nothing, sorry. I'm just saying, in the Kesh you'd best not come off too amorous - made some of the lads a bit nervous and all.

**AINE**

*[long beat]* Did you ever think of me in there?

**ANDREW**

Christ, Annie, I thought of you all the time. Non-stop. But it got so bad - I couldn't. Made me weak and there was no room for that. If they even smelled weakness on you, they poured it on. *[long beat]* Let's don't talk about that, ok? I don't want to talk about that.

*[long beat]*

And yourself? Is that your daughter over there who's been so kind as to pretend she's not dying of curiosity all this time?

**AINE**

No, that's me niece, Nuala. *[long beat]* I never married. You didn't know that, eh?

**ANDREW**

No. I asked about you when I got out - wanted to come see you but the Brits wouldn't have let me in. Besides, if I'd come, it'd be worse for you.

**AINE**

Yeah, I know. I heard you were out. I hoped, prayed, I'd see you come through those doors. But I knew you couldn't.

**ANDREW**

When I left for America, I thought I'd be gone just a year or two. Pretty naïve, huh? I'm not legal here now - got a fake passport.

**AINE**

Shit, Andrew. You can't be caught. You gotta be careful, even now.

**ANDREW**

*[long beat]* Have you waited all these years?

**AINE**

For you? Don't flatter yourself, Mr. O'Doherty. I've had plenty of suitors, thank you kindly. And some very substantial offers, if I do say so me self.

**ANDREW**

*[boyish grin]* None quite as engaging as me own self here, though, eh?

**AINE**

Please - let's don't tease about this. Fact is, yeah, I've never gotten over you. Sure, I've had lots of loves - tried, anyway. I don't know how to describe it, exactly, but I left something in there. Something died or withered away. I don't know - but I've not felt love or passion since.

**ANDREW**

I understand.

**AINE**

Do you? Do you really?

**ANDREW**

Yeah. It's more than missing Ireland and Derry and me family and you ...

**AINE**

Me? You've missed me?

**ANDREW**

Oh, god, Annie, have I missed you? Jesus, you've never been out of me thoughts. It's not that I don't love me family - it's just - 10 years in the Kesh. I've not felt at home, at peace, the kind-of feelings we had back then. I remember as vivid as this moment the taste of your lips, the smell of your hair, so sweet, the feel of your skin, so soft. Oh, god, Annie, all I ever wanted was to live with you, our kids - yeah **our** kids - in a nice house, a job.

I haven't felt anything real since the cages. Something died there, over the mirrors, hunger strikes. Not me body – but something inside.

**AINE**

Can I hold you?

**ANDREW**

I'm scared.

**AINE**

Me, too, every day. [*they embrace, long beat*] I was on hunger strike.

**ANDREW**

I know. I remember the army council holding a meeting - called it off. I was so happy. I was so scared for you. It's no way to die, Annie.

**AINE**

They did the same to us as you only, maybe worse. There wasn't a part of us they didn't violate.

**ANDREW**

Did they rape you?

**AINE**

Not like that, not in a sexual way. *[long beat]* I still feel 'em shoving their batons into ... into every ... place ... *[long beat]* They crippled me.

**ANDREW**

I noticed the limp.

**AINE**

Worse. Any thought of being touched in a loving ... *[tears]* ... there are no loving ways. God *[wipes eyes, stiffens, long beat]* by the time I got out, I couldn't have kids, that was all ruined, tore up. I couldn't love a man. I wanted to – tried, but ...

I heard you'd gone to America. Figured you'd never come back. Not much else to say between that day and this. *[long beat]*

**ANDREW**

Why did you do it? Join up?

**AINE**

You know why. *[long beat]* But that's ancient history. Times have changed. People say things are better now – bullshit. The war's over, and it's not likely to start up again - but you and me, people like us, we're part of a old story no one wants to hear. There's plenty of fight in me, but it's meanness I feel now, coldness, not love and that scares me. I don't want to become the person I see in the mirror.

**ANDREW**

I have to go, Annie - the fake passport. And I want to visit me Ma and Da's graves before I leave.

**AINE**

I'll remember this day - and cherish it, Andrew O'Doherty. I've not had a sweet memory since the day that iron door closed - not til this. Now I have a fresh one - I'll carry it here *[she touches her heart, her breast]* to me grave.

**ANDREW**

Annie, please, stop.

**AINE**

*[They stand, hug, kiss ... a short, timid kiss. They hug again, a long, warm, tight embrace. They look into each other's eyes.]*

**ANDREW**

I've got to go ...

**AINE**

I know ... *[He turns, takes steps, turns again, gazes at Aine]*

**ANDREW**

Do you have any regrets?

**AINE**

*[long beat]* Will you visit my grave?

**ANDREW**

God willing.

**AINE**

Then, God speed.

*[Andrew exists the stage, lights begin to fade, a spot on Annie, who follows Andrew with her eyes. The spot slowly fades to black.]*

**END OF PLAY**