From ‘Dancing at Lughnasa’ by Brian Friel

When I was sixteen I remembered slipping out one Sunday night. It was this time of year, the beginning of August - and Bernie and I met at the gate of the workhouse and the pair of us off to dance and Ardstraw, I was being pestered by fellow called Tim Carlin at the time but it was really Brian McGuinness that I was that I was keen on. Remember Brian with the white hands on the longest eyelashes you ever saw? But of course he was crazy about Bernie. Anyhow the two boys took us out on the bars of their bikes and the four of us headed to Ardstraw fifteen miles each way. If daddy had known may he rest in peace ....

And at the end of the night there was a competition for the best Military Two-Step, and it was down to three couples the local pair from Ardstraw, wee Timmy and meself, he was up to there on me and Brian and Bernie. And they were just so beautiful together, so stylish you couldn't take your eyes off them. People just stop dancing and gazed at them. And when the judges announced the winners- they were probably blind drunk. Naturally the local couple came first and Timmy myself came second and Brian and Bernie came third. Poor Bernie was stunned, she couldn't believe it. Couldn't talk, wouldn't speak to any of us and the rest of the night, wouldn't even cycle home with us. She was right, they should have won, and they were just so beautiful together.

And that's the last time I saw Brian McGuinness, remember Brian with.... and the next thing I heard he'd left for Australia. She was right to be angry Bernie, I know it wasn't fair. I mean they must have been blind drunk those judges whoever they were.

From ‘Playboy of the Western World’ by J M Synge

Up to the day I killed my father, there wasn't a person in Ireland knew the kind I was, and I there drinking, waking, eating, sleeping, a quiet, simple poor fellow with no man giving me heed. And I after toiling, moiling, digging, dodging from the dawn till dusk with never a sight of joy or sport saving only when I'd be abroad in the dark night poaching rabbits on hills, for I was a devil to poach. I'd be as happy as the sunshine of St. Martin's Day, watching the light passing the north or the patches of fog, till I'd hear a rabbit starting to screech and I'd go running in the furze. Then when I'd my full share I'd come walking down where you'd see the ducks and geese stretched sleeping on the highway of the road, and before I'd pass the dunghill, I'd hear himself snoring out, a loud lonesome snore he'd be making all times, the while he was sleeping, and he a man 'd be raging all times, the while he was waking, like a gaudy officer you'd hear cursing and damning and swearing oaths after drinking for weeks, rising up in the red dawn, or before it maybe, and going out into the yard as naked as an ash tree in the moon of May, and shying clods against the visage of the stars till he'd put the fear of death into the banbhs and the screeching sows. He'd sons and daughters walking all the great states and territories of the world, and not a one of them, to this day, but would say their seven curses on him, and they rousing up to let a cough or sneeze, maybe, in the deadness of the night. I'm telling you, he never gave peace to any, saving when he'd get two months or three, or be locked in the asylums for battering peelers or assaulting men. It was a bitter life he led me till I did up a Tuesday and halve his skull.
Monologues From Plays

Chatroom by Enda Walsh

I’m six years old and my three brothers are going away with my mother for the weekend ... a treat for something or other. My dad’s staying behind and my mother says that he’s to look after me. That it would be a chance for us to bond. So they’re gone and me and my dad are sat at the kitchen table looking at each other. Like we’re looking at each other for the first time, you know. He asks me what I want to do, and straight away I say I want to go and see the penguins in the zoo. When I was six

I was going through some mad penguin obsession. I used to dress up as a penguin at dinner times and always ask for fish fingers ... stuff like that. If it wasn’t penguins it was cowboys. Cowboys were cool. A penguin dressed as a cowboy was always a step too far, funnily enough! So we go to the zoo and I wear my cowboy outfit ... get my gun and holster, my hat and all that. We get the bus and it’s sort of funny to see my dad on the bus and away from the house. We start to have this chat about when I was born and what a really fat baby I was ... but how after a day or so I stopped eating any food and everyone was dead worried.

That he was very worried. That he was so happy when I got better and they could take me home. We’re in the zoo, and I go straight to the penguins. Standing in my cowboy gear ... looking at the penguins ... having such a great chat to my dad on the bus ... it was a perfect childhood day. He lets go of my hand and says he’ll be back with my choc-ice. And he goes. He’s gone. I’m happy looking at the penguins, but it’s an hour since he’s left and I go to look for him. I’m walkin’ about the zoo, and I’m not worried yet.

And I don’t talk to anyone. I leave the zoo and I go to the bus stop we got off at earlier. I get on the bus. I tell the driver my address. He asks where my parents are and I say they’re at home waiting for me. I stay on the bus in the seat nearest the driver. After a while that we end up at the end of our street and the driver says, ‘So long, cowboy.’ [Laughs a little] He was nice. I get the key from under the mat and open the door and go inside the house. And I’m alone there and I suppose I still think my dad will be coming back soon. I take off my cowboy clothes and hang up my hat and holster. It being Saturday night I have a bath and get into my pyjamas because my dad would have liked that.

I have a glass of milk and some biscuits and watch Stars in Their Eyes ‘cause that was his favourite programme on the telly. [Slight pause] It’s getting dark outside and I start to worry. The house is feeling too big so I get my quilt and take it into the bathroom and lock the bathroom door and it feels safer with the door locked so I stay in there. And he’s not coming back. He’s never coming back. I stay there for two days.

‘Thirst’ by Eugene O’Neill

You remember when the crash came? We were all in the salon. You were singing—a Cockney song I think? You were very beautiful. I remember a woman on my right saying: “How pretty she is! I wonder if she is married.” Strange how some idiotic remark like that will stick in one’s brain when all else is vague and confused. A tragedy happens—we are in the midst of it—and one of our clearest remembrances afterwards is a remark that might have been overheard in any subway train. You were very beautiful. I was looking at you and wondering what kind of a woman you were. You know I had never met you personally—only seen you in my walks around the deck. Then came the crash—that horrible dull crash. We were all thrown forward on the floor of the salon; then screams, oaths, fainting women, the hollow boom of a bulkhead giving way. Then I was on deck fighting in the midst of the crowd.

Somehow I got into a boat—but it was overloaded and was swamped immediately. I swam to another boat. They beat me off with the oars. That boat too was swamped a moment later. And then the gurgling, choking cries of the drowning! Something huge rushed by me in the water leaving a gleaming trail of phosphorescence. A woman near me with a life belt around her gave a cry of agony and disappeared—then I realized—sharks! I became frenzied with terror. I swam. I beat the water with my hands. The ship had gone down. I swam and swam with but one idea—to put all that horror behind me. I saw something white on the water before me. I clutched it—climbed on it. It was this raft. You and he were on it. I fainted. The whole thing is a horrible nightmare in my brain—but I remember clearly that idiotic remark of the woman in the salon. What pitiful creatures we are!
Monologues From Plays

From ‘Bold Girls’ by Rhona Munro

It was a terrible wet day when I got married. A wet grey day in 1974 and I couldn’t get to the church for the roadblocks. I was standing on my step there with my mammy screaming at me to come in before I got my good white dress dirty from the rain.... only I was wetter from crying than the clouds could make me because Michael Donnelly was the only boy I’d ever wanted for myself and me just seventeen, he was the only boy that I had ever wanted and it was still a miracle to me he wanted me back... but then I’ve always had to work hardest of believe in miracles, and anyway I knew they could only fall in the laps of the pure in heart ......now it seems certain to me that a pile of Brits and a roadblock would lose me and Michael altogether...... for why would he wait an hour or more at the church when he’s that smile on him that made you feel wicked and glad about it, and that look to him that caught your eye when he was walking down the streets, just with the way he put his feet down, bold and happy together; and those hands they were so warm and gentle you hardly worried where he was putting them. And why would a man like that wait two hours in a cold church for a wee girl in a damp wedding dress?

And my mammy is trying to pull my daddy in ‘cause he’s shouting at the Brits, saying this was the greatest day of his daughter's life and hadn’t they just spoiled it all together? Then this big Saracen pulls up and they’ve all jumped out my mammy’s going to scream when they do not offer us an escort through the roadblock? So that was my bridal car to the wedding, a big Saracens tank full of Brits all grinning and offering us fags and as pleased as punch with themselves for the favour they were doing us. I hardly dared look at them I was certain the big hulk sitting next to me was one of them that had lifted Michael just the year before. But oh they were as nice as anything.

There were wanted men at my wedding and sure I’d grey hairs even before I was married. And then I was married and Michael brought me here and the rain stopped it, it even looked like the sun had come out. And I stared and stared, just standing at the top of the Park in my wee white dress and that’s still half soaked it felt like we’d won through everything, the weather and the roadblocks and the Brits and there was never going to be bad times again..... because I was never going to be without him again. Well I was just seventeen after all.

Anne Curtis_ Just Above Dogs

It’s been years since I was home. Since I walked out of Horan’s bar and stood by the shore, the damp sod leaking through me boots, the rain spitting on my jacket thinking of all the people like me who'd sailed away and the price we’d paid for that leaving. I thought of the building work in England that wouldn’t happen in Ireland. And do you know what I thought? ‘I thought that this is mine’.

Understand it isn’t the work on site that’s the hardest, you get used to being cold, tired, aching from back breaking work. Nor is it waiting at the counter till the landlord decides whether you’ve bought enough stout for him to cash your pay cheque. Tisn’t picking yourself up from the ground after fellas with too much in them have thrown punches at you because you’re from Cork and they’re from.... Kerry, Clare, Limerick anywhere that you’re not … I tell you Frank these things are mine. These are the things that keep me alive, that tell me in the dark of the tunnels and the cramp of the footings that I come from somewhere that I belong.

It’s the Sunday afternoons that kill you...when the work stops, when there’s no site, no pub, no fellas to talk to. Just yourself in a room or launderette, listening to time passing, thinking back and wondering what is happening everywhere else. Working all over but belonging nowhere. Watching as the walls move in and then out again as if your breathing and theirs are one...just you, the walls and the tick and the tock of the clock. There’s no outside...no fields...no skies......no breath of wind .... Nothing that’s yours.

A lot of fellas made the journey to this country and many have done well. You might say that fellas like me are of a different kind and maybe you’re right. But I’ll tell you one thing. One thing. There’s not a man who walked a ferryboat gangway who’d lay mortar on bricks to build walls that would imprison a fellow Irishman whose only crime was his poverty. Don’t forget that Frank? (Mikey exits.)