

# Willie and Maud

An original  
screenplay by  
*Trevor Griffiths*

*Trevor Griffith's two volumes of Theatre Plays are published by Spokesman, together with his celebrated screenplays of the life of Thomas Paine, These Are the Times, and of D. H. Lawrence's Sons and Lovers. A new volume of screenplays, including 'Willie and Maud', is forthcoming.*

black

MAUD'S VOICE: *My dear Willie, What on earth is going on? I hear from my publisher in London you have had my manuscript for months and will neither give your consent to its publication nor furnish him with reasons why you object. Can this be true? I know things have been cool between us for a long time now and I have been perhaps too ready to lambast you in public for your increasingly appalling politics ...*

*fade up*

**title:** *red on black: 'Willie and Maud'*

MAUD'S VOICE: (Continues) *... but I have never ever thought of you as other than a dear and true friend. Am I mistaken? Please tell me how we might resolve this matter. To you it may seem a literary event of little moment, but it is my story and I wish to see it published and I hate the thought you may be playing games with it out of some whim or other.*

black

*fade up*

**caption:** none of this happened ...

black

MAUD'S VOICE: *I must have answer soon. Tell me you will help. Always your friend, Maud.*

**caption:** *Dublin Bay, summer, 1938*

*becoming*

**a long white room** *salmoned by dipping sun; plaster walls hung with occult symbols and scrolled texts, a stand of tibetan windbells, a burmese gong, african masks, open windows catching sea sound, a simple desk and chair, a divan bed, persian rugs on plain wood floor. A man's voice intones a not quite intelligible mantra over and over. We reach*

**Willie**, *tranced, crosslegged on a rug, a single red rose in his hands, face to the sun, at 71 his own Prospero, the mantra pulsing up from him like throatsong: my maudmy maudmy maud my maud ...*

*the room* again; photographs, portraits, sketches, letters, candles, incense burners and hands of cards dealt from the tarot encircle the squatting **Willie** and pen him to the wall at his back.

*his face*, eyes in shadow, most else below blooded and bruised by a sinking sun. The mantra breaks to silence. The eyes blink open, probe deep into the thickening light.

*the windows*, afire with light, the mantra resumed, stronger, more insistent. Something begins to form in the windowed effulgence, not quite shape and not yet colour; an immanence.

*a large rear garden* terrace, evening, alive with kids at play and grown-ups at ease around the place; and several monkeys, a huge irish wolfhound, rabbits, a donkey, a goat and a wilderness of cats being themselves everywhere. We reach

**Maud**, 70 or so, tall and beautiful still, at a trestle table a touch apart from her family, an inveterate smoker's cigarette in her lips, revising a typed manuscript, voicing phrases as she goes. Across the table, her 4 year old grandson **Tiernan** crayons a bold black and red picture of her. She looks up suddenly, hearing something somewhere.

*the room* again; **Willie's** face, peering, beginning to see, his hand stretching towards the light, opening slowly, offering up the dark red rose it holds;

*the windows*, the vague figure forming of a tall iconically attractive **Maud** in her Cathleen Ní Houlihan incarnation forty years back.

*garden again*, **Maud** scanning the trees for the source of the sound, a strange soughing mymaudmymaud.

TIERNAN: (from nowhere) Willie!

She frowns at the still crayoning boy across the table.

MAUD: What did you say?

The lad looks up, face blank, unaware he spoke. His mother **Kit** leaves the house for the terrace, an envelope held aloft in her hand.

KIT: For you, Maud. And by hand, by God.

*room again*, **Willie's** face, a slow smile of achievement in the darkening silence. The door creaks open, **George Hyde-Lees**, his wife, mid-forties, stands in the doorway at the head of the stairs, dressed for off.

GEORGE: Willie my car's here I shall need to leave if I'm to catch my boat ...  
(His head turns slowly to take her in) I've left lists everywhere, Mr Sweeney has agreed to do for you while I'm away.

WILLIE: ... Mr Sweeney ..? Where are you going?

GEORGE: (patient, measured) ... Willie, I'm going to visit my parents, in London, not my idea, darling, yours ... You dreamt they were in danger ..? (He's creaking to his feet) You promised me you wouldn't use the lotus position any more.

WILLIE: Leave me if you must, but do not I beg you leave me with that ... (Car-horn from below) ... Sweeney ...

*He waves a hand for emphasis, she sees the rose in it.*

GEORGE: (*Casual, threading gloves on*) ... Who is it he's to collect at the station tomorrow by the way? Come.

*She holds out a cheek for his lips, he approaches with care, kisses her cheek, then her neck.*

GEORGE: There's nothing in the diary.

WILLIE: It'll be some student, I imagine. Slipped my mind. (*Nuzzles her neck*) I hate you being away.

GEORGE: (*soft*) Will I stay?

WILLIE: (*eventually*) No no, off you go. I'm just a foolish fond old man. But hurry back.

GEORGE: Take your pills. Promise?

*He nods. She blows him a kiss from the door. Closes it behind her. He dwells for a time, resummoning the moment. Crosses to his desk. Lays the rose on it, across a photograph of Maud at 17 at St Patrick's Hall in her coming-out gown. Her father Tommy in dress uniform, the Prince of Wales and his son Clarence, make up the formal shot.*

**garden;** *Maud* stands by a clump of trees reading the note.

WILLIE'S VOICE: (*Over*) *My Dear Maud, Your letter caught up with me here at the Summer House en route for France. Pack a weekend bag and take the four o'clock to Howth Station on Friday, a car will be there to meet you, it's the only way if we're to resolve this matter of your book before I'm gone...*

*The child calls her to look, the finished picture held up in his hands: the tall stick-figure grandmother in black stands half as tall again as her red house.*

**Howth Station,** *platform; a straggle of holidaymakers leaving the fuming train. The figure of Maud appears apparitionally through the clearing steam; tall, erect, in black habit and veil, her bags at her feet.*

WILLIE'S VOICE: (*Continuing over*) ... *I have wanted to see you for a long time now but ... I am still Yours Ever, Willie.*

*A short odd donkey of a man, boots and waistcoat, clatters up to meet her.*

SWEENEY: (*Heavy Sligo*) Sweeney himself, sent to serve the Royal Queen of Eireann, this way if ye will, Your Holiness.

*He gathers her bags, leads her off to the ticket-barrier, calling for those ahead to give way. Word ripples around the place, folk begin to surround her, keen to press the famous flesh.*

**upper windows** overlooking the sea road, a gleaming, spruced-up **Willie** watching and waiting. A battered '28 Model A sways and chatters round the bend of the hill, **Willie** edges back into shadow, eyes bright in the dark of the room.

**car,** rattling up to the headland, the sea a dark glisten beyond. The house ahead begins to loom. **Maud** hangs on grimly.

SWEENEY: (*Crazy at the wheel*) So will ye stay the whole weekend, Your Grace?  
My wife'll be cookin', she'll need to know, we do for the Great Man when  
the lady's away.

MAUD: (*Bumped and banged*) George is away? He made no mention.

SWEENEY: Packed off to London like a piece of luggage last Wednesday, didn't I  
take her meself for the train. Yer Man's a pot cat stuffed with secrets, so he is.  
(*Swinging the wheel*) Hold tight to your teeth there, milady!

*High shot of the car screeching from the road into the grounds of the headland  
house and clattering eventually to a stop by a rear door.*

*Half-heard, at distance, as **Sweeney** helps her out and shepherds her inside:*

SWEENEY: And here y'are, safe and sound, Your Worship. I'll set ye in the library  
and let yer Man know you're come ... Mind your step there.

*The shot angles upwards, locates **Willie** at his window, watching everything.  
Voices fade, a door's pulled to down below. The figure at the window fades back  
in to the room. Silence.*

*A Burmese gong begins to hum, slow, low, resonant.*

**Titles end.**

*Fade to black.*

**INT. DAY. THE YEATS' SUMMER HOUSE; BOOK-LINED FRONT ROOM.**

*A Siamese cat in gleaming black ceramic stares out from the mantelpiece in the  
half-bright room. The gong hums on, somewhere above.*

*Maud stands at the mantel, cloak discarded, gazing at the pot cat. Sounds of a  
rumbling spat drift in from the back of the house: Willie does not require the  
Sweeneys to sleep in while George is away; Sweeney will not hear of it.*

*She turns away from the mantel, reads the familiar room, touches known objects,  
is in turn touched by them; studies pictures and photographs of Willie through  
the years, one of herself as Cathleen; takes in framed scrolls on the walls  
announcing his Nobel Prize or the Freedom of some city. The spat grumbles on.*

*She reaches the desk, stops to light a cigarette, sees her manuscript on the  
leather writing pad, turns it carefully round with her fingers, begins to leaf  
pages, checks for marginal notes, finds none. Frowns. Leafs on a little.*

*Sudden laughter down the garden. Voices, a man's, a woman's, deep in talk, drift  
in. She returns the MS to the desk, crosses to the window, scans the long lawn  
and orchard, fence, cliff and sea beyond. A pair of lovers out for the day drift  
into frame, out at the cliff's edge. The pale young man wants something of her,  
the auburn-haired young woman won't give it. Maud stares intently, drawn as if  
to a scene from her own life.*

*WILLIE looms up behind her at the window. For a moment both are gazing out  
in silence.*

WILLIE: (*Soft*) Ghosts, is it?

MAUD: (*A smile*) Shouldn't wonder. Hello Willie.

*She turns to look at him.*

WILLIE: Look at you.

*He moves in to kiss her cheek.*

WILLIE: How long is it ..? Ten years?

MAUD: Must be.

WILLIE: An age. An ice age. And my God, look at you.

*He steps back to admire her. She takes a look at the tanned, still handsome man. Chuckles.*

WILLIE: What?

MAUD: Nothing.

WILLIE: (*Checking his front*) What is it?

MAUD: It's nothing. Really. Your pullover, it's back to front.

WILLIE: (*Trying to check*) Is it? How do you know?

MAUD: I can see it is ... (*He begins removing it*) Willie, please, it doesn't matter, leave it ...

WILLIE: See, no label, how does one tell?

MAUD: The front's supposed to sit lower than the back. See ...

WILLIE: (*A sniff*) I see what I see.

MAUD: Said a blind man to a star.

WILLIE: Who used to say that? Was it George Russell?

MAUD: Or was it Oscar? I can't remember.

*They share a chuckle.*

WILLIE: It's not easy being A Great Poet, you know. Have you any idea how much respect and awe I command in people these days ...? They're so busy bowing and scraping they don't have chance to notice my damned jumper's on back to front.

MAUD: I bet you love that. More deference, I'll try to remember ...

*She puts her cigarette case back in her bag, lays it on a table. His eyes never leave her.*

*Outside, the Young Man's raised voice, angry, fearful, calling his lover not to go: Cathleen, Cathleen.*

MAUD: Your man tells me George is away.

WILLIE: London. Family. She was sad to miss you. He's not my man, by the way, he does odd jobs about the place. But it leaves the decks clear. The boat ready to sail. And all the time we need for the dark uncharted waters up ahead ...

*She shivers a little, sensing undisclosed agendas, games perhaps. Lights another cigarette.*

MAUD: It's only a little book, Willie. I was rather hoping for plain sailing.

*He gives no answer. Swings suddenly to look at the doorway. Sweeney's there already, as if cued or magically summoned.*

WILLIE: (*Glacial*) Sweeney.

SWEENEY: Himself, sirrah.

WILLIE: Kindly show Madame to her room.

SWEENEY: That I will, your honour.

WILLIE: And see she has what she needs. If I'm wanted for anything, I'll be in my lair. (*Turns away, finished with him*) Rest. We'll talk it through at dinner.

*He smiles, turns to leave. Sweeney hasn't budged.*

WILLIE: What is it?

SWEENEY: Sligo Hare.

WILLIE: Sligo Hare?

SWEENEY: Y'asked to know what the wee woman's makin' yez for dinner, it's Sligo Hare.

WILLIE: Sligo Hare. What is it?

SWEENEY: Chicken.

*Silence. Willie's eyes burn into the little man.*

MAUD: (*Finally*) Just take my bags if ye would, Mr Sweeney, I'll find my own way up.

*He evaporates. Willie's on the edge, trying not to blow.*

MAUD: Strange man. Is he always so ..?

WILLIE: (*Blowing*) ... This man is sent to dog my days and nip me to the grave, Maud. We have built a new Ireland, with a theatre and a literature and painting second to very few, and we have peopled it with ... Sweeneys, with oafs and dullards, common beasts without a scrap of culture or a thought higher than the muck they stand in, you know the Irish for Sweeney, Maud ... *Suibhne*, peasant, same root as swine ...

*He searches a chair, sits heavily, riven with the pain of it. Sweat beads his head and hair. He dabs it with a kerchief. She hangs on, concerned, a bit disturbed by the venom.*

MAUD: Can I get you something?

WILLIE: Forgive me, it ... I ... he, that man, that ...

MAUD: Stop it, Willie, you hurt yourself (*She takes out a handkerchief, stoops to wipe his head and hair*) Now relax. And breathe. And breathe. And breathe.

WILLIE: (*Coming back*) Bless you. (*He stills the hand she dries him with, gently kisses it.*) Oh. I have missed you so much. For so much of my life. Missed. Lacked. Wanted. And for a moment: here you are. Woman of the Sidhe. Queen Maeve. Cathleen Ní Houlihan. Madame Republic. (*He leans his head back.*) I'm better. Go.

MAUD: You missed one. Maud Gonne Mad they call me now. (*She smiles, squeezes his hand, kisses it, stands back up*) I can't imagine why, I've never felt saner in my life. (*Gathers her document case and cloak*) Where do I stay ..?

WILLIE: Top of the house, will I show you?

MAUD: No need.

*She leaves. Willie sits on in silence; puts the hand she kissed to his lips; kisses the kiss. His eyes close. Sudden sounds of laughter, a man's voice, a woman's, beyond the window. Shot through glass of garden, orchard, fence as before, as if in his point of view. The pair of young lovers drift slowly into frame as before, but now in late 19th Century dress.*

*His face, a thin smile on the lips, savouring what he conjures behind the lids.*

*Moving to*

***mute images as dreamed*** of young Maud and Willie (1891; in their mid-20s) out by the fence, the summer house in the background. They stand side by side, looking out over sea. Willie grabs little looks at her, perilously overboard already. *Sound bleeds abruptly in.*

MAUD: There is magic here. Spirit. I feel it. (*Straightens a glove*) Can't be done, Willie, I can stay a few days longer, but I must get back to Paris ...

*Moving to*

*INT. ATTIC ROOM. AFT/EVE.*

*Tightening shot of Maud's face, restless, dozing, dreaming, on the red counterpane, typescript pages of her memoirs spread around her.*

*Moving back to*

***dream again***, Howth Head.

WILLIE: Must? Who says so? No, you choose.

MAUD: Oh God, Willie, you're such a boy. Look.

WILLIE: No!

*A gull screams on the wind. He walks away from her, stands at the cliff's edge.*

MAUD: Don't spoil this day, Willie. I told you when we met: I took a vow on my father's grave to make my life's work the freeing of Ireland ...

WILLIE: In Paris?

MAUD: Yes! There are people there who have Ireland's interests.

WILLIE: There are people **here**, Maud, a movement you can help lead, and I'll be at your side, every inch of the ...

MAUD: Willie, **here** there's a warrant out for my arrest, helping evicted tenants get back their rightful homes is against the law. I'm no use to Ireland in a British gaol ...

*She turns, begins to walk back to the house. Moving to*

*INT. STUDY.*

*Close shot of Willie, tranced, reliving every word. Beyond the window, the young Willie calls after her: **Maud. Maud.***

***dream again:***

*Willie calls on. She turns to look back at him.*

MAUD: I **must**, Willie.

WILLIE: Then I must come with you.

MAUD: To do what?

WILLIE: To share the work. To keep you from harm. To ...

MAUD: No. Absolutely not. Your work is here.

WILLIE: (*Loud*) Not if you're not, it isn't. (*She turns away again, headed for the house. He shouts after her*) Is there another? Back there in Paris? Is there? Is there ..? Maud! Answer me ...

*His voice tails on the wind. The image hovers, the sound fades. A gentle knocking sets up, house acoustic.*

WILLIE: (*Voice over, from the trance*) You lied, Maud. And in your book you lie still, there **was** another and you had already borne his child ...

*Moving to*

*INT. ATTIC GUEST ROOM. LIGHT FADING.*

*Maud bursts from sleep, sweating, disturbed. Grows slowly aware of the gentle knocking. Gathers.*

MAUD: Who is it?

JANE: It's Jane, mum, Mrs Sweeney.

MAUD: Come.

JANE: (*Appearing*) ... come to light your lamps.

MAUD: Please.

*She crosses to light the mantels; slim, younger than Sweeney, oddly pretty. Maud sits on the edge of the bed, struggling to recover.*

JANE: You alright, mum?

MAUD: Thank you, I'm fine.

JANE: (*gazing at the unpacked dress on wardrobe door*) Ach, such a beautiful thing, so it is. (*Leaving*) Dinner's on the way ...



*Maud smiles her thanks. Stands. Dips to wash her face in the waterbowl. Looks at herself in the tiny wallmirror:*

*The Burmese gong begins to hum from across the stairhead, low, steady. She crosses to the doorway, stares at the door to Willie's workroom.*

JANE: (*stopped at crook of stair*) Pay it no heed, mum. Ye'll come to no harm, long as ye stay this side o' the door.

MAUD: Is he in there ..?

JANE: Below, mum. I just woke him.

*EXT. LAMPLIT VERANDAH, OVERLOOKING SEA. LATE EVENING.*

*Sweeney carries a bowl of fruit to the makeshift dinner table, begins to gather the remains of the meal. Maud and Willie sit in silence across the table. She wears the beautiful black dress; Willie, light, alert, recovered, shines in a pale linen suit and red cravat.*

MAUD: Please tell your wife the hare was wonderful, Mr Sweeney.

SWEENEY: So I will, milady.

*He moves off.*

WILLIE: (*Calling after him*) Coffee in the parlour, if ye please. (*To Maud*) Sligo Hare, it was bloody chicken ...

*He offers more wine, Maud caps her glass with her hand. They look at each other for a moment. He holds up his glass.*

WILLIE: You look. Magnificent.

MAUD: Thank you. You look pretty fetching yourself.

WILLIE: Yes, I'll make a fine corpse.

MAUD: Do stop it, Willie. (*He grins at her, an impish boy again*) You'll see us all out.

*She shivers. He gets up, places her shawl across her shoulders, moves to the rail, stares out at the glistening sound. She searches for a cigarette.*

WILLIE: There is magic here. Spirit. (*She stops, flame to tip*) I feel it. (*Turns to look at her*) Yes?

MAUD: What are you up to, Willie? What about the book ..?

WILLIE: Forget the book, Maud, it's not the book.

MAUD: (*Fast to anger*) The hell it's not the book.

WILLIE: I mispoke, forgive me, I ...

MAUD: Forget the book? (*Tough, deliberate*) I need the money, Willie, I'm the only breadwinner back there and drowning in a sea of dependent family and friends, I've had nothing but grief from the publishers, they're terrified someone will take out a libel action against it, you must have noticed the misnamings and misdatings I've had to resort to, if you don't give your agreement they'll toss it on the scrapheap ... What do you mean it's not the book!

*She stubs her cigarette, angry, upset. He returns to the table. Takes an unsealed envelope from his pocket, places it on the table in front of her.*

MAUD: What's this?

WILLIE: Take a look.

*She takes out the letter. Reads it.*

WILLIE: I've carried that around for weeks. Will we go in?

MAUD: Wait. I thought the book was the reason I was here, if it's never been a problem ..?

WILLIE: It's the book disturbs me, Maud. Not its publication. *(She frowns)* Come, you'll catch a chill.

*He leads her in, past Mrs Sweeney lighting the library mantels, to the parlour across the hall. Sweeney's there, tabling the coffee tray by the peat fire. Willie waves her to an armchair facing his; sits. Sweeney makes to pour.*

WILLIE: Thank you, we can manage.

SWEENEY: *(Showing him the bottle)* Pills.

WILLIE: Yes yes. *(Reaches to pour. Sweeney stands firm. Willie takes the proffered pills and water glass. Tosses them back. Hands Sweeney the glass. Sweeney leaves.)* Bah! *(He scrapes the pills from under his tongue, throws them on the fire)* Damned things.

MAUD: What are they for?

WILLIE: Blood pressure.

MAUD: Is that wise?

WILLIE: Wise? I think so.

*They sip their coffee in silence for a moment.*

MAUD: *(The letter in her hand)* So I'm free to send your agreement? The book can go ahead ..?

WILLIE: Absolutely.

MAUD: Shuh! That's a relief. I thought I was going to have to spend the whole weekend fighting you.

WILLIE: Wouldn't be the first time. *(He digs a hand into a metal bowl of dark powder on the table)* Remember this?

*He throws it onto the glowing peat. A flame bursts up, a curl of thick oily smoke floats out into the room.*

MAUD: Mmm ...

*He nods, she smiles, shakes her head. He reaches for more.*

MAUD: Enough. I'd prefer to keep my wits about me, at least until I know what the hell I'm doing here. Are you going to tell me? I mean if it's not my book.

WILLIE: It is the book, Maud, it is.

MAUD: Then kindly tell me how.

WILLIE: I'll try. *(He gets up, paces, hands on the move, gathering. She watches)*

Some months back, I reached a ... defining moment. Wait ... *(He riffs through a roll-top desk, finds a leather-bound diary, looks for his page)* I got up one morning, full of the future, sat calmly down at my desk and wrote ... *(Finds it)* 'I know for certain now that my time will not be long. In two or three weeks I will begin to write my most fundamental thoughts and my work will be over. It seems to me that I have found what I wanted ...' See, The last entry. Next day, the very next day, your book dropped onto my mat and proved me wrong. You do have that knack, Maud. From the first time I set eyes on you all those years ago, you brought into my life the sound as of a Burmese gong, an overpowering and unstemmable tumult, a sound that never left it. And here you were again, there on the mat, humming like a star through space, like a flame to the soles of my feet. Even now, at the end, bags packed, work done, set to go, your knuckle on the door, your hand on the latch, and suddenly I fill with doubt, glimpse something else I must know, something there and not there, blowing through my head and heart and shaking to its root the peace I felt I'd found ... I can not die like this. Will not. I will not leave with less than everything. *(He examines her face)* How can I bring you to understanding? How can I bring myself?

*He paces on, hands carving air, struggling for meaning. The phone bell starts whirring across the hall. Neither notices. It's picked up.*

MAUD: Sit, Willie. You'll wear a hole in the carpet. And another in your brain-pan, I shouldn't wonder. *(He resumes his seat)* It's the book and not the book, something there and not there, you want me to understand but don't understand it yourself, you don't make it easy, friend.

WILLIE: I know. If it weren't so grave, it'd be really quite comical ...

*She blinks, prepares to laugh; sees Sweeney in the doorway.*

SWEENEY: That's the phone thing there ... *(Willie swipes the arm of his chair in frustration; begins levering himself upright again. Sweeney waits till he's almost there)* For milady.

MAUD: Who on earth ..?

*She frowns her way to the library. Willie stays on his feet; scowls.*

WILLIE: Who is it, did they say?

SWEENEY: Didn't say, didn't ask. I'm off to my bed.

WILLIE: Take those lamps away, will ye. *(Sweeney squints at him, unmoving)* I don't need them.

SWEENEY: Will I just turn 'em off ..?

WILLIE: Take them.

*Sweeney removes the two oil lamps, leaves heavily. Willie broods, takes another hand of incense, sprinkles it on a glowing chunk of peat spilled onto the hearth, moves out into the hall to look through the open doorway at Maud on the phone. Her voice just fails to carry the distance.*

## INT. LIBRARY.

MAUD: *(At phone)* Wait ... *(She searches pencil and paper; settles for Willie's copy of her MS)* Say the name again. *(writes it down on the cover)* Yes, I know the family. And who gave him my number? Ahunh. And you told him I was here for the weekend ... Right, give me a second. *(She lays the receiver down, paces a little, working stuff out. Becomes aware of Willie in the hallway, watching her. Returns to phone.)* Look, I think it's best you stay out of it, love, if he does turn up, I suppose I'll handle it, the poor devil. Mm. Thanks.

*She places the phone down, establishes Willie's gone, finds a piece of notepaper in a drawer, folds and places it in her bag, returns to*

## INT. PARLOUR

MAUD: My son. His boy's running a fever.

*She takes in the darkened room, the smoulder of lapsed peat on the hearth, resumes her armchair.*

WILLIE: They'll cope?

MAUD: I should think so. What happened to the lamps?

WILLIE: Sweeney has them. He's up to bed.

*She settles back, runs a finger along a coil of incense held in thick air above her head. Silence.*

MAUD: Who says you're dying, Willie?

WILLIE: I do.

MAUD: No physicians, specialists ..?

WILLIE: How would they know?

MAUD: Oh God, I bet your doctors love you.

WILLIE: About as much as I love their bills.

*She chuckles. Can't stop, the incense beginning to kick in.*

WILLIE: I said something funny? I hate the bastards. They charged me a fortune for an operation to restore my vitality a few years back, monkey glands, couldn't do without it, they said, horseshit of course, didn't restore a thing ... Unless you count the more or less permanent erection I was left with for the next two years, fat lot of good that was to a man with work to do.

*She chuckles on, he relents at last, acknowledges the joke he's being, laughs with her. They wind down towards silence. Look at each other through the wisping smoke.*

MAUD: You wouldn't have a drop of the pure stuff, would you, Willie?

WILLIE: I have something much better. Will I fetch it?

MAUD: Much better than whiskey? I'm not sure I'm ready for that. *(She gets up, wanders the room, sees remembered pics, remembered people)* You've been in my dreams for weeks. And here today too. But you know that, don't you.

Is that all part of this? *(She comes back to sit on the floor by the fire, her back against her chair, lithe arms around supple knees; looks at him for a moment)*

You're such a bloody ringmaster, you know. Mr Yeats' Magic Circus.

Introducing Maud the Wonder Horse, who will prance and skip to order and step through hoops of fire for your delight and edification ... You could have just asked, Willie. I would have come. You didn't need to put the wind up me about the book or walk around my head muttering instructions. I would have come.

*Willie watches her throughout, face, hair, hand, the rucked skirt, the black silk glint of ankles below it.*

WILLIE: Would you? I couldn't be sure. Things had grown so cold. Why should you want to spend your time helping a reactionary old ... fascist did ye call me? ... who sold his freedom for a pot of fame and betrayed the cause of Ireland ..?

MAUD: *(Simple)* Because you're Willie. And I'm Maud.

WILLIE: You put me to shame. Forgive me.

*He reaches for her hand. Puts it to his lips. She runs a finger through his flop of hair.*

MAUD: Will you sleep now?

WILLIE: Sleep? Gave it up long since. I need to go on with this, are you tired ..?

MAUD: Not at all. But I need cigarettes, I have some in my room.

WILLIE: Will I fetch them?

MAUD: *(Up on her feet)* No no. You fetch that stuff you spoke of. It's beginning to look like a session.

*She gathers her things, leaves. He follows to the door, watches her climb the stair, crosses to the library.*

INT. STAIRWAY LANDING.

*Maud heads for her room. Faint sounds from a back-bedroom. She turns onto the second flight, listens. Hears the faint rhythmic insistence of bedsprings, voiced pleasure: the Sweeneys at love.*

JANE: *(off, from within, laughing)* ... Holy Christ, Mr Sweeney, you still have yer sweaty old **socks** on.

SWEENEY: *(off, chuckling)* I do, I do ...

*Maud smiles, moves on.*

INT. LIBRARY.

*Willie finds what he needs at his desk: notepad, fountain pen. Crosses to the mantelpiece, lifts the pot cat, screws off its head, removes a small package, puts it in his coatpocket. Remembers he needs his copy of Maud's memoirs, collects it from the desk. Sees the name she pencilled on the cover: **Finnegan**. Studies it. Leaves for the stairs.*

*INT. ATTIC ROOM.*

*Maud transfers a fresh supply of cigarettes from packet to monogrammed silver case. Takes pencil and notepaper from her bag, hears a creak on the stair, crosses to close the door, returns to paper and pen, begins to write:*

*'To whom it may concern*

*Mr Finnegan'*

*She thinks a moment, presses on.*

*The gong begins to hum across the stairhead. She listens a moment. Finishes the note. Gathers her things. Leaves to go back downstairs.*

*INT. STAIRHEAD.*

*The workroom door lies open, the room half-lit. She moves a touch closer, peers inside. A small fire burns in the grate. Light splashes the room through the sea-facing windows: red, black; red, black; red, black; the Bailey Lighthouse at work. She edges forward a little, scans the empty room. Locates the Burmese gong, still humming. Prepares to leave.*

*WILLIE: (From within) Come. We'll work here. Almost there.*

*She scans the room again, looks behind the door: nothing.*

*MAUD: Where are you?*

*WILLIE: Come.*

*She moves warily in, following the source of the voice towards a far corner of the room.*

*WILLIE: (Behind her) See.*

*She turns sharply. He steps out from behind a lacquered folding screen, face gleaming in the Bailey light, a small fine-wrought hookah in his hands. Carries it to the fireplace, waves her to the chaise longue precisely placed before it. She drifts after him, wary; lays her bag on the chaise.*

*WILLIE: (Kneeling to the work) I'll need a little tobacco. (He takes out a pen-knife and the package, begins unwrapping it) May I?*

*He reaches for her bag, she rescues it just in time, hands him the silver cigarette case. The unfinished letter lies beneath her fingers at the top of the bag.*

*MAUD: What is it?*

*WILLIE: (Holding it up; a 1/2lb ball.) Hashish. From Nepal. A Swami taught me how to use it. See the white stripes? Opium. Enfolded, see. Better than whiskey.*

*He works on, laying thin strips of hash on top of the bed of tobacco.*

*MAUD: Better for what, Willie?*

*WILLIE: The journey. We are upon experiments, my love. Sit, won't you. I 'm getting a crick ...*

*He moves off into the room, gathering what he needs, charged, vital, in his element. She watches him, rounds the chaise, delays the sit.*

MAUD: This. Journey, Willie. What is it, exactly?

*He returns laden, begins laying things on the coffee table by the fire: a large painted metal bowl, an uncorked champagne bottle, matches, tapers, a Tarot box.*

WILLIE: I do wish you would sit, Maud, you're so bloody tall, you know.

*She smiles, removes his copy of the memoir from the chaise, lays it on the coffee table, sits.*

WILLIE: *(Emptying bottle into bowl)* ... Seawater. Irish. What is this journey exactly? I can't exactly say. A journey is not only the journey we take but also the journey we make. You used to know that. *(Sprinkles a pinch of tiny dried flowers onto the water. Lowers the oil lamp, lights a candle here and there, peers back into the bowl)*. See.

*She looks, their faces quite close. In the bowl, the dried flowers are beginning to swell. He shakes it a little, the water dances.*

MAUD: Where are we going, Willie?

WILLIE: Wherever you take us, my love.

MAUD: In search of what?

WILLIE: The truth your book glimpsed and shied away from. The truth I know I've lost.

MAUD: I'm not sure I'm up to it, Willie. It's half a lifetime since.

WILLIE: The power is in you still. I know it.

*He lights a taper, fires the bubble-pipe, draws on it, turns it to her. She stares at it. He moves to a gramophone, winds it taut, lays a record on the turntable, sets the needle hissing.*

*She looks at the pipe, the bowl; the manuscript. **Finnegan** burns up at her from the cover.*

WILLIE: *(Returning to a chair)* Time to go.

*Maud takes a hit, blinks as it hits her; lies back across the chaise, like a patient in analysis. Willie shakes the bowl again. Sits back in his chair, as if preparing for take-off. Close shot of the water, swaying, lapping.*

*The poet's voice speaks out from the gram.*

‘... Those masterful images because complete  
Grew in pure mind, but out of what began?  
A mound of refuse or the sweepings of a street,  
Old kettles, old bottles, and a broken can ...

*Maud's face, eyes closing. Willie's lips, drawing smoke through a gurgle of water, face burning in Bailey light. The water in the bowl, growing choppy, agitated.*

Old iron, old bones, old rags, that raving slut  
Who keeps the till.

*Long still shot of the moonlit sea in Dublin Bay. Long still shot of the headland summerhouse, windows lit against the dark.*

Now that my ladder's gone,  
I must lie down where all the ladders start,

*Close shot of Maud's face, eyes bobbling beneath the lids, en route.*

In the foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart.'

*Willie's face, head back, eyes closed, en route; the water dancing; the ridged moonlit sea, frame slowing to a frozen silvered abstraction, a sort of seascreen for their shared.*

## VISION

*EXT. DAY. GRAVEYARD. S. ENGLAND, 1871.*

*Mute slowed bleached shots of a country funeral. Upper class family mourners, high church ceremonial, dignified restraint much in evidence.*

*Shot of Tommy Gonne, late 30s, tall, goodlooking, heavily moustached, in the dress uniform of an Army captain. He holds a weeping three-year old daughter, Kathleen, in his left arm. We pan down his right arm to reveal the five-year Maud clutching his hand, watching with a hard, detached fascination as her mother's coffin is lowered.*

MAUD: *(Over, from trance) Never be afraid of anything, he said. Even death ...*

*EXT. DAY. DONEGAL. 1882.*

*Mute bleached shots of Ascendancy Ireland. We pick up members of a houseparty riding fields and bridleways, Tommy and Maud (16) among them. The group's progress is halted on the outskirts of a small village by an eviction. A battering ram splinters the barred front door; men move in, an ancient woman is carried out on a mattress, a mother and baby follow.*

WILLIE: *(Over, from trance) I can't hear; I need words ...*

*A small band of protesting Landleaguers spot the group, rush forward to shout and wave their banners at the landowner who leads them. R.I.C. men drag them off, clearing the way. Other villagers tip their hats. Maud watches, horror growing on her face. The landowner says something to a companion; they bark into laughter as he leads the group imperiously on.*

*Maud stays on, drawn by the scene. Sound bleeds slowly in. The riders' laughter floats back across the eviction men, now busy smashing roof and windows.*

*INT. EVENING. DEBUTANTES' BALL, ST PATRICK'S HALL, DUBLIN. 1883.*

*Wildtrack sound covers slowed beached shots of a court photographer preparing a group picture. Through his lens we see the group finding its positions: Edward,*



*Prince of Wales, his idiot son the Duke of Clarence, Tommy Gonne in Colonel's dress uniform and Maud (17), in shimmering dress, water-lily train and ostrich-feather fan. Edward banishes his idiot son to the edges, insists Maud stands next to him. Tommy and Maud share a smiling unimpressed look. The lens follows the movement of personnel, seeking the compositional moment; catches the Prince's hand casually groping the young woman's arm and hip.*

*The picture is ready: a magnesium flash; the image resolves into the monochrome photograph we saw in Willie's workroom (p.5). Trail **Dead March** from Saul; move to*

*EXT. DAY. DUBLIN QUAYS, NORTH WALL, 1886.*

*March continues wildtracked over Tommy's funeral procession. Maud (19) and Kathleen head the mourners following the gun-carriage bearing the coffin to the British boat waiting to take her father's body back to England. Thin sifting rain soaks the cortège and the military Guard of Honour. Tommy's sister, Mary, Comtesse de la Sizeranne, tries to shelter her two nieces with a huge umbrella. Maud's face gives little away, 'the Colonel's daughter', but the grief and loss run deep. The procession stops at the North Wall, the coffin's slowmarched on board. Maud comforts her distraught sister; is suddenly taken by a paroxysm of coughing. Aunt Mary hands her her kerchief, the fit subsides, the kerchief's handed back, flecked with blood. Aunt Mary notes it, eyes grim.*

*MAUD: (Over, whispered, from trance) Oh Tommy, Tommy, I miss you still, I have never stopped missing you.*

*WILLIE: (Ditto) On, on ... Where now?*

*EXT. DAY. CHATEAU SPA, ROYAT, FRANCE, 1887.*

*A sweltering summer day. The chateau shimmers in the heat. Thunder in nearby Puy-de-Dôme.*

*WILLIE: (Over, from trance) Ah. Lover boy! Now to the foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart ...*

*MAUD: (Over) No, Willie, I won't have you pushing me ...*

*The image begins to break down, as if resolving back to frozen seascreen.*

*WILLIE: (Over) Please, I'm sorry, you're quite right ...*

*A band sets up. The image resumes. Gives way to*

*EXT. DAY. TREE-LINED PROMENADE, CHATEAU GROUNDS.*

*Five women seated on a long bench under trees fanning themselves with identical great black fans. Spa clients, of similar wealth and ease, pass slowly before them, hobbling, wheelchaired or whatever. Maud (20), recovering but still pale, sits to one side of Aunt Mary, her sister Kathleen by her side. A French friend and her daughter make up the group.*

*A tall cultivated man, late thirties, elegant, heavily moustached, approaches the group, his male secretary in tow. He greets Aunt Mary's friend; is introduced to the bench.*

*Close shot of him brushing Maud's hand with his lips; Maud's face, looking up at him, seeing her father's lineaments at once in the man before her.*

MILLEVOIE: Lucien Millevoie, Mamselle. Enchanté.

*He moves on to Kathleen. Maud's eyes stay with him, drawn; take him in.*

WILLIE: *(Over, from trance)* My God, look at you. Right away! Hot, instant. You cannot see the wolf for the peacock.

MAUD: *(Over, ditto; tough)* We can end the journey right here if you want, Willie. None of this is easy ...

WILLIE: *(Over, ditto)* I'm quiet, I'm quiet.

*The five ladies stand, the men accompany them towards the Chateau's Residential Quarters. The band plays on.*

INT. MID-EVENING. AUNT MARY'S SUITE.

*Maud stands at the french windows, looking out. Thunder, close. Jags of lightning turn her face spectral. Behind her, preparations are under way for retirement.*

*We see what she's looking at: Millevoie under a lamp-lit tree in the avenue, reading a book.*

*Aunt Mary approaches, Kathleen on her arm.*

AUNT MARY: *(On the approach)* Come, child, to bed. Sleep is beauty, sleep is health, as my third husband the Count was wont to say. Boring, my dear, but true. Much like my third husband.

*Maud turns half-guiltily, places her back to the pane to block the view.*

MAUD: I'm waiting for the storm, Aunt. It's almost here. Ten minutes. I promise.

AUNT MARY: Not a second more.

*They kiss, Maud hugs Kathleen goodnight, they fade into the darkening recesses of the Salle. The storm outside begins to break.*

*Maud returns her gaze to the man across the way. He's gone. She scans the promenade. Opens the French windows, steps out onto the canopied balcony. Rain slashes across the parkland; lightning; Wagnerian thunder. She grows powerfully drawn to it; watches the rosebed below fill with dashed petals; stretches an arm out beyond the canopy to feel the rain.*

*A hand reaches up from below to touch it. She starts. Sees Millevoie on the lawn directly below the balcony. Water pours down his already soaked head and body.*

MAUD: Qu'est-ce que vous faites, Monsieur?

MILLEVOIE: *(Serviceable English)* I was waiting for the storm. And you?

MAUD: Moi aussi. C'est splendide, parfait, non?

MILLEVOIE: Splendid, yes, perfect no. **You** are perfect, Maud Gonne.

*The storm's moving on. They stare at each other in the growing calm.*

MILLEVOIE: My friend Mme Feline tells me you fight to throw the British out of Ireland.

MAUD: The same lady tells me you run a newspaper dedicated to smashing the alliance between France and England.

*He turns away, scans the dripping parkland. Mist rises from the hot earth.*

MILLEVOIE: There is much to say. Will you walk with me?

MAUD: I might.

*He looks at her. Reaches for her hand. Kisses the palm.*

MILLEVOIE: Perhaps we should build a new alliance, France and Ireland. Une entente cordiale?

*Long shot of the chateau wing. Millevoie holds his arms up, Maud climbs the balcony rail and eases down into them. Dissolving to*

*Mute abstract images of bodies coupling, Maud's, Millevoie's, covering the early years of the relationship. They fuck on stone floors, rugs, tables, desks, beds, in grass, carriages. Their sex is never gentle, giving; often it's brutally direct, a struggle for dominance; frequently it ends in recrimination, coolness.*

MAUD: *(Through this, from trance) Impossible to say if I ever loved him, love was never a word we shared. But for years he drew me terribly, long after I had begun to despise him.*

WILLIE: *(Over, from trance; pained) All this, all this, even before*

EXT. NIGHT. BEDFORD PARK, LONDON, 1889.

Sounds of heart-beat over mute shots of Maud (22) stepping from a hansom cab outside 3 Blenheim Road, the modest brick villa rented by the Yeats family. Her stunningly distinctive Parisian couture gives out at the feet, which are unexplainedly slipped. She stands the hansom by, searches for the house, rings the bell. The door's opened.

WILLIE: *(Over, from trance) Ah, the troubling of my life begins.*

INT. NIGHT. SITTING ROOM.

Heart-beat sounds continue and quicken over mute images of arrival, greetings, introductions. Willie's father, JB, comes forward to greet her, introduces his excited teenage daughters Lily and Lolly, sons Jack (16) and Willie (23), shows her a chair. Lily and Lolly, agog, pour the tea and hand it round. Jack sits on the carpet by his father's chair, eyes fixed on her. Willie sits in the half-light by the window, characteristically outside the family loop, flicking fascinated glances at her through the dark sweep of hair masking his eyes.

WILLIE: *(Over, from trance) What is that sound?*

MAUD: *(Ditto) I believe it's your heart, Willie.*

*The heart-beat fades, full sync sound bleeds in. JB has resumed his dominant chair by the Adam fireplace.*

JB: ... Well now, Miss Gonne, what a pleasure. (*She smiles, takes out her Russian cigarettes*) You'll forgive the excitement, but your reputation does somewhat precede you, John O'Leary wrote me only last week of your most recent exploits, some of which he does not approve, I should add, though he does regard you still as his most hopeful recruit ...

MAUD: You mean my work with the Land League?

JB: I do. He believes the status of Ireland will not be materially altered by individual acts of violent resistance, sticks and staves and the like, on the part of evicted tenants, and on the whole I believe he is right.

MAUD: I'm sorry to hear it, Mr Yeats. You know of a peaceful way of ending British Rule, do you?

JB: I'm a painter, Miss Gonne, not a politician, but it does seem seriously wrong-headed to help the Irish peasant by asking him to wave his shelalagh at a rifle, and irresponsible too, since he will only end up getting shot or serving a long sentence in a British gaol.

MAUD: Mr Yeats, I am not a member of the Land League and cannot speak for its tactics any more than you or John O'Leary can. But last month I led a torchlit procession of more than a thousand on Limerick Castle Hall in order to negotiate a reduction in rents with the Landlords, in which I should say we were successful. Now, do you think it was my silver tongue or the sight and sound of that unprecedented throng – with their sticks and staves and torches – that won us the day?

*She lights a cigarette, composed, unafraid, smiles at the dumbstruck girls on the sofa. Willie's dark eyes burn at her through the hair; he's wholly taken.*

JB: Well, having met you at last, Miss Gonne, I think it might well have been a little of each. (*His daughters chuckle, relieved he hasn't exploded.*) More tea, Lolly.

*Lolly takes charge. Willie finds a bowl for Maud's ash. She takes it with a smile, widens her eyes to look at him. Willie swallows hard, fearful of her scrutiny, too shy to speak.*

MAUD: You're the poet of the family, am I right?

WILLIE: Well, yes, I have written some verse.

MAUD: Mr O'Leary mentioned a small volume you'd had published.

WILLIE: Quite small, yes. Well, very small.

MAUD: I have a project I'd like to discuss with you, perhaps we could have dinner one evening while I'm in town?

WILLIE: Dinner? Certainly. I'd like that very much.

MAUD: Good.

*He edges awkwardly back to his chair; dismissed.*

MAUD: (*Focused; on*) Mr Yeats, I am in London to present a petition to the British Home Secretary demanding the release of all Irish political prisoners. Your name on it would greatly help the cause.

JB: Political prisoners? I wasn't aware there were such men, who are they, pray?

MAUD: The Dynamiters, Mr Yeats. Eighteen patriots rotting in English gaols, I have visited them all and sworn to work for their release ...

JB: Miss Gonne, I will have nothing to do with violence, to me these men are criminals aiming terror at the innocent.

MAUD: Then I will not press you, sir. Though your description would seem to fit the British in Ireland rather the better than the men I refer to.

JB: You are young, Miss Gonne, and you will learn ...

*Sound fades. The exchange continues mute a little longer. Close shot of Willie, marvelling at her.*

WILLIE: (*Over, from trance*) *God, Maud, you hit my life like a bomb.*

*Sounds of a doorbell. Moving to*

*INT. EBURY ST. MANSIONS, LONDON. NEXT EVENING.*

*Shot of oak door from inside the apartment. Maud appears in shot to open it. Willie shines on the doormat like a beautiful boy.*

MAUD: Ah Mr Yeats, you're early, do come in.

WILLIE: Thank you. I brought you this.

*She takes his slim volume of verse. Opens it. Reads his inscription.*

MAUD: That's very flattering, thank you. As a matter of fact I went out this morning and bought a copy for myself. Come through.

*He follows her into her drawing room. Blinks at the eccentric menagerie it houses: Dagda the Wolfhound, four persian cats, two doves in cages, Chaperon the Gibraltar Monkey. Notes she wears her slippers again.*

MAUD: (*Indicating a table*) Have a seat.

*She brings a lamp, sets it on the table between them, splashing light on his face. Studies him steadily for some time.*

WILLIE: (*trying for calm; unnerved*) What?

MAUD: Forgive me, I was looking for something ... an aura, shape ... it was very strong the other night when we met.

WILLIE: Ah. And tonight?

MAUD: No. Not this evening. I read your poems, by the way. They're very fine. It's a very pure talent you have.

WILLIE: You think so?

MAUD: I do.

*He looks at her, she holds his eyes, he looks away, too scared to go on looking, out of his depth.*

MAUD: Pity you haven't yet found something important to write about, but that will come, you're young still, what are ye, twenty?

WILLIE: Twenty-four.

MAUD: Really? You should eat more. Where shall we dine? There's an Irish Fish Bar in Soho ...

*She collects her cloak and bag.*

WILLIE: Ah, I see, I thought we were to eat here ...

MAUD: Here? Whatever gave you that idea? I don't cook ...

WILLIE: Of course, erm. Is it expensive, this er, I came without ...

MAUD: A few shillings. I'll pay mine ... *(She watches him fiddling through his pockets)* How much have you?

WILLIE: *(Squirming)* Sixpence ..?

MAUD: Come, I have enough.

WILLIE: No no, I can't allow that.

MAUD: We have to eat, my friend.

WILLIE: I'm really not hungry.

MAUD: Nonsense. Come along, I know just the place ...

*Dagda and Chaperon prepare to go with her, she shoos them away. Willie follows in her tailstream.*

*INT. NIGHT. KERBSIDE CAB STATION, HAMMERSMITH.*

*Maud and Willie stand in line at the Food Hatch, waiting for their penny pie and gravy. Cabbies nosh away on benches at the sides of the long narrow station, eyeing the pair: clothes, class, slippers.*

*Maud leads Willie down the hut, nodding and smiling at the cabbies. Willie follows her; plates in hand, deeply uncomfortable. They find a place to sit.*

*Willie sets to at once, ravenous. She watches him; smiles.*

MAUD: *(Over, from trance)* I always loved the boy in you, Willie. Is any of this helping?

WILLIE: *(Over, ditto)* Hush. Let the will move of itself and we will find it.

*Willie's finishing off the gravy with a chunk of bread.*

MAUD: Best penny pie in London. *(He grunts agreement, busy)* Have another. *(He shakes his head)* Go on, I had a huge lunch at the House of Commons, working my charm on those unspeakable Home Rulers.

WILLIE: No no, you must be hungry.

MAUD: I'm not.

WILLIE: (*Eyes it, takes it*) If you're sure. It just happens to be my fasting day, I eat nothing until dinner on Thursdays.

MAUD: Is that a spiritual thing ..?

WILLIE: No, it's a way of buying the books I need. And good training for the sort of material future I can expect from a life as a poet. For that is the life I intend to live.

MAUD: (*Squinting at him*) I'm damned.

WILLIE: What?

MAUD: The aura. It's back.

WILLIE: Ah. Describe it. Does it have colour?

MAUD: Green. It's green. Mm.

*He lays the plate down, takes out a notebook and pencil, jots it all down. Puts a circle round it. Lays a large ? against it. Resumes his second pie.*

MAUD: Why green, do you think?

WILLIE: I'll need to give it thought.

*A cabbie arrives at their bench, takes off his hat.*

CABBIE: Evnin, Miss, wondered if ye needed a hansom, I'm just about on my way.

MAUD: Thank you, Albert, I think I'll walk this evening. But if you'd care to call at Ebury Street around ten, I think we could find you a fare.

CABBIE: Much obliged, mum.

WILLIE: (*Amazed*) Do you know everyone in London?

MAUD: I know Albert, I've been his fare often enough.

WILLIE: Do you feel no fear?

MAUD: None. Should I?

*He shakes his head, shrugs, aware of her utter otherness.*

*EXT. SOHO STREETS. LAMPLIT.*

*They walk in silence, through populous pavements. Willie stops at a pet shop window, gazes in at ping pong balls rising and falling on jets of water.*

MAUD: What are you thinking of?

WILLIE: I'm thinking of Ireland. Sligo, actually. Innisfree. Where I grew up. Were you ever there?

MAUD: No. Perhaps you'll take me one day.

WILLIE: You mean that?

*She smiles, puts her arm in his, walks him on.*

MAUD: (*On the fade*) You're going to have to learn to trust me, Willie. When I say something, I usually mean it.

WILLIE: Miss Gonne.

MAUD: Maud.

*EXT. EBURY STREET. NIGHT.*

*A church clock strikes ten as they approach her apartment block. Albert stands by his Hansom at the kerb. Maud mounts the steps to the front door. Willie watches, bursting to follow.*

MAUD: We will be friends, will we?

WILLIE: Yes. May I write you?

MAUD: You may. So long as you write for Ireland too.

*She unlocks the door, turns.*

MAUD: My friend has fourpence, Albert. Will that see him to Bedford Park?

*Albert frowns, certain it won't. She gives him a covert nod, he reads the sign.*

ALBERT: Not a problem. Ready when you are, sir.

*Sounds fade. Willie boards the cab. Maud waves from the open door.*

WILLIE: (*Over, from trance*) *The slippers, Maud. Why did you wear the slippers ...?*

MAUD: *Can't you guess, Willie?*

*INT. DAY. PARIS APARTMENT. BEDROOM. 1890.*

*Mute images of Maud in the throes of childbirth. A physician and a midwife work hard to deliver the obdurate Georges. Millevoie stands by the window, close to tears; turns at a call from the bed; sees the boy held up in the midwife's hands.*

*INT. DAY. PARIS APARTMENT. MAUD'S 'IRLANDE LIBRE' OFFICE. 1891.*

*Maud works at her cornerdesk, dressed for travel, bags around her. The walls by her desk are covered in cuttings of her letters and articles, hundreds of them, under a red-and-black sign: **Irlande Libre**. From time to time she turns to look at baby Georges at the wetnurse's breast in the adjoining nursery.*

*Doorbell. She stands, peers through the window, sees the carriage arrived on the street below, gathers her things, crosses to the nursery to have a last hug of the child, returns for her bags.*

*Millevoie in with cabman, whom he directs to carry her bags out. She tidies her desk. Millevoie watches*

MILLEVOIE: (*Cool, polite*) How long will you be, do you know?

MAUD: (*Calm*) A month, I'm not sure, depends if I'm allowed to see the political prisoners.



MILLEVOIE: I must say I'd rather hoped motherhood might have tempered your romantic obsession with Ireland, but you are your own woman, I will not complain.

MAUD: Good. How's your wife?

*A small silence.*

MILLEVOIE: Not greatly changed. *(She's ready to leave)* Don't I get a kiss? *(She kisses his cheek, en route. He takes her arm, holds her back)* There are times I fancy you have other men in your life, over there. *(She looks at him coolly, says nothing)* But I'm sure you would not sleep with them. *(She moves to break the hold)* Unless of course there were some political advantage to be had.

*She removes his hands from her arms.*

MAUD: I will not grace that with comment, Lucien. Send for me at once if I'm needed.

*The boy begins crying in the adjoining room. She listens, bites her lip; leaves.*

EXT. DAY. ROWING BOAT. 1891

*Mute images of oars on water, a slow dipping and rising.*

WILLIE: *(Over, from trance, interest quickening)* Ah wait, what's this...?

*The phone rings downstairs, is left unanswered, cuts.*

WILLIE: *(Over, ditto)* Is it here? Is this it ..?

*The image tilts to reveal the tiny island the boat's approaching.*

MAUD: *(Over, ditto)* Ireland's Eye, Willie, don't you remember? Just after we'd buried Parnell?

WILLIE: *(Ditto; cooling)* Ach. For a moment it seemed, I don't know, close.

EXT. DAY. IRELAND'S EYE.

*The boat lies moored on a shingle beach. A sea mile away, Howth Head, the summer house, the Bailey Lighthouse. Slow mazy track of the island, rock, bird, bracken, until we reach the pair on a high ledge overlooking the water.*

WILLIE: *(Over, throughout, reading)*

*'When you are old and grey and full of sleep  
And nodding by the fire, take down this book,  
And slowly read, and dream of the soft look  
Your eyes had once, and of their shadows deep;  
How many loved your moments of glad grace,  
And loved your beauty with love false or true,  
But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you,  
And loved the sorrows of your changing face ...'*

*The shot reaches them. Willie stands in shadow, reading from his notebook; Maud sits watching him.*

WILLIE: There's another verse, I haven't got it right yet.

MAUD: It's beautiful.

WILLIE: It's for you. (*She says nothing, looks away.*) Do you feel the spirits here?

MAUD: Mm.

WILLIE: All Ireland's alive with them. I'd love to show you Sligo. How long can you stay?

MAUD: I don't know. I'm waiting for a letter.

*He walks to the end of the ledge, hurls a stone into the sea, a brief freak of sulky frustration. Maud stands, gathers.*

MAUD: What's wrong?

WILLIE: Nothing. (*Silence*) I'm writing a play for you. About Cathleen Ní Houlihan. I want you to play Cathleen.

MAUD: Brilliant. What a tremendous idea. We'll find a place in Dublin for it and call it the National Theatre of Ireland, what do you say?

WILLIE: I have to write it first, but yes.

*She walks towards him, takes him in her arms, hugs him like a younger brother.*

MAUD: Oh Willie, Willie, Willie, you're the best friend in all the world and I love you dearly.

*Shot of Willie's face over her shoulder, wanting so much, daring so little.*

*Shot of the cliff, the ledge, the locked couple. Sound fades.*

**EXT. DAY. HOWTH HEAD./The dream reprises.**

*They stand by the cliff's edge. She gazes at the hazing sea, the island they've just left. He waits for answer.*

MAUD: There is magic here. Spirit. I feel it. (*Straightens a glove*) Can't be done, Willie, I can stay a few days longer, but I must get back ...

WILLIE: Must? Who says so? No, you choose.

MAUD: Oh God, Willie, you're such a boy. Look.

WILLIE: No!

*A gull screams on the wind. He walks away from her, stands at the cliff's edge.*

MAUD: Don't spoil this day, Willie. I told you when we met: I took a vow on my father's grave to make my life's work the freeing of Ireland ...

WILLIE: In Paris?

MAUD: Yes! There are people there who have Ireland's interests ...

WILLIE: There are people **here**, Maud, a movement you can help lead, and I'll be at your side, every inch of the ...

MAUD: Willie, **here** there's a warrant out for my arrest, helping evicted tenants get back their rightful homes is against the law. I'm no use to Ireland in a British gaol ...

*She turns, begins to walk back to the house. He watches a moment, calls after her: **Maud. Maud.***

MAUD: *(Turning, calling)* I **must**, Willie.

WILLIE: Then I must come with you.

MAUD: To do what?

WILLIE: To share the work. To keep you from harm. To ...

MAUD: No. Absolutely not. Your work is here.

WILLIE: *(Loud)* Not if you're not, it isn't! *(She turns away again, headed for the house. He shouts after her)* Is there another? Back there in Paris? Is there? Is there ..? Maud! Answer me ...

*His voice tails on the wind. She heads for the summer house, lets herself into the porch. Picks up a letter from behind the door, opens it, begins to read.*

*Willie sprints up, breathless.*

WILLIE: Forgive me, that was childish. *(Sees the pallor on her face, the fear in her eyes.)* What? What is it?

*She looks at him, barely aware he's there.*

MAUD: I have to leave at once ...

*Sound fades. She waves the letter as if in evidence, heads off up the stairs to her room. Willie's face, watching her leave his life again, powerless to stop her.*

WILLIE: *(Over, from trance)* How you lied, Maud. There **was** another and you had already borne his child ...

*INT. PRIVATE VAULT, PARIS CEMETERY. 1894.*

*Mute images of Maud (27) letting herself in to the ornate stone vault. She locks the door behind her, crosses to the tomb in the middle of the floor, lays a bunch of roses on it.*

MAUD: *(Over, from trance)* I did not lie, Willie. I simply concealed what could not be uttered. You've never been a woman, my friend, and nothing I've read of yours in fifty years suggests you have the faintest idea what it is to be one. Perhaps there'll come a time when women can speak their truth, but it was not then and it is not now.

*The heavy door swings open, Millevoie stands there a moment, lit by the sun, searching for her in the dark space; relocks the door; walks, slow, deliberate, to the tomb.*

MAUD: *(Over, from trance)* The boy was ill, meningitis, he died just after I got home, for many months I couldn't speak, or sleep, or hope ...

WILLIE: *(Over, from trance)* And what's this ..?

*Fade in full sound. Millevoie has arrived by the marble tomb.*

MILLEVOIE: I had your letter. *(Glances around the vault)* What do you want of me?

MAUD: I want another child.

MILLEVOIE: (*Stunned*) Another child.

MAUD: Yes.

MILLEVOIE: (*Eyes her, thinks.*) Can we not talk of this somewhere el..?

MAUD: ... It has to happen here, Lucien. (*She lays a hand on the brass plaque inset into the top of the tomb*) Here.

MILLEVOIE: Is this one of your spirit theories ..?

MAUD: Does it matter?

*She lifts herself on to the marble tomb, stretches her long legs out in front of her, stares at him.*

MAUD: Does it?

*She lies back, draws up and parts her knees, pulls her skirt up to her middle.*

*He stares at her. Then at her groin. Sound fades.*

*EXT. DAY. CONVENT NEAR PARIS. 1896.*

*Mute shots of Maud (30), walking through trees with 3 year old daughter in the convent grounds.*

WILLIE: (*Over, from trance*) ... So all those questions you asked me about reincarnating the spirit of a dead child in the next one were on your own behalf, not a friend's ... And that's Iseult.

*Her carriage waits in the drive. The Mother Superior is at the top of the steps, ready to take the child from the mother.*

*A last long hugging kiss, Maud climbs into her carriage, waves her goodbye.*

MAUD: (*Over, from trance*) You have it, Willie ...

*INT. EVENING. DRAWING ROOM, MAUD'S SUITE, NASSAU HOTEL, DUBLIN. 1897.*

*Maud (31) sits at a French window, staring at the darkening sky from the darkening room. She's pallid, eyes lifeless, cheeks tear-streaked. The small table by her chair is littered with medicines. Sudden raised voices in adjoining room; Mrs Old, her hired nurse, enters on the knock.*

MRS OLD: There's a Mr Yeats outside, ma'am, I've told him till I'm blue in the face you're seeing no one.

MAUD: Ask him in, will you.

*Mrs Old sniffs, turns, waves Willie forward, grudgingly announces him. Willie appears, a wholly transformed man, elegant, confident, stylish in corn-coloured suit and apricot cravat. He thrusts a bunch of roses into the Nurse's hands.*

WILLIE: Put those in a vase, will you. And try to remember you're a hired assistant, not Supreme Leader of the Galaxy. (*She leaves, less than pleased*) I came as soon as I got your card ...

MAUD: I sent it a week back ...

WILLIE: I've been away. If you'd let me know you were coming.

MAUD: I thought I'd surprise you. Come and sit down. Why are you so angry?

WILLIE: I haven't heard from you in an age, you ignore my letters, you turn up in Dublin – and presumably London en route – and sick to boot by the looks of you, and I'm the last person to know, I'll say I'm angry. By the way, this is my third attempt to see you today, that Valkyrie needs putting down. Here, let me look at you ...

*He switches on a couple of lamps, she holds up a shielding hand, he sits to take her in, blinks, shocked at the drawn white face, the empty eyes, the dead gesture of her body in the chair.*

WILLIE: What is it, love? *(He sees the tears massing)* What is it? Can you say?

*The tears brim over, scald her nose and cheeks. She rubs a stiff palm at them. He kneels forward, takes her hands in his to calm her, hands her his perfect apricot kerchief.*

MAUD: *(Trying to gather)* Look at this *(the kerchief)* ... look at you, my, you look something.

WILLIE: A chance encounter with Oscar Wilde, a couple of succès d'estime, *e presto* ...

MAUD: Oh God it's so good to see you, Willie. *(Tears again, she goes to wipe them back, he stops her)* See, this is what happens, I can't stop.

WILLIE: They will out. Let them be. Mmm?

*He calms her again, stands, checks out the medicines on the side-table, studies several bottles of chloroform, looks back at the pallor on her skin.*

WILLIE: Is it an illness?

MAUD: Bit of bronchitis, nothing. *(Sees the bottle in his hand)* No, that's to help me sleep, just now I don't, as a rule. I've used it since ... for years. It's not in the body, it's in here *(She lays a hand on her breast)*, in here *(She touches a temple)*. It's just, I can't say ... I'm losing touch with my life. So many things. And every one of them hurts.

*Tears again. He watches, moves back to his chair.*

WILLIE: So what is it? Is it politics? Is it ..?

MAUD: Politics? Some of it, yes. I've been away too long, I don't belong any more, I'm treated like a freak and an outsider looking to butter my own loaf. I offered to raise money in America for the Wolfe Tone Centenary, the London Committee turned me down ... For the first time in my life I don't know what I'm doing. I'm not sure I want to go on with politics.

*Long silence. She twists the kerchief in her hands. Mrs Old arrives with the roses, lays them on a table.*

MRS OLD: *(Leaving)* Ye've a hard mouth for a poet, Mister, so ye have.

*Willie ignores her. Maud crosses to smell them.*

MAUD: God look at them, they're beautiful.

WILLIE: Going to America, Maud, would it help?

MAUD: I don't know. It wouldn't hurt to know somebody trusted me ...

WILLIE: I'll ask the Dublin Committee, will I?

MAUD: Why would they be any different?

WILLIE: I've just been elected President.

MAUD: Are you tickling me? *(He shakes his head)* That's wonderful, I had no idea.

WILLIE: There's more, isn't there? Come on, let it out. I'm staying here until I know it all.

MAUD: Why are you so good to me, Willie?

WILLIE: *(Simple)* Because I love you, Maud. And because you're Maud and I'm Willie. And if you're not you I can't be me.

*Tears again; scalders. He draws her from her chair, brings her to him, holds and comforts her.*

WILLIE: You know I would marry you tomorrow if you would have me. *(She spills over again, sobbing, moaning, beating the chair with her fists)* What? What have I said?

MAUD: *(Maddened by it)* You don't know anything about me, what do you imagine France has been about, do you think it was just politics ..? I've had a lover there. Since before I met you. I bore a son who died. I have a three year old daughter in a convent. And I can own to **none** of it and it's burning holes in me, Oh God Oh God Oh God, you'll hate me now and so you should, say you won't, say you won't ...

*The two hang close to each other in the darkening room. The roses burn on the table. Willie's face gleams over her shoulder, a lost boy.*

WILLIE: I could never hate you. But can all of this be true ..? I mean.

MAUD: I cannot marry you, Willie. There is no wife in me for anyone and I have lost all feeling for the ... physical, do you understand?

WILLIE: I don't love you for your sex, Maud. I love you for your spirit.

MAUD: Then we are married already, my love. A true spiritual union. *(She moves her head to look at him, their faces close)* Willie, I dreamt you last night.

WILLIE: I know.

MAUD: You came to me while I slept.

WILLIE: Yes.

MAUD: And.

*He slowly places his lips on hers, like a man leaving a love-letter for an absent sweetheart.*

WILLIE: (*Eventually*) Kissed you on the lips. (*Looks hard into her eyes*) Maud, come to the West with me, until you're Maud again, Maud Gonne again, there's a sacred place there I want you to see and feel, Roscommon, a lake, an island castle, will you ..?

MAUD: God, but you're a good man, Willie Yeats. See. See. I'm not crying.

*He brushes hair from her eyes. Sound slowly fades. The room slowly darkens, like a stage set.*

*Music fades in, a piped version of The Wearing of the Green, trailing coming scene.*

WILLIE: (*Over, from trance*) No no, there was more, there was much more ...

MAUD: (*Over, from trance*) I don't see it, Willie. I'm Maud again.

WILLIE: (*Over, from trance*) And gone again.

*Smash cut to*

*INT NIGHT. OPERA HOUSE, NEW YORK. 1897*

*Applause, cheering, whistling, stamping.*

*Maud (31) stands alone before a microphone on the vast stage, staring out at the packed 2000-seat house. She wears a beautiful shimmering emerald green evening dress, holds a single half-sheet of notes in her hand. Above her, a grand banner proclaims **The Wolfe Tone Centenary Fundraising Tour/for the Freeing of Ireland/ and the Release of all Political Prisoners.***

*The huge applause finally ends.*

MAUD: Friends, compatriots, I thank you for the warmth of your welcome.

Much praise has been bestowed on me by previous speakers, but I would have you know I stand before you as a woman of no importance who is simply performing the duty every Irishwoman owes her country. A country of plenty, where in the last hundred years one million of our people have died of starvation and a further three million have been forced to flee her shores. This year that hideous mockery the Queen's Jubilee will be celebrated, by those who care nothing for the famine and misery she has caused. Next year Ireland will celebrate her own Jubilee. (*A wave at the banner*) and your generosity will help us show the world that Ireland is united once again and will be free ...

*Applause, giving way to music again, moving through*

*Mute montage of collections America-wide; money hits buckets, hats, collection-plates; then on to Ireland, Scotland, England, with Willie and Maud sharing platforms; arriving finally at*

*EXT. CHARLEMONT ST. TENEMENTS, DUBLIN. 1897. DAY.*

*Maud and Dagda pick their way through the rotting pavement life of the classic slum. She checks a number; climbs stone steps to an open communal front door and up again to the top of the building. Knocks at a peeling door. Studies the poster for the Irish Socialist Republican Party in the window while she waits. Six-year-old Nora Connolly answers. Stares at the giant hound, the godlike woman.*

MAUD: I seek Mr Connolly, if you please, child.

*A short stocky Scots Irishman around thirty appears, buttoning his shirt.*

MAUD: James Connolly?

CONNOLLY: Who wants him?

MAUD: Maud Gonne. (*He sniffs. Nods.*) I hear you have plans for the Jubilee.

CONNOLLY: We do.

MAUD: I have a few of my own. Will we talk?

CONNOLLY: (*A brilliant smile*) That we will.

*He lifts Nora into his arms to clear the way. Sound fades.*

*Maud walks in to the two-room hovel. Takes in for the first time the appalling squalor in which these lives are led. Mrs. Connolly washes two infants in a tin bath; four kids in all; she's 25 maybe. Crucifixes, sacred hearts, blessed virgin maries, palm sunday palms adorn the damp crumbling walls. Connolly and Maud sit at table to talk. The kids fuss Dagda, who's trying to eat the bath soap.*

MAUD: (*Over, from trance*) *It was you said I should go, I wouldn't have bothered. But such a day will change a life ...*

*Moving to*

*Mute montage of images of Municipal Preparations for the official Jubilee Celebrations across Dublin, intercut with images of Nationalist anti-Jubilee preparations to sabotage it, including*

*Maud and Willie making black flags for the demonstrations; Maud and Connolly selecting images from Maud's personal collection of land eviction slides for use on the big day; committee on committee, all of them, arguing the toss; working on a coffin and a banner to drape it reading: **The British Empire R.I.P.**; Connolly briefing electricity workers around a map of the city on the timing of the required power-cut; writing and printing handbills with Arthur Griffith at the offices of **The United Irishman**; Maud and Willie giving secret briefings to the world's press; women's groups, workers' groups, middle-class sponsors and patrons groups ...*

WILLIE: (*Over, from trance*) *Such a time, such a time. Was it ever better than this, Maud?*

MAUD: (*Over, from trance*) *Everything seemed possible. What could be better, Willie? And it marked us all. Our 'terrible beauty' I think you called it, later on. Of which, in this time anyway, you were wholly a part ...*

*Mute montaged images of the anti-Jubilee actions:*

*The vice-regal procession, ceremonial coaches draped with union flags and flanked by military outriders, turns into O'Connell Street. Crowds line the pavements, sullen, silent. At a signal from anti-Jubilee marshalls, segments of the crowd hoist their black flags. Police rush in to quell the movement, fights break out as the crowd struggles to keep them out. Moving to*



*Parnell Square, evening, light fading. Furtive street-lit preparations underway for an open-air anti-Jubilee meeting, Maud vividly in view. Men fit a projection screen to a large upper window of the National Club, Maud mounts a makeshift platform to survey the space. A crowd begins to form as if by magic from the sidestreets and passageways. Maud checks her watch. Moving to*

*Generator Plant: Connolly's electrical workers check their watches, a silent countdown. A bulb-lit map of the city shows lights on everywhere. At a signal, several handswitches are plunged, the map bulbs for the Parnell Square area go out.*

*Parnell Square plunges into darkness, the swelling crowd roaring its approval. An eviction slide suddenly appears on the Club window-screen. Lamps appear in the crowd; organisers move forward to light the platform and Maud. Applause.*

MAUD: *(full sound suddenly)* ... Today, my friends, we are invited to celebrate the Famine Queen's 60th year in office. We thought it right that we should review what she has done for Ireland ... *(Slide by slide piles up the casual horror)* ... Donegal, Mayo, Roscommon, Galway, Sligo, Limerick ... A proud record of achievement to take with her to her royal grave.

*Squads of police arrive in the Square, whistles blowing; loudspeakers blare out their warnings, Connolly's men and Maud's women form a human cordon around the listeners, fights break out, Maud's women refuse to budge and have to be carried away. Anti-Jubilee marshalls move in to ferry the crowd away to Dame Street. Maud leaps into a car driven by Willie and away. She shrieks with laughter. Willie drives like a madman through the moil.*

*Mute images of Dame Street demo: Connolly leads a torchlit procession towards College Green, the coffin and British Empire R.I.P. banner at its head on a rickety handwagon. The procession swells as the Parnell Square crowd begin to filter in. Maud and Willie arrive, join Connolly and Griffith in the van, under I.R.S.P and United Irishman banners. Bystanders applaud, some join.*

*Police on horseback appear from sidestreets up ahead. The March heads straight through them, the police regroup, draw batons, charge into the March. Fights, shrieks, men and horses down, panic.*

*The leading group rush the bier-wagon towards the Liffey, horsemen give chase. At the bridge, Connolly lifts the coffin from the wagon and hurls it into the river. A great cheer goes up from crowd and onlookers. Maud's face, exultant; Willie's, demonic. They share a grin. The horsemen charge into them, batons flailing. Paddywagons rush up, arrestees are dragged and thrown into them. Connolly goes down, blood flowing from a scalp wound. People begin to scatter.*

*Full sound abruptly in. Willie grabs Maud's arm, draws her after him into a maze of dockside ginnels, alleys, snicks, freeze in doorways as marauding mounted police search the area. Arrive eventually at a stairway to a basement apartment, go down to hide among the dustbins in the tiny front yard. They gasp for breathe, exhilarated, scared, alive to everything.*

WILLIE: By God we showed 'em, Maud, we showed 'em.

MAUD: (*Gasping*) I feel such a coward running away.

WILLIE: You'll get over it. In any case, who's going to help bail the folk arrested if we're all inside?

MAUD: You're so calm, Willie. Look at you.

WILLIE: Once I'd decided I was going to have my skull broken, I stopped worrying ...

*Sounds of horsemen approaching up above, calls, shouts, a demonstrator sprints by, the hooves quicken to follow. Maud and Willie paste themselves to the wall between the overflowing dustbins. The sounds leak away down the street. They find themselves sitting in the spilled rubbish: rags, bones, assorted trash. Willie picks around in it, fascinated.*

MAUD: What are you doing?

WILLIE: I'm rooting. People's lives. (*He's piecing the torn photograph of a young woman together*) People's hearts.

*He roots on. Handles an animal bone; a raggedy cotton stocking. She watches him. He looks up at her.*

MAUD: There are times I love you so much, Willie.

WILLIE: Marry me, Maud. (*She shakes her head*) Live with me.

MAUD: You're part of me, Willie. I'm part of you. You need to be a poet. I need to be a free woman.

WILLIE: Can I meet your daughter?

MAUD: Of course. Iseult.

WILLIE: Iseult. Mm. Remember the play I said I'd write you? (*She nods, eyes bright*) It's almost done.

MAUD: I want to be the first to read it.

WILLIE: You will be. (*Shouts in the street above, close for a moment, fading, gone*) ... I don't want to lose you, Maud, you know? You marry someone else, suddenly we're ... nothing ...

MAUD: (*Approaching, holding him to her*) Never. Never never never. Never.

*Long overhead shot of the huddled pair among the debris.*

*Sound fades.*

WILLIE: (*Over, from trance*) All the nevers in the world. And yet, and yet ...

*The image slowly reverts back to seascreen.*

WILLIE: (*Over, from trance*) Maud?

MAUD: (*Over, from trance*) Nothing there. Blank. (*Long pause*) Wait!

*The seascreen flickers into image, becomes*

*EXT. DAY. PLATFORM, GARE DE LYON, PARIS. 1901.*

*Mute images of Maud (35) waiting to meet someone from the train. She carries a small placard with L' IRLANDE LIBRE on it. Behind her, a small group of women carry a banner of welcome reading **The Daughters of Erin, Paris Section, welcome Major John MacBride, Commander of the Transvaal Irish Brigade and Hero of the War against the British in South Africa.***

*Maud's watching face, focusing on someone some distance down the platform.*

*On the reverse we see*

*John MacBride, mid-thirties, in the uniform of a Major in the Irish Brigade, striding powerfully towards her through the throng, his pack over his shoulder. He's a sinewy, seeming-gentle Mayo man, heavily moustached, burnt by the sun.*

*Maud's face, taking him in.*

*Her point of view. The unstoppable advance continues.*

WILLIE: *(Over, from trance) Never never never never never.*

*The image of the striding soldier slows, breaks up, degrades back into seascreen.*

## VISION ENDS

*Shot of the sea, immediately pre-dawn.*

*Reverse to show the house perched on Howth Head. The attic windows burn yellow against the lightening sky, Magritte-like.*

*Cut to*

*INT. ATTIC.*

*Maud sleeps on her chaise, Willie watches her from his chair.*

*The Bailey light suddenly cuts. The Burmese gong sets up its humming. The water in the bowl is all but still.*

*Fade to black.*

*Fade up*

*EXT. GARDEN. EARLY AFTERNOON.*

*Willie sits at a parasolled table reading a paper amid the debris of breakfast.*

*Maud's manuscript lies open on the table beneath the newspaper.*

*INT. STAIRS.*

*Maud arriving in the hall, headed for the garden. Jane sees her from the kitchen, calls her softly, beckons her for a confidential word, a slip of paper in her hand.*

JANE: Mr Sweeney took a call for you this morning, mum. No message. Just left his name.

MAUD: *(Taking the note)* Thank you, Jane. Is Mr Sweeney about?

JANE: (*Leaving*) He's fetching Rooney's boat, mum. I'll bring the tea.

*Maud frowns: Rooney's boat? She studies the note. It bears the one word, in Sweeney's unschooled hand: finergun.*

EXT. GARDEN.

*Willie turns to take her in as she crosses the lawn, stands to back a chair for her.*

WILLIE: I trust you slept well, we have a busy day ahead.

MAUD: Well, as long as it involves nothing more strenuous than a gentle ramble in the orchard and a game of croquet. Ah. Soda bread.

*She lays some on her plate, finds the butter. Jane appears with a fresh pot of tea, pours, leaves. Willie's returned to his paper.*

WILLIE: It seems there's not to be a war after all. The English and the Germans have decided to hold a peace conference. (*Laughs*) That's like having a pair of necrophiliacs run a mortuary.

MAUD: Willie, please, I'm trying to eat.

WILLIE: We made a good start, Maud.

MAUD: And did you find what you were after?

WILLIE: No, but I will before we finish, I know it.

MAUD: I thought we had finished.

WILLIE: How do you mean?

MAUD: The book, Willie. We reached the last page of my memoir, nineteen three or whenever it was. Wasn't that the journey?

WILLIE: (*Laying paper down*) There's more, Maud. We can't leave it there.

MAUD: Why not? It's where I left the book.

WILLIE: But not the life. I need it all.

*Silence. She sips her tea. Looks out across the heat-hazed sound.*

MAUD: Willie, my book stops there because I cannot deal with the rest. It's too painful. Too raw.

WILLIE: Try, love. I beg you.

*Silence. Their eyes lock; their wills.*

*Sweeney appears at the bottom of the garden.*

SWEENEY: (*Calling*) Ready when you are, milord.

WILLIE: (*Cool*) With you in a moment.

SWEENEY: Rooney wants it back by five at the latest ...

WILLIE: (*Iced*) Thank you, Mr Sweeney.

*Sweeney evaporates. His wife appears from the house, Maud's cloak in her hands; lays it on a chairback. Maud stares at it, frowns. Willie gathers a leather bag by his chair; puts on his coat.*

WILLIE: All set?

MAUD: For what? Where are we going?

*Fade in*

*Rasp of outboard motor at full-throttle, cut to*

*EXT. SEA.*

*Tight shot of prow of small boat powering through waves.*

*The shot tilts up to take in Ireland's Eye looming from the water two hundred yards ahead.*

*Sweeney steers at the rear; Willie and Maud are up front, staring at the island. Behind them, the mainland, Howth Head just visible in the haze, a mile away.*

*EXT. SHINGLE COVE, IRELAND'S EYE.*

*The boat's been beached on shingles, Sweeney carries Willie's bag up to the mouth of a cave a few feet above sea-level. Willie watches him from a ledge.*

*Maud stands aloof, not wholly pleased, in the entrance to the cave, gazing in.*

SWEENEY: *(Plonking bag down)* I'll catch some fish. Half four suit ye?

WILLIE: *(Checking watch)* Stay close, the weather may turn around.

*Sweeney makes a long deliberate scan of the unblemished sky. Locates a solitary scrawl of white cloud in the vast blue.*

SWEENEY: Ah. Look at that devil there, could be the tip o' the ice cube, right enough.

*He heads back for the boat. Willie begins unloading the bag and laying things out in the mouth of the cave: firewood, charcoal, matches; a metal cup, a small dagger, a disc, a wand, a sword, a lotus wand, a Rose cross with a fixing pin. Maud has turned to watch him. He pours paraffin over the firewood and charcoal cobs; lays out two cushions. Looks up at her.*

MAUD: No bowler hat and butcher's apron, no rolled trouser-leg ..?

WILLIE: *(Patting a cushion)* Come.

*She wanders over; joins him by the readying fire.*

MAUD: Only for you, Willie. And don't blame me if it comes out wrong, I'm really not ready for this ...

*He pins the Rose cross to her breast.*

WILLIE: *(Naming them in turn)* Love *(the rose)*, water *(the cup)*, air *(the dagger)*, earth *(the disc)*, invocations *(the lotus wand)*, energy *(the sword)* ... *(He lays the wand across the charcoal, strikes a match, holds it above the pile)* Fire.

*The match falls, the pile lights, paraffin first, wood, wand, charcoal. He picks up the lotus wand, begins a Kabalic invocation, his eyes burning into the blaze.*

*Maud watches him a moment, resisting; eventually turns her eyes to the flame.*

*Willie sets up his weird chanting throatsong: **Cathleen's Song.***

WILLIE:           They shall be remembered forever  
                       They shall be alive for ever  
                       They shall be speaking for ever  
                       The people shall hear them for ever

*Close shot of the blaze, sound gradually fading, image slowing to flamescreen.*

## SECOND VISION

*A single red-gel spot emerges, kicks suddenly to life. Cut to*

*INT. ST THERESA'S TOTAL ABSTINENCE HALL, DUBLIN. 1902.*

*The front of house spot hits a stooped old woman front of stage. She gazes blindly into it at the packed, expectant house. Straightens to a full majestic six feet, the cloak sliding to the boards, revealing the brilliant green of the dress beneath. The shot closes on her as she begins to speak.*

MAUD/CATHLEEN: It is a hard service they take who help me. Many that are red-cheeked now will be pale-cheeked; many that have been free to walk the hills and the bogs and the rushes will be sent to walk hard streets in far countries; many a good plan will be broken; many that have gathered money will not stay to spend it; many a child will be born and there will be no father at its christening to give it a name. They that have red cheeks will have pale cheeks for my sake; and for all that they will think they are well paid ...

*Silence. The blind eyes stare on into the dark. The audience sets up a chant: Cathleen Cathleen Cathleen ....*

*Sound fades.*

*Trail MacBride's voice, a hopeless cry: She has maligned me, she has dishonoured me, she has unmanned me ...gavelling throughout. Cut to*

*INT. CIVIL COURTROOM, PARIS. 1906.*

*John MacBride, wrecked, desperate, struggles with his lawyers and court ushers trying to push him back into his chair. The Judge gavels for silence.*

MACBRIDE: (*As he's overpowered*) ... I want my son, let her go to hell but let me, I beg you, let me have my son ...

*He weeps, reduced. The judge waits quietly for calm; glances at Maud (40), who sits upright, aloof, beside her lawyer; at the children, Iseult (12), Séán (2), on his nurse's knee, in the well beyond her. Takes an all's well nod from MacBride's lawyer. Resumes his written judgment.*

JUDGE: (*In French; a lawyer feeds MacBride translation*) ... In addition to the aforementioned weekly right of visitation, the father shall have the right to sole custody for the month of August until the son shall attain the age of 16 years ...

*Maud's eyes close in shock and horror, MacBride's open on hope. Maud's up on her feet at once, protesting vehemently, her lawyers struggling to calm her.*

*Sound fades. The packed international press gallery scribbles furiously.*

MAUD: *(Over, from trance) ... One day of sole custody was all MacBride would have needed to spirit my son away to Ireland, where no court would uphold the claim of an errant wife. So any thought of raising the boy there had thus to be abandoned ...*

*EXT. DAY. LES MOUETTES, NORMANDY COAST. SOME MONTHS LATER.*

*A voiture - a large farm cart with hooped canvas covering - drives Maud, Iseult, Seán, maid and menagerie to her summer house by the sea.*

MAUD: *(Over, from trance) ... And the long years of virtual exile had begun ...*

*Maud looks ahead towards the house. Sees a solitary figure waiting amid his luggage by the gate.*

*Maud's face, trying to make the figure out, blinking with joy when she realises who it is.*

ISEULT: Who is it, Maman?

MAUD: It's Uncle Willie.

SEAN: Willie willie willie ...

*Long shot of the carriage's arrival, greetings, introductions, the slow ragged drift inside.*

*INT. MID-EVENING, SOME HOURS LATER. LARGE COUNTRY KITCHEN.*

*Maud writes letters by candlelight amid the debris of dinner, which the maid is trying to clear. Mounds of box-files litter the work-surface: *Irlande Libre, Daughters of Erin, Clann naGael, Irish Socialist Workers Party, Irish National Theatre Board, Irish Party, Prisoners Defence League, School Dinners ...**

*From upstairs, the sounds of Willie reading bedtime stories and poems to the children, amid gasps, whoops and laughter. Maud frowns smilingly at the din, lays down her pen, walks to the bottom of the stairs.*

MAUD: *(Calling) Willie, in case you've forgotten, the object of the exercise is to get the little pests to sleep ... (The children shout their protests, Willie hushes them.) Any more of your cheek, Miss Gonne, and you'll spend tomorrow working the vegetable patch instead of seeing Mont St Michel.*

*She smiles her way back to her work. Lights a cigarette. The maid removes the last of the crockery to the scullery.*

*Willie in, pale suit, brown face, eyes gleaming. Joins Maud across the table.*

MAUD: What do you think?

WILLIE: *(Headshake) Couple of brats, no question. I adore them.*

MAUD: They like you. (*Willie pours them more wine*) I have never known a man more generous, more loving, more everything than you. I'm so happy you came. So happy you're here.

WILLIE: (*Glass raised*) To families.

*They clink, drink; she smiles, he stares at her shimmering face in the candlelight. Silence.*

WILLIE: What are you working on?

MAUD: (*A wave across the files*) Oh, everything. Just now I'm focusing on children. Did you know the British Provision of School Dinners Act specifically excludes Ireland? (*He shakes his head*) How can that be justified? How?

WILLIE: It can't. (*He takes in the files; the labour*) You are. Quite unstoppable. Mrs ...

*He cuts, not comfortable with the rest. The Maid appears from the scullery, en route for bed.*

MAID: Bonne nuit, Madame. Je m'en vais.

MAUD: (*Crossing to hug her*) Bonne nuit, Charlotte. Et merci. Demain tu seras libre, ça va? Prends quoi que tu veux de l'armoire ... Oui oui.

*She leaves. Maud returns to her wine, lights another cigarette.*

WILLIE: You know, for a woman who's been dragged through hell by the heels, you look a treat. Was it awful?

MAUD: Not all of it. I have a son again. Iseult came through unscathed. There's much to be thankful for.

WILLIE: I have read the public prints, Maud. It wasn't all good news.

MAUD: No. It wasn't all good news. I fell to a brave revolutionary hero, but I married a deeply conventional little man. There we are.

WILLIE: Five nevers, Maud. Five. I really imagined you meant never.

MAUD: I did. And I paid for it. And I'm sorry. Don't ask me.

WILLIE: What a swine.

MAUD: No.

WILLIE: Drunken fits, brutal assaults, animal demands ...? **No?**

MAUD: It's how men are, Willie. If we want to change it, we have to change how they're raised. Pour me some wine.

*He pours more red. She strokes his pouring hand with a finger.*

MAUD: How long do you have?

WILLIE: In France? Couple of weeks. I'm meeting people in Paris but.



MAUD: Are they important? (*He shrugs*) I know I haven't the right to ask, but I'd love you to stay.

WILLIE: You have the right.

MAUD: Then will you?

WILLIE: (*After thought*) I might.

*She blinks. He grins. Sound fades. She throws her head back, laughs.*

*Her long gleaming hair rears in slowed motion, live, writhing. His eyes glisten, living her.*

MAUD: (*Over, from trance*) *The last of the beautiful days, Willie.*

*MAINLY MUTE MONTAGE. THAT SUMMER. NORMANDY.*

*Deserted beach. Willie and Seán fly a painted Chinese hawk kite high above the tide flats. Maud and Iseult sit with a hamper and books in the dunes, watching them.*

*MONT ST MICHEL. They wander en famille around the ancient walls and yards of the sacred redoubt. Willie secures Seán by the legs on the highest wall to look out at the sea.*

*TIDE FLATS. Maud and Seán gather seashells and pebbles in a box. Return to the dunes, where Willie recites poetry to Iseult, whose head rests on his shoulder.*

*SEA. They swim naked, all four of them, in the lee of high limestone rocks. The dogs stand in the shallows barking, scared to go in.*

*VOITURE, heading back to the summerhouse. The four sit in silence, as if acknowledging the end of something. The sinking sun washes their faces.*

*Full sound resumes as we move to*

*INT. LES MOUETTES, KITCHEN. NIGHT.*

*Willie sits by the big black stove, stowing books and notebooks in a bag and listening to Maud upstairs comforting an inconsolable Sean. A mantel clock ticks determinedly in the still room.*

*Iseult appears in the doorway in her nightdress, finger to lips. Willie looks a question at her.*

ISEULT: This is for you, Willie.

*He takes the painting, studies it. A man and a woman stand hand in hand before the summer house looking out at the viewer. A young girl with long flaxen hair and a squit of a boy, badly drawn, play on the edges of the scene. She's called it 'Willie and Maud' in bold script.*

WILLIE: Thank you.

*He opens his arms, she melts into the hug, he kisses her head and hair.*

ISEULT: Just so you don't forget us.

*He shakes his head, moved. She bobs forward to kiss his cheek. Tiptoes away.*

*Willie stares at the picture a moment. Frowns. Looks more closely. On the reverse, we see a small green aura around the man's head and upper body. He looks after her to the doorway. Sees Maud there, grave-eyed, just arrived, watching him.*

WILLIE: What?

MAUD: Nothing.

*She crosses to pour herself a drink and stand by the window. Stares out at the bruised sky.*

MAUD: He's inconsolable, the boy. Says we won't ever see you again.

WILLIE: Fat chance.

*He closes the bag, takes it through to the next room, comes back with another one, begins stashing shoes, boots, leggings laid out in the hearth.*

MAUD: I may be in Ireland in the Autumn. A week or two. Lady Gregory has sent me a ticket to her première. It'll be a great Irish occasion, I think I should be there.

WILLIE: Are you sure?

MAUD: What do you mean?

WILLIE: It hasn't occurred to you, has it? You're a National Scandal, Maud. The Catholic Heart of Ireland has been seriously attacked by your conduct, people can't wait to get you in their sights, they will make your public life unbearable ...

MAUD: No they won't. They don't have the power to do that.

WILLIE: Fine. Then we'll walk in together, arm in arm.

MAUD: *(She smiles, loving him)* Done.

*She joins him by the stove. Watches him packing. He stops, sits back, looks across at her. The clock ticks stolidly on.*

WILLIE: This is the longest we've ever spent. All the years.

MAUD: I know.

WILLIE: Hasn't been bad, has it?

MAUD: I have loved this time, Willie.

WILLIE: Beautiful days. They've given me something very dear. A place in your family. A place in your heart. Uncle Willie. But if I'm to be truthful ... *(He closes the bag, carries it to the next room. Maud takes out her cigarettes, puts one to her mouth, fumbles for her matches. He returns, lights a taper at the stove, holds it to her face)* ... I'm actually rather glad to be leaving.

*They look at each other close up across the flame. She dips for the light, comes up smoking. He keeps the taper up, as if to light her or fend her off.*

MAUD: Glad?

WILLIE: Yes. Maybe relieved's the word I want.

MAUD: Relieved. What like a fortress, like an occupied city ..?

WILLIE: No, like a man, Maud.

MAUD: Like a man.

WILLIE: Indeed, if I'm to be truthful ...

MAUD: ... Do ...

WILLIE: ... I'm glad or relieved to be leaving like a man who has spent the last four weeks enjoying every possible intimacy with the woman he loves save the one he most and most persistently desires to bursting point, namely her sexuality. In that sense, and in that sense only, it would be true to say I am relieved to be leaving. Man cannot live by hand alone, Maud. Leviticus. Forgive the candour, I don't intend to make a habit of it ...

MAUD: Oscar Wilde, actually.

WILLIE: Really? (*She nods*) I needed to raise this, love. It's not easy. And I'm quite bitter, underneath. So.

*Remote sound of train hooting the night.*

MAUD: What about that hashish you spoke of in Paris? Do you have some?

WILLIE: Ahunh. Want to try?

MAUD: Mmm.

*He carries a lamp into the other room, searches for the gear in a bag. She follows. He lays the stuff out on his makeshift bed, sits to get it together: wooden pipe, resin, tobacco.*

*Maud moves in, hovers in the half-light.*

WILLIE: To frustrate that which you excite would in some seem serious cruelty. But you have the singleminded innocence of the uncorrupted child, my love, and give it no thought ...

MAUD: Do you have other women ..?

WILLIE: I do.

MAUD: And do they ..?

WILLIE: They do.

MAUD: Oh. And is it ..?

WILLIE: It is. More or less.

MAUD: Who, for instance?

WILLIE: Florence.

MAUD: Florence Farr? (*He nods*) She's a fine woman.

WILLIE: Indeed. Mabel Beardsley?

MAUD: The ...

WILLIE: ... Physiotherapist, yes.

MAUD: Mmm.

*He lights the pipe, inhales, holds, releases. Hands it to Maud.*

WILLIE: Just one. It's enough.

*She takes the hit. Waits. Lets it out. Blinks.*

WILLIE: We could still get married.

MAUD: I am married.

WILLIE: I can wait. The court's offered you a divorce in two years.

MAUD: I didn't ask and I won't file. In any case ...

WILLIE: (*Waiting*) ...What?

MAUD: What?

WILLIE: In any case **what**?

MAUD: I don't know what you want. This marriage, this hot sticky gruel of relationship. There is a mother in me, there is a sister in me, there is a daughter in me, there is no wife in me, Willie, not for you, not for any man, especially not for you, I'm the last person on earth you should seek to marry, posterity will surely thank me for my consistent 'No', no poet should ever marry ... Are we arguing?

WILLIE: Arguing? Who?

*They chuckle. She moves in to the bedspace, sits back to the wall on the floor to face him.*

MAUD: When I come over.

WILLIE: Autumn.

MAUD: I want to see the Castle.

WILLIE: Lough Key.

MAUD: Show me.

WILLIE: The mysteries.

MAUD: Yes.

*The mantel clock whirs and strikes: eleven.*

*Sudden flash images of gold and blue medieval oars on stretch of lake intersperse:*

WILLIE:       And the oars that take us to that holy place  
                   Across that sacred lough shall be of no  
                   Ordinary wood, your beech, your cherry, but  
                   Sandal from the East gilded blade to fist  
                   And tipped in Ravenna's brightest blue ...

WILLIE: (*Over, from trance, stirred by oars on water*) *Ha. There again, close, close.*

*The vision steadies, wholly restoring to the Les Mouettes present. They stare at each other across the room; magically stoned.*

*Moving to*

*INTERIORS. MAUD'S BEDROOM/ WILLIE'S. THROUGH THE NIGHT.*

*Mute shot of Maud lying naked on her bed, unmoving as if asleep, eyes open.*

*Mute shot of Willie, naked on his bed, eyes closed as if in sleep.*

*Maud sits up suddenly, eyes open. Listens.*

*Willie's face, barely lit in the darkened room. Sounds of someone close by, closing. His eyes open. See*

*Maud – or someone like her, or an outline of her – standing by the bed. He holds his arms out, she moves to him, folds herself to him on the bed.*

*WILLIE: (Over, from trance) The dreams were real, Maud.*

*MAUD: (Over, from trance) Real Dreams.*

*SOUND sifts slowly through into the shot. Breathing, moaning, tiny mutters, the slide of flesh on flesh in the darkened room.*

*Other sounds, perhaps distant thunder, or premonitory cannonades from the coming war ...*

*They love on, oblivious.*

*Moving to*

*Mute bleached shot of oars in rainpocked water; dipping and lifting.*

*WILLIE: (Over, from trance) Yes yes yes, there was more, I knew it.*

*The shot tilts up to reveal a rowing boat on the Seine (1912), caught in a downpour. Willie (47) pulls hard for the bank, urged on by Iseult(18) and Seán (8). Maud (46) waits for them under a stand of elms on the bank.*

*WILLIE: (Over, from trance) No no no, where is it, where is it ..?*

*Moving abruptly to*

*INT. SANATORIUM. LOURDES. 1914.*

*MAUD lies propped in a darkened room, writing a letter. A nursing nun works round her, taking temperature and pulse and entering readings on a chart.*

*MAUD: (Letter voice over) ... The Home Rule Act must not be allowed to stand, we have been betrayed again, and blood will flow until the six northern counties are returned where they belong. The papers tell me Ireland sits on the brink of civil war, Ulster Volunteers armed to the teeth by Germans at one end and Irish Volunteers armed to the teeth by Germans at the other, and I must do what I can to get home to do my share as soon as I'm well enough to travel. I am waiting for the paper with breathless anxiety and can hardly sleep*

for thinking of it all ... How are you, where are you and why don't you write to me? We missed you so much this summer, I explained you had to visit America but the children were desolated at not having their Uncle Willie visit, and your absence left me feeling unwanted and for the first time rather old ... I had a haunting sort of vision the other night, Willie, which troubles me a lot: death and famine everywhere and my dear Dublin in flames ...

*A doctor enters, smiles, checks the Nurse's readings, listens to Maud's lungs, front and back.*

DOCTOR: *(In French)* Another week, maybe two, and you'll be well enough to get back to your beloved Ireland, Madame.

MAUD: Thank the lord.

DOCTOR: *(laying a folded copy of Le Figaro on her bed)* Provided you can get passage that is ...

*He leaves with the nurse. Maud frowns, stretches for the paper, opens it. It carries a single headline in huge letters: La Guerre.*

*She closes her eyes. Opens them. Tears grease her cheeks.*

*Moving to*

*INT. TROOP HOSPITAL, PYRENEES/ TROOP HOSPITAL, PARIS.*

*Brief mute sequence of images of Maud (pushing 50) and Iseult (20 or so) nursing the tidal waves of wounded Frenchmen home from the front. Seán (early teens) works as a runner and general help.*

MAUD: *(Over, from trance)* Look, look at it, these men who run this world, look what they have given us, and go on giving us.

*Cut to*

*INT. HOSPITAL, PARIS. DAY. 1916.*

*Maud moves at speed down corridor writhing with trainloads of young wounded just arriving. A second nurse keeps pace with her, pointing the way.*

*Cut to*

*INT. CRAMPED LINEN ROOM.*

*A young, corn-haired nurse stares out of the solitary window, her back to the shot. On the window sill by her hand, a jug of water and a bottle of belladonna.*

*The door swings open behind her, she turns to look: Iseult.*

*Maud stands in the doorway, strong but scared. Studies her daughter's face, ravaged by agonies of grief and despair.*

*Maud takes her in her arms to soothe her. Looks down at the bottle on the window sill. Sound suddenly in: trail the dull bump of great guns opening up at distance. Cut to*

*EXT. LATE MAY. DAY. HEADLAND OVER NORMANDY COAST. 1916*

*Maud stands in dune grass, listening to the war twenty miles upcoast. The great guns bump calmly away, on and on: unreal.*

*In closer shot, the face is worn, the eyes losing belief, a touch hopeless.*

*A bicycle bell draws her gaze to the house. The postman waves to her, on his way again.*

*INT. HOUSE. HALLWAY.*

*She stands in the hallway staring at the copy of The Times she's just opened. Her face maps her emotions, powerful, contradictory, alive.*

*INT. BACKDOORWAY.*

*Through open door, we see Seán working the vegetable patch. Maud calls him, out of shot. He saunters up, alert, self-confident.*

MAUD: Seán. Your father has died a hero's death in a great rising in Ireland. I believe you can be proud this day, Bichon.

SEÁN: Right. *(Thinks)* How did he die?

MAUD: At the hands of a British firing squad.

*She hands him the paper.*

SEÁN: Right. Will I pack my things?

*INT. FRONT ROOM.*

*Iseult sits listlessly at the window, eyes fixed on nothing. She's waxen; passive; lost in the madness of her moment.*

MAUD: *(from doorway)* Iseult. *(Iseult looks across at her).* We're going home, my love.

*Iseult's face slowly crumples. It takes a while to realise it's joy she's weeping for.*

*EXT. DAY. AT SEA.*

*A channel steamer's bows plough through rough fog-trapped seas.*

MAUD: *(Over, from trance)* No more, Willie. I cannot deal with these days, the centre cannot hold.

*The shot slows, stutters ...*

WILLIE: *(Over, from trance; intense)* On. You must. We sow the seed, we reap the harvest, let the rose bleed.

*Becoming*

*Mute bleached montage – a sort of raw footage – of the return to Ireland:*

*Willie awaits them at Southampton Docks. Spots them and their menagerie – 10 canaries, 1 parrot, 1 monkey, 2 cats, 1 dog – descending the gangway. He's 52, a little thicker at waist and spectacle lens, well-dressed, sage-like. He kisses Maud's cheek, then Iseult's, a grave handshake for Seán. The dock area around them fills up with British wounded, back from the war.*

*CUSTOM SHED. Maud and Iseult are singled out for strip-search in a back room. A court officer serves her with a Defence of the Realm Act notice banning further passage to Ireland.*

*Boat again. Fog again. An ancient peasant woman, weirdly reminiscent of the disguised Cathleen Ni Houlihan seen earlier, stands by the prow watching the coast of Ireland forming through the mist.*

MAUD: *(Over throughout, from trance) Half a war to get us home and once again outside the law ... God's own country, still ruled by the Devil.*

*MAYOR'S HALL, DUBLIN. SPRING, 1918.*

*Packed meeting. The platform bears leading members – men and women – of the anti-British Alliance. Behind and above them, banners and posters proclaiming affiliations (SINN FEIN prominent) and campaign issues. A strap banner the width of the stage subsumes the rest: **No Conscription for the Murder Machine - Oppose the Act.***

*Audience and platform, in black armbands, stand together in a minute's silence for the Easter Dead.*

*Sound abruptly up as they resume seats. Arthur Griffith, in the chair, welcomes Maud Gonne MacBride back to the country and the struggle. She stands, approaches the microphone. An uncertain moment, then applause begins to spread and deepen. The platform stands too: among them, Con Markiewicz, Kathleen Clarke, Helena Maloney, Hannah Sheehy-Skeffington.*

*Maud's face, worn, grave, a smile growing as the applause swells.*

MAUD: Friends, men and women of Ireland, I thank you. Let the message go out from this meeting tonight that Irish people across the land will resist – with their lives, if forced to – this infamous Act of Conscription in Ireland decreed by the foreign Parliament of a foreign power. And let it be understood and dutifully passed on by those in this Hall who secretly serve the British yoke, that from this day force will be met by force in this matter ... Tell your masters, for I know you are here, that Ireland demands but one Act only from the British State: the Freedom of Ireland Act.

*Huge applause again. She sips from her glass. The doors at the back of the hall burst open, police and soldiers rip into the hall, declare the meeting to be seditious and place the whole gathering under arrest.*

*Sound fades on the mayhem of cracked heads and scuffles. Marshalls protect the platform, as the leaders make their exits, Maud among them.*

*INT. APARTMENT, STEPHEN'S GREEN. DAY.*

*Full sound. Maud and Seán unpack boxes and bags, moving in. Seán wears Fianna uniform; the youth movement of the IRA. The doorbell rings, Maud goes to answer it. Finds Willie on the step.*

MAUD: Ha. You're over, you can help us move in, come in.

WILLIE: No, better not, I can't stop, I er ...



*He scans the street, looking for surveillance.*

MAUD: What is it, love?

WILLIE: I had dinner with the Attorney-General the other evening.

MAUD: ... The British Attorney-General ..?

WILLIE: ... There's a list being prepared, your name's on it.

MAUD: Ahunh. What do you suggest I do?

WILLIE: Leave Dublin. Lie low. Abandon all political action.

MAUD: Is that all?

WILLIE: Armed struggle is not the answer, Maud. It will get worse. Violence and terror, breeding like maggots in a boneyard. I want to help.

MAUD: Thank you.

WILLIE: *(Turning away, then back)* I'm to be married on Saturday.

MAUD: Ah.

WILLIE: Georgie Hyde Lees.

MAUD: Mm. Iseult said no then.

WILLIE: Mm. *(They look at each other)* I plan to live in Ireland.

MAUD: Good. We have room if you need it, while you find a place.

WILLIE: Thanks.

*Silence. He leaves. She watches.*

*EXT. ROADWAY, STEPHEN'S GREEN. DAY.*

*Mute slowed shot through barred window, from moving vehicle, of the uniformed Seán (14) giving chase, calling and sobbing, shrinking as the van picks up speed.*

MAUD: *(Over, from trance)* No no. No no no ...

*On the reverse, we see Maud's face at the police van window, watching her life disappear.*

*The shot stills to freeze. Stutters. Freezes again.*

*Another still frame: Maud with others, shackled on the deck of a boat. The image kicks into life briefly, freezes again.*

*Frame after frame, charting the way to the gates of Holloway Prison.*

*INT. PRE -DAWN. AUTUMN, 1918. PRISON CELL.*

*Full sound. Wispy light from yard lamps lightens the rough stone cell. The shot moves across the inmates' faces: Con Markiewicz, Kathleen Clarke, Hannah Sheehy-Skeffington; all sleeping; arrives finally with Maud (52), lying half-propped on her cot, coughing, delirious, half-dead.*

MAUD: *(Over, from trance) Five months? Five lifetimes? The last weeks I saw death each night at dawn. Summoned to watch ...*

*A prison bell clock sounds the hour: seven. The light grows stronger from the coming day. She moves her feet to the stone floor, struggles to upright, moves unsteadily to the high window, lifts a stool with great effort, lays it beneath the window, begins her impossible climb.*

*Her head, clearing the window ledge, light striking the face. Sounds of a single drum beat, trailed from her coming vision, replace the ambient sych.*

*Light brightens to epiphany on her face as she scans the yard below.*

*We take her point of view: see*

*MOUNTJOY GAOLYARD, DUBLIN, SUMMER, 1916.*

*James Plunkett is marched to the pole at the top of the yard to the beat of the drum. Squaddies tie him to the pole; secure the blindfold. A priest prays with Plunkett for a moment, mouth to ear. An officer marches the firing squad into positions, hands out the cartridges. Aim. Fire. Puffs of smoke, Plunkett sags. The officer walks forward, pistol cocked; fires a shot into the man's head. squaddies move in to lift the body and throw it into a waiting cart filled with quicklime, as*

*James Connolly is carried out unconscious tied to a kitchen chair; his legs shattered by bullets. The nightmare repeats itself. As Connolly's body hits the quicklime,*

*John MacBride is being marched to the pole. He refuses the blindfold; dies shouting defiance.*

WILLIE: *(Over;throughout, a whisper, from trance) ...*  
 And what if excess of love  
 Bewildered them till they died?  
 I write it out in verse –  
 MacDonagh and MacBride  
 And Connolly and Pearse  
 Now and in time to be,  
 Wherever green is worn,  
 Are changed, changed utterly;  
 A terrible beauty is born.

*Maud's watching face, in restored natural light, at the bars of her cell window. Pulmonary blood has seeped from her mouth and onto her chin. A motor horn hoots down in the yard. She looks. Sees*

*EXT. HOLLOWAY PRISON YARD.*

*An ambulance backing towards the main building from the main gate. Two warders stretcher a woman out towards the van.*

*Cut to*

*EXT. YARD.*

*Mute close shot of stretcher being lifted into the ambulance: it's Maud. The shot slows, stutters, stills to freeze; flames from the Ireland's Eye cave fire char and melt the still; a new image lies below it, a close shot of*

*Maud's face, black-veiled, red-eyed, ravaged, waiting outside*

*EXT. STEPHEN'S GREEN FLAT. EARLY MORNING. NOVEMBER, 1918.*

*Maud stands on the step amid her bags. Tries the bell again. Thin sifting drizzle mists the lamplit air.*

*The big oak door opens, Willie stands there in green pyjamas, straight from his bed.*

WILLIE: Maud? I thought you were confined in hospital still.

MAUD: I discharged myself. Can I come in?

WILLIE: Come in? What ..?

MAUD: ... I'm just in from the boat. I could use a bath and a bed.

WILLIE: I'd rather you didn't, don't you still have the room at the Nassau ...?

MAUD: This is my apartment, Willie.

WILLIE: Which you have leased to me. I'm sorry. George is sick, a dreadful pneumonia, I can't risk disturbances, police raids, soldiers, she's heavy with child and ... I'm sorry.

MAUD: *(Not wanting to believe this)* Willie ..?

WILLIE: It's over, Maud. It's over. I'm sorry.

MAUD: *(Sad; stony)* Oh Willie. Oh Willie. Once it was your spirit was green, now it's just your pyjamas. What a falling-off was there.

WILLIE: Let me call you a cab.

*She shakes her head, gathers her bags, leaves. He stands at the door watching. She disappears into the mist.*

WILLIE: *(Over, from trance)* Enough.

MAUD: *(Over, from trance)* Is it?

*The image reverts to frozen flamescreen, as if over.*

*Jagged flashes flicker in and out, disconnected, raw footage of life beyond the moment reached. Maud's disjointed voice over from trance offers cryptic commentary.*

*IRA hit squads, pistols, bombs, taking out British Military Intelligence men.*

MAUD: *(Over, from trance)* Only for some was it enough, Willie. For others, the war never ended.

*Black and Tan terror raids: IRA youths are dragged half-dead through their home village roped to troop trucks.*

*Tans throw a 16-year old youth from his house into the cobbled street. Other Tans follow, the youth's mother struggling in their grip. The youth is forced to kneel; his mother is forced to watch. The Tan commander draws his pistol, holds it casually to the back of the lad's neck, fires; a simple pre-enactment of a key image from the Vietnam war.*

MAUD: *(Over, from trance) And when we could no longer fight the British, we found ways to fight each other, and all of us losers, a great age had passed and genius gave way to accountancy ...*

*A women's prisoner's defence league banner flutters above a silent picket of twenty black-robed women outside the walls of Kilmainham gaol. Free State soldiers line the perimeter wall above them, rifles ready. Maud (almost 60) climbs onto a cart, stares up at the young Irish officer in charge. Their eyes meet; hold.*

MAUD: *And. And. And ...*

*Full sound. In abruptly, trailing hollow metallic Prison sounds.*

INT. KILMAINHAM GAOL. STONE CELL. 1923.

*Mute images of Maud prostrate on her bed, half dead, on her 18th day on hunger strike. A warder makes the ritual offer of food; a doctor checks her pulse, hands her a tin cup of water. She takes a sip.*

*Trail sounds of soldiers, shouts, laughter. Moving to*

EXT. STEPHEN'S GREEN APARTMENT. EVENING. 1923.

*Maud returning home along the Green. Ahead, a small crowd of onlookers watches Free State soldiers come and go through the smashed Georgian front-door of her flat. She quickens her pace. Two soldiers guarding the action block her path. A young squaddie is pouring paraffin on the great and growing mound of documents and papers they've culled from the house and piled on the pavement. Others are still arriving with more boxes.*

MAUD: *(To the paraffin pourer) What are you doing? Who's in charge here?*

POURER: *(Working on, calling inside) There's an ould biddy out here wants to know who's in charge, sir ...*

MAUD: *I said what are you doing, young man.*

*An officer appears on the step, looks her up and down.*

OFFICER: *This your house?*

MAUD: *It is.*

OFFICER: *Authorization.*

*He hands her a chit. She stares at it. The officer signals the pourer away, strikes a match, drops it on the papers, returns indoors.*

*Maud's face, lit by the flames, watching her life burn away.*

*Slow creep into the bonfire: notebooks, diaries, four decades of press cuttings, pictures, photographs, messages from comrades, her children's first scrawls and drawings, letters and their envelopes by the thousand go up in the flame.*

MAUD: *(Over, from trance)* Your letters too, Willie. Every single one. All gone. Enough.

*Close shot of the bonfire, reduced to a smoulder of gun-metal ash.*

*Becoming*

*Close shot of the cave fire, down to dull grey ember.*

## VISION ENDS

*EXT. IRELAND'S EYE. LATE AFTERNOON.*

*They sit in their separate spaces, immobilised; appalled to silence. Tears run down Maud's cheeks; she gives no sign of knowing it.*

*Willie very slowly slides his hand across the limestone; covers Maud's with it. Silence.*

*Growing sounds of boat returning. A shout from Sweeney below. They sit on, hand on hand, in some other place.*

*Cut to*

*EXT. BOAT.*

*They sit in silence as the boat whines them back. Ahead, Howth and the jetty. Sweeney's catch – three or four assorted fish – slide around in the bottom. The largest, a sea bass, slides onto Willie's foot, he kicks it away.*

SWEENEY: Hold the holly there, doctor. That's your supper you're toe-endin' ...

*Willie gives him a cold look. Sweeney hawks, spits.*

MAUD: *(Suddenly)* That'll be Sligo Duck I suppose, will it?

SWEENEY: Bang on, Your Grace. The very thing.

*He laughs. She smiles.*

*Cut to*

*EXT. JETTY.*

*Sweeney gives Maud a hand up to the boards. Willie waves the hand away; proves unable to manage the ascent; Maud has to haul him up.*

WILLIE: No no, I can manage perfectly well ...

*Sweeney leads them off down the jetty towards the parked car, the catch in a bucket in his hand.*

SWEENEY: Ye may not know it, ma'am, but just now we're treadin' sacred ground ...

WILLIE: *(Throttling it back)* For God's sake man, we're treading clapboard! Sacred ground ...

MAUD: How so, Mr Sweeney?

WILLIE: Don't humour him.

SWEENEY: Twas on this very jetty the guns and rounds was landed for the Rising of 19 and 16, so it was.

WILLIE: Ignore him, he's making it up ...

*Sweeney grins, begins whistling.*

WILLIE: We won't be needing your fish, by the way. Tonight we dine out ...

*Sweeney stops whistling. They've reached the car. Sweeney begins spooning them in.*

MAUD: Really? Where?

WILLIE: Here in Howth. But let me surprise you with it.

SWEENEY: *(Starting her up on the handle)* If it's here in Howth it'll be Malloy's, that being the only place serves a plate in the place, and if it's Malloy's, that'll be some surprise all right.

*He gets behind the wheel, crunches through to first.*

WILLIE: Just drive, would you. Talk is not required.

*Cut to*

*EXT. EVENING. HEADLAND ROAD.*

*The Model A Ford hurtles down the winding hill towards the town. Willie and Maud hang on grimly; Sweeney sings **Patrick was a Gentleman** with some abandon.*

SWEENEY: Patrick was a gentleman  
 Came from decent people  
 He built a church in Dublin town  
 And on it put a steeple.  
 His father was a Gallagher  
 His mother was a Grady  
 His aunt was an O'Shaughnessy  
 His uncle was a Brady  
 The Wicklow hills are very high  
 And so is the hill of Howth, sir,  
 But there's a hill much higher still,  
 Much higher than them both, sir ...

*EXT. MALLOY'S BAR, A SPATCHCOCK OF RECENTLY CONVERTED COTTAGES, HOWTH HARBOUR.*

*Sweeney locks the car and ushers the bedecked couple into the boisterous saloon bar. He carries a brown paper bag in with him.*

*INT. MALLOY'S SALOON.*

*Maud and Willie wait by the door while Sweeney has a word with Malloy, who's serving at the bar. Malloy approaches the couple, wiping his hand for the shake, leads them through to a private room at the back.*

*Sweeney's left at the bar haggling with Mrs Malloy over the contents of his bag. She offers a pair of shillings. Sweeney reluctantly accepts, well pleased.*

*INT. PRIVATE DINING ROOM, A HALF-FLOOR UP.*

*Malloy disposes of their topcoats, sees them to their seats at the solitary table, lights the table candles.*

MALLOY: Excuse me, Mum, but would you be Maud Gonne ..?

MAUD: I would.

MALLOY: Bless you, Mum. Tis a grave honour ye do us, mum, and a benediction on this house. I'll send the Missus right away, sir.

*He backs out of the tiny room, eyes agleam at the Great Lady.*

WILLIE: You should go on the boards, ye'd clean up.

MAUD: So write me a play.

*They gaze at each other through the smoky candles.*

WILLIE: I would too. If there were time. *(He scans the whitewashed walls)* What do you think?

MAUD: It's ... cosy.

WILLIE: You don't recognise it?

MAUD: *(Looking again)* No. Should I?

WILLIE: You were here once.

MAUD: Malloy's?

WILLIE: Before Malloy. *(He waits; she shakes her head)* This very room. Mrs Meredith?

MAUD: Nanny Meredith? No ..!

WILLIE: This was her sitting room.

MAUD: My God. It's so ...

WILLIE: Malloy took all three cottages and knocked 'em through.

MAUD: She retired here, we came to see her, that summer.

WILLIE: We did. We sat in her sitting room and took tea and she told me all about you. And later, you told me, she took you on one side and asked in a whisper if we were engaged to be married ..?

MAUD: Hmm. And did I tell you what I answered?

WILLIE: I doubt it.

MAUD: I said Nanny Meredith, in every important respect I believe we are married already.

WILLIE: You said that? What did she say?

MAUD: She said O that's nice, Miss Gonne, I'm very happy for you. You'll recall she was three-quarters deaf, I don't believe she heard me.

WILLIE: Still, a beautiful thing to say.

MAUD: A beautiful thing to do. *(She gestures the room)* Thank you.

*Silence. The saloon has grown more lively: fiddle, accordion, voice.*

WILLIE: The day before that, Maud, the day before we came here.

MAUD: What about it?

WILLIE: ... What did we do?

MAUD: Do? It was fifty years ago. What did we do?

WILLIE: I don't know, I'm asking you ...

MAUD: ... I don't know.

*Standoff. They hardeye each other a moment.*

MRS MALLOY: *(Arriving; the power behind the throne)* Ah good evening, good evening, nice to see you again, Mr Yeats, it's been a while, I have a card here to tempt a hawk from the sky but the beef and the lamb are both off and there's a special treat not on the card we call in the trade Sligo duck ...

*Willie's head jerks up from the card. Maud chuckles.*

MRS MALLOY: ... Oh, two gentlemen were asking after yez earlier on, sir, foreigners says Malloy but nice enough.

WILLIE: Foreigners? Where from?

MRS MALLOY: Malloy thought Dublin, I couldn't say.

*The shot slides away, becomes a shot of two suited men sitting drinking in the saloon.*

MAUD: Now this Sligo Duck, Mrs Malloy, what exactly would that be ...?

*INT. SALOON BAR, FILLING UP.*

*Sweeney plays pot-boy, one of nature's oddjobbers. Approaches the two men's table. Waits for one of them to drain his glass. Goes to gather it. The man keeps his hand on the handle; gives Sweeney a hard stare. Sweeney's lips offer a disarming smile, but his eyes aren't in it.*

*Fiddle, accordion and voice set up in the far corner, picking up **Patrick was a Gentleman** where Sweeney left it.*

SONG ... On the top of this high hill  
 St Patrick preached his sermon  
 Which drove the frogs into the bogs  
 And banished all the vermin.  
 There's not a mile of Eireann's isle  
 Where dirty vermin musters  
 But there he put his dear fore-foot  
 And murdered them in clusters.



*INT. PRIVATE ROOM. LATER.*

*Close shot of the skeletal remains of the sea bass on a salver. Mrs Malloy's hands lift the plate and place it on a side table by the wall.*

MRS MALLOY: And how was the Sligo Duck then ..?

MAUD: *(Lighting cigarette)* Excellent, thank you.

WILLIE: *(Pouring coffee)* And mercifully nothing like a duck.

*Mrs Malloy carries out. The din from the downstairs bar has grown more raucous, a fiddle has joined the music-makers.*

MAUD: It's been a grand weekend, Willie.

WILLIE: When do you leave?

MAUD: I'll catch the twelve o'clock.

WILLIE: I'll let Sweeney know.

MAUD: I fear it hasn't helped you much.

WILLIE: Oh it has helped. I'm nearly there.

*They drink their coffee in silence. Willie broods a little, working on things.*

*INT. SALOON BAR.*

*Sweeney stands drinking at the sidebar; his eyes on the two men. They check their watches, get up to leave. Sweeney drains his pot, drifts outside after them.*

*EXT. MALLOY'S BAR. ALMOST NIGHT.*

*The two men head for their car at the roadside. Sweeney tucks himself round a corner to take a leak and watch. The men board the car, squirt off up the hill towards the headland.*

*Sweeney buttons up, returns to the bar.*

*INT. SALOON BAR.*

*Across the crammed smoke-filled moil, Sweeney sees Willie in altercation at the bottom of the steps to the private room; moves at once to push his way through.*

*Cut to*

*INT. SALOON BAR, FAR PART OF ROOM, UNDER SIGN TO TOILETS.*

*A group of drunks have corralled the whitefaced Willie against the wall to snipe at him.*

DRUNK 1: ... A cut above, is it, his high and mighty self in the fine suit ...

DRUNK 2: ... T'inks he knows more than the rest of us, got a fountain pen where his dick used to be ...

DRUNK 1: ... Couldn't tell his arse from his armpit, so he couldn't ...

DRUNK 2: ... An' niver done a decent day's work in his life ...

SWEENEY: (*Arriving; calm*) An' what would you know about a decent day's work, Pat O'Hare ..? (*To Willie*) Where's the lady?

*Willie indicates Toilets, Sweeney nods, begins to clear a path. Maud appears. He waves her through, placing both behind him. Malloy comes out from behind the bar, Sweeney waves him still; in charge.*

DRUNK 1: (*Some stout-sodden bluster*) Not your affair, Sweeney, keep yer nose to yerself if ye don't want it bustin' ...

SWEENEY: Shame on ye, Michael Finney, d'ye not know who this is ..?

DRUNK 1: I know who it is alright, it's mister bloody hoitytoity Yeats is who it is all right, he's ...

SWEENEY: ... Ireland's greatest poet is who he is, Michael Finney, and if he walks the high road to heaven and you crawl the gutters, that's maybe 'cause you haven't thought of standing upright like a man yet ... All right? (*The five men sway and snuffle, still dangerous*) I'll say one thing and then I'll go. Harm a hair of that man's head and I'll break ye in two, four, six, eight ... (*Reaches the last drunk*) ... ten. And I'll say another. Take yerselves to the bar there and have a glass on me.

*Sweeney ushers Willie and Maud through the stilled room and out into the night.*

*EXT/INT. NIGHT. CAR.*

*Willie sits with his head back, eyes closed, still pale. Maud sits by him, her hand on his.*

*Sweeney sings, but more gently, picking up where the singer left off.*

SWEENEY:     The frogs went hop and the toads went pop  
                  Slapdash into the water  
                  And the snakes committed suicide ...

*His headlamps pick up a parked car up ahead, its lights out. He stops the song to take in the two men up front, smoking cigarettes in the dark of the car.*

SWEENEY: (On) ... To save themselves from slaughter.

*He adjusts his rear-view mirror, picks up the car gathering speed behind them.*

SWEENEY: Ah, there ye go, boys.

WILLIE: What?

SWEENEY: I think ye have company, sir.

WILLIE: Company?

*Sweeney hoiks a thumb at the rear window. Willie hoists himself round to look into the glare of the car behind.*

*EXT. HOUSE. NIGHT.*

*Sweeney parks up by the side door as before. They sit in silence for a moment, waiting for the following car. Nothing.*

SWEENEY: In we go then. *(He bips the horn, gets out at speed, opens the rear doors to help them out)* Lights, if you please ... *(The light goes on above the door)* Thank you.

*Jane appears at the door, a torch in her hand.*

JANE: There you are, come away inside, I've cocoa on the hob.

*Lights rake the side of the house, the men's car rolls to a halt across the yard. The three stare at it through the glare.*

JANE: Ah, you have company, sir.

*The lights cut. The two men leave the car and approach at a saunter.*

MAUD: Ah. Of course. S.B.

*Sweeney gives her a look.*

MAN: *(arrived)* I wonder if we might have a word with you, sir? *(He holds up his ID. Willie can't read it)* Inspector Lucan, Sergeant McShane. There's more light inside, sir, would ye mind ..?

WILLIE: And what business would you have with me, Inspector?

LUCAN: The business of the State, Senator.

WILLIE: The business of the State. *(A sniff)* Come in.

*INT. PARLOUR. NIGHT.*

*Silence surrounds the ticking clock. Lucan and McShane sit in armchairs, side by side. Maud sits opposite, sipping whiskey. McShane reaches for her manuscript memoir, which has now found its way onto the parlour table. Studies the front. Shows it to Lucan, who nods.*

*Sounds of toilet flushing, Willie appears, buttoning flies.*

WILLIE: You won't have reached your prostrates yet, gentlemen, but you will. *(Plumping into his chair)* Now tell me one thing, Inspector. Do I look like a man who would be hiding an escaped Volunteer in his summer house?

LUCAN: No no, of course not, sir.

*He looks deliberately at Maud, who returns the stare.*

WILLIE: ... I am William Butler Yeats, founder and president of the Irish National Theatre, Nobel Prize winner, eight years a Senator in the Dail, I have – if you'll pardon the expression – done this State some service.

LUCAN: We're simply acting on information, sir, and bound to check it out.

WILLIE: Information. Mm. Well, you've done your duty, there is no such person on these premises ...

LUCAN: I'm sure there isn't, sir, would you mind if we checked ..?

WILLIE: (*Popping*) Are you saying I'm a liar, sir?

MAUD: Easy, Willie, the Inspector's only doing his job ... Special Branch has all our interests at heart.

*Lucan gives her another searching look. She smiles sweetly.*

LUCAN: Would you mind if we took a brief tour of the house, Senator? Just so's we can tell the office we done a search?

WILLIE: You have a warrant?

LUCAN: We can get one.

WILLIE: Come back when you have it. (*Stands*) Anything else?

LUCAN: (*unbudging*) One or two things, yes.

WILLIE: I need my pills.

*He leaves the room. The two men fix their attention on Maud, who's lighting a cigarette. Lucan gives McShane a nod.*

MCSHANE: 'A Servant of the Queen'? This yours, Madam?

MAUD: It is, in a manner of speaking. Though it's the Senator's copy.

MCSHANE: And this word in pencil on the front, ma'am.

MAUD: Yes?

MCSHANE: Finnegan, does it say?

MAUD: (*Taking a look*) It might. It could be Finnegan. I know Mr Yeats was talking long-distance with Joyce yesterday.

MCSHANE: (*Pencil ready*) Joyce who?

MAUD: James Joyce. (*The two men stare blankly at her*) The novelist. I believe he has a work-in-progress about a funeral.

LUCAN: What's this to do with Finnegan?

MAUD: I believe he's the main character. He's thinking of calling it Finnegan's Funeral.

MCSHANE: (*copying it all down*) ... Funeral. Mm. Where can we find this ... (*Checks notes*) Joyce feller?

MAUD: Paris.

*Silence.*

MCSHANE: (*obdurate*) So that's not your handwriting at all then.

*A muffled cry from the Library across the way. They turn to look. Sweeney speeds past from the kitchen. Maud stands, moves to see what's happening.*

*Sees*

*IN LIBRARY.*

*Sweeney crouches over Willie's prone body on the carpet, his pill bottle near his hand, pills everywhere.*

MAUD: My God, is he all right?

SWEENEY: (*Fingers on neck-pulse*) He's breathing, ma'am.

MAUD: (*At desk, clicking phone rest for operator*) Doctor doctor doctor ... (*She sees the SB men in the doorway*) I think you might usefully leave the premises now, gentlemen, you've probably been instrumental in seeing off Ireland's greatest man of letters, a fine night's work and one I'm sure the Minister of Justice will want to hear all about ... Hello, hello ... Yes, this is the summer house. Out on the head there, yes, we need Mr Yeats' doctor urgently, ahunh, yes, thank you ...

*She replaces the receiver, joins Sweeney on the rug. A car starts up outside, lights sweep the trees, they're gone.*

WILLIE: (*From nowhere*) Are the buggers gone?

*Maud and Sweeney look at each other. Willie draws himself to the sit.*

WILLIE: Damn 'em, they'd've stayed all night, sniffing for bones. Good, eh? Should've been an actor. It's a gift, you know. Give me a hand.

*Sweeney hands him upright with a chuckle.*

MAUD: You bugger. I thought you were a goner.

WILLIE: Me? I'll live forever, didn't I tell you? (*The pills*) Gather those up will ye Mr Sweeney, I'll only tread them into the carpet, I'm on my way ...

MAUD: I'll walk you up.

SWEENEY: Leave it to me, Your Grace, you get yourself a mug of cocoa.

WILLIE: I wouldn't mind a mug meself.

MAUD: I'll bring you one up.

*She leaves for the kitchen. Sweeney helps Willie to the stairs and up; for the moment, comrades-in-arms. The pace is weirdly slow, as if the collapse had been real.*

SWEENEY: (*As they recede*) Is it still actin' y'are or what, sir?

WILLIE: (*Eventually*) Guess.

*INT. KITCHEN.*

*Jane cuts sandwiches: bread, cheese, pickle. Swings round tense-eyed as Maud enters.*

JANE: Ah it's you, mum, come for your cocoa.

MAUD: And a mug for the Man Himself, if ye would.

*She sits, suddenly drained. Notes the substantial pile of sandwiches down the table. Can't make sense of it.*

JANE: (*At the hob with the mugs*) Did Finbar speak with you at all, mum? Sweeney.

MAUD: Finbar. Lovely name. No, what about?

JANE: He'll tell ye himself soon enough, mum.

*She stirs the milk and cocoa, fills the bold blue dolphin-motif mugs.*

MAUD: Mr Sweeney was wonderful this evening, down there at the bar. Spoke up for the Man in a roomful of drunks and faced them down with a surprising passion. *(The sandwiches)*

JANE: A passionate man, mum. And not the fool he looks.

*(Sweeney's heavy clump on the stair, returning at speed).* It's his feet's his achilles heel ...

SWEENEY: Did you tell her, love? *(Jane shakes her head)* Go and ring the doctor, will you, tell him false alarm, the Great Man's fine.

*He squeezes her hand as she passes. She blushes a little smile. He crosses to the hob, pours himself a cocoa.*

SWEENEY: The man who phoned earlier, ma'am.

MAUD: Yes.

SWEENEY: ... said he might come out here.

MAUD: Yes.

SWEENEY: Finnegan, was it?

MAUD: I believe it was.

SWEENEY: He's in the coalhouse. Came while we were out.

MAUD: Mm. *(She looks inside her bag, closes it).* I'd better go and see him. *(Pointing down passage to outside door)* It's that way, isn't it?

SWEENEY: I'll take you through, Ma'am ...

MAUD: Your goodness will lead you to the grave, Mr Sweeney, this is not your concern.

SWEENEY: We'll need a torch.

*He collects one from a ledge, leads off down the passage.*

*EXT. SIDE OF HOUSE. MOONLIT NIGHT, SCUDDING CLOUD.*

*Sweeney scans the driveway and trees, Maud just behind him. Nothing. He points his torch to the ground behind him, sets off down the side of the house, lighting Maud's footing.*

*He stops, torch cut, scents the air; a feral creature still somewhere inside him. Moves on.*

*INT. COALHOUSE, NIGHT.*

*Sounds of bolts being drawn, the door pushes open, the torch lances the barn of a space, picking out heaps of logs and mounds of coal.*

SWEENEY: Are ye there now, sirrah? *(Nothing)* I'm Sweeney, twas my wife hid ye here. *(Nothing)* I've Miss Gonne here with me.

*Silence, then small sounds of someone emerging from spread tarpaulin. The torch finds him; brings him out. He's maybe 17, a baby-faced runt of a kid, hard masking scared.*

*Maud passes Sweeney into the space, takes the torch from him.*

MAUD: Thank you, Mr Sweeney. That will be all for the moment.

SWEENEY: I'll step outside then, will I?

*She nods. He steps outside. Maud moves in to the space. The boy shimmers in the moonwashed dark.*

MAUD: I don't know who you are, who sent you, what you've done, why you're on the run to England. I do this because I can do no other. *(She opens her bag, hands him the letter)* This will help you find a place to stay. *(She opens her purse, hands him some cash.)* This'll help you get there.

*The kid takes both, pockets them, his eyes fixed on the woman in front of him.*

FINNEGAN: Are you really Maud Gonne? *(He shakes his head)* S'like meetin' the Virgin Mary. Hell fire, wait till I tell the boys, will they be green.

*Maud watches the tremble in his shoulders, smells the fear.*

MAUD: I wish you Godspeed. You'll cope.

FINNEGAN: Miss.

MAUD: What is it?

FINNEGAN: Would you pray with me?

MAUD: If ye will.

*The lad kneels, Maud joins him. They pray in silence. The boy gulps. Maud looks at him. He's crying.*

*She puts her arm round his scrawny back, he puts his head on her shoulder, tears mottle his pinched face.*

*Cut to*

*INT. HOUSE. STAIRWAY TO FIRST FLOOR.*

*Maud climbs the stairs, Willie's cocoa in her hand; sees Sweeney at the top cutting his toenails on a newspaper.*

SWEENEY: All done are we, ma'am?

MAUD: You're a foolish brave man, Finbar Sweeney, so you are. *(She stoops, places a kiss on his head)* Good night.

*She swishes past him and on towards the second flight. Sweeney sits on, his whole frame sexualised by the kiss and the contact, his eyes closed.*

SWEENEY: *(Eventually; after her)* Pleasant dreams, milady.

*INT. UPPER STAIRWAY.*

*Light spills from Willie's open door as Maud approaches the stairhead landing.*

WILLIE: *(From within)* Bring my cocoa did ye ..?

MAUD: You should be asleep, you old witch.

*She looks in. Sees*

*INT. WORKROOM.*

*Willie's at work in the middle of a set-up, stretching and fixing a bolt of sky-blue silk along a wall. There are candles, signs, pictures ranged around the silk wall.*

*He's alive, tireless, deep in what he does.*

MAUD: *(Laying mug down)* Shouldn't you sleep?

WILLIE: Go to bed.

MAUD: I'll sleep ...

WILLIE: Thank you.

MAUD: Thank you, Willie.

*They look at each other across the crazy room. He raises his fingers to his lips, sends her a kiss.*

MAUD: Will I see you before I leave?

WILLIE: *(A grin)* You might. *(She's leaving. He waits till she's all but gone)*

Maud. *(She turns)* That summer, here at Howth, the day before ..? We crossed the bay and climbed Long Hill and near the top we lay in the high heather and looked into the sky together and envisioned ... remember ..?

MAUD: Nothing. No.

WILLIE: ... The Castle ...

MAUD: I don't remember.

WILLIE: The Place of Heroes. Yes.

*Silence.*

MAUD: No, Willie.

*She crosses to her room, closes the door.*

*Willie turns back to his work. Sits lotus-legged before the blue silk sky. Gazes into the silk. Sounds begin a slow bubble deep in the body.*

*Willie's face, close up, the eyes filled with blue.*

*His point of view: a sky-blue screen.*

*Intercut, snap shots of the house:*

*Finnigan, smoking a cigarette, on his back, staring out through the skylight.*



*Sweeney lying in Jane's arms between the sheets, sleeping like a child. Jane strokes his head.*

*Ext shot of the house, angled to show outline against cloud-streaked sky.*

*Overhead of Maud in her bed, drifting towards sleep.*

*Willie again, eyes driving in, on.*

*The blue skyscreen.*

## FINAL VISION

EXT. LONG HILL, HOWTH. SUMMER DAY.

*Willie and Maud, mid-thirties, lie on their backs in the high heather, staring at the big bare sky.*

WILLIE: *(Over, from trance) Yes? (No answer) Yes?*

*On the reverse, we see the sky they see.*

WILLIE: *(Over, from trance) Water first, then fire. Now air ... Yes!*

*The sky they watch becomes*

LOUGH KEY, LATE EVENING.

*Painted and gilded oars dip and lift, the boat moves relentlessly on towards the island castle ahead. Held flambeaux light the smouldery way.*

*Shot of the pair, Maud at the prow, Willie at the stern, alone in the moving boat, torch-lit, staring ahead. Between them, a raised black coffin draped with an Irish flag.*

WILLIE: *Yes yes yes ... This is it. This is it, Maud.*

EXT. ISLAND. DARKENING SKY.

*Long shot of the two on the shingle beach, the burning torches now in their hands, gazing up at the mouldering castle. The boat has evaporated; dreamed out.*

INT/EXT. CASTLE.

*They walk the ruined rooms in silence, torches raised. Above them, broad sweeps of starlit sky through the crumbled roofs.*

WILLIE: *(Over, from trance) That's right! All was open and open to the sky. Save one last room.*

*Shot of squat sunken oak door, a short flight of stone steps leading down. Maud approaches, Willie behind her; they read an inscription on the metal plaque driven into the wood: **Locus Futuri/ Porta exire singuli.***

WILLIE: *(Over, from trance) The Room of the Future. Pass one by one ...*

*Maud pushes against the door to open it. Offers Willie entry, he waves her on, she stoops to pass into the dark, the door swings shut behind her.*

*Willie approaches the door, pushes; it stays shut. He bangs the wood with his palms, calling her name.*

WILLIE: *(Over, from trance)* Take me, Maud. Take me inside. Take me with you.  
Show me what you saw.

MAUD: *(Over, from dream)* ... I saw nothing.

WILLIE: *(Over, from trance)* Show me ...

*Abrupt cut to*

*INT. ROOM OF THE FUTURE.*

*Maud stands, back to the door, in the black hole, torch raised. Behind her, echoic light years away, Willie's voice calls her name.*

MAUD: *(Over, from dream)* Why, Willie? Let it be.

WILLIE: *(Over, from trance)* The last vision. The last room. Maud?

*Shot of the flap of flame of her torch against the unpenetrated blackness of the space.*

*Sound builds in the black void: air in movement; unearthly.*

*An island of light grows slowly at the heart of the void, reveals a perfect circle of tessellated floor, a marble tomb at its centre.*

WILLIE: *(Over, from trance)* Ah. Ah.

*Shot of Maud on her back on the tomb, staring up into the light. In her point of view, we see only intense white light, too strong to source.*

*Her face, rapt. The light slowly dims.*

*Her point of view again: a vast star-packed sky, at once real and planetarial, begins to define itself in the resuming dark.*

MAUD: *(Over, from dream)* No more, Willie ...

WILLIE: *(Over, from trance)* More. Everything.

*The sky explodes.*

*Images of the century we've lived, mute actuality footage of the century she faces, early and late promiscuously bundled, cut for speed not sense, cascade from deep space: a one hundred-second catalogue of one hundred years of war and destruction and famine and horror and deep global self-abuse; a sort of Old Testament of our times, probably set down by Jeremiah; your list as good as anyone's and not a pretty sight.*

WILLIE: *(Over, throughout, from trance)* Everything. Everything. Everything.  
Everything. Everything.

*The last image: an on-board shot of a 3000lb Cruise missile mapping its way through suburban Baghdad, 100 feet from the ground, en route.*

WILLIE: *(Over, from trance, a whisper)* Everything, Maud.

*Fast cut to*

*EXT. LONG HILL, HOWTH HEAD. SUMMER DAY.*

*Tightening vertical downshot of the pair on their backs in the high heather a hundred feet below.*

*Their voices drift up. As the shot closes in, we hear them.*

WILLIE: If you will not marry me, at least ...

MAUD: At least let you have me? Is that what you mean?

*Willie props himself up on an elbow to look at her.*

WILLIE: Maud, I want you all. I want every last hair of you, cell of you, smell of you. I want everything.

MAUD: You don't want everything, Willie. You want my sex. That's the everything you want, am I right?

*Willie stares down at her, stunned, uncertain. She begins quietly unbuttoning her blouse and bodice. Breasts begin to appear.*

MAUD: Come then. We'll make love, will we.

*She draws him gently to her, brushes her lips on his, draws his head to her breasts. He shivers, moans, trembles, everything inside him struggling to release.*

*He comes almost at once, well short of everything, on a long hopeless groan, half joy, half shame.*

*Maud strokes his head. Willie lies back from her. Covers his wetting crotch with a spread hand.*

MAUD: *(Over, from dream)* Oh Willie. Was it so important?

*Sometimes enough is everything.*

## VISION ENDS

*Cut to*

*EXT. EARLY MORNING.*

*Shot of the house from the sea. Gulls wind on the wind.*

*INT. HOUSE.*

*Maud washes herself at the basin by the window, ready for the day. The flannel dips between her legs, her body at ease with itself.*

*Cut to*

*INT. WILLIE'S STUDY.*

*Willie sleeps fully-dressed on his camp-bed by the wall; out to the world. A smile comes and goes on his lips.*

*Moving to*

*EXT. MIDMORNING.*

*Sweeney bangs the banger down the hill to Howth. Maud hangs on.*