

Taigh Tê Teach English Translation

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1.

LARA: “Down the pitch with her, she has mastered the middle of the field. She’s not to be stopped!! She is down amid the forwards, pacing down the field, she looks like she might finish it?! Lara Ní Bhraonáin pushing in now, can she put it in the back of the net?! GOAAAL!”

Thump, thump, thump. The sound bounces off the wall, a beautiful, hopeful sound, like a heart. Doing it’s work, day by day. Football keeps me alive. Thump, thump, thump.

Pass? You have to be ready. That’s the thing. Prepared. In case something happens- an unexpected attack!

Stay calm my friends. That’s the most important thing. If I have a ball in my hands I can see things clearly, simply. “Safe hands” says my manager.

I think about my hands often. My “safe hands”. My mum has arthritis. Her hands are painful. She can’t knit, bake, she had to retire early. After a life of working relentlessly hard is that what she’s earned?

“Ah sure I’ll get my reward in heaven”

But I don't believe in heaven, or in life after death, or in god. I believe in the earth, in the mountains, I believe in football. Thump, thump, thump.

I came home from university a week ago. I was looking forward to a week on the couch. So I drove in the gate, and what was in-front of me but strangers in my garden. Right there, where you are now. A glamorous skinny lady, with a Burberry coat on. And a man wearing a grey suit. Both looking strangely formal.

"Why are there strangers in my garden?"

"Lara, pet, I have some good news, said mum as soon as I was in the door. The smell of steak and chips was in the air. "The house is on the market." She told me in a strange voice. In a whisper nearly.

"Are you out of your mind?"

Thump, thump, thump.

Silence.

"It's a great time to sell apparently!" said my Mam. "The Americans bought Peadar's House for four hundred thousand, would you believe?!"

That one, at the top of the hill, that's Peadar's House. Peadar was an incredible musician. An American lad bought it at an auction online, after he died.

People from around here can't afford to buy a house because the prices are that high- sure it's a great time to sell altogether!

“Ah Lara, I don’t have a penny.” Mam’s face was red, there were tears in her eyes. The woman who is always in good humour, singing, dancing around the house when she hoovers. “There's steak and chips in the oven for you”

But I wasn’t hungry any more. There were strangers in my garden.

“They’re up from Dublin. They're going to make an offer.”

I felt sick. I looked out the window, and I saw her again. The woman in the long Burberry coat. She turned around and I saw her properly. Those grey eyes. Antonia. The butterflies in my tummy. Antonia.

What summer was it?

Thump, thump, thump.

This house is no ordinary house. My Mam is a Bean an Tí. She took in 15 girls, every month of the summer ever summer, for 20 years. Here to learn Irish. Daughters coming out of the walls. All of them laughing, crying, drinking, smoking, escaping out the windows. Fighting over straighteners and boys.

“There has to be easier ways to make money!” my Mam would say, but she loved the girls. They were always giving out about the food. Oven pizzas mashed potato. “If they’re hungry they’ll eat it.

When I was young I hated the girls. They were staying in my house. Staring at me as though I was an alien.

“The daughter’s so weird, isn’t she?”

“Omg yes! She’s like, haunted or something!”

They were all convinced I couldn’t speak English. I spent every day playing football. Escaping from them.

Thump, thump, thump.

But a few of them were nice, friendly, good looking even.

I remember when I saw Antonia for the first time. Her wearing jeans, a spaghetti strap top and pearls on her. She was small, skinny, with grey eyes. She was covered in fake tan. I was in love.

I didn’t have the courage to talk to her. Her up in the room singing Singing Lady Gaga. *“I want your loving and I want your revenge, you and me could be a bad romance”*.

One night around midnight, I was out in the dark, kicking a ball around, thump thump thump. I turned around and who was there? Antonia. She had escaped out her window, a glint in her eye.

“Call me Toni,” she said. The smell of cigarettes off her. I threw the ball in her direction. Like this.

She caught it and started laughing. I remember the sound of it, her laughing out loud. She didn’t know the rules of GAA, believe it or not.

She took off her shoes and she ran in her bare feet across the wet grass. Her hair was in her face. She was laughing still, with me or at me, I didn't care, I was in love.

"What's the Irish for magic?" she asked.

"Draíocht."

"Tá draíocht ag baint leis an áit seo - This place is magic" she said, as she looked at the hills in the darkness. She was right.

Then she looked at me with her grey eyes and kissed me, against that wall. The stone pressing into my skin. Her cold hands on my pink face. Against that pebbledash there. Unexpected attack!

My whole life changed then, with Toni's tongue in my mouth. GOOAAAAL!

She didn't speak to me again after that night. She didn't even look at me. I heard her laughing at me up stairs when I was out practising. "My god she is obsessed with that football! Like is she ok? Thump, thump, thump. My heart was breaking in my chest.

Toni went back to Dublin. With a bit more Irish, and a better knowledge of the rules of GAA. Mam and me had steak and chips the night the girls left, the pair of us sitting in front of the TV. But I couldn't eat. Toni was gone. I felt sick.

"Don't worry about her." And then under her breath, "There's plenty more fish in the sea."

I didn't see her again. Till I came home last week and saw her standing in my garden. Toni. Wearing pearls still and a wedding ring.

Was I imagining the queen of D4 back in south Kerry? Unexpected attack. And the man that was with her. Her husband... Thump thump thump.

This place is magical, she said, looking at the mountains, the house, her standing on the land that's been in my family for generations.

I looked her straight between the eyes.

"I was born in that kitchen, on that floor. This house has been in my family for generations. Did you know that Toni?"

But I didn't have the courage to speak to her. I was speechless.

Toni put in an offer before she left. When she left mum was on the verge of tears.

There's magic in this place. Antonia was right when she said that. I think of her waking up every morning looking at the beautiful view, her pearls still on her, looking out over the fields that have been in my family for years.

"Ah sure the house was always too big for us anyway. I'm looking forward to less hoovering anyway."

Mam bought an apartment in Cork city, fair play to her. She's getting rid of all her stuff, cos there won't be space for it. Getting rid of my life to make space for Antonia. I'll be staying in that apartment at Christmas, sleeping on the couch. Kicking a ball around a tiny room.

Stay calm. Stay cool. My heart pounding in my chest.

2.

LUNED: Here it is, Nain. Like I promised. I have a draft. I put everything into it, almost every piece of myself.

YOUNG LUNED: (Voice) Can you tell the story again, Nain?

NAIN: (Voice) It's far past your bedtime, cheeky monkey.

YOUNG LUNED: (Voice) One more time before we go to sleep.

NAIN: (Voice) Alright, machi. But one day I want to read a story written by you. Ok?

LUNED: Starting something new means that something else has to end. Dyl and me are finished... still not sure who dumped who.

I tell everyone that I finished with him.

Anyway. He's gone. To Bristol.

I got a half-arsed offer to join him. Fucking hell, his face, when I said no. Not sad, not angry... just confused. And that says it all.

But even if he was on his knees, begging... I would never leave this place.
Now I'm back here. In your house, Nain and Taid. A home. For sale, again.

I wish you were with me, right now, to tell me the stories again so I can
immerse myself in a blanket of your words. I don't want to lose them. I'm
afraid that I'm going to lose them.

You would always have to re-read the previous chapter before carrying on
because you forgot what had happened. Huw and me always teased you for
that.

"You're old Nain, you keep forgetting things."
And you really didn't like being called old.

I remember you saying: "The best stories are on the tip of your tongue. They
won't disappear, ever."

"What if someone slices your tongue off?" Huw. Little twat.

"Jesus, you come out with some silly things Huw bach. What will they do with
you in that school of yours?"

Being back here now... I can hear your voices, yours and Taid as if it were
yesterday.

What were they? What were the names? Each one with its own little meaning,
an invisible thread connecting the people and the land beneath their feet.

NAIN: (Voice) Bwlch Brudyn, or Bwlch to you and me. I think that Brudyn comes from the Irish name for salmon, 'bratan'. Or a Saint. Can you tell me the names of the crab holes?

YOUNG LUNED: (Voice) Twll Siôn and Twll Terfysg.

NAIN: (Voice) Ogof Dywyll, Ogof Bebyll... that's the one that swallows all the golf balls. Carreg yr Afr and Carreg Ddu. Golau Gwynus... that's the best place to fish, apparently. I don't know if your Taid would agree.

LUNED: Taid's whole world fit into that little shed, didn't it?

Now? A new decking, lay-z spa, an outdoor shower.

Sometimes I would sneak in. If I was quiet, I could stay there with him. I loved sitting on the floor, legs crossed, inhaling the smoke from his cigarette. I loved the smell of it. If Mam knew, she would've gone nuts.

I would study him rolling his Golden Virginia carefully as he'd sit on his stool. Place the baccho carefully on the paper, roll it, lick the edges until it looked like one of those sweets I used to have. Then he'd tap it on his yellow thumbnail, three times.

Taid had a working man's hands, so big compared to mine. Old scars and fresh scabs all over, and dirt underneath his nails, even though I knew he washed his hands - I could smell the Imperial Leather. He was a fisherman for years. Crabs

mostly. He'd always take part in the mackerel race with Dad every August. They never won.

The backyard was always peppered with crabs legs – the seagulls feasting on them in the sky above us, then dropping them from their greedy beaks from the blue sky.

My eight year old eyes were drawn to the buoys, to the neon pink, orange and yellow. Bright pearls in the shed's dark corners.

I could hear Taid chuckling behind me, stained by years of 30-a-day. Laughing because I saw the old equipment as something to play with, be mesmerised with, but for him it was work. A livelihood.

There are a handful of local lads still doing the same today. The smell of fish hanging in the air when they drive through the street in their tractors. The younger lads sitting in the back trailer in their yellow boots and overalls, knackered, stinking, eyes like darts as they stare at people on the street. I don't know where they sell them exactly. Not here, anyway.

Do you remember putting the hot water bottle on the end of the bed to warm our feet, and wrap us both tightly under the bed cover?

You knew which story was my favourite. Luned Bengoch.

Luned, the brave young woman who lived on the rugged cliffs of Nant Gwrtheyrn, who went to deliver a message to Owain Glyndŵr – Son of Destiny.

On her way home, she was kidnapped and jailed in Plas Crafnant, Dyffryn Conwy, because she was the true heir of the estate. But, she managed to escape back to Nant Gwrtheyrn, the ruthless men of Crafnant tight at her heels. She escaped in a small boat, while the men drowned in Pwll Pant y Saeson.

And she accepted her destiny. She was the true heir of Plas Crafnant. She was a boss ass bitch. I wanted to be like that Luned.

But I was probably just an annoying little shit. Still am.

I had a dream once... maybe it was more of a nightmare. Luned was sailing in a small boat, all on her own from Nant Gwrtheyrn to Porthdinllaen. But I was Luned. The sea was rough, really rough, the waves lathering on the side of the boat... I could even see the fish in the waves, their big, empty eyes staring at me. The boat wasn't moving. My arms, the oars, they wouldn't move. I think I kicked Huw in my sleep of something because then I woke with him shaking me. I was drenched in sweat.

NAIN:

(Voice) She lived in a big house, close to the beach in Nefyn, the author. Do you remember her name? Elizabeth Watkin-Jones. I can just imagine her looking out of her wide window in the attic, looking out to the wide sea, and towards Porthdinllaen. Come on, let's have a look. Come to the window.

LUNED:

I walk past her house often. Sometimes I think that I can see somebody standing in the window. But no one's there. It's empty for most of the year.

RICHARD: Yeah, yeah. I'll be there now.

LUNED: Shit.

RICHARD: Hi, yeah on my way, just in the house. I'll meet you up there in a bit. See you on the green.

LUNED: Haia.

RICHARD: Bloody hell!

LUNED: Sorry! The door was open.

RICHARD: You're early.

LUNED: I thought I'd just come in, I hope you don't mind? God, sorry.

RICHARD: No, no - it's OK. I just popped to the shop. Cuppa?

LUNED: I'm fine thanks.

RICHARD: I prefer these private viewing, much nicer aren't they? Less formal. You can have time to have a good look by yourself... well, you already have.

LUNED: Has there been lots of interest?

RICHARD: Third viewing this week.

LUNED: Oh?

RICHARD: The wife put it up on facebook, and that page... Women's Net-

LUNED: Women's Network Wales, yeah.

RICHARD: That one. It worked.

LUNED: It was my mam and her sister that sold it to you.

RICHARD: Yes, I remember. Over ten years ago now.

LUNED: Yeah. They wanted to sell it to a Welsh family.

Pause

RICHARD: What's your name again?

LUNED: Luned.

RICHARD: Yeah, yeah, I remember now. And you're thinking of buying the old place back, Luned?

LUNED: Well, yes. I'm thinking about it.

RICHARD: Husband, children?

LUNED: No and... no.

RICHARD: Oh, right. Great.

Pause

LUNED: This place means a lot to me.

RICHARD: It's a lovely little place. Emphasis on the 'little'. But, it's a lovely house. We've done a lot of work on it. The worktop is granite, you know? Lot of work has been done in the garden. It's tidy, clean.

LUNED: Are you leaving the jacuzzi?

RICHARD: No.

LUNED: Is that why you're selling, too small?

RICHARD: Well...

LUNED: Sorry, that was a bit rude.

RICHARD: No, no. I tend to get on my high horse about it actually. This fucking...this bloody council tax premium.

LUNED: Oh.

RICHARD: We have lovely memories here. Then we tried to make it a part time business – you need this 182 day target don't you. But Christ, it was a lot of work. Cleaning and... things. And we live about an hour and a half away. It was just, too much.

But it was handy, you know? I came up to play golf. The wife came here on weekends, our daughter stayed here with her friends. I worked here sometimes. It's much easier now, isn't it? You can work anywhere.

LUNED: Mm.

RICHARD: But that's how it is.

LUNED: You could've rented the house, it wouldn't affect you then.

RICHARD: Trouble and more trouble being a landlord. And you make double the money in a week on Air BnB than a month in rent.

LUNED: Yeah... it's just, people need houses to rent. There are plenty of Air BnB's.

RICHARD: Oh, don't tell me you're one of these Crusaders?

LUNED: Sorry?

RICHARD: Isn't it a bit childish to paint walls and signs these days?

LUNED: I've never painted a wall, personally.

RICHARD: They can make people feel uncomfortable.

LUNED: They have a right to raise their voice.

RICHARD: I'm pulling your leg. Smile!

LUNED: Don't you think things have gone too far?

RICHARD: I agree with that. But I don't think that punishing people, people who've worked really hard to buy their properties...

LUNED: Properties...

RICHARD: What's funny?

LUNED: People need homes. I'm nearly 30, still living with my mum and dad. But others are worse off too. I have one friend with a little baby, living in a chalet in her parent's garden. So, I'm not sure who's really being punished.

RICHARD: I'm not arguing with that. You know, people have businesses – you have builders, people who run holiday homes, they need to make a living, don't they.

LUNED: And fuck everyone else.

RICHARD: What if you inherit a house? Is it ok to punish someone for something they have no control over?

LUNED: No. But they still have a house, don't they?

RICHARD: I don't have the answers.

LUNED: The answers are there, but nobody wants to hear them.

Short pause

LUNED: I'm not trying to blame anyone. We have a history of selling ourselves, don't we?

Richard's mobile phone rings

RICHARD: Damn, sorry. *(He's speaking on the phone)* Yeah, yeah, I'll be there in ten. Yeah, ok, bye.
Listen, take your time, I'll be out until the end of the afternoon. Lock the door and post the key through the letterbox.

LUNED: Thanks.

Richard leaves

YOUNG LUNED: *(Voice)* No, no, Huw! Me first!

YOUNG HUW: *(Voice)* Stop trying to get past. Nain! Luned's being a pain in the ass.

YOUNG LUNED: *(Voice)* Don't swear! Yes! I got the remote!

HUW: Luned?

LUNED: In the kitchen.

HUW: Well.

LUNED: Well.

HUW: Waw.

LUNED: Waw?

HUW: They've spent a fortune.

LUNED: I know.

HUW: They've taken down the wall, haven't they? To make this one big room?
It's more spacious, isn't it?

LUNED: The kitchen and the living room is open plan.

HUW: And an extension. The kitchen wasn't this big.

LUNED: The fireplace is gone.

HUW: Imagine how much it cost.

LUNED: It's nothing to them.

HUW: It's better.

LUNED: Is it?

HUW: Did you tell Mam and Dad about this?

LUNED: No.

Pause

LUNED: It feels the same doesn't it? Even though it looks different.

HUW: What do you mean?

LUNED: Feels like you're home.

HUW: Home...

LUNED: I feel as if these walls are telling me something.

HUW: Don't bullshit.

Pause

LUNED: Are you going to take off your coat?

HUW: Why? We're not staying long are we?

LUNED: We have plenty of time. He's gone to play golf.

HUW: Yeah, it's just a quick look around. Just so we can see the place again.

LUNED: There's no rush, is there?

HUW: I don't want to stay long.

LUNED: Why?

HUW: I just don't want to waste time all afternoon, and I wanna go to the pub.

LUNED: Waste time?

HUW: I just don't want to, ok?

LUNED: Ok! Ok.

Pause

HUW: Quite the interior designers, aren't they?

LUNED: It's lost its character. As if someone's puked white all over everything.

HUW: Come on, it was old fashioned as it was.

LUNED: I'm just saying, it's possible to modernise and still respect what was there.

Pause

HUW: What's his name again?

LUNED: Richard.

HUW: Does he live here?

LUNED: Does it look like people live here?

HUW: Oh. It's an Air BnB? I thought it was an actual home.

LUNED: He's here quite often. Golf. Work from home...

HUW: Which is worse. A Cheshire bloke with a holiday home, or a Welshman with a holiday home?

Luned laughs

HUW: Shall we go?

LUNED: No, not yet.

HUW: (Voice) Stay! Stay in bed now and you can have a story.

YOUNG LUNED: (Voice) Can we have Luned Bengoch?

YOUNG HUW: (Voice) And drown the bad guys in Pwll Pant y Saeson!
Yeees!

YOUNG LUNED: (Voice) That's so mean.

LUNED: Do you hear it?

HUW: Hear what?

LUNED: What would they say if they saw us here now.

HUW: Nain nagging us for quarrelling.

LUNED: Yeah probably.

Pause

HUW: You ok?

LUNED: Yeah.

HUW: Sure?

LUNED: I'm fine, Huw.

HUW: You have a right to feel shit, you know. Seven years for a relationship, it's a lot.

LUNED: Maybe.

HUW: Have you spoken to Dyl Dickhead then?

LUNED: No.

Pause

HUW: Why didn't you go to Bristol?

LUNED: You know why.

HUW: Yeah, yeah, responsibility bla bla bla. Maybe it would've done you some good.

LUNED: Over-priced bars, coke and people too cool for shit in dungarees?

HUW: Change of scene.

LUNED: I'm not going to settle for someone, just because it's convenient. We weren't on the same wavelength by the end.

HUW: You're stubborn.

LUNED: Who's side are you on?

Pause

LUNED: Our way of thinking, how we looked at the world. These things mean something. I wouldn't have been happy. Anyway, if every young person leaves this place...

HUW: Think about yourself for once, instead of trying to save everyone and everything.

LUNED: Who else is going to try!

HUW: Things carry on without you, you know.

LUNED: Don't preach, you don't live here.

HUW: This, again.

LUNED: You could use your Welsh to help people, being a doctor. Oh, no. Better for you to stay in London, those little old Welsh people don't matter.

HUW: How many people have filled in those language questionnaires you've shared on facebook? Riveting read, I'm sure. If you'd put the same amount of energy into your writing as you do in volunteering, working for free, you'd have written five novels by now.

LUNED: Piss off.

HUW: Cymdeithas yr Iaith is my crack, stick it in my veins.

LUNED: Shut up, Huw. No one can fucking afford to buy homes here. We're in caravans, renting, or staring at our wallpaper of our teens. You don't have to worry.

HUW: What do you mean?

LUNED: Look at your salary.

HUW: I can't help how much salary I get!

LUNED: I know, I'm just saying.

HUW: And I work really fucking hard. The stress, the shit you have to deal with. You have no idea.

LUNED: No, I'm just a stupid Country Bumpkin.

HUW: It's not my fault you're on a shit salary. You could've moved too, to find better opportunities, but you didn't. You had a chance with Dyl, and you didn't.

LUNED: I don't want to leave.

HUW: Go travelling, go have some experiences to write about, instead of this fucking narrow-minded place.

LUNED: I have plenty of things to write about. Short pause. You think you're better than me, don't you?

HUW: What?

LUNED: Just because you went, and I've stayed.

Pause

HUW: I didn't belong here, did I?

LUNED: Times have changed.

HUW: Oh! Have they?

LUNED: Yes!

HUW: On the surface, maybe. Not really. And yes, I'll enjoy my pint in the Lion tonight but I'll still remember the thrashing I got from the rugby lads when I was seventeen. Dad asking, 'Why didn't you punch them back?'

LUNED: Dad knows better by now, doesn't he.

HUW: One thing's to educate Dad, it's another thing educating a whole community.

Pause.

HUW: I felt safe here, with Nain and Taid. Shut the door on the world. Sitting in Taid's shed... we didn't chat a lot. Both of us there, in our own little worlds. But our idea of home is two different stories.

LUNED: Yes, maybe. But you can always change the direction of a story.

Huw goes to leave.

LUNED: I want to buy this place.

HUW: What?

LUNED: It would make sense.

HUW: You couldn't afford a match box round here.

LUNED: I know.

HUW: What you on about then?

LUNED: It would be possible...with two?

Pause

HUW: Are you fucking serious? Is that why I'm here?

LUNED: What did you think it was, a Sunday School trip?

HUW: Yes! Having a nose around.

LUNED: Let's do something Huw. Do something good in this place.

HUW: If I have £300k to spare yeah?

LUNED: It would be less than that, It would be between us.

HUW: So you can have your little dollhouse. So you can run away from your problems and hide in this house? So you'd pay me rent? I could be your brother, therapist and landlord.

LUNED: Not a landlord. Co-owners. Think about it.

HUW: This is one of your most bonkers ideas to date.

LUNED: There's no need to be a twat.

HUW: That's not the way round it.

LUNED: I want to live here, Huw, please, try and understand. This place is changing, you don't see it. We're losing the place, with each house. With each For Sale sign. Might as well turn the chapel into a holiday let or flats or whatever. Why not? Rename it, The Old Chapel, or New Chapel. Hey God, do you like it? Lovely. Bloody lovely!

Pause

You're just swimming against this massive wave. With everything I love about this place getting washed away. Then I think, why do I even bother? What's the point? Who the hell do I think I am, thinking I could make a difference?

Pause

HUW: One house isn't going to save a whole community.

LUNED: It's a start.

HUW: It won't mend a broken heart either.

LUNED: God, don't be so dramatic.

HUW: Says you!

Pause

HUW: It's a big ask.

LUNED: You and James love coming up don't you? And you'd have a place to stay whenever you like.

HUW: We would have a second home. You've got double standards haven't you.

LUNED: It wouldn't be, because I'd be living here!

HUW: I wouldn't be comfortable with it.

LUNED: That's an excuse, it's not the same and you know it.

HUW: I don't come up that often, I wouldn't get my money's worth.

LUNED: You're clearly thinking about it, that's something...

Pause

HUW: I don't think I could ever come back and live here. Everyone in each other's pockets, gossiping about one another. You don't like that either.

LUNED: It's the worst and best thing about living here.

HUW: You can be whoever you want to be in a city. Invisible, even.

LUNED: You couldn't be invisible even if you tried. Anyway, you're too good to be invisible.

Pause

HUW: James has been talking about it recently.

LUNED: What?

HUW: Moving out of London.

LUNED: Anywhere in particular?

HUW: He said something about Oxfordshire.

LUNED: Seriously?

HUW: To see how I would react, probably.

LUNED: Sorry, but that's more wanky than living in London.

HUW: Oi!

LUNED: No, no -not... you know what I mean.

HUW: He doesn't really care, he says he'd move anywhere. It's not quite the same, is it? He's not attached to the place where he was raised. It's like he isn't rooted to his hometown in the same way as us.

LUNED: Do you think he'd live here?

HUW: He wouldn't last a month.

Pause

LUNED: Do you have hiraeth for home?

Pause

HUW: What is it with Wales?

LUNED: She's a bitch. I have hiraeth for what could be lost.

HUW: It's not lost.

LUNED: Not yet...

Pause

HUW: Remember Stormzy tweeting "hiraeth"? Everybody went nuts. "Why you tweeting in a dead language." Classic English.

LUNED: It always gets messy when you're talking about the language.

HUW: Why do they want to destroy everything that's different to what they know? 'I can't pronounce it. I know the locals kick off when people change names, but that's more for farms and things, or lakes. It doesn't matter with cottages in the middle of a village.'

LUNED: You're starting to sound like me!

Pause

HUW: What are you going to do, Luned?

LUNED: Buy this house with you.

HUW: I'm not talking about that. What are you going to do with your life?

LUNED: What kind of question is that?!

HUW: You could write, but you have to try.

LUNED: How would you know if I try or not?

HUW: You have something to say.

LUNED: I'm working, you know, I need money to live.

HUW: You need to chase your dreams.

LUNED: I dream too much.

HUW: What are you doing?

LUNED: Checking something... come here!

HUW: What's there, a sex dungeon?

LUNED: Look!

YOUNG HUW: (Voice) I'm the tallest!

YOUNG LUNED: (Voice) No you're not.

YOUNG HUW: (Voice) Yes I am. And I'm the oldest too, it makes sense.

YOUNG LUNED: (Voice) I've grown too. I want to be as tall as you.

LUNED: Do you remember that?

HUW: Yeah.

LUNED: Come on then.

HUW: Tall twat.

LUNED: My little big brother. Nice that it's still there.

HUW: Yeah.

LUNED: After all that spending, they didn't paint over our marks.

HUW: They forgot, probably.

Pause

LUNED: Can we play hide and seek? Like when we were little! And stay up all night making stories! Play on the beach, sing like we used to do with Nain...

LUNED: *(Singing)* There's a sound in Porthdinllaen, the sound of sails being raised

HUW: *(Singing)* All the blocks screeching, Davy Jones is shouting

LUNED: Nothing else would exist. Just us, with the freedom to do whatever we wanted.

Pause

HUW: Come on. It's time to go.

LUNED: Wait.

HUW: No, Luned. I'm not discussing more today.

LUNED: No. I want to show you something.

HUW: What's this ?

LUNED: A first draft.

HUW: Of what ?

LUNED: A novel. Read the first page.

HUW: *(Reading)* A story told with lips that taste of sea-salt. To Nain and Huw, for the bedtime stories.

HUW: Do you remember it? Taid was always whistling it.

LUNED: What ?

HUW: *(Singing)* My father's house is white and fair ... god, I'm out of tune.

LUNED: *(Singing)* *Ai o, Santiana*

LUNED & HUW: *(Singing)* And red roses in the garden, My home is far away in Wales

HUW: We can discuss the title in the pub, ok?

LUNED: Discuss the house, you mean...

3.

Winter, Isle of Lewis. Present day.

Echo of a Gaelic psalm is heard.

SEÒNA: *(to audience)* Come on folks, come along. You'll be frozen.

ANNIE: *(to audience)* Thanks so much for coming. Just as well we didn't get caught in a snow shower but brr, it's Baltic.

SEÒNA: *(Shaking hands with audience member)* Oh hello Donald, what a lovely prayer you said in the church, thank you!

ANNIE: Yes, thank you Donald, it was so lovely to hear someone who -

SEÒNA: Go and put the kettle on Annie. *(To audience)* And I can't believe that someone would park their camper van INSIDE the graveyard! Tourists are bonkers. Some people think that they can do whatever they please and get away with it. Don't they Annie?

ANNIE: Do they?

SEÒNA: Some don't understand the rules

ANNIE: And some that don't even break the rules but you seem to blame me for-

SEÒNA: You? We weren't talking about you. Has that kettle boiled yet?

ANNIE: Anyway, this island needs tourists and we're not all evil. When I'm travelling with work I make sure that I -

SEÒNA: "When I'm travelling with work.." You're slowing down Annie, that was at least 5 minutes before you said it. *(To audience)* Now, as the minister said in the intimations, there's a burst pipe in the hall so that's why we're having the food here, in Uncle Iain's house.

ANNIE: Everything used to be in the houses anyway. The wakes, the worship, people squeezed into every room. An elder praying in the back room and you'd no idea down in the kitchen if he'd started or finished!

SEÒNA: Thanks won't pay you for all this food. Effie for the soup and Maggie, you knew your trifle was Uncle Iain's favourite. Oh, hello. Pardon? Oh yes, I think Annie has put on weight.

ANNIE: What a cheek! I have not.

SEÒNA: There's obviously a lot of calories in those Pina Coladas.

ANNIE: Anyway, she's only here for the tea and gossip. And it's still the same questions, "When did you arrive?" "And when are you leaving?" And, "why aren't you married yet?"

SEÒNA: They're asking where Stephen is so I'm telling them he's away working and can't be here. Ok?

ANNIE: That's up to you. He's your husband.

SEÒNA: Yes. He's my husband.

ANNIE: Honestly Seòna. You've lost the plot. If you'd only answer my calls or my texts you'd know that the-

SEÒNA: I've had more calls from you in the last two months than I have in the last two years.

ANNIE: Well, you don't phone me either!

Seòna discovers a present amongst the buffet.

SEÒNA: Uncle Iain's present.

ANNIE: I'm glad that you were already on your way up from Glasgow

SEÒNA: I was just coming into Ullapool when Maggie phoned and I knew immediately from her voice that...

ANNIE: It's a wonder the Lewis ferry was even running!

SEÒNA: It was meant to be a surprise for his 80th. I'd asked Na Dùrachdan to play 'Eilean Fraoich' on the radio for him and I was going to make a wee party for him but... but instead of that, I had to organise a funeral.

ANNIE: I would have come up earlier but-

SEÒNA: But you pleased yourself, as always. That happens when you don't have any children, you become selfish.

ANNIE: I was stuck in London!

SEÒNA: An important cocktail party was it?

ANNIE: What kind of life do you-? It was due to the weather.

SEÒNA: He died of a heart attack on his birthday. All alone.

ANNIE: The poor soul.

SEÒNA: Alone in that chair.

ANNIE: His favourite chair

SEÒNA: What do you know about his favourite chair?

ANNIE: Well, that's where he always used to sit.

SEÒNA: Or his unfavourite chair!

ANNIE: I know I wasn't as close to him as you but-

SEÒNA: Anyway, never mind about the damn chair! His chair is empty now.

ANNIE: I'm going to miss him too.

SEÒNA: It's odd the lengths people will go to for a funeral rather than making the effort to see the person whilst they're still alive.

ANNIE: That's not fair.

SEÒNA: Fair?! Fair? And you were talking about cheek...? You've got a brass neck!

ANNIE: You know full well what Stephen is like.

SEÒNA: Annie! I told you before you came on the plane today, that I didn't want to talk about what happened with you and Stephen.

ANNIE: But nothing happened between myself and Stephen.

SEÒNA: Today is about Uncail Iain. *(To audience)* Right folks. Help yourselves now, there's plenty food.

ANNIE: There won't be if he keeps going. Are you seeing the food on his plate? He doesn't know whether to eat it or climb it.

Beat

SEÒNA/ANNIE: I hate funerals

ANNIE: I can't believe it's five years since I stood in that church... since we lost Mum.

SEÒNA: Why do people say that? We didn't lose her. She died! She went off the road and she died.

ANNIE: Bloody German, driving on the wrong side of the road.

SEÒNA: It's still so strange driving past our house.

ANNIE: When Donald Angus started precenting the Gaelic psalm... I was back at that day. Standing before her coffin. The day I became an orphan.

SEÒNA: The day we both did! That's the only time I saw Uncle Iain cry. Carrying his sister's coffin. And now he himself has gone.

ANNIE: You were like his pet lamb.

SEÒNA: And Mum had the ‘fatted calf’ on the table every time you’d be home from one of your jaunts.

ANNIE: Nonsense.

SEÒNA: I went to Glasgow, met Stephen, fell pregnant and married. But Annie? Oooh, Annie travels the world with a camera and a pen, isn’t she doing well for herself! Writing stories from exotic lands like Colombia... Croatia... Cambodia...

ANNIE: Callanish. I did a travelogue from here too.

SEÒNA: Oh yeah. You’d come home if you could get something out of it.

ANNIE: What went wrong between us?

SEÒNA: But I never told them about the 3am phone calls from Timbuktu when you were drunk-

ANNIE: “When you were drunk”. For crying out loud, I was lonely in the evenings, that’s all.

SEÒNA: Or when you were in need of money, again. I’d hear from you then. The lies I had to tell Stephen to get money for you.

ANNIE: You got some of it back.

SEÒNA: By selling the family home from under me?

ANNIE: I was up to my neck in debt and the tax were after me. I thought I was going to end up in prison. I had to sell it. And yourself and Stephen didn't have the money to buy it.

SEÒNA: What chance did we have against those English folk? Giving you an extra £50k just so that they could have a second home!

ANNIE: They promised me they wanted to be part of the community

SEÒNA: Yes. Until the first winter arrived and they were out of here faster than you could say, 'Green Welly Brigade'

ANNIE: I can't be blamed for what they did with the house.

SEÒNA: It's what you did with the house, Annie! You sold our family home. Where we were raised. Where we'd sit in the window counting the seconds between the flashes from the lighthouse. Where that gust of wind came and shut the window on my finger. Do you remember? My nail never grew back properly after that. Where we wrote boys' names on the wallpaper before that new orange, flowery one went on.

SEÒNA/ANNIE: "I fancy Crunchie"

ANNIE: It was me that fancied Crunchie! You fancied his brother, Fudge.

SEÒNA: No I didn't, it was the other way around! I remember Dad used to tease you by singing, "A finger of fudge is just enough until it's time to eat...".
Our parents' voices are in these walls.

ANNIE: But they're not Seòna! They're not there at all. Even Mum would say after Dad died. People's souls aren't in bricks or in graveyards or in photos... they're here in our hearts and our memories!

SEÒNA: Of course you'd say that.

ANNIE: Oh, what's the point in going over this again and again?

Annie pours a glass of wine.

SEÒNA: Oh, careful, in case you get drunk and do something else you shouldn't.

ANNIE: For goodness' sake. It was Stephen that kissed me!

SEÒNA: Oh, I suspected he was seeing someone again-

ANNIE: I'm not seeing him.

SEÒNA: But my sister? Even the Brahan Seer couldn't have predicted that.

ANNIE: I've told you a thousand times, he made a pass at me!

SEÒNA: You flirting with him

ANNIE: We were just talking...

SEÒNA: Full of adventure and Thailand tan

ANNIE: ... about how great it was that Calum got his first gig with the band. I wish I'd never gone.

SEÒNA: You travel the world and you choose my husband as your boyfriend

ANNIE: Boyfriend? Some boyfriend!

Calum has sneaked in behind then carrying a sheep's skull in front of his face.

CALUM: *(bleating like a sheep)* BAAAAAAA!!!

SEÒNA: Calum!! For heaven's sake!

CALUM: Sorry Annie. That's what Uncle Iain did to me every time I came home on holiday! Mum, you'll be happy Annie made it to the funeral. *(Whispers to Annie)* She needs a bit of support from big sis right now

ANNIE: Oh?

CALUM: I haven't seen you for months.

ANNIE: How's it going with the band?

CALUM: Yeah, good. I noticed you didn't stay to the end of our first gig that night though.

ANNIE: Sorry. I had to head back to Edinburgh earlier than I'd expected.

CALUM: Yeah, yeah. Well, we'll forgive you, won't we Mum? You know that article you wrote about the nyckelharpa and the music of Sweden.

ANNIE: You read my travelogues?

CALUM: It's such a cool instrument. Well, this girl was playing one in the Park Bar recently and since I knew so much about it I got extra brownie points from Astrid that night! She was a beauty. Thanks for that Annie!

SEÒNA: Calum!

CALUM: And I hear you've got a beau?

ANNIE: What?

CALUM: When I came in I heard Mum speaking about your boyfriend.

ANNIE: Eh...

CALUM: Well? Who is he?

SEÒNA: Did you manage to gather the sheep?

Annie exits.

CALUM: They'd gone all over the village. And I know full well who left Uncle Iain's gate open. I'll thump that idiot when I see him.

SEÒNA: Calm down Calum!

Calum looks at a photograph.

SEÒNA: Yourself, grandad and Uncle Iain were like the three musketeers. Except in boilersuits! You were always at their heels.

CALUM: What's going to happen with his sheep? *(He lifts a cassette from a pile on the table.)* What's going to happen with all this stuff?

SEÒNA: Some of those tapes are as old as the hills. He'd always record us when we were wee without us knowing. There wasn't a concert in this district that didn't go on tape.

CALUM: We'd sometimes listen to them together. He'd be laughing his head off remembering the capers of the night. Who was drunk, who ended up in the ditch on the way home... He was full of fun, wasn't he?

SEÒNA: He'd have been so proud of you today.

CALUM: I almost dropped the coffin at one point and I turned to find Uncle Iain for help and then I remembered it was him in the coffin and I was trying to be strong and, as usual, there was no sign of Dad!

SEÒNA: Shh, shh now, it's alright Calum. Everything will be alright.

ANNIE: There you go. I pinched a scone from Peggy Màiri's plate for you whilst she was telling me that Ian Sheonaidh's loom shed sold for £150,000!

CALUM: What? That shed is barely standing. Had they seen it? Mad. Wee Donald was after James' house but some pensioner from Perth jumped in at the last minute and threw silly money at it. What chance did he have?

SEÒNA: It's odd seeing so many houses for sale in the village.

CALUM: Bellag's daughter, Carol, has bought one of them.

ANNIE: And how does she have the money to buy a big house?

CALUM: She's a Gaelic teacher BUT she told me she got it on the cheap because they wanted to sell to a local. They had much higher offers from some outsiders.

SEÒNA: Good on them

ANNIE: *(to audience)* There's more tea in the pot now. *(To Seòna)* Who is that fellow over there? I think he was trying to speak Gaelic but I couldn't understand a word he was saying.

SEÒNA: He's doing his best to learn Gaelic, the wee soul.

ANNIE: So many weirdos are attracted to learning Gaelic, aren't they?

SEÒNA: Well, there's plenty from around here that have the language and won't even bother speaking it.

ANNIE: Maybe they've lost it.

SEÒNA: Don't be daft.

ANNIE: Well I met some indigenous people when I was in Africa who had lost their mother tongue becau-

SEÒNA: 'When I was in Africa...' Does everything have to be about 'Annie's Travels'

ANNIE: Are you ok Calum?

CALUM: I keep expecting him to come through the door doing that silly whistling through his teeth.

Calum tinkers on an accordion whilst imitating Uncle Iain's whistling.

ANNIE: A dying art!

CALUM: Dammit, I can't remember the last tune he taught me.

SEÒNA: It will come back to you

CALUM: But what if it doesn't? What if I forget everything? Everything he told me, and that grandad and granny told me, and that wee Mòr told -

SEÒNA: Calm down Calum. *(Seòna's phone rings)* Sorry but I'll have to answer this.

Seòna exits.

ANNIE: Maybe the tune will be on one of those tapes.

CALUM: Good shout Annie! If I can find it... There's nothing written on any of them. I'll try this one.

Calum plays the tape and they listen.

ANNIE: The whole village would congregate in Iain's house because it was at the end of the village.

CALUM: The famous 'ceilidh house'.

ANNIE: Exactly. *(Hearing a girl singing)* Oh wait!

CALUM: Is that you?

ANNIE: It's your mother.

CALUM: Mum used to sing?

ANNIE: She got second prize at the Mod on Primary 5. I'd help her learn her words.

CALUM: That's a shame

ANNIE: A shame?

CALUM: That I don't ever hear her sing.

YOUNG ANNIE: *(On tape)* Oh no!

YOUNG SEÒNA: *(On tape)* The lights! Annie? Annie, where are you?

YOUNG ANNIE: *(On tape)* It's alright Seòna, I'm here. Everything will be alright.

CALUM: What's happening?

ANNIE: That was the hogmanay that the electricity went off. I remember because it was my birthday.

CALUM: How old were you?

ANNIE: I was 10. Double figures, I felt so grown up. So your mum must have been 6.

Young Seòna: *(On tape)* I'm scared

Young Annie: *(On tape)* Everything will be fine Seòna. Sing a song. Your favourite one.

ANNIE: I only said that to her because Iain would always tell us this story in the blackout called-

CALUM/ANNIE: "The village girl"

ANNIE: You know it?

CALUM: Word for word

The lights suddenly go out.

CALUM: Oh very funny.

ANNIE: What?

CALUM: Put the lights back on Annie.

ANNIE: I swear, I didn't go near the lights.

CALUM: You're worse than Uncle Iain with your antics.

ANNIE: The whole village is in darkness.

CALUM: Seriously? I can't believe that. Spooky!

UNCLE IAIN: (On tape) There's candles over there

CALUM: Uncle Iain?

UNCLE IAIN: (*On tape*) Now, you'll have to listen to me

ANNIE: Ok. What is it you need to tell us?

UNCLE IAIN: (*On tape*) Ready?

ANNIE: Oh for goodness' sake! It's the tape recorder still playing!!

CALUM: Aaah, on the batteries...

Uncle Iain: (*On tape*) This night, a beautiful young girl was walking home alone through our village.

UNCLE IAIN/CALUM: It was a dark, cold, horrid night...

CALUM: ... and she had a way to go before she'd reach home. She was terrified of the dark but she remembered that her granny saying, "Whenever you're scared, sing

your favourite Gaelic song and your fear will disappear.” She began to sing.
(Singing a couple of lines)

But she forgot the words. “Oh goodness, what will I do?” and she got scared again. But her granny must have been looking down on her that night because when she tried to sing the song again, the words came flooding back! And she ran, full speed, home.

But then she heard this voice singing along with her. She looked around her and saw no-one but when she turned back what was in front of her face but a sheep’s skull. Well, she screamed a scream that could be heard in Buckingham Palace.

Seòna returns

“Oh don’t be afraid,” said the skull. “I’m lost and I’m trying to find my way home. Take me home with you in your loving hands and I’ll tell you your future.

“I can see that if you are loyal to your ancestors and heritage all your days, then you will have an abundant happy life.” And the girl made for home with the skull, both happily singing and carefree.

Well, many years later the girl left the island and turned her back on all she learned as a child. But one night after returning to the island she was walking on that very same road again. This time, she was neither afraid nor singing but close to midnight she happened upon a funeral in the middle of the road and she froze. They silently passed her by with the coffin and she was terrified. She ran full speed home and told her mother about the unusual sight before heading to her bed. But, she never woke up again. It was her own funeral that she had watched passing her by that night.

ANNIE: You had a death grip on my arm all the way home that new year's night!

SEÒNA: And you'd got a Sindy doll for your birthday. You gave it to me so that it would help me sleep.

ANNIE: You're making me homesick.

SEÒNA: Homesick for a place that doesn't even exist anymore.

CALUM: Wouldn't it be great to bring back the taigh-cèilidh. (excited) "Taigh-Cèilidh Uncle Iain!" What's the use of those tapes sitting in a corner gathering dust. People should hear those voices. We could open one end of his house for music lessons...

Seona goes to gather dishes.

CALUM: ...storytelling, Gaelic songs, Keeping the dialect here alive, and we could-

ANNIE: We? Oh is Mum getting the house?

(Beat)

CALUM: Oh.

ANNIE: It's ok. I fully expected Mum to get the house. But what about Glasgow?

CALUM: I'm sure you know what Dad's like but he's been seeing another woman. Again! You know about that though.

ANNIE: Me?

CALUM: Yeah. I read the article you wrote. About the 3 women who were being cheated on by the same man and they all knew each other.

ANNIE: I remember. They didn't believe each other at first, they were bitching and full of jealousy but eventually... *(Seòna returns)* I couldn't go with someone else's husband, even if it was George Clooney!

CALUM: Well, we'd know if you did because you're such a blabbermouth!

SEÒNA: Go and wash the dishes.

Calum leaves.

SEÒNA: That's true. And you don't have the best memory either, which you need for being a good liar. That then tells me that you ARE telling the truth. That piece of work, Stephen, has messed with my head. Making me doubt my own sister.

ANNIE: You were always too good for him but now you have Iain's house. You have a choice.

SEÒNA: That was the solicitor on the phone again.

ANNIE: And you deserve the house.

SEÒNA: I need to sell it.

ANNIE: What? Why?

SEÒNA: He was in a mess with debts and they want me to sell the house to pay for them

ANNIE: Iain?

SEÒNA: And I don't have that kind of money.

ANNIE: Leave that lech! Sell the house in Glasgow and with the money from the sale-

SEÒNA: The house has always been in Stephen's name, I don't have a penny and he wouldn't give me anything.

ANNIE: What? Oh Seòna.

Calum returns

CALUM: Are you ok, Mum?

SEÒNA: Yes love. It's been a big day, that's all

CALUM: Folk seem to think the ceilidh house is a good idea because when I-

SEÒNA: Calum! You shouldn't have said anything to anyone about it! That's just a silly dream anyway.

CALUM: You calm down yourself!

SEÒNA: I might as well tell you. Uncle Iain's house, we'll have to...we'll have to-

ANNIE: Do it up. You'll have to do up the house first.

CALUM: Ok.

ANNIE: And you'll need money for that, to get your plan up and running

CALUM: Och, I know.

ANNIE: Well, I think it's a brilliant idea Calum. And I'd love to give you the money to get started.

SEÒNA/CALUM: You?/What?

ANNIE: I was in London for an interview. I've signed a contract to publish a book and they've given me a huge advance on the deal.

CALUM: Wow. Congratulations!

ANNIE: It's an Investment though.

CALUM: Well, remember to come back and write a travelogue about "Taigh-Cèilidh Uncle Iain"

ANNIE: Try and stop me.

CALUM: Uncle Iain would be delighted. (*Playing the accordion*) Oh, I've got it. I've remembered the tune!

SEÒNA: Oh, his favourite.

(Singing)

Thig na h-eòin gu geug madainn Chèitean le sràbh ac'
Is lorgaidh uan nan caorach, na raoin air an robh màthair
Thèid an crodh cho dòigheil 's cho stòlda chun a' Gheàrraidh
'S a-rèist an gabh sibh iongnadh ged a dh'iarrainn-sa tàmh ann

*(The birds will come home to roost on a May morning with their straw
And the lambs will find the fields that their mothers were born on
The cattle will happily and steadily go to a' Gheàrraidh
Therefore don't be surprised that I'd want to stay here forever.)*

CALUM: I'm going to have to give Wee Donald my news.

ANNIE: Nineteen going on old man. Will you let me give him the money? And support my wee sis?

SEÒNA: It would be good to have a home 'at home'.

ANNIE: Iain would love that.

SEÒNA: Well, if it works out, you'll get every penny back. And there's always a bed for you here.

Bagpipes can be heard outside.

SEÒNA: The piper! I completely forgot!

ANNIE: A piper? For a Lewis funeral?

SEÒNA: It was the last part of his birthday present! God, I'll be the talk of the village.

ANNIE: I'll go and stop him.

SEÒNA: Actually no, don't! You don't need to.

ANNIE: What?

SEÒNA: This is my home, and I make the rules now. *(To audience)* Come on folks, we're going to say our last goodbyes to Uncle Iain.

4.

GRÁINNE: That's beautiful, Ruairí.

RUAIRÍ: Jesus!

GRÁINNE: Sorry!

RUAIRÍ: You put the heart crossways in me!

GRÁINNE: Am I disturbing you?

RUAIRÍ: Ah don't worry, I'm only practising.

GRÁINNE: Do you reckon we have enough chairs? Dad will be here soon with the car.

RUAIRÍ: He will, I'm sure. Dad loves to be busy.

GRÁINNE: Me too. Will you be nervous?

RUAIRÍ: What?

GRÁINNE: Playing?

RUAIRÍ: You're the one getting married. *(he looks at the cake, it's terrible)* Very nice cake you have there.

GRÁINNE: Stop. I hate it.

RUAIRÍ: Well Aunty Mary is very proud of it. She spent a whole month decorating it

Silence.

GRÁINNE: I heard you stopped playing... for a while?

RUAIRÍ: Ah, I needed a break. I was sick of it.

GRÁINNE: Sick of music?

Silence.

RUAIRÍ: Are you alright?

GRÁINNE: Oh yeah, I'm fine, just my hay-fever annoying me. I forgot how strong the pollen is here. I left my pills in New York.

RUAIRÍ: We have a chemist here too, believe it or not.

GRÁINNE: Oh my god what is that stuff?

RUAIRÍ: Medicine for your hay-fever. It was nice to chat to Bart in the pub last night.

GRÁINNE: *Brett* is his name.

RUAIRÍ: Sorry. It's a strange name, I always forget it. He's a funny guy.

GRÁINNE: What do you mean funny?

RUAIRÍ: He loves to chat.

GRÁINNE: Well he's American.

RUAIRÍ: He loves speaking Irish too, after he has had a few.

GRÁINNE: Stop. He's obsessed with it. He wants to be fluent.

RUAIRÍ: Good luck to him. So he was staying up in Peadar's house was he, last night?

GRÁINNE: Peadar's house? Will it always be Peadar's house?

RUAIRÍ: Oh definitely.

GRÁINNE: Peadar's dead

RUAIRÍ: He is, God rest his soul. Along with all of his tunes. He was some fiddler. It's very sad he's gone.

RUAIRÍ: Wasn't he 99 when he died? That's a good age.

RUAIRÍ: He was 80.

GRÁINNE: I'm just saying it our house now not *Ti Pheadair*.

RUAIRÍ: Oh don't worry, the world and its mother knows you bought it. On the fucking internet during lockdown. But it will still always be Peadar's house.

GRÁINNE: Look, I was homesick. I was working from home, in the middle of the city, I missed the sea, the fresh air, the food even, for the first time in my life. Brett was worried about me so he bought me a horse-

RUAIRÍ: He bought you a horse?!

GRÁINNE: I know. Sure I was never on a horse in my life.

RUAIRÍ: You live on 5TH avenue. Were you going to ride the horse around Central Park?!

GRÁINNE: We live in Brooklyn. But anyway he sold the poor horse and he bought me Peadar's house.

RUAIRÍ: Hon Brett. More money than sense!

GRÁINNE: Look, I know what people think. But I'm only gone a few years. Is it really so wrong for me to have a house in the place that I'm from. Is it really that hard to call it *Gráinne's house*?

RUAIRÍ: You're gone too long I'm afraid.

GRÁINNE: I know. Sure my accents gone.

RUAIRÍ: That's true.

GRÁINNE: Hey!

RUAIRÍ: That American accent on ya. *Pass me the coffee.*

GRÁINNE: Shut up you. I spent ages trying to change my accent. No one at Harvard could understand me . One girl called me "Granola". And now I'm a yank.

RUAIRÍ: Well you'll have an American passport soon.

GRÁINNE: Stop.

RUAIRÍ: And you'll have kids running around shouting "Mom tell me about Ireland and the leprechauns and the tomato famine!"

GRÁINNE: Stop! I'll kill you!

Silence.

GRÁINNE: How are things with you?

RUAIRÍ: Ah sure grand.

GRAINNE: Grand, that's it?

RUAIRÍ: Ah I struggle like, but sure that's life.

GRÁINNE But you're doing better... in general?

RUAIRÍ: I am. I started on pills of some sort. *Oxymatosis* or something.

GRAINNE : Anti depressants?

RUAIRI: Yeah, I wasn't convinced about the drugs at first but they've helped a lot I have to say.

GRÁINNE: Fair play Ruairí, I know it can be hard... complicated, to ask for help.

RUAIRÍ: Yeah it can.

GRÁINNE: Brett has a *shrink*!

RUAIRÍ: Well he loves to talk. I've a shrink now too, believe it or not.

GRÁINNE: Oh that's great Ruairi. Sorry I wasn't around when you weren't well.

RUAIRÍ: Ah don't worry about that.

GRÁINNE: I didn't know how bad it was.

RUAIRÍ: I'm fine now.

GRÁINNE: I mean I knew you had depression over the years but...

RUAIRÍ: Ah you were busy over there.

GRÁINNE: That's not an excuse.

Silence.

RUAIRÍ: That's why I took a break from the music. I took a break from life in general. Couldn't get out of bed for months. Mam was worried sick apparently. But sure I didn't realise. I was on another planet altogether.

GRÁINNE: Fuck. I'm sorry.

RUAIRÍ: I'm doing much better.

GRÁINNE: That's a relief.

RUAIRÍ: And it's nice to be back playing.

GRÁINNE: Just in time for the wedding. I'd be raging if I had to pay for musicians at my wedding! Can you imagine! The shame!

RUAIRÍ: God forbid!

Silence

RUAIRÍ: I'm thinking of starting something for the young lads, who want to play. Set up a place where people can come for tunes and chats. I put in an application for a bit of funding, so we'll see.

GRÁINNE: That's a great idea! *Ceol for the soul!*

RUAIRÍ: Well, something like that. I know how hard it is here. If I can help one person with a few tunes, I'll be happy.

GRÁINNE: Fair play.

RUAIRÍ: If you stay here, as a young person, if you decide not to immigrate or move, then what's here for you? I don't have all the answers, but I see people struggling. I see it day in, day out, especially with the lads ...

GRÁINNE: It's the same in the states

RUAIRÍ: Well I'm not too worried about you and Brett and his horses.

GRÁINNE: I wasn't saying... Look, I know how lucky I am. And I feel guilty, that I'm here and I have the house and we're hardly every even in it -

RUAIRÍ: Ah Christ sake don't be crying! I'm the crier in the family! It's my one job. Remember when you were going to America, you would have thought it was famine times and I'd never see you again.

GRÁINNE: And grandad got so confused cos he thought you were going cos you were so upset!

Sometimes I don't know why I left.

RUAIRÍ: Ah you had ideas too big to stay here. You wanted to travel. You got a scholarship to Harvard like. You had no choice. You have no idea how proud Mam and dad are of you.

GRÁINNE: I wasn't there for you.

RUAIRÍ: That's nonsense.

GRÁINNE: You're all here at home. This place makes sense. There's craic and music, *ceol for the soul!*

RUAIRÍ: You're not thinking of moving home?

GRÁINNE: Maybe... I love being home. The air is fresh, and people know their neighbours and everyone is obsessed with money or their career. Things are simpler here.

RUAIRÍ.: Sorry *Granola*, can I stop you there. There's nothing simple about life here. The grass is always greener.

GRÁINNE: I miss you.

RUAIRÍ: Look, Gráinne if you want to move home do it! Sure Peadar's house is here for you already, I'm here day in day out, caring for mum and dad, helping out on the farm. You're more than welcome back, but I have a feeling it might just be bit of a dream for you.

GRÁINNE: You should take the house

RUAIRÍ: What ?

GRÁINNE: Seriously, we don't need it. You're right, I'm always talking about going home but Brett will never leave New York.

RUAIRÍ: That's your house, Gráinne.

GRÁINNE: Who cares? You wouldn't need to pay much, just a few hundred a month to cover the mortgage, that's all.

RUAIRÍ: Or I could whack it up on Airbnb and make a couple of thousand a month. Easy!

GRÁINNE: What about your project, with the lads? Use it for music, or anything you want.

RUAIRÍ: Jesus Christ I'm not going to take your house!

GRÁINNE: Ok Ruairí take it easy!

Silence.

RUAIRÍ: That's really nice of you, I'm really grateful for your generosity but you're not a charity.

GRÁINNE: No, I'm not. I'm your sister. If you want to take it, it's there. Think about it. Peadar would be delighted if there were musicians in it, instead of me and Bart Simpson.

RUAIRÍ: Maybe.

GRÁINNE: You don't need to decide now. We can talk about it.

Silence

RUAIRÍ: Do you remember when we were little and we'd play hide and seek?

GRÁINNE: And you hid in that cupboard and when you jumped out I fell down the stairs and broke my big toe!

RUAIRÍ: That wasn't my fault!

GRÁINNE: That cupboard's gone now.

RUAIRÍ: Mam threw it away when she was getting the house ready for the big day.

GRÁINNE: The hall looks weird without that cupboard.

RUAIRÍ: You're sad about a cupboard?!

GRÁINNE: I was surprised by how different everything looked.

RUAIRÍ: Well you haven't been home in years. Things change, whether you're over in New York or you're here. Nothing stands still. That's dad, with the car.

GRÁINNE: *Shit.*

RUAIRÍ: You look amazing.

GRAINNE: Do you think I'm doing the right thing? Getting married?

RUAIRÍ: Gráinne, I don't have a clue.

GRÁINNE: Brett doesn't get it, the life here. My family, my home, my language, like I know he's on Duolingo but-

RUAIRÍ: Gráinne.

GRÁINNE: Seriously!

RUAIRÍ: Brett's written a speech entirely in Irish.

GRÁINNE: What?

RUAIRÍ: I had to write it out phonetically for him.

GRÁINNE: Jesus Christ.

RUAIRÍ: Who cares if he doesn't get life here. He would do anything for you. He bought you a horse! And I spent two hours translating that speech. You have to marry him!

GRÁINNE: I feel sick.

RUAIRÍ: Will you play with me?

GRÁINNE: Now? We'll be late.

RUAIRÍ: They won't start without you. There you go.

GRÁINNE: I'm a bit rusty.

RUAIRÍ: Sure give it a go. The polkas?

5.

Lara: It's strange to be here, for the last time, and my life changing completely like this. The best place in the world, the most beautiful place in the world- regardless of the weather, the place I scored my first ever goal.

But I won't be back. I won't be a tourist on my own turf. I won't be visiting
Antonia,
I can promise you that.

What happens now? Look at Peadar's house. Owned by the American and empty year round. That white house over there, up on air b and b. And our house - bought by Toni. What about the soul of this place?

Mam says we can take the language with us, and a piece of the land in our hearts. But that's not enough. The amount we have lost... it's not enough.

I believe in the earth and the mountains and in football. Thump, thump, thump.

I'm not gonna say goodbye with tears in my eyes. I'm gonna put the ball in the net one last time. Gooaaaaaalllll!

