

## Girleen – Irish/Galway, 17

### THE LONESOME WEST MARTIN MCDONAGH

Presented at the Royal Court Theatre in 1997 as part of the Leenane Trilogy and set in Leenane, Galway.

Two brothers, Coleman and Valene, live side by side in an old farmhouse. They are forever quarrelling, even becoming violent as the poteen – supplied to them by Girleen's father – takes hold of them. A young priest, Father Welsh, unable to cope with the slaughtering and suicide among his parishioners, also finds solace in drink. He tries to settle the differences between the two brothers but it's a hopeless task. And they in turn try to cheer him up by pointing out the good he has done in the parish. Even Girleen does her best to joke him out of his 'crisis of faith'. After all, he does train the 'under-twelves' – a notoriously rough girls' football team.

In this scene Father Welsh is sitting on a bench on a lakeside jetty at night. He has just come back from conducting the funeral service for Tom Hanlon who drowned himself in the lake. He has a pint in his hand. Girleen enters. She sits down beside him. She congratulates him on his sermon and he tells her he is leaving the parish.

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## Girleen

Father. What are ya up to? . . . That was a nice sermon at Thomas's today, Father . . . I was at the back a ways. *(Pause)* Almost made me go crying, them words did . . . I'd be saying you've had a few now, Father? . . . I wasn't starting on ya . . . I wasn't starting at all on ya. I do tease you sometimes but that's all I do do . . . I do only tease you now and again, and only to camouflage the mad passion I have deep within me for ya . . . *(Welsh gives her a dirty look. She smiles)* No, I'm only joking now, Father . . . Ah be taking a joke will ya, Father? It's only cos you're so high-horse and up yourself that you make such an easy target . . . It's tonight you're going? . . . But that's awful quick. No one'll have a chance to wish you good-bye, Father . . . Will you write to me from where you're going and be giving me your new address, Father . . . Just so's we can say hello now and then, now . . . It's more than Thomas has killed himself here down the years, d'you know, Father? Three other fellas walked in here, me mam was telling me . . . You're not scared because you're pissed to the gills. I'm not scared because . . . I don't know why. One, because you're here, and two, because . . . I don't know, I don't be scared of cemeteries at night either. The opposite of that, I do like cemeteries at night . . . *(Embarrassed throughout)* It's because . . . even if you're sad or something, or lonely or something, you're still better off than them lost in the ground or in the lake, because . . . at least you've got the *chance* of being happy, and even if it's a real little chance, it's more than them dead ones have. And it's not that you're saying, 'Hah, I'm better than ye,' no, because in the long run it might end up that you have a worse life than ever they had and you'd've been better off as dead as them, there and then. But at least when you're still here there's the *possibility* of happiness, and it's like them dead ones know that, and they're happy for you to have it. They say 'Good luck to ya.' *(Quietly)* Is the way I see it anyways . . . I'll be carrying on the road home for meself now, Father. Will you be staying or will you be walking with me? . . . See you so, Father . . . If you let me know where you get to I'll write with how the under-twelves get on tomorrow. It may be in the *Tribune* anyways. Under 'Girl decapitated in football match'.