

IRISH GIRLS

Written by

Alan S Austin

Arizona Performing Arts Theatre
2641 E Beekman Place
Phoenix,
Arizona 85016

DARKENED STAGE. SOUND OF SEAGULLS AND THE LAPPING OF WATER. TWO GIRLS WITH BONNETS ON AND SHAWLS WRAPPED TIGHTLY AROUND THEM ARE LOOKING OUT AND WAVING AND SHOUTING THEIR GOODBYES. THE PARTS ARE PLAYED BY THE TWO SAME ACTORS THROUHOUT

DEORA

Wave goodbye to them. Dochy

DOCHY

I'm waving. Is dad crying?

DEORA

**They have a long journey home from
Cork**

DOCHY

We're so lucky to be getting away.

DEORA

Lucky? Bye!

She waves

They call them coffin ships

DOCHY

What?

DEORA

These.

DOCHY

What's these?

DEORA

**The thing we're standing on you
amadan dur. Alot of people die on
the journey.I heard it.**

DOCHY

**Well,... there's people dying back
home too.**

DEORA

**You're right. We're lucky. We're
young.**

She shouts.

Bye.

(MORE)

DEORA (CONT'D)

**Mind you, you could have married
that Englishman.**

DOCHY

**I wouldn't have married an
Englishman for all the tea in
China.**

DEORA

**He took a fancy to you. He fell for
that red hair and those green eyes.**

DOCHY

**I told him to elsewhere. I was firm
about it.**

DEORA

**Oh we're moving... We'll look after
each other and we'll make alot of
money in America and come back with
gold in our pockets.**

DOCHY

That we will.

BOTH

Waving furiously. Shouting

**Slan abhaile. Goodby mam. Goodby
da.**

(Lights fade sound of
church service and nuns
singing)

Bonnet removed Deora, a shawl tight around her is lying on a bench holding her stomach. Painfully she sits up, moaning slightly. Enter Dochy dressed in a servant's apron with a cap on her head. She carries a basket

DOCHY

**There you are. I'm sorry I'm late.
Boston's full of these little
alleys.. so difficult. I got your
message but I can't stay long.**

DEORA

Dochy, I'm not well.

DOCHY

What are you doing here in a convent? You said last year you had a job.

DEORA

I did and ..well..well..he left me you see.

DOCHY

What do you mean? Who?

DEORA

It doesn't matter, it was my own fault.

DOCHY

What are you talking about?

DEORA

I'm sorry ..I....don't be angry. I... got.. I got in the family way...

DOCHY

What? A baby?

DEORA

He promised he would look after me.

DOCHY

How could you be so stupid?

DEORA

I believed him.
Dee, The baby's beautiful. A little girl. I named her Mary after our mother.

DOCHY

Where is she?

DEORA

The nuns have taken her. They tell me she'll go to a good home.

DOCHY

You fool. Here...What are we goin'
to do? And what's that on your
skirt? Is that blood?

DEORA

Where?

DOCHY

On your slirt.

DEORA

Dochy. I don't know. I've been
bleedin' a bit. Dochy.. Look after
Mary. Will you promise me? If
anything happens.

DOCHY

You need to see a doctor girl.

DEORA

I'm hurting a bit.

DOCHY

I'll tell them you must see a
doctor.

DEORA

I can't afford it. Dochy... here..
I have a wish.. Take this. Keep it
for me. Mam gave it to me when we
left the old country. Give me your
hand.

DOCHY

God a'mighty... if I don't have
enough troubles of my own. What is
it?

Presses the broach with a Celtic design into her palm.
It's mam's broach.

DEORA

She gave it to me. It's silver. I'm
frightened of losing it. Just look
after my Mary. Will you... ?

DOCHY

Don't be such a fool. I'll get a doctor to come. You'll be right as rain in a couple of days. I'll talk to the nuns. But I have to be getting back with these groceries. My people are protestants. They allow me a few hours off to go to church on a Sunday. I'll be back then. For God's sake take care of yourself. Bye.

Exits

DEORA

I promise. Geallaim and thank you. I'm sorry..

She weeps and moans quietly to herself.

Light fades. Loud sound of a train whistle and a train at full speed. The whistle goes again. Sound of the steam engine. Fades slowly.

Lights up. Mary is seated sewing. She is simply dressed. She is nervous.. keeps looking at a small watch pinned to her blouse. There's a knocking on the door. She excitedly straightens her clothes, looks at herself in a little mirror. Practises a sweet rather flirtatious smile.

MARY

It's open. Come on in.

Enter Maureen with a small bundle. She's young. Same actress but wears a different bonnet and cape. She is about seventeen.

Mary clearly disappointed.

Oh... erm... yes?

MAUREEN

Is that you Mary? Mary Sullivan?

MARY

Yes...? That's me. You're ?

MAUREEN

It's me Maureen..... your neice??

MARY

Oh my goodness Maureen.. Of course

Oh Thank God. You made it. Bless
You. I was expecting someone else.

(Shriek of happiness)

Oh my goodness me ..I got your
mother's letter a month ago saying
you'd be coming. I'd given up on
you. Look at you. Last time I saw
you, you were knee high.

MAUREEN

I'm sorry. I know I'm late... You
sent me the notice about jobs being
available.. and...I was looking for
a hotel...

MARY

Don't worry you can stay here.
There's only four of us. Plenty of
room. It's A company dormitory
We've each have our little space.
Sit yourself down girl. It's
wonderful to see you..oh.. my
heart's all of a flutter..

MAUREEN

Are they still looking for workers
..?

MARY

At the factory? Of course. There's
more than enough work.

MAUREEN

Do you think I can manage it?

MARY

Of course you can. It's just
fingers and thumbs. Goodness you
look just like You look just like
your mother. No... The cotton
spinning is a piece of cake. And
it's brand new factory. Come here.
Let me give you a kiss.

(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)

Your mother was so good to me after my own mother passed. Is she well?

MAUREEN

She has a bit of the dropsy... coughin' alot... you know.... But she sends her love. Will I start working straight away?

MARY

In the morning. We'll get you signed up. Don't worry. The gaffer's a lovely man.. In fact.. I'll introduce you to everyone. We start at five and finish at six. Of course it's noisy and hot all that clackin' and bangin' but you'll get used to it in no time. The money's good which is the most important thing.

MAUREEN

Sounds better the scrubbing the floors and blacking the fireplaces. I am so happy. I've been so worried. God Bless you and thank you.

MARY

I haven't done a thing. Here sit down. Take your bonnet off. I'll boil some water to make you a cup of tea.

MAUREEN

Mother sends her love and oh, I nearly forgot she said be sure to give you this.

She hands a small package to her.

MARY

My goodness...what is it?

MAUREEN

She said it belonged to your mother or grandmother...she wasn't sure

MARY

Oh. That would be back in the old country .. yes...and my poor mother...

She takes the broach out of the package.

Oh it's a beautiful broach all right. I think it's silver. Mmm.. I remember your mother wearing it. Thank you. I'll put it on straight away. There. Doesn't that look pretty? It's an old celtic thing. It'll bring me luck. Now let's have some tea. You'll be fine here. We've got classes for reading and so on Sunday.

MAUREEN

Do you have to do the reading? I'm not so good at it.

MARY

You'll learn. We're organized here. We won't be taken advantage of. We've got rights..and.. I've saved a good few dollars would you believe it? I call it my little nest egg. Oh I nearly forget. I have a visitor coming. We're going for a walk..nearly every Sunday.. he's the gaffer, the foreman, I was telling you about.. He was wounded in the war...at Gettysburg. He's a carpenter by trade. He wants me to... perhaps ..well you know.. perhaps go to Butte...the Irish town... but he's a real gentleman

MAUREEN

Will.....

MARY

Don't worry. I'll make sure you're fine and settled.

MAUREEN

It sounds ...

There's a sound of knocking at the door.

MARY

Oh there he is now... What am I jabbering about. Just settle in. We're just going for a walk together... make yourself at home. I'm coming James... We usually walk for about an hour....just down to the river and back. Make yourself comfortable.

Blackout. Train whistle. Engine again... the sound echoes..

V/O

Welcome to Billings Montana. Change here for the Butte Anaconda and Pacific line. If you're going to Portland Oregon stay on the train. Change here for the Butte Anaconda and Pacific Line... Change... here.

..

Sound of steam and engine. Pause

Lights up on empty stage. A doorbell rings

Enter Mary older, respectably dressed. She is wearing the broach. The bell rings again. She goes off stage to open the door.

MARY

Maureen.. for goodness sake.. you can't keep coming here like this. People will talk if they see you.

MAUREEN

Mary I'm the same girl I always was back at the factory.

MARY

I'm a respectable woman. I have two children.

MAUREEN

Yes and your husband's a drunk. I have seen him down the lanes.

MARY

Don't please.... I'm sorry. He's not well. He wakes up screaming.

MAUREEN

Mary, you're my only relative... I wouldn't embarrass you.

MARY

I know. God help me I know.

MAUREEN

I had no other way. You know that. When William died in the mine...what was I to do? I had a baby I had to feed myself.

MARY

I know. I know. I understand. What it is to be a woman.

MAUREEN

Well, I've kept my looks. I don't know for how long.

MARY

But....

MAUREEN

I need you to do something for me. I won't bother you again. Take this money...here. Keep it safe for me. What with paying off the police and the owners, there should be more. I have an admirer on the city council...

MARY

Maureen. I have to tell you. We're gettin' out of here. After The Panic we lost a bit...and now there's talk of them laying off the miners, because of the low price of copper. We need a new start. Tulsa maybe..

(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)

Oklahoma We're selling the two houses, this and next door that William. He'll be a better man there away from temptation...

MAUREEN

Good. I am happy for you. You will keep in touch.... You promise.

MARY

I promise.

MAUREEN

If can find a decent man, maybe I'll be joining you.

MARY

We can get good jobs there.. Have a decent life... I'm expecting my third.

MAUREEN

Well, Promise you'll stay in touch. Send any letters to to the Post Office on Main Street. I'll collect them there. It's safer.

MARY

Take care of yourself.. I'm sorry I couldn't do more.

MAUREEN

We've been through worse. That factory was hell.

MARY

You're right. Well take care. And write. I'll look after your money.

Blackout. Sound of diesel train approaching and finally coming to halt. V/O over the speaker system.

V/O

Welcome to Tulsa. Next stop on the Firefly will be Oklahoma City....

Loudly. Recording of Elvis Presley There Ain't nothing but a Hound Dog....at least a minute.

MAUREEN

A much younger version of Maureen comes on stage singing along and practicing her rock and roll for the prom. She is just wearing a dressing gown. She has red hair. There's a table and two chairs

**You ain't nothing but a hound
dog..crying all the time... they
said were high class ..**

MARGARET

Off stage

Maureen!

MAUREEN

What ?

MARGARET

Off stage

Turn that music off.

MAUREEN

It's Elvis.

MARGARET

She emerges in a 50s apron, headscarf and is stirring a cake mix in a bowl.

**I don't know how many times I have
to tell you. It's disgusting. Turn
it off... all that gyrating... I
don't know what.. it's**

Maureen goes off stage to turn it off

**Nice girls don't listen to that
sort of music.**

Maureen returns.

MAUREEN

**Well they play it at the school
dances.**

MARGARET

**I don't know what the world is
coming to. Go and get dressed.**

MAUREEN

I'm waiting for my new skirt . It's been a week.I need it for the dance tonight.

MARGARET

You didn't tell me.

MAUREEN

Yes I did. You filled out the order from the Sears catalogue.

MARGARET

No the dance.

MAUREEN

It's a school dance.

MARGARET

Who are you going with?

MAUREEN

Anthony.

MARGARET

Who's Anthony.

MAUREEN

He's the quarter back on the school team.

MARGARET

That's good.

MAUREEN

He is so good looking.

There is a loud knocking at the door.

Oh..That's probably my skirt.Don't Worry Mom, I'll get the post

Exits

MARGARET

But...teenagers...

Re-enter Maureen

MAUREEN

It's here. Thank God. I am going to look so cool. Oh and there a package for you...

Hands her the package.

MAUREEN (CONT'D)

So what's in the package?

MARGARET

I don't know... it's from...

She looks at it

Oh..the attorneys... Oh no...

MAUREEN

I am going to look so good in this. Thank you Mum for buying it for me. You are the best.

MARGARET

Yes....I Ho[e this is not trouble. I sure thought everything was sorted after your grandmother's death last year...

MAUREEN

Perhaps it's from Dad. Where is he now?

MARGARET

I don't know. He said he would be back... sometime... in the Fall.

MAUREEN

So what's in it? I have to try this on.

Exits

MARGARET

I don't know.

She sits and opens the package slowly... there's a sturdy envelope inside in which are two letters, a small but old looking diary and a small box. Margaret gets everything out carefully and place them on the table.

Re-enter Maureen wearing blouse. She parades herself.

MAUREEN

Oh the girls are going to hate
me...

She dances slowly to the words of the song. While Margaret is reading/

Oh baby it makes me feel so right.
Baby I can't be wrong.

MARGARET

It's your grandmother's. The
attorneys just found it. It was in
a deposit box.

MAUREEN

What is it?

MARGARET

Some old papers and some sort of
broach. The letters are from
someone called Maureen.

MAUREEN

That's my name.

MARGARET

Listen to this. Dear Mary.. I
finally got your letter Don't worry
about the money. I'm married now
and have moved to California...We
Have a beautiful home in Santa
Monica. My daughter, Loretta is
living with us and is well loved.
She has started college. I am so
glad to hear your move to Oklahoma
went well and you are happy. Three
children now .. and all of them in
school. You must be so proud. I
agree the medical profession is the
way to go. My husband was in the
Pacific war and works for an
investment company.

MAUREEN

What was the Pacific War?

MARGARET

Here's another letter... it's falling apart..and A diary. It's my grandmother's... look her name, Mary

MAUREEN

Can I see. Nobody writes like that now. So she's my great grandmother.

MARGARET

Yes My mother's mother. She and my grandfather met in Butte or before that. It's was her mother that came over from Cork.

MAUREEN

Where's Butte?

MARGARET

It's in Montana. My great grandfather was the carpenter who built the houses. My mother used to say he was drunk.

MAUREEN

Wow... I could use this for my history project... Oh look there's a photo.

MARGARET

Give it me.

MAUREEN

It's tiny.

MARGARET

That was just after the war look there your Aunt Mary..that was just before she graduated. Look at the hair...doesn't your Uncle Joe look cute.

MAUREEN

That's Uncle Joe?

MARGARET

I remember my grandmother when she was dying said some strange stuff something about being born out of wedlock and having to work in the factories.... And about a sister dying getting in the family way.

MAUREEN

Mum please.... That sounds terrible. You're always goin on at me about not getting in the family way.

MARGARET

Back in those days. You did what you had to do to survive. We're all Irish girls and proud of it. If I remember rightly it was her sister that had the red hair and green eyes... just like you.

MAUREEN

That doesn't mean to say I'm going to get in the family way.

MARGARET

You better not be.

MAUREEN

Can I see the brooch? That looks beautiful. Can I wear it tonight. It'll be perfect with this blouse.

MARGARET

You wear my love. And behave yourself.

