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PP 58-60

START

58 JOHN SR. / JOANNA / JOHN / CHRISTINA / MARY / MATT  
TILLIE / MONSIGNOR

CHRISTINA. Yes . . . Joey's told me. I know how horrible.

MARY. Oh Mrs. Drayton please— You can try to sympathize. Don't try to relate. You don't know what it's like— His wife was a daughter to us and that little boy never got to try being a man.

CHRISTINA. We lost our son fifteen years ago. Fifteen years, seven months . . . Six days.

MARY. I'm sorry, most people don't know, Mrs. Drayton . . .

JOHN SR. (Entering:) Get your coat. We're leaving now.

TILLIE. Oh, hell no, not before dinner. (Calling out:) Dinner's on! Everybody get in here now. Get yourselves to the table. Come on now! Get to the table!

(MATT, JOHN SR, and MONSIGNOR RYAN enter from Matt's Sstudy.)

MATT. What the hell . . .

(TILLIE begins singing "Run Home Children")

MONSIGNOR RYAN. (To TILLIE:) You got quite a voice there, lass . . .

MATT. What's gotten into you, Tillie?

MONSIGNOR RYAN. I'd like to learn that one. I'll trade you for one of mine.

(Sings:)

In Dublin's Fair City  
Where the girls are so pretty  
I first set my eyes on sweet Molly Malone . . .

JOHN SR. (To MARY, over MONSIGNOR's song:) I'm not staying here for dinner. John wants me out of his life we'll start now.

MONSIGNOR RYAN. (Sings continuously:) As she wheeled her wheel barrow  
Through streets broad and narrow  
Crying cockles and mussels alive, alive o!

MATT. (Over the singing:) What the hell's happened in this house? Everybody's gone out of their mind!

MONSIGNOR RYAN and TILLIE. Alive, alive o!, alive, alive o!  
Crying cockles and mussels alive, alive o!

MATT. Goddamn it, Mike! You're making the problem worse!  
(MONSIGNOR RYAN quits singing. MARY crosses to MATT.)

MARY. Mr. Drayton, what problem? What problem is it for you? All you have to do is tell my son that you're against the marriage and this is all solved for you.

JOHN SR. Come on, Mary.

MARY. I don't know your daughter but my son . . . With all that he's gone through and with what he's said to me tonight . . . Mrs. Drayton, I don't really know how to answer you about whether I "approve." But I will tell you that my heart aches for our son.

JOHN SR. Don't tell me you support this!

MARY. I would rather trust them and you'd rather see them hurt. It's as if the two of you have forgotten everything you ever knew about everything in this life that really matters.

JOHN SR. We're leaving.

MARY. I'm staying. I'm staying here for our son.

JOHN SR. I won't stay in this house a minute longer.

(JOHN SR goes to the door.)

MARY. John! . . . What happens to men when they grow old? Why do they forget everything? I believe now that those two young people need each other the way they need the air to breathe. Anybody can see that by looking at them. (To MATT:) But you and my husband are—you may as well be blind men. All you see is that they have a problem. Do you really know what's happened to them or how they feel about each other? I believe that men grow old and that when the—when sexual things no longer matter to them they forget it all. Forget what true passion is. If you ever felt what my son feels for your daughter you've forgotten everything about it. My husband has too. The strange thing—for your wife and me—is that the two of you don't remember . . . If you did, how could the two of you do what you're doing?

JOHN SR. Don't fool yourselves . . . Whatever you talk out in this house on a hill tonight won't change the hearts in homes across the country. That day will never come.

MARY. John, please . . .

JOHN. I'll be out in the car.

(JOHN SR exits. JOANNA and JOHN enter carrying suitcases.)

MATT. Listen, Joey—

JOANNA. Please don't call me that. Every word you said to me . . . Every word you wrote or thing you did— All that . . . Every single

thing has been proven false today . . . I don't know what's worse . . . That you're a phony or that you're a bigot!

CHRISTINA. No . . . Don't you dare! Everybody, anybody gripes and complains but your father's out there fighting and he has never been a phony! And he's never been a bigot.

(MATT is looking at CHRISTINA.)

JOHN. Mr. Drayton, I know I promised—

MATT. Hold on . . . I haven't told you anything yet. All day long I've been held to the fire of your question and now have one of my own. What is your great rush in this? You've had ten days together. What's another ten days? Why do you have to leave tonight?

JOANNA. What is ten days? Ten days is first ten days you were in love with Mom. Ten days is the first ten days after Michael was born, the first ten days of me. It is also the last ten days of Michael's life, the last ten days of John's wife and son. You ask why not leave in ten days? Because the next ten days are the start of our life together and if they happen, we will count them as a gift because everyone in this room has experienced how suddenly our ten days can end.

MATT. Wait a minute. This afternoon I told Dr. Prentice that I would have something to say to him about how I felt. Would anyone care to listen?

(They sit.)

Now this has been a very strange day. I don't think that's putting it too strongly. I might even say an extraordinary day. It began when I ran home from the club this afternoon and walked in here and Tillie said to me, "You better sit down." Naturally, I asked her what she meant by that and then I met John. After some preliminary guessing games, at which I was never very good, it was explained to me by my daughter that she had decided to get married and that her intended was the young man before me who I'd never met before and whose skin was black. Now I think it's fair to say that I reacted to the news in just about the same way that any father would have reacted. In a word, I was flabbergasted. And was informed by my daughter—a very determined young woman and very like her mother—that the marriage was definitely on no matter what her mother or I might feel about it. (Beat.) Then the next rather startling development occurred (To JOHN:) when you came in and told us that unless we, her mother and I, approved of the marriage there'd be no marriage—

JOANNA. John didn't have the right to say that and you don't have the right to decide.

MATT. This may be the last chance I ever have to tell you to do anything so I'm telling you— Joanna . . . pipe down.

It was then clear to me that we had one single day to decide just how we felt about the whole matter. So what happened? My wife, typically enough, began thinking with her heart which made her, in my view, totally inaccessible to anything in the way of reason. But she made a number of statements that obviously seemed reasonable to her. The last of which was that if I didn't approve of the marriage it wouldn't matter anyway because there was bound to be a big fight in which she of course (To JOANNA:) would naturally be on your side. (Beat.) I haven't referred as yet to His sozzled Reverence, who insulted my intelligence by mouthing three-hundred platitudes and ended just recently threatening me as if he stood before me on the path as the angel of Death.

Now at the same time my daughter, having suddenly decided to simplify the situation by leaving with the doctor tonight, reveals that as a surprise, she's invited the in-laws for a little dinner party before we all dash over to the airport to wave goodbye.

All right . . . Mr. Prentice says that he has no wish to offend me and asks if I'm some kind of lunatic. He finally decides everyone under this roof's crazy and leaves us to go sit in the car. Then Mrs. Prentice says that like her husband I'm a burnt-out old shell of a man who can't even remember what it feels like to love a woman the way her son loves my daughter. And strangely enough that's the first statement anybody's made to me all day on which I feel truly qualified to take issue.

(To MARY:)

Because I believe you are wrong and as wrong as you could be. I admit that I hadn't considered it. I hadn't even thought about it. But I know exactly what he feels for her. And there is nothing your son feels for my daughter—nothing at all—that I didn't feel for Christina. Old, yes. Burnt-out, certainly. But I tell you, the memories are there, clear and intact and indestructible, and they'll still be there if I live to be a hundred and ten. Where John was wrong was in attaching so much importance to what her mother and I think about this thing. Because in the last analysis it doesn't matter. The only thing that really matters is what they feel and how much they feel for each other. And if it is even half what we felt . . . Then that is everything.

As for you two and the problems that you are going to have—it seems to me they're almost unimaginable. But you'll have no problem with me. You must know—I believe that you do know—what you're up against. Your father is right about the world outside this house.