



A Change of PACE

Creatively supporting young people during the coronavirus crisis

The Monologue Pod Class

Episode 4

Character: Maggie
Gender: Female
Age: 30s
Play: *Dancing at Lughnasa* by Brian Friel (1990)
Accent: Irish – County Donegal

MAGGIE: I was sixteen when I remember slipping out one Sunday night – it was this time of year, the beginning of August – and Bernie and I met at the gate of the workhouse and the pair of us off to a dance in Ardstraw. I was being pestered by a fellow called Tim Carlin at the time but it was really Brian McGuinness that I was – that I was keen on. Remember Brian with the white hands and the longest eyelashes you ever saw? But of course he was crazy about Bernie. Anyhow the two boys took us on the bar of their bikes and off the four of us headed to Ardstraw, fifteen miles each way. If Daddy had known, may he rest in peace...

And at the end of the night there was a competition for the Best Military Two-step. And it was down to three couples: the local pair from Ardstraw; wee Timmy and myself – he was up to there on me; and Brian and Bernie...

And they were just so beautiful together, so stylish; you couldn't take your eyes off them. People just stopped dancing and gazed at them...

And when the judges announced the winners – they were probably blind drunk – naturally the local couple came first; and Timmy and myself came second; and Brian and Bernie came third.

Poor Bernie was stunned. She couldn't believe it. Couldn't talk. Wouldn't speak to any of us for the rest of the night. Wouldn't even cycle home with us. She was right, too; they should have won; they were just so beautiful together...

And that's the last time I saw Brian McGuinness – remember Brian with the... ? And the next thing I heard he had left for Australia...

She was right to be angry, Bernie. I know it wasn't fair – it wasn't fair at all. I mean they must have been blind drunk, those judges, whoever they were...

Extract taken from *Dancing at Lughnasa*, published in Friel, Brian *Plays One* (1999), Faber, London.

Character: Alex
Gender: Male
Age: 20s
Play: *Passing Places* by Stephen Greenhorn
Accent: he's meant to be from Motherwell. Any greater-Glasgow kind of accent would work fine.

On the road. In the car. BRIAN in the back. ALEX and MIRREN in front. BRIAN talks directly to the audience.

BRIAN: I'd been working on it for nearly twelve weeks. It was basically a database with some tricks built in. Horse racing. I had information on over three hundred horses. All kinds of information. It was just getting to the point where predictions were reliable. The point where I could start to make money.

[ALEX: A835. North out of Ullapool.

MIRREN: There's a wee road that turns off a Drumrunie. Goes round the coast to Lochinver. It's a bit of a detour though.

ALEX: What do you think Brian? Turn off or carry on? Eh? Brian?]

BRIAN: I'd only went to the toilet. Two minutes. I was sitting there working out how much cash I could get together to stake when I heard the Hoover. It came to me quite slowly where the sound was coming from. I waited until it stopped before I could bear to go see.

[MIRREN: '... a wild and adventurous road with magnificent scenery...' That's what it says. In your book. Look.]

BRIAN: She was just plugging it back in when I got there. She switched in on and smiled at me. 'That's the place a wee bit cleaner anyway.' I was looking at the screen. It was more than just a wee bit cleaner. It was blank. I saw all that information, all those facts and figures, all swirling around and down into the big black hole of my mum's Hoover bag. I saw her sucking them off

the screen and out from between the keys with her handy hose attachment. Nozzling it into oblivion.

She died three months after that. We all stood at the grave chucking dirt down on top of the coffin. Me and George and my Dad. My shoes were leaking and I thought about the money I could've made with the programme. I had an urge to jump into the grave and wipe all that dirt off the polished wood. I wished I had a yellow duster to do the job properly. But I didn't. So my mum disappeared into a black hole too.

Extract taken from *Passing Places*, by Stephen Greenhorn. Published in *Scotland Plays* (1998), Nick Hern Books, London.
