

Apotheosis – John A. McMinn

SETTING:

New England, 1920's

CAST OF CHARACTERS:

CYRUS, Mid-50's

ALARIC MAURER, 65, a German

PÁDRAIG MAC PIARAIS, late 40's, an Irishman

QUINCEY HOLBECK, 70

ROSE, early 20's

SCENE 1:

A large private library in a stately New England home. In addition to hundreds of musky old books, the room is decorated with antiquities from various ancient cultures: Egyptian ibises and ankhs; framed parchment fragments; Assyrian bas-reliefs and cuneiform tablets; Celtic daggers and Ogham stone engravings; etc. Two bearded, scholarly men sit in plush armchairs; another, CYRUS, browses the vast collection of books and now and again impatiently thumbs through one. One chair is empty. One of the seated men, ALARIC, fills a pipe with tobacco, strikes a match and lights the pipe. The third man, QUINCEY - grey and bespectacled - fidgets in his seat, visibly impatient. He draws his pocket watch and angrily returns it to his pocket.

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QUINCEY

(rising from the chair)

We don't have all day! Pádraig was supposed to be here at a quarter-of; it's nearly six-thirty!

(He storms across the room and opens the door.)

QUINCEY (CONT'D.)

Rose! Rose!

ALARIC

Quincey, you know this isn't necessary.

QUINCEY

Rose! Come in here now!

(ROSE enters timidly.)

ROSE

Yes, Mr. Holbeck?

QUINCEY

Any word from Pádraig?

ROSE

No, sir. Mr. Pearse isn't here at the moment. He should return shortly.

QUINCEY

He was supposed to be here nearly an hour ago.

ALARIC

You know Pádraig isn't known for his promptness. Leave it, Quincey.

QUINCEY

I won't leave it. I've become rather irritated with his inability to keep an appointment, and the leisurely way in which he conducts his affairs. I'll see that he loses his tenure for this!

(to ROSE)

Find him!

ROSE

Sir, Mr. Pearse left us no means of contacting him.

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QUINCEY

I don't care. Send someone to find him!

ALARIC

You're being unreasonable, Quincey.

(to ROSE)

Ignore him, Rose. He's had a hectic day; he doesn't mean what he says. You may leave.

ROSE

Thank you, sir.

QUINCEY

(as ROSE exits)

I don't care what he says! Find him!

ALARIC

Sit down, Quincey.

QUINCEY

Find him!

ALARIC

(with surprising ferocity)

Sit down, Quincey!

(QUINCEY sits.)

ALARIC (CONT'D.)

You've made a fool out of yourself, Quincey. And foolishness is unbecoming for a scholar such as yourself. I suggest you compose yourself and keep your mouth shut until Pádraig arrives.

(CYRUS stops thumbing through the library and joins his colleagues.)

CYRUS

He's quite right, Alaric. I'm meeting my daughter and son-in-law for supper this evening and I'm already late as it is. I'll allow him ten more minutes and if he hasn't arrived in that time then I'm afraid I'll have to go.

ALARIC

You're not going anywhere, Cyrus. I suggest you take a seat or find another way of occupying yourself until he returns.

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CYRUS

You're being damned rude, Alaric.

ALARIC

And you're both being damned stupid.

CYRUS

Listen, I've taken much abuse from you over the years, but now -

ALARIC

You listen to me; both of you.

(PÁDRAIG, tall and lanky, enters quietly,
unbeknownst to the others.)

ALARIC (CONT'D.)

Pádraig insists that this discovery is one of the most important archaeological finds in recent years.

PÁDRAIG

Indeed I did say that, Professor Maurer.

(Everyone turns to look at PÁDRAIG.
They approach him. PÁDRAIG extends his
hand to each man for handshakes.)

PÁDRAIG

Gentlemen, I trust you weren't too lonely in my absence.

ALARIC

(laughing)
We made do, Pádraig, as always.

QUINCEY

Lovely to see you again, Pádraig. I trust everything is well on the island.

PÁDRAIG

It is. And I trust you've been cursing me and everyone in this house on account of my lateness.

(QUINCEY is taken aback.)

PÁDRAIG (CONT'D.)

I can't blame you, Quincey.

(MORE)

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PÁDRAIG (CONT'D.)

But I think you won't regret the wait once you've seen the goodies I brought back for you.

(turning to CYRUS)

Pleasure to see you again, Cyrus.

CYRUS

As always. How was your trip?

QUINCEY

Enough with the small talk. Show us why we're here, Pádraig.

PÁDRAIG

In due time. First, gifts.

(PÁDRAIG places a large bag on a nearby table. He removes a dagger.)

PÁDRAIG

(to ALARIC)

I know you have numerous Celtic daggers, but I think you'll find this one worthy of adding to your collection.

(ALARIC takes the dagger and examines it closely.)

ALARIC

Excellent craftsmanship. Mid-to-late third-century, if I'm not mistaken.

PÁDRAIG

Right as always, sir.

ALARIC

Thank you, Pádraig. I'll be proud to add this to my collection.

(PÁDRAIG takes another artifact from the bag and hands it to CYRUS.)

PÁDRAIG

For you, my most romantic friend, a claddagh ring. Late seventeenth-century.

(CYRUS examines it.)

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CYRUS

Thanks, Pádraig. I guess I should give it to my ex-wife, then? You know I divorced less than a month ago; I don't find this amusing.

PÁDRAIG

Keep it in your pocket until you find a special woman. And when you do, give it to her and perhaps you'll never have to worry about another divorce.

CYRUS

(still offended)

Thanks. I'll do just that.

(CYRUS pockets the claddagh. PÁDRAIG removes a Celtic cross from the bag.)

PÁDRAIG

Lastly, a Celtic cross for my old friend.

(He hands the cross to QUINCEY.)

QUINCEY

What use has an atheist for a cross?

PÁDRAIG

You're getting on in years, Quincey. Perhaps you'll find religion in your old age.

QUINCEY

I don't think I'll ever get so old as to be religious.

PÁDRAIG

Perhaps in your senility, then.

(QUINCEY gives the cross back to PÁDRAIG. PÁDRAIG walks over to QUINCEY'S jacket and puts it in the pocket.)

QUINCEY

You're wasting our time, Pádraig!

PÁDRAIG

Bí i do thost! Scrios dearg ort!

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CYRUS

(to ALARIC)

You can tell he's serious when he begins to curse people in Gaelic.

(ALARIC chuckles.)

PÁDRAIG

You've really become quite the cranky old header, you know that Quincey?

ALARIC

Now, now, boys; let's not be children about this.

(to QUINCEY)

If you're late for some other engagement, Quincey, I suggest you leave now before your tardiness becomes too apparent. Otherwise, let's continue.

(to PÁDRAIG)

What did you find in Ireland, Pádraig?

PÁDRAIG

I found god.

(ALARIC, CYRUS, and QUINCEY eye each other skeptically.)

PÁDRAIG (CONT'D.)

I'll be more specific: I found a new god.

QUINCEY

Enough with the riddles, Pádraig. What are you getting at?

(PÁDRAIG holds up his hand to calm QUINCEY. He walks over to his bag and removes an object. He puts it on the table in front of his colleagues: it is a small, stone idol, no more than twelve inches high.)

QUINCEY

You've wasted our time for this? This is no more than a statue of Bríd, and from the looks of it, no earlier than the third-century.

PÁDRAIG

You clearly have no idea what you're talking about.

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CYRUS

He's right, Pádraig. This is no more than a statue of Bríd. She's one of the Túatha Dé Dannan. It's all in the Leabhar Gabhála Éireann.

ALARIC

Mispronunciations aside, Cyrus is correct. We all know about Bríd and her place in the Celtic myths.

PÁDRAIG

I would expect this from the others, Alaric, but you are usually a much more astute observer than they.

(handing the statue to ALARIC)

Look closely.

(ALARIC puts on his glasses and takes a closer look.)

PÁDRAIG (CONT'D.)

What do you see?

ALARIC

It looks like a penis.

PÁDRAIG

Looks like, Alaric?

ALARIC

It's a penis.

PÁDRAIG

Which makes it apparent to even the most oblivious of scholars -

(he turns to QUINCEY)

- that this is by all means not a statue of Bríd.

QUINCEY

This tells us nothing! It's probably a statue of The Dagda, Bríd's consort.

PÁDRAIG

I hate to correct you yet again, Quincey, but The Dagda was Bríd's father; I'd hardly call him a consort.

QUINCEY

Then it's just another of the myriad Irish deities.

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PÁDRAIG

You are correct in saying that.

CYRUS

So what makes this different from any of the countless similar finds?

PÁDRAIG

I'm glad you asked. Look at the proportions of this creature, whatever it is.

(They all examine it closely.)

PÁDRAIG

Look at the disproportionate limbs, the bulbous head. Look even closer and you'll find only three digits on each hand and foot.

CYRUS

Why is this unusual?

ALARIC

If I'm not mistaken, Gaelic icons are typically recognizably human. This clearly isn't.

PÁDRAIG

Precisely. This was found in Sligo, near the Mesolithic tombs, which I'm sure you're all familiar with. This was found inside the remains of a human skeleton, within the ribcage. The bones of the skeleton were burned all over, suggesting human sacrifice.

CYRUS

That's preposterous. We all know that human sacrifice was a myth created to demonize the Druids.

PÁDRAIG

Who said anything about Druids? This is older than the Druids. Much older, in fact, than anything we've yet found in the British Isles. In the same strata as the human skeleton we found the bones of mammals extinct long before the accepted colonization of Ireland. These bones, I might mention, were untouched by flames, as this idol clearly is as well. A bit striking that a stone icon, found inside the human skeleton were untouched by the flames, don't you think? But I digress. The presence of these bones would date this find to something like twenty-thousand years ago - likely more.

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QUINCEY

Absurd. Pure absurdity. It's commonly accepted that the British isles were uninhabited until nearly ten thousand years ago.

PÁDRAIG

That is indeed commonly accepted. For now. Another interesting thing I should mention is that along with the bones we found the remnants of tools made of a type of stone not native to the British Isles or indeed any other area of Northern Europe. In fact, the very statue that sits before you is made of stone entirely foreign to Europe.

CYRUS

Then where is this stone native to?

PÁDRAIG

(smirking)

That's the big question, isn't it?

(PÁDRAIG takes the idol back to the bag. Heads turn to follow it.)

PÁDRAIG (CONT'D.)

Now if you'll excuse me, I am quite exhausted from my trip.

CYRUS

Of course.

QUINCEY

(looking at his watch)

There goes any hope of making it to my meeting.

(CYRUS and QUINCEY exit. ALARIC stops at the door and turns back to face PÁDRAIG. They give each other a knowing look.)

PÁDRAIG

Beannacht an Dia leat, a chara.

ALARIC

Agus leatsa.

(ALARIC leaves. PÁDRAIG turns out the lights.)

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SCENE 2:

PÁDRAIG'S office. Similar in décor to the previous room, but smaller and less opulent. PÁDRAIG turns on his desk lamp, illuminating half of the room. He puts his bag on the desk and removes the idol. He takes a picture off of the wall, revealing a safe. After turning the knob and unlocking the safe PÁDRAIG places the idol inside. FOOTSTEPS can be heard outside. PÁDRAIG hurriedly closes the safe, sits down at his desk, and pretends to be reading over some papers.

ROSE enters the room, but her features cannot be seen in the darkness. Her voice and demeanor are powerful, unlike the her previous scene.

ROSE
Where is it?

PÁDRAIG
I have it.

ROSE
Where is it?

PÁDRAIG
It's in the safe.

(ROSE approaches the safe, entering the light. PÁDRAIG puts himself between ROSE and the safe.)

ROSE
I want to see it.

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PÁDRAIG

In due time. Right now he's resting.

ROSE

You make light of this situation, but I don't find it amusing, Pádraig.

PÁDRAIG

Calm yourself, Rose.

ROSE

You must show it to me now.

PÁDRAIG

I can't show you now, Rose. You know that. Should one of my colleagues return and find us together, all of our work would be for naught. We can't take any risks this time.

ROSE

You act as if you are somehow responsible for this. Be honest with yourself, Pádraig.

PÁDRAIG

It's too dangerous to show you now. And you already know what it looks like. I don't see why you care.

(pause)

Fine. If it's important to you...

(PÁDRAIG pauses, thinks for a moment. He takes a pencil and a sheet of paper from his desk and scribbles something on it.)

PÁDRAIG (CONT'D.)

Here's the combination. Open it tomorrow when you come in to clean. Only the watchman will be here, so you'll have plenty of time and privacy to observe our find. But come in early.

(PÁDRAIG hesitates and looks around anxiously.)

ROSE

We're all losing patience with you, Pádraig. You've failed us time and again.

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PÁDRAIG

I failed? So soon you forget. I do as much as I can with what I'm given, dear. If anything, the fate of this...project...of ours rests entirely in your hands.

ROSE

There will be no more failures. This time is different from all others.

PÁDRAIG

How so?

ROSE

I have something special in store.

(They pause, silent.)

PÁDRAIG

I'm waiting, Rose.

ROSE

And you'll continue to wait. The time is not yet here.

PÁDRAIG

And when will that time arrive?

ROSE

You'll know, Pádraig. There will be no mistaking it. But you will be the last to know. But at that point everything will have been set in motion and there will be no room left for error.

PÁDRAIG

(amused)

Very cryptic. Very mysterious. I look forward to seeing what's in store for us.

ROSE

It's easy to say that now. But do not forget that the damage is irrevocable and cannot be undone once we've loosed this secret into the world.

PÁDRAIG

(laughing)

Yes, once we've unleashed our little forgery on my fellow academics.

(MORE)

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PÁDRAIG (CONT'D.)

(serious)

I do hope that you're right about this, Rose. I fear this will be our last opportunity.

ROSE

What do they know about the Gaels? That fool Quincey has scarcely left his office in twenty years.

PÁDRAIG

That may be true, Rose, but you don't know these men like I do. They're set in their ways; they're unchanging. They're still teaching from the texts they studied in their own youths. They ignore any evidence contrary to what they learned and what they teach. And this goes for all of them, not just my associates here at the university.

ROSE

They'll be convinced.

PÁDRAIG

I don't know what proof you have, Rose, but I hope it's more impressive than a paper published in an archaeology journal.

ROSE

You'll be pleasantly surprised, Pádraig. I'm quite sure of it.

PÁDRAIG

As always, Rose, my faith is in you. But you've shaken my faith many times in the past. For what it's worth.

(PÁDRAIG looks at his watch.)

PÁDRAIG (CONT'D.)

We've spent too much time in here together already.

(PÁDRAIG hastily throws a few things into his bag and makes for the door.)

ROSE

Pádraig...

(He turns to face her.)

ROSE (CONT'D.)

Will it be ready in time for the conference?

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PÁDRAIG

I can't see why not. We've plenty of time to corroborate my findings. However, as I said Quincey and Cyrus will swallow anything, but they are unreceptive to any ideas that may challenge their notions of truth, or the "established truth," as they see it.

ROSE

Perhaps, Pádraig. But they're not the ones we're worried about.

PÁDRAIG

Alaric will corroborate.

ROSE

And if he doesn't?

PÁDRAIG

Alaric will corroborate.

(As PÁDRAIG leaves.)

ROSE

Smug imbeciles like Quincey and Cyrus can be made to believe many things, but can this really convince your true colleagues?

PÁDRAIG

You'll have to be the judge of that.

(PÁDRAIG exits. ROSE turns out the lights.)

SCENE 3:

The library. Same as the first scene. ALARIC, CYRUS, and QUINCEY again await PÁDRAIG'S return.

CYRUS

(looking at his watch)

It couldn't hurt Pádraig to invest in a watch. And he's been back in the States for nearly two weeks and this is the first we've heard from him since the day after his return.

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QUINCEY

It couldn't hurt Pádraig to invest in some basic etiquette. I'm the chair of the Antiquities Department at this University, and his fondness for wasting my damned time is beginning to grate on my nerves.

ALARIC

This is important, Quincey. You know it is.

QUINCEY

Five more minutes.

(QUINCEY crosses his arms and sits stiffly in his chair. PÁDRAIG enters. QUINCEY rises to greet him.)

QUINCEY

Mr. Pearse, we were just beginning to inquire into your tardiness. It's quite perplexing that an academic, such as yourself, should -

PÁDRAIG

No one's the least bit interested in the rest of that sentence, Quincey.

QUINCEY

Now you hear this -

ALARIC

Shut up, Quincey.

(QUINCEY sits down, feigning disinterest.)

CYRUS

Please proceed, Pádraig. I must finish preparing my lecture for this afternoon, so my time here is limited.

PÁDRAIG

Well, since you've no interest in small-talk, I shall dispense with the pleasantries. You all know why we're here.

ALARIC

We do. Now what information have you for us?

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PÁDRAIG

This morning I received a letter from my old friend and former colleague at Carysfort College, Professor Dennis Campbell. Before I left Ireland, I sent a number of the artifacts uncovered during my dig as well as duplicates of my field notes for his review, without including, of course, my own conclusions.

(PÁDRAIG opens his bag and hands a stack of papers to CYRUS. The three professors peruse the papers as PÁDRAIG continues speaking.)

PÁDRAIG (CONT'D.)

You hold in your hands Dr. Campbell's findings. According to him, this site antedates the end of the Pleistocene by nearly six-thousand years, which, as you know, means our little deity is nearly thirty-thousand years old.

QUINCEY

Incredible.

PÁDRAIG

Indeed. During that time, as you of course already know, the British Isles were covered in their entirety by an ice sheet.

CYRUS

Which means that, during the Pleistocene, there must have been a tribe of people -

QUINCEY

Or another species...

CYRUS

...Who were capable of withstanding the harsh extremities of a perpetual winter.

QUINCEY

Unbelievable.

ALARIC

Unbelievable is the right word for it. What you're essentially saying, Pádraig, is that during the last Ice Age, a race of - well, Yeti, for lack of a better term - ruled over the frozen northern tundra?

PÁDRAIG

You make it sound ridiculous, Alaric. I said nothing of Yeti; that's your own interpolation.

Apotheosis – John A. McMinn

ALARIC

I a ridiculous assertion leads to ridiculous conclusions. Honestly Pádraig, who could survive such temperatures?

PÁDRAIG

We don't know. But it must have been a race of people physiologically unlike modern humans.

ALARIC

I know the Irish are fond of fairy tales, but this...

CYRUS

What are you suggesting, Pádraig?

PÁDRAIG

I'm not suggesting anything. Look at the evidence. We have a race of men living in a barren tundra that we know - or thought - was uninhabitable. Who were these people? Where were they from? I don't presume to know the answers to those questions.

ALARIC

This presupposes of course that this site has been correctly dated. You don't feel that perhaps it is too early to draw definite conclusions about these dates?

PÁDRAIG

Professor Campbell is one of the preeminent geologists and Irish historians. And I fancy myself a bit knowledgeable on those subjects as well. The fact that two eminent scholars drew the same conclusions independently seems to me to be quite impressive corroborative evidence. You know Dr. Campbell's work, of course, Quincey.

QUINCEY

Yes, yes I do.

ALARIC

You've been uncharacteristically silent, Quincey. What are your thoughts on this matter?

QUINCEY

I must say I'm taken off guard by all of this. I don't quite know what to make of it. But the evidence seems strong. I say we bring it before the Celtic Nations Conference at the end of October for input from other experts.

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CYRUS

I concur. Further research is needed, but this find is incredible.

PÁDRAIG

I'll have my secretary make copies of my report and Dr. Campbell's report for your personal review.

CYRUS

That would be much appreciated.

QUINCEY

We should continue this conversation upon further review of your evidence. But now I must leave or I will be late to a prior engagement.

CYRUS

I look forward to taking a closer look at Dr. Campbell's reports.

(CYRUS and QUINCEY leave. PÁDRAIG waits for ALARIC to leave, but he just stands there with his arms crossed.)

PÁDRAIG

Quite extraordinary, don't you think, Alaric?

ALARIC

Extraordinary indeed. So extraordinary, in fact, as to be untrue.

PÁDRAIG

You've become rather cynical, Alaric.

ALARIC

Cynicism is a virtue.

PÁDRAIG

Cynicism in the face of insurmountable evidence is foolish.

ALARIC

I suppose you're right.

(ALARIC begins pacing the room. PÁDRAIG becomes increasingly antsy and agitated.)

Apotheosis – John A. McMinn

PÁDRAIG

Is there something else on your mind, Alaric?

ALARIC

I was just admiring this papyrus scroll. It has been in the possession of this department for nearly sixty years. In those sixty years, it has been dated to the Thirteenth Dynasty, the Tenth Dynasty, then the Thirteenth Dynasty again when that dynasty was re-dated. We're still not entirely sure how old it is. And yet, its antiquity pales in comparison to your find in Sligo. Given the abundance of historical knowledge we have of Ancient Egypt and the paltry evidence - and by paltry I mean non-existent - that we have of human culture in Pleistocene Ireland it becomes apparent that any certainty in dating those artifacts is spurious at best.

PÁDRAIG

It's difficult to argue with you, Alaric. Your observations are well-intentioned, but I dare say misguided.

ALARIC

It's also interesting that the dating of this find, and indeed the very find itself, comes on the eve of the Celtic Nations Conference. You're familiar with the conference. It's the triennial event in which Celtic scholars from Scotland, Wales, Cornwall, Brittany, the Isle of Man, and your own Ireland convene to discuss Celtic history and archaeology. These are the very people who would be most interested in your findings. Rather curious, don't you think?

PÁDRAIG

You're an astute observer, Alaric.

ALARIC

There is no Dr. Campbell at Carysfort College.

PÁDRAIG

Well, not exactly. There was a Dr. Campbell there.

ALARIC

And there hasn't been a Carysfort College in nearly a decade. The idol - it's a forgery, isn't it?

PÁDRAIG

It's a total forgery.

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ALARIC

Are you responsible for this forgery?

PÁDRAIG

Not exactly. But I can always recognize a good swindle.

ALARIC

What makes you think you can fool the world's leading scholars with an endorsement from a dead professor at a defunct college? A report from a "Dr. Campbell" at Carysfort College may carry some weight with someone like Quincey, but for a more astute and competent academic it will destroy all credibility. And once Quincey himself finds out about this fallacy you'll lose your tenure.

PÁDRAIG

That's why Campbell's name shall never be mentioned again. I knew that I could easily find a name that would evoke memories of an old colleague - or in Quincey's case - *invent* a colleague. I forged those documents to win Quincey's endorsement. The support of our department's chair will go a long way toward establishing the veracity of my claims.

ALARIC

You're merely arguing from authority, Pádraig.

PÁDRAIG

That's the only sort of argument he'll listen to. Do you think he's going to do the research himself, or seek independent verification of my claims?

ALARIC

No.

PÁDRAIG

Absolutely not. And once we have the support of the world's leading paleontologist, Dr. Campbell's name shall never be mentioned again.

(ALARIC sits down.)

ALARIC

I won't do it.

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PÁDRAIG

Need I remind you, Alaric, of the Mediterranean vacation you took at the expense of the university, under the guise of an archaeological expedition?

ALARIC

Really, Pádraig, that was ages ago. And I told you under the strictest confidence.

PÁDRAIG

Then that was a mistake on your part.

ALARIC

You wouldn't dare.

PÁDRAIG

You're right. I wouldn't. But if I let it slip in conversation with someone, say Cyrus or Quincey, I can't guarantee that it wouldn't reach the president of the university.

ALARIC

You slimy Irish bastard. I never would have expected this out of you. I thought you were the only respectable person at this institution, and I thought I could trust you.

PÁDRAIG

In all of your sixty-five years, Alaric, one would expect you to have learned the most important and most basic lesson of life: you can rarely trust anyone, and you can never trust yourself.

(ALARIC goes to a table in the corner that contains a bottle of liquor and some glasses. He pours himself a drink and downs it. He takes another swig straight from the bottle.)

PÁDRAIG (CONT'D.)

So, what do you say, old friend?

ALARIC

You don't leave me with many options, Pádraig. I have no choice but to substantiate your claims.

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PÁDRAIG

You *always* have a choice, Alaric, and this time you made the correct one. Now, why don't we go back to my house and have a few drinks?

ALARIC

Not this time, Pádraig. I don't think I would make for pleasant company tonight.

PÁDRAIG

Some other time, then.

(ALARIC puts on his coat and heads for the door.)

PÁDRAIG

We'll get together to discuss the finer details later this week.

(ALARIC nods and opens the door, nearly bumping into ROSE. She yields submissively. ALARIC exits, and ROSE immediately drops her subservient façade.)

ROSE

What is the word from your colleagues?

PÁDRAIG

The fools fell for it, no question about it.

(PÁDRAIG lights a cigarette and slowly paces the room with an air of confidence.)

ROSE

And Alaric?

PÁDRAIG

Alaric is much more astute than both Quincey and Cyrus, both as a scholar and as a person. He knew I was lying. But I promised I'd come through this time, and come through I have. If there's one thing these people fear, it's losing their position, their credibility, and they'll do anything to prevent that. All it took to convince Alaric was a little coaxing.

ROSE

Blackmailing, I presume.

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PÁDRAIG

Maybe a little.

(PÁDRAIG smiles. He goes to the liquor cabinet and pours himself a drink.)

PÁDRAIG

Care for a scotch? I must say, I love Irish whiskey, but there's just something special about scotch. I cannot discern exactly what it is – perhaps the triple distillation process; but whatever it is, scotch whisky has a certain robust flavor that not even we Irish can emulate.

(raising his glass in a toast)

Here's to the Scots, our Gaelic kinsmen!

(PÁDRAIG takes a hearty swig.)

ROSE

I know you're very amused by this whole situation, but it's hardly time for revelry.

PÁDRAIG

Just one drink.

ROSE

If we make it safely through the conference, I'll drink with you until we stumble into oblivion. Or until the Gods return. Whichever occurs first.

(ROSE smiles for the first time. PÁDRAIG takes a seat.)

PÁDRAIG

Rose, I've always wondered why me? Of all the men in the whole of Ireland, why did you choose me?

ROSE

Because of your lanky physique, your awkward comportment. Your big ears.

(PÁDRAIG is at first self-conscious, then amused.)

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ROSE (CONT'D.)

Because you did not look the least bit like a scholar, I felt it would be easier to mold you into one. From that one conversation we had outside Shields', I knew you exuded enough charisma and charm to pull off the character. All I'd have to do is forge the documents, forge the degree you received from a now-defunct institution. Enlist a few people from our syndicate to pose as your mentors and former instructors... The revolution changed so many things. I knew few people would look too deeply into the matter. And I knew that you served as an assistant to the real Professor Pádraig Mac Piarais - before his untimely departure - so I knew that you were familiar enough with the inner workings of the antiquities business to be a credible substitute.

PÁDRAIG

Quite so. In fact, it was rather easy to take his place. I was hoping you'd say you chose me because of my high moral standards and upright character, but I suppose that will have to suffice.

ROSE

Back to the matter at hand: you're certain Alaric will back your claims?

PÁDRAIG

He'll come through. There's too much at stake for him to turn us in. The cost of honesty is great. With Alaric's support, I'll make a very convincing case for our little *discovery*. The scholars from the Celtic nations are eager to prove their antiquity and superiority, so little effort will be required to convince them. These events are frequented by private collectors looking to get their hands on the newest relics, and I'm certain one of them will offer us a handsome sum. And we'll be out of the country long before an independent investigation reveals it as a fraud.

CURTAIN

SCENE 4:

The curtain comes up on a lecture hall. There is a podium in front of a blackboard. There are a couple of chairs on the stage behind and to the

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right of the podium.
 ALARIC sits in one of
 them. The idol stands in
 a glass case next to the
 podium. PÁDRAIG stands
 at the podium,
 addressing the audience.

PÁDRAIG

Ladies and gentlemen, I would now like to introduce to you one of the world's pre-eminent paleontologists and one of my closest friends, Dr. Alaric Maurer.

(ALARIC takes the podium to a smattering of applause. PÁDRAIG takes an empty seat.)

ALARIC

Thank you. I have been asked to speak today on Ireland in the late Pleistocene and its relationship to Pádraig's incredible find. Now, as we know, or at least as we have assumed, Ireland was under an ice sheet during that time and indeed until the end of the Holocene, nearly thirteen-thousand years ago. Now, Pádraig asserts that what you see in front of you, this stone idol no more than a foot in height, is *thirty-thousand* years old - or more. This idol was found amongst stone tools and the burnt remains of a human being, suggesting a race of people living in the icy tundra of the Pleistocene British Isles who had a clear concept of a semi-anthropomorphic male deity to whom they performed human sacrifices. Now, my friend Pádraig asked me to look at this idol and samples of those bones in hopes that I could confirm his dating of the materials. I gladly would have done so, if these bones existed. I gladly would have gone to the site to examine in more detail the stratum from which this extraordinary object came. But that was impossible, for you see, this is a total forgery.

(An AUDIO TRACK of the AUDIENCE murmuring amongst themselves begins to play.
 PÁDRAIG begins to approach the podium.)

PÁDRAIG

Alaric, please, we all know that -

(ALARIC motions for him to sit down.)

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ALARIC

(forcefully)

Sit down, Pádraig. You'll have your chance to respond and perhaps even confess.

(to the audience)

I am ashamed to admit it but I am complicit in this shameful swindle that Pádraig is trying to pull off. I would like to say that Pádraig blackmailed me into cooperating, but that would only be half the truth. One cannot be blackmailed if one has done no wrong. So I stand before you, my colleagues from around the world and from my department at this university, and admit that I am guilty of the misallocation of funds.

(More AUDIENCE murmuring is heard.)

ALARIC (CONT'D.)

Yes, under the guise of academic studies and conferences with the Hellenistic Department of the University of Athens, I used the school's money to fund a Mediterranean vacation. I know that my reputation is at stake here, and I am willing to face those consequences. Therefore, I am resigning from my position at this university. And I fully stand by my earlier assertion: Pádraig Pearse is a liar and a fraud!

(The AUDIENCE murmuring is louder.

PÁDRAIG rushes to the podium and pushes ALARIC out of his way.)

PÁDRAIG

These allegations are absolutely absurd! This amounts to slander! You are deliberately trying to destroy my reputation. You'll be hearing from my attorney first thing in the morning, Alaric. Now, in response to these accusations, I would like to say that this idol is a genuine artifact found in County Sligo, Ireland.

ALARIC

This idol is a fraud!

(ALARIC throws off the glass that covers the idol, grabs the statue itself and throws it on the ground. It shatters into so many pieces that it could never be salvaged. The AUDIENCE noise rises to overwhelming levels, almost as if a mob is forming. PÁDRAIG looks out at

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the audience as the volume rises. He shoves ALARIC out of the way and runs out of the lecture hall and offstage.)

CURTAIN

SCENE 5:

There is a long pause between scenes in order to reset the stage. The curtain rises on the library. The stage is dimly lit. PÁDRAIG enters and turns on a lamp, revealing ROSE, who sits in an armchair. PÁDRAIG is shocked.

PÁDRAIG

Rose!

(regaining his composure)

I'm glad you're here. I was able to sneak out of the conference for just a moment to update you on the situation with my colleagues, and I have good news. They've fallen -

ROSE

Pádraig, don't lie to me. It's useless. They already know what happened at the conference, and they are not happy with you.

PÁDRAIG

They? What do you mean? Who are you referring to?

ROSE

Your naiveté is cute sometimes, Pádraig, but now you're just being foolish.

PÁDRAIG

I don't follow you.

ROSE

They elder ones are upset with you.

(MORE)

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ROSE (CONT'D.)

Our plan was fool-proof, so we thought – but it was not safe from you. I'd like to say that's because you are some sort of misguided genius if you weren't so damned stupid.

PÁDRAIG

Listen, Rose –

ROSE

You needn't say anything else, Pádraig. Not to me. You can argue your case before the judges, if they care to hear your testimony. And yet, sometimes a disaster came bring about great things.

PÁDRAIG

Rose, no good can possibly come out of this.

(PÁDRAIG gets up to leave.)

PÁDRAIG (CONT'D.)

I am packing the necessities and I am leaving here immediately.

(The lights begin flickering.)

ROSE

You still have a role to play, Pádraig.

(The lights go out. PÁDRAIG'S BLOOD-CURDLING SCREAM can be heard. Barely audible beneath PÁDRAIG'S shriek is an inhuman gurgling. The sound of FOOTSTEPS can be heard running toward the library. The lights come back on to reveal a heavy-breathing ALARIC next to the lamp. The light also reveals that ROSE'S arms are soaked in blood. PÁDRAIG'S foot can be seen sticking out from behind the desk in a pool of blood.)

ALARIC

My God.

(ALARIC moves in to get a closer look at PÁDRAIG. He quickly looks away, covering his mouth.)

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ALARIC (CONT'D.)

Rose. My God. Rose – are you responsible for this?

ROSE

I suppose I am responsible, in some ways. I'd be lying if I said I am inculpable.

ALARIC

I never would have believed...you. Rose. I never would have suspected...

ROSE

You never would have suspected that the *meek servant girl* could be capable of such savagery. You're a smart man, Alaric – brilliant, even; but you have much to learn about people.

ALARIC

I don't even know what to say to you, Rose.

ROSE

What's left to say, Alaric?

(CYRUS and QUINCEY rush into the library. QUINCEY takes one look at PÁDRAIG'S body and runs out of the room to vomit.)

ALARIC

Call the police! Now!

(CYRUS rushes out of the room.)

ALARIC

All I want to know, Rose, is what role you played in this. Are you complicit in Pádraig's fraudulent discovery?

ROSE

Is it necessary for me to answer that question?

ALARIC

I knew Pádraig couldn't have acted alone. I assumed he had some sort of accomplice, but I suspected they were back in Ireland. Some invented colleagues who could lend credence to his claims; some farmers he could pay a few pennies to claim they were hired to dig at the site.

(MORE)

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ALARIC (CONT'D.)

But I couldn't possibly imagine that his co-conspirator could be so close to home, much less our trusted domestic. Tell me, Rose, in the strictest confidence - whose idea was this?

ROSE

Does that matter, Alaric?

ALARIC

No, I suppose not. Not now that your scheme has failed, at least.

ROSE

Who says it failed? Perhaps we have succeeded in ways you could never comprehend.

ALARIC

What do you mean?

(Just then two POLICEMEN enter. They see the body and the bloodied ROSE and they pull out their clubs.)

ALARIC

She's not armed!

(The POLICEMEN cuff her.)

ALARIC (CONT'D.)

Rose - tell me what you meant by that last remark! Tell me!

(The POLICEMEN begin to lead her out of the room.)

ALARIC

Rose! I must know!

ROSE

See for yourself.

(The POLICEMEN and ROSE exit. ALARIC examines PÁDRAIG'S corpse until two MEDICS enter and cart him off. ALARIC turns away; he cannot watch them take his body. As they exit, CYRUS and QUINCEY enter.)

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QUINCEY

Alaric! How can this be? You stole resources from the school to fund a vacation? Unacceptable!

CYRUS

Shut up, Quincey! This isn't the time for that. Pádraig is dead, and our servant killed him.

(to ALARIC)

What happened here? What's going on?

ALARIC

Rose didn't kill him.

QUINCEY

Don't be foolish, Alaric. She was covered in blood next to his body.

CYRUS

Dammit, Quincey. Let him finish.

ALARIC

The human mind often has trouble putting together seemingly disparate but ultimately inseparable pieces. It's not a limitation of our minds, though. If anything, it is a virtue - a mechanism that has evolved to protect us from the truth. But occasionally it fails, and it pieces together the puzzle whether we like it or not.

QUINCEY

I don't follow.

ALARIC

The ancient Egyptians believed that the writing and speaking of words would cause what was written to become a reality. Therefore, writing the names of their gods confirmed that they existed and ensured that they would continue to exist.

QUINCEY

Where are you going with this?

ALARIC

They also believed that for something to exist there must first be two things in existence. That is why many of their gods existed in dyads - male and female aspects of the same deities.

(MORE)

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ALARIC (CONT'D.)

For example, Atum came into existence from the primordial chaos and from him came everything that exists. But his existence is not recognized until he created his two children. If there is nothing to recognize his existence then his existence is meaningless. Over the years, many gods have come and gone. We do not know how many have been forgotten. And we do not know how many could come back once their existence has again been recognized and spoken of and written of again. Perhaps what Pádraig showed us, though it was a forgery, nevertheless bore some truth.

CYRUS

What are you saying, Alaric?

ALARIC

I'm not sure, really. That's just what came to mind when I examined Pádraig's corpse. All I know, friends, is that no human being could have caused those wounds.

(CYRUS and QUINCEY slip into two nearby armchairs. ALARIC pours himself a drink.)

CURTAIN