

Mike, M, early 50s, accent Irish (neutral Irish and/or strong Irish)

Wilson, M, acts early 20s but may be older, accent (a) Home Counties/London/Essex and/or (b) Irish

Joyce, F, early 30s, accent somewhere north England (Yorkshire/ Manchester/Liverpool/Geordie etc)

WILSON: I wanted a room.

MIKE: We haven't got a room.

WILSON: You're Irish! My mother was Irish. My father was Mediterranean. I have difficulty with rooms for that reason. (*Smiles.*) I've walked all the way from the bus station by Victoria. Do you know that district at all?

MIKE: I know King's Cross intimately.

WILSON: Victoria is a different place entirely. In the summer it has a character of its own. Are you a Londoner?

MIKE: No. I was born in the shadow of the hills of Donegal. We had a peat farm. It was the aftermath of the troubles drove us away. Otherwise there'd be people called Mike in Donegal to this day.

WILSON: I love Ireland. I'd go there tomorrow if it wasn't for my dad. He's a hard man to please. My feet are killing me. Could I have a drink of water?

MIKE: Certainly. Come on in.

JOYCE: You're not letting him in?

MIKE: Be quiet. You're making yourself look ridiculous. (*To WILSON:*) This way. And take no notice of her. She can't help herself.

Get the lad a glass of water, Joycie.

(*To WILSON:*) What part of Ireland is your mother from?

WILSON: Sligo.

MIKE: I once knew a lad from Sligo. Name of Murphy. I wonder if maybe your Ma would've come across him?

WILSON: I'll make enquiries.

MIKE: I'd be obliged if you would. He had dark curly hair and talked with a pronounced brogue. Not an easy man to miss in a crowd.

JOYCE *hands WILSON the glass of water.*

JOYCE (*to MIKE*) What did you let him in for?

MIKE: He isn't a leper.

JOYCE: Ask him.

MIKE: What?

JOYCE: Ask him about his conduct. He won't be able to face it out.

MIKE (*to WILSON*) About these things she tells me. Did you cheek her yesterday?

WILSON: It depends on which way you look at it. I thought my behaviour was exemplary.

MIKE: Did you molest her?

WILSON (to JOYCE) What've you been telling him? I never tried to interfere with you, did I ?

JOYCE (angry). Stop using that kind of talk. (To MIKE:) You can see what I had to put up with.

MIKE: That's medical talk, Joycie. You should learn to control your temper. (To WILSON:)
Why did you bring a suitcase with you?

WILSON: I wanted a room. (Nods to JOYCE:) I thought she might change her mind.

JOYCE: Who's she? The cat's mother.

MIKE (to WILSON). Bring it in. You don't want to leave it lying out there.

WILSON exits.

JOYCE: What are you playing at? After what he's done to me?

MIKE: Quiet

JOYCE: What's his background? He could be anything

MIKE: Give the lad a chance.

JOYCE: Chance? After what I've been through?

MIKE: Shut up!

JOYCE: (bewildered) Shut up?

Wilson, M, acts early 20s but may be older, accent (a) Home Counties/London/Essex and/or (b) Irish

Joyce, F, early 30s, accent somewhere north England (Yorkshire/ Manchester/Liverpool/Geordie etc) Ruffian Sides: Joyce and Wilson OPTION A

WILSON *(smiling)*. I've come about the room.

JOYCE: I'm afraid there's been a mistake. I've nothing to do with allotting rooms. Make your enquiries elsewhere.

WILSON: I'm not coloured. I was brought up in the Home Counties.

JOYCE: That doesn't ring a bell with me, I'm afraid.

WILSON: Is that the room?

JOYCE: That's my room.

WILSON: I couldn't share. What rent are you asking?

JOYCE: I'm not asking any.

WILSON: I don't want charity. I'd pay for my room.

JOYCE: You must've come to the wrong door. I'm sorry you've been troubled.

She tries to close the door, but WILSON blocks it with his foot

WILSON: Can I come in?. I've walked all the way here.

(Pause. He smiles.)

JOYCE: Just for a minute.

I'm so busy. I'm run off my feet today.

WILSON: How about a cup of tea? You usually make one about now.

JOYCE; How do you know? . . .

WILSON: Oh, I pick up all sorts of useful information in my job.

JOYCE: What's that?

WILSON: I'm a Gents hairdresser Qualified. My dad has a business. Just a couple of chairs. I've clipped some notable heads in my time. Mostly professional men. Though we had an amateur street musician in a few weeks ago. We gave him satisfaction, I believe.

My brother was in the business too. Until he was involved in an accident.

JOYCE: What happened?

WILSON: A van knocked him down.

JOYCE: Was he tattooed?

WILSON: You've heard of him?

JOYCE: I've heard of his tattoos.

WILSON: They were unique. He had them done by a well known artist. His funeral was attended by some interesting people. He was a sports man before his decease. He wore white shorts better than any man I've ever come in contact with. As a matter of fact, strictly off the record, I'm wearing a pair of his white shorts at this

moment. . They're inconvenient ...because ...*(He blurts it out.)* - there's no fly. *(Pause.)* He wore them two days before he was killed.

WILSON I wasn't mentioned in the press. They didn't realise the important part I played in Frank's life. So I didn't get the coverage. I thought of revealing myself'. But what's the good? *(Pause.)* My brother's fiancé had her photo taken. Bawling her head off. She insisted we bury the engagement ring with him. It was just an idle, theatrical gesture. It's too much trouble now to put a bunch of flowers on the grave.

JOYCE: Perhaps the accident unhinged her mind.

WILSON: I t wasn't an accident. *(He drinks his tea.)* He was murdered.

JOYCE: You don't know that.

WILSON: Don't contradict me

JOYCE *(angry)*. This is a private house. What do you mean by raising your voice? I'm not having perfect strangers taking to me like that.

Drink that tea and clear off. I don't want to see you here. again. My husband will be back soon.

WILSON: He's not your husband.

JOYCE *(furious)*. How dare you. You've gone too far. Leave my room at once.

WILSON: You're not married. You want to watch yourself

JOYCE: I've a good mind to call a policeman.

WILSON: You aren't on the phone.

JOYCE: I can knock on the floor.

WILSON: There's nobody downstairs.

JOYCE:: I'll report you.

WILSON: Come here.

JOYCE *(alarmed)*. Keep away!

WILSON: Do you know I could murder you. Easy as that. *(He snaps his fingers)* That's how these assaults on lonely women are committed. I could make a very nasty attack on you at this moment. If I was so inclined.

JOYCE *(with a note of hysteria)*. Don't come any nearer.

WILSON: Is your husband passionate with you?

JOYCE: I'm reporting you. Using filthy language.

WILSON: If I were to assault you would he avenge it?

JOYCE: Yes.

WILSON: Where does he keep his gun?

JOYCE: He hasn't got a gun.

WILSON: I have it on good authority that he keeps it-loaded. Where is it?

JOYCE: In the drawer. Over there.

WILSON *(smiling)*. Thanks for the tea.

JOYCE: Are you going?

WILSON: The room's not available, is it? I expect you think I'm Jewish or something.

(Pause.) Have you got a couple of bob to spare ? I can't walk all the way back.

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MIKE: Take no notice. She'll come round. She's nervous, you know. It's the life she led before I took up with her. I have to watch her. She'd get me into all sorts of trouble. She has no religious feelings. That's the worst of it. She never had the benefit of the upbringing.

WILSON: My mum was brought up by nuns.

MIKE: Is she still alive?

WILSON: She's in hospital with an infectious disease of the hip-joint. The nuns think the world of her.

MIKE: Is she in pain?

WILSON: She screams out. It's terrible to hear her.

MIKE: I wish I could do something. Would it be any use to burn a candle? I don't think I've the cash on me.

WILSON: Wouldn't the priest lend you the cash?

MIKE: I'd not like to ask. I'd pop across and burn a candle myself. But he might ask questions. It's his business, of course. He's a right to ask. But why should I subject myself to scrutiny? *(Pause.)* Is your mother expected to recover?

WILSON: It's touch and go.

MIKE: She's maybe doomed. She's likely to be a candle herself already. She's probably being stripped by the angels as we speak. I suppose we are roasted nude? I've never seen fit to ask. It's not a question you can put to the Father. Though he is a Jesuit. And that makes a difference. *(Pause.)* Is your da in good health?

WILSON: Fine *(Pause)* I'm not keeping you am I?...

MIKE: No. *(Pause, to look at his watch)* As a matter of fact you've kept me. I've missed my appointment. I shall have to drop them a line and apologise for my absence. *(pause)* If you're desperate for a room we could put you up. On the bed settee. It's quite comfortable.

WILSON: Is it new?

MIKE: No.

WILSON: You surprise me.

MIKE: I bought it a long time ago. I couldn't afford such luxury today. Financially I'm in a bad way.

WILSON: Well, my money will help you out.

MIKE: It's the Assistance Board. I'm not a believer in charity. Unless I need it. With the cost of living being so high I'm greatly in need of a weekly donation from the

Government. They say my circumstances have altered. I haven't any circumstances to alter. They should know that. I've filled in a form to the effect that I'm a derelict.

WILSON: Yes. My brother and me had the same trouble.

MIKE: They haven't the insight into the human heart that we have in Ireland.

WILSON: We lived in Shepherd's Bush. We had a little room. And our life was made quite comfortable by the N.A.B. for almost a year. We had a lot of friends. All creeds and colours. But no circumstances at all. We were happy, though. We were young. I was seventeen. He was twenty-three. You can't do better for yourself than that, can you? (He shrugs.) We were bosom friends. I've never told anyone that before. I hope I haven't shocked you.

MIKE: As close as that?

WILSON: We had separate beds - he was a stickler for convention, but that's as far as it went. We spent every night in each other's company. It was the reason we never got any work done.

MIKE: There's no word in the Irish language for what you were doing.

WILSON: In Lapland they have no word for snow.

MIKE: I'd rather not hear. I'm not a priest you know.

WILSON: I wasn't with him when he died. I'm going round the twist with heartbreak.

MIKE: He's dead?

WILSON: Yes. I thought of topping myself. As a gesture. I would've done but for my strict upbringing. Suicide is difficult when you've a pious mum.

MIKE: Kill yourself?

WILSON: I don't want to live, see? That's the crude way of putting it. I've lived among rough people.