

ІРИНА КОВАЛЬЧУК
ТЕТЯНА ЧАЮК



ПРАКТИКУМ З ЧИТАННЯ: ВИБРАНІ ОПОВІДАННЯ МЕЙВ БІНЧІ



ДЕРЖАВНИЙ ПОДАТКОВИЙ УНІВЕРСИТЕТ

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**ПРАКТИКУМ З ЧИТАННЯ:
ВИБРАНІ ОПОВІДАННЯ МЕЙВ БІНЧІ**

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Практикум з читання призначений для здобувачів вищої освіти, які вивчають англійську мову як іноземну на рівні B2, і містить систему завдань до десяти оповідань ірландської письменниці Мейв Бінчі зі збірок *The Return Journey* та *This Year It Will Be Different*. Видання спрямоване на розвиток навичок аналітичного читання, збагачення словникового запасу, удосконалення усного мовлення, формування вмінь художнього перекладу та креативного письма.

Може бути використаний у процесі аудиторної та самостійної роботи здобувачів вищої освіти під час вивчення дисципліни «Основна іноземна мова», а також усіма, хто прагне поглибити знання англійської мови через читання художньої літератури.

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ВСТУП

Практикум з читання призначений для здобувачів вищої освіти (Державного податкового університету), які вивчають англійську мову як іноземну та володіють нею на рівні B2 відповідно до загальноєвропейських рекомендацій з мовної освіти. Видання містить систему завдань до десяти оповідань, дібраних із двох збірок ірландської письменниці Мейв Бінчі «The Return Journey» та «This Year It Will Be Different». Тексти подано в автентичній формі, що забезпечує роботу із сучасним англомовним художнім дискурсом і сприяє формуванню навичок свідомого, аналітичного та інтерпретаційного читання. Особливості художнього стилю Мейв Бінчі – іронія, психологічна деталізація, соціальна зумовленість характерів – створюють умови для розвитку критичного мислення, мовленнєвої культури та лінгвокультурологічної компетентності, потрібних для професійної підготовки майбутніх фахівців у сфері права, економіки та публічного управління. Значення творчості письменниці для культури Ірландії було офіційно визнано 2012 року, коли Тішок (Прем'єр-міністр) Ірландії Енда Кенні вшанував її пам'ять, назвавши письменницю «національним надбанням».

Метою практикуму є формування та вдосконалення іншомовної комунікативної компетентності здобувачів вищої освіти за допомогою роботи з автентичним художнім текстом. Завдання спрямовані на розвиток умінь читання, розширення та систематизацію лексичного запасу, закріплення граматичних структур, розвиток навичок усного мовлення, а також формування навичок художнього перекладу й креативного письма. Кожен розділ практикуму має уніфіковану структуру та передбачає поетапну роботу з текстом. Лексично орієнтовані вправи спрямовані на опанування нових лексичних одиниць, активізацію ідіоматичних і усталених виразів, фразових дієслів та їхнього використання в усному й писемному мовленні. Питання на перевірку розуміння змісту тексту сприяють актуалізації граматичних знань і розвитку навичок мовного мовлення, формують вміння логічно та зв'язно висловлювати власні думки англійською мовою. Завдання дискусійного

характеру, побудовані на цитатах із художніх текстів, сприяють розвитку діалогічного мовлення, аргументації та критичного осмислення прочитаного.

Кожен розділ містить інформаційно-довідковий матеріал про Ірландію, що розширює лінгвокраїнознавчі знання студентів і забезпечує глибше розуміння культурного контексту творчості Мейв Бінчі.

Практикум може бути використаний у процесі аудиторної та позааудиторної роботи студентів Державного податкового університету, зокрема під час вивчення дисципліни «Основна іноземна мова» в межах освітньої програми «Германські мови та літератури (переклад включно)». Практикум може бути також використаний для самостійної роботи всіма, хто поглиблює знання англійської мови через читання художньої літератури.

THE WRONG SUITCASE



Before Reading

Work in pairs or small groups. Discuss the following questions:

❖ Have you ever experienced a cancelled flight, lost luggage, or a double-booked hotel? What happened and how did you handle the situation?

❖ Imagine you've just arrived at your destination and your suitcase is missing. What would your first steps be?

Reading

THE WRONG SUITCASE

Annie checked in early. She had come out to the airport in plenty of time. None of this was going to be a **hassle**. Once she had taken her boarding card and seen the smart new case **trundle off** with its little tag telling it to go to London Heathrow, she sighed with relief; it was all happening now, nothing could stop it. She was going to have the luxury of really looking at the things in the duty-free shop for once, and maybe trying out a few of the perfumes on her wrist. She might even look at cameras and watches – not buy, not look.

Alan was late; he was always late checking in. But he had such a nice smile and looked so **genuinely apologetic**, nobody seemed to mind. They told him to go straight to the departure gate, and he did – well, more or less. They couldn't expect him to go through that duty-free without buying a bottle of vodka, could they? He showed no sign of fuss or confusion; he slipped onto the plane last, but somebody had to come in last. He settled himself easily into his seat in executive class. **With the ease** of the frequent traveler, he had stowed his briefcase and vodka neatly above, fastened his safety belt in a way that the air hostess could see it was fastened, and he had opened his copy of *Time*. Another business trip began.

Annie smiled with relief when she saw her case on the carousel at Heathrow Airport; she always half expected it to be left behind, like she expected the Special Branch men to call her in and ask her business in England and the Customs men to rip the case apart looking for concealed heroin. She was **of a fearful nature**, but she knew that and said it wasn't a bad way to be because it led to so many nice surprises when these things didn't happen. She took her case and went **unscathed** through Customs. She followed the signs for the Underground and got onto a train that she thought must be like a lift in the United Nations building: there were people of every nationality under the sun, and all of their suitcases had different little tags. She closed her eyes happily as the train rushed into London.

Alan reached out easily and took his case as it was about to pass by. He helped a family who couldn't cope with all their cases arriving at once. One by one he swung them off the conveyor belt, and when he took one that wasn't theirs he just swung it easily back again with no fuss. The woman gave him a very grateful smile. Alan had a way of looking better than other people's husbands. He bought an *Evening Standard* in the paper shop and settled himself into a taxi. He had already asked the taxi driver if he could have a receipt at the end of the journey; some of them could be grumpy, always better to say what you want at the start and say it pleasantly. Alan's motto. Alan's secret of success. It was sunset; he looked out briefly at the motorways and the houses with their neat gardens away in the distance. It was nice to be back in London where you didn't know everyone and everyone didn't know you.

The train took Annie to Gloucester Road, and she walked with a quick and happy step to the hotel, where she had stayed many times. The new suitcase was light to carry; it had been expensive, but what the hell – it would last forever. It was so nice, she had bought two of those little suitcase initials and stuck them on: A.G. At first she wondered if this was a dead giveaway, wouldn't people know that they weren't married if they had different initials? But he had laughed at her and patted her nose, telling her that she was a funny little thing and had a fearful nature. And Annie Grant had agreed and remembered that most people didn't give a damn about that sort of thing nowadays. Most people.

The taxi took Alan to Knightsbridge and the hotel, where they remembered him or pretended to. He always said his name first, just in case. ‘Of course, Mr Green,’ the porter said with a smile. ‘Good to have you with us again.’ Alan folded the receipt from the taxi driver into his wallet and followed the porter to the desk; his room reservation was in order. He made an elegant and flattering remark to the receptionist, which left her patting her hair with pleasure and wondering why the nice ones like Mr Green didn’t ask you out and the yucky ones **slobbered** all over you. Alan went up to his room and took a bottle of tonic from the minibar. He noticed it wasn’t slimline, so he put it back and took soda. Alan was careful about everything.

Annie opened her case in the small hotel bedroom where she would spend one night. She would hang up her dresses to make sure the creases fell out. She would have a bath and use all those nice lotions and bath oils so that they didn’t look brand new tomorrow. The key turned and she lifted the lid. There were no dresses and no shoes. Neither the two new nighties nor the very smart toilet bag with its unfamiliar Guerlain products were in the case. There were files and boxes and men’s shirts and men’s underpants and socks, and more files. Her heart gave several sharp sideways jumps, each one hurting her breastbone. It had happened as she always knew it would happen one day. She had got the wrong case. She looked in terror and there were her initials; somebody else called A.G. had taken her case. ‘Oh my God,’ wept Annie Grant, ‘oh God, why did you let this happen to me? Why? I’m not *that* bad, God. I’m not hurting anyone else.’ Her tears fell into the suitcase.

Alan opened his case automatically. He would set his papers out on the large table and hang up his suits. Marie always packed perfectly; he had shown her how at an early stage. Poor Marie had once thought you just bundled things in any old how, but, he had explained reasonably, what was the point of her ironing all those shirts so beautifully if they weren’t to come out looking as **immaculate** as they went in? He looked at the top layer of the case in disbelief. Dresses, underwear – female underwear neatly folded. Shoes in plastic bags, a flashy-looking sponge bag with some **goo** from a chemist in it. God

almighty, he had taken the wrong suitcase. But he couldn't have. It had his initials: A.G. He had been thinking that he must get better ones, these were a bit ordinary. God damn and blast it, why hadn't he got them at the time? For a wild moment he wondered if this was some kind of joke of Marie's; she had been very **brooding** recently and wanting to come on business trips with him. Could she have packed a case for herself? But that was nonsense, these weren't Marie's things, these belonged to a stranger. Shit, Alan Green said aloud to himself over and over again. What timing. What perfectly bloody timing to lose his case on all trips.

It took Annie a tearful seventy minutes on the telephone and many efforts on the part of the airline and of the hotel to prevent her from going out to the airport before she realized that she would have to wait until the next morning. **Soothing people** in the hotel and at the airline said that it would certainly be returned the following day. She had only discovered an office address for Mr. Bloody Green, typed neatly and taped inside the lid of the case. An office long closed by now.

Tomorrow, the voices said, as if that was any help. Tomorrow he would have arrived expecting her to be in fine form and to have her things with her. They were going to go for a week's motoring holiday, the first time she was going to have him totally to herself. He was flying in from New York and would hire a car at Heathrow; he had told his boss the negotiations would take longer, he had told his wife... Who knew or cared what he had told his wife? But he would not be the best pleased to spend the first day of their holiday in endless negotiations at the airport looking for her things. Was there no way she could find out where this idiot lived? If she phoned his home even, maybe his wife could tell her where he was staying. That was if his wife knew. If wives ever knew.

It took Alan five minutes to find the right person, the person who told them that there was no right person at this time of night, but to explain **the machinery of the morrow**. Yes, fine for those who hadn't arranged a breakfast meeting at seven-thirty a.m., before shops were open, before he could get a clean shirt. And what was the point of a breakfast meeting without papers? God rot this stupid woman with her

cellophane bags and her tissue paper and her never-worn clothes. Her photograph album, for heaven's sake, and pages and pages of notes, a play of some sort. Hard-to-decipher writing, page after bloody page of it. But there was one page where it revealed the address of Miss Prissy A. Grant, whoever she was, and he was sure she was a Miss, not a Mrs. A letter addressed to her had 'Ms' on it, but Alan had always noted that this was what single, not married, women called themselves. Unfortunately it had no address, or he could have sent for an Irish telephone directory and found her mother and father and got the hotel that their daughter was staying at. That's if she had told them. Nutty kinds of girls who carry photograph albums, unworn clothes, and plays written in small **cramped writing** probably told their families nothing.

The man who ran the small hotel near Gloucester Road was upset for nice Miss Grant, who often came to spend a night before she went on her long trips to the Continent; she was a teacher, a very polite person always. He took her a pot of tea and some tomato sandwiches in her room. She cried and thanked him as if he had pulled her onto a life raft.

'Look through his things. You might discover where he is staying,' he advised. Annie was **doubtful**. Still, as she ate the tomato sandwiches and drained the pot of tea she spread all the papers out on the small bed and read. She read of the plans that Mr. A. Green had been building up over the last two years. Plans which meant that by tomorrow he should be able to take over an agency for himself. If things went the way he hoped.

Mr. A. Green would return to Dublin at the head of his own company. The arguments were so persuasive that the overseas client would be very foolish not to accept A. Green's offer. There were photocopies of letters marked 'For your eyes only'... There were files with heavy underlining in thick felt pen, 'Do not take to office'. A great deal of the correspondence was organized so that it showed A. Green's present employers, the people who were paying for his trip to London, in a very poor light. Annie sighed; she supposed that this was the world of business. At school you didn't go plotting against the geography mistress or getting the headmaster to lose confidence in the art teacher. But it seemed a bit **sneaky**.

Sometimes there were copies of letters his boss *was* shown pinned to those he had *not* been shown. It was masterly filing, and if you read the whole anthology, which up to now had presumably been for A. Green's eyes only, it made a convincing case. Annie decided that A. Green was a bastard and he deserved to have lost his case and his deal. She hoped he would never find either. But then how would she get back what was hers? And God almighty, suppose he had read her diary.

Alan Green decided to hell with it, he couldn't bear the **flat taste** of the soda. He opened a calorie-packed tonic water from his minibar and decided that he would do this thing methodically. Look on it as a business problem. Right. He had left his name with the airline, if she called. Of course she would call. Stupid girl, why had she not called already? Stupid A. Grant. She was probably in a wine bar with an equally stupid teacher talking about plays and how to write them in longhand at great length and maximum stupidity. What kind of play was it, anyway? He began to read it. He read of her romance... it wasn't a play, it was the real thing. This was a diary. It was more than a diary, it was a plan of campaign. It was dozens of different scenarios that could take place on his holiday.

There was the scene where he said he couldn't see her any more, that his wife had given him an ultimatum. This **creepy** A. Grant had written out her lines for that one, several times over. Sometimes they were casual and see-if-I-care. Sometimes they were filled with passion, or threats: she would kill herself, let him wait. She had written the whole thing out as if it were a play, even with stage directions.

Alan decided that A. Grant was a raving lunatic and that whoever the poor guy she was going to meet was, he deserved to be warned about her.

He felt glad that she had lost this insane checklist of emotional dramas and how to play them; he was glad that all her finery had gone astray and that she would have to meet the guy as she was. He realized that she had probably done some kind of repair job and washed her tights and whatever just as he had washed the collar and cuffs of his shirt and the soles of his socks. Then he remembered with a lurch that she might have read his dossier on the company.

Annie suddenly remembered she hadn't told the man in the airport where she was staying. She had been too upset. Suppose Mr. Conniving Green had rung in with his whereabouts; they wouldn't have been able

to contact her. She telephoned them again. Had Mr. Green called? He had. This was his number. He answered on the second ring. He would come right around with her case. No, please, gentleman's privilege. A very simple mistake, must be a million. A.G.s in the world. He'd come right away.

He held the taxi. She was quite pretty, he saw to his surprise, soft and fluffy. He sort of remembered seeing her at Heathrow Airport and thinking that if she was in the taxi queue he might suggest they share. Remembering the **revelations** of her diary, he shuddered with relief at his escape. She was surprised to see that he looked so pleasant; she had expected him to look like a fox: sharp-featured, mean pointed little face. He looked normal and nice. She thought she remembered him on the plane up in executive class laughing with the air hostess.

'I have your case here,' she said. 'It's a bit **disarrayed**, for want of a better word. I was hunting in it to see if I could find out where you were staying.'

'Yours is a little disarrayed too.' He grinned. 'But none of those nice garments you have fitted me, so they're all safe and sound.'

They grinned at each other almost affectionately.

He looked at her for a moment. It was only eleven o'clock at night; in London that meant the evening was only starting. She was quite lovely in a round soft sort of way.

She wished he didn't have to go. Maybe if she said something about why not go and let's have a bottle of wine to celebrate the found suitcases...

She remembered how he had described his boss as **bordering on senility** and how he had given chapter and verse to prove that the boss was a heavy drinker.

He remembered how she had proposed threatened suicide with attendant letters to some guy's wife, his children and his colleagues.

They shook hands, and at exactly the same moment they said to each other that they hadn't read each other's papers or anything, and at that moment they both knew that they had.

(Maeve Binchy, *The Return Journey*)



I. Explain the meaning of the words and collocations given in bold in the text.

Hassle; to trundle off; genuinely apologetic; with the ease; to be of a fearful nature; unscathed; grumpy; to slobber; immaculate; goo; to brood; soothing people; the machinery of the morrow; cramped writing; doubtful; sneaky; flat taste; creepy; revelations; disarrayed; to border on senility.

II. In the text find the English equivalents of the Ukrainian collocations below and use them in short situational sentences of your own:

1) заздалегідь; 2) зітхнути з полегшенням; 3) не виявляти ознак метушні; 4) легко вмотитися в своє крісло; 5) розірвати валізу навпіл; 6) знімати / стягнути щось; 7) очевидний доказ; 8) переконатися, що складки розгладились; 9) з недовірою; 10) Вчасно!; 11) з боку авіакомпанії; 12) вилити весь чай із чайника; 13) втратити впевненість; 14) різко, ривком, здригнувшись мимоволі.

III. Translate the following sentences into Ukrainian:

1. He showed no sign of fuss or confusion; he slipped onto the plane last, but somebody had to come in last.

2. He made an elegant and flattering remark to the receptionist, which left her patting her hair with pleasure and wondering why the nice ones like Mr Green didn't ask you out and the yucky ones slobbered all over you.

3. Her heart gave several sharp sideways jumps, each one hurting her breastbone.

4. It took Annie a tearful seventy minutes on the telephone and many efforts on the part of the airline and of the hotel to prevent her from going out to the airport before she realized that she would have to wait until the next morning.

5. A great deal of the correspondence was organized so that it showed A. Green's present employers, the people who were paying for his trip to London, in a very poor light.

Reading Comprehension

IV. *Describe the appearance and personality traits of Annie Grant and Alan Green.*

V. *Answer the questions:*

1. When did Annie Grant and Alan Green check in? What did they do afterwards?
2. What worried Annie at the airport?
3. Why did Annie take the wrong case?
4. How long did it take Annie and Alan to understand that nothing could be done?
5. What did Annie find out about Alan?
6. What was Alan's reaction to Annie analysing the contents of her suitcase?
7. What impressions did Annie and Alan have of each other when they met?
8. Why is the story titled 'The Wrong Suitcase'?

Discussion

VI. *Comment on the following quotation from the story. Say whether you agree or disagree with the statement and give your reasons.*

- ... always better to say what you want at the start and say it pleasantly.

Irishness in Facts and Myths

VII. *Read the text and mark the following statements as T (True), F (False) or NG (Not Given):*

1. The British have always been interested in visiting Ireland.
2. The English prefer to spend their holidays in Ireland rather than Scotland and Wales.
3. Most English tourists in Ireland take the time to explore the country thoroughly.

4. The British tourists in Ireland often express a desire to return.
5. The British always treated the Irish with respect and kindness during their ownership.
6. The Irish and the British have resolved all historical conflicts and have a harmonious relationship.
7. The Irish population is predominantly interested in history, politics, and nationalism.
8. Criticizing the British will not make you popular with the Irish.
9. Nationalists in Ireland are easily identifiable by specific clothing or symbols.
10. The Irish lifestyle is more similar to the British lifestyle than the American lifestyle.

ANGLO-IRISH RELATIONS

The British owned Ireland for centuries, but nowadays many of them never set foot in the place at all. These two facts may not be unconnected. The English love to take their holidays in Scotland and Wales, and more and more of them crowd over to Dublin for a boozy weekend. Most of these see no more of the place than their own out-of-focus feet, which they could have viewed more cheaply back home. They also tend to pronounce the name of the country as 'Eye-land', since the English, unlike the Irish, have a problem in sounding their R's. But a good number of them abandon this uniquely beautiful corner of Europe to the French and Germans, who have to travel further to get there. The British do in fact form a high proportion of tourists to Ireland, but 'Funny thing, but I've never actually been to Ireland', is a remarkably common English comment.' This is partly because most of what the English see about Ireland on television is people bombing each other in the North. So they're afraid of getting their heads shot off in the wilds of Connemara, even if statistically speaking they have more chance of being savaged by a sheep.

Though some aspects of British rule in Ireland were fairly enlightened, the British sometimes treated the Irish shabbily, even brutally, when they owned the place. But it isn't fashionable to say this in Ireland at the moment, for a number of reasons. First, because the

Irish are afraid that saying so might give comfort to the IRA, who have little support in the Irish Republic. Second, because the Irish and the British are now partners in the European Union, and some of the Irish want to put all that squalid history behind them. They're much too busy turning a fast buck and proving that they're as cybernetic as anyone else to want to be reminded of it. Thirdly, because the Irish population is largely made up of young people, many of whom find history, politics and nationalism as boring as algebra or Julie Andrews. So don't think that you'll ingratiate yourself with the Irish by slagging off the British. This will be music to the ears of nationalists, but it's hard to know at a glance who is a nationalist and who isn't. At least it is in the Irish Republic. In Northern Ireland, some Protestant Unionists claim they can spot Catholic nationalists by how close-set their eyes are, and vice versa.

On the whole, the Irish get on better with the Americans, with whom they have an historic relationship, than they do with the British, with whom they have an historic relationship some of them would prefer to forget. In fact one major difference between the Irish and the British is that the Irish like the Americans, whereas the English, on the whole, don't. The open, free-and-easy Irish life-style is much closer to American culture than it is to the reserved, hierarchical British.

(Extracted from Terry Eagleton's *The Truth About the Irish*)



MISS VOGEL'S VACATION



Before Reading

Work in pairs or small groups. Discuss the following questions:

- ❖ Do you think it is possible to feel like a tourist in your own city? Why or why not?
- ❖ Many people travel far for vacations but overlook what is nearby. What are the pros and cons of taking a staycation?
- ❖ What are some hidden gems or lesser-known places in your area that you would recommend to a visitor?

Reading

MISS VOGEL'S VACATION

Miss Vogel was surprised that she had never married. Not so much upset as surprised. When she was young everyone thought Victoria Vogel would surely be one of the first in the neighbourhood to walk down the aisle.

Fair-haired, soft and pretty, a great home-maker, she even made dresses for herself and her sisters and their friends, as well as baking delicious desserts for any event where good cooking was needed.

The young Miss Vogel had an agreeable manner with everyone; no future mother-in-law would **stand in her way**, no family would object to the girl who worked pleasantly in her father's bakery. She was much in demand to dance at the weddings of her many friends, and although she caught the bride's bouquet on many occasions, it never led to a wedding of her own.

Miss Vogel didn't look back on her girlhood in New York as a lonely time; she hadn't yearned always for **a beau** of her own. She always thought there was one around the next corner. She lived happily over the bakery and didn't really notice the years go by.

There were so many other things to think about. Like her mother's illness. The other were all married by the time Miss Vogel's mother took to her bed, so she did the nursing, which made sense because she lived at home.

And when her mother died and her father became gloomy and lost interest in his work, she had to work all that much harder in the bakery to keep it going. There was a manager, of course, Tony Bari. They spent long hours together trying to see how the bills could be paid, the overheads reduced, and the whole enterprise **made sound**.

Everyone thought one day they might marry.

Miss Vogel didn't really think they would, even though she would have been happy had their quick embraces led to a proposal.

But she was a practical woman and realized that Toni Bari was very interested in money and had told her several times that any sensible man in business was looking for a rich wife. Miss Vogel knew she wasn't in this category, and even though she did like his company, his big broad smile and the way his moustache tickled her cheek, she didn't weep when he told her he had finally met a **lady of property** and invited her to his wedding.

Not long after, Miss Vogel's father went to the hospital, and it was known that he would not come out. Toni Bari bought the business. His new wife did not think it appropriate that Miss Vogel continue to work and live there, so, at the age of thirty, she was unemployed.

People said Tony Bari had not paid enough, and indeed, after it had been divided between her sisters and brothers there was very little left.

Miss Vogel had nowhere to live, she had no real **qualifications** to get a good job anywhere, but with her customary good humour she decided to wait until something turned up. Then she saw a position as a type of janitor or superintendent in a small, new apartment building. A lot of the residents were female, and they had specifically sought a woman super. Miss Vogel, with her calm, pleasant manner, seemed ideal, and she now had a two-room apartment, with an address in a fine part of town.

Her friends were pleased for her.

'You'll meet very **classy folk** now,' they said.

Miss Vogel didn't mind whether they were classy or not, just as long as they were nice. And mainly they were.

She became involved in all their lives. She walked the little **yapping dog**, unsuitably called Beauty, for Janet, the discontented widow in Number One.

She babysat for the teenage daughter of Heather, who was a workaholic advertising supremo in Number Two. She took in the flowers and arranged them for Number Three, where Francesca, the attractive mistress of two businessmen, lived. Tactfully, Miss Vogel made sure these two gentlemen never **coincided on a visit**.

She spent a lot of time in Number Four, where Marion sat and looked out the window, sad because her husband came home so rarely.

There were many others in the building whose lives were familiar to Miss Vogel. Her sisters sometimes said these must be rich, spoiled people who lacked nothing in their lives, but Miss Vogel didn't agree. As she sat in beautifully decorated apartments and drank coffee from a fine china cup or soda from **cut-crystal glassware**, Miss Vogel knew that unease and unhappiness didn't fly out the window just because you had money. A lot of the people had even more worries than the Vogel family ever had. Sometimes she went past the old bakery where Toni Bari had built a big business with his wife's money. It was now a delicacies shop, and people faxed in their orders for sandwiches, which were delivered to their offices. Imagine!

There were three children. Miss Vogel watched them grow up. She would have liked to have met them properly and know them, to have been invited into the store where she, too, had lived as a child.

But Tony Bari's wife never seemed to want her around.

Miss Vogel thought this was sad. She had always been welcoming and kind to the woman who had come to live there only because of her father's dollars. But then, you couldn't make people like you if they didn't.

Her days and nights were never empty or lonely, because of all the people in the apartments. Miss Vogel did not have what anyone would call a great life of her own, but she went through all theirs, their hopes and dreams for Thanksgiving and Christmas, who would come home, where they would be invited, what they would cook. Their diets

for the new year, how many days a week working out at the gym, low-fat foods to be stocked in the freezer. Then she went through their new wardrobes for spring. None seemed to notice Miss Vogel didn't buy spring clothes, plan to lose ten pounds every January, or discuss where she went for Thanksgiving or Christmas.

She was a listening person, not a talking person.

She was interested in their lives.

Now it was time to talk about vacations.

Janet was going to Arizona with her sister, so naturally there was the matter of Beauty, the bad-tempered little dog. Beauty didn't like kennels, so perhaps Miss Vogel...

Heather could take only a week and not one day more away from work, so she would fly to Los Angeles. This way, she could fit in one or two meetings on the West Coast as well as take fourteen-year-old Heidi to Disneyland and Universal Studios, so it would be a fantastic holiday for the child. But there was simply no time to get her any vacation clothes. Could Miss Vogel manage... one Saturday morning possibly? Just a quick trip to the department store?

Francesca was going to spend one week with one man and the other with the second man, but she had told each she was going to a health spa for the week she would not be with him. Would Miss Vogel mind very much taking the bus to this town two miles away, where the spa actually was, and mailing two postcards for her? You see, men were so possessive and so suspicious these days, and one didn't want to do anything silly.

Marion in Number Four was uncharacteristically cheerful because she and her husband were going to a quiet inn – he said he would like time to talk properly. That had to be good, Marion said, vacations were a time when people found new relationships if they had none or **cemented** an existing one that needed to be patched up.

That was the wonderful thing about vacations, wasn't it, Marion had said over and over.

Miss Vogel didn't know. She had never had a vacation. There had never been the opportunity, the money, or the time. And now, at fifty-three, there seemed little point in hoping she would find a new relationship, and there wasn't an old one to cement.

Toni Bari and his wife and children were going to Italy. Her sisters, brothers, and their families were going to a lake where they rented chalets every year. Nice for the cousins to get to know each other and keep in touch, they said.

None of them ever thought it might be nice for Miss Vogel to get to know them all and keep in touch, too. But then, she would be out of place. An elderly aunt on her own.

All the holidays seemed to come together. Miss Vogel would have a very empty building to look after. But she **enthused about** their trips, as she had enthused for so many years about everything they did.

She did all she was asked to do. She studied the feeding schedules of the small, aggressive Beauty to reassure Janet. She took Heidi on an outing to Bloomingdale's and with Heather's dollars bought her bright-coloured clothes to wear in the California sun. she planned the two bus trips so she could send the deceiving postcards for Francesca. She helped Marion pack romantic negligees for her week in the country inn.

And, of course, she would do all the other things that made them think Miss Vogel was an angel. She would turn out their lights, **pull their drapes** at the different times each evening, sort their mail, so, when they came back, it would be in a neat pile on their hall table. She would see their garments were returned from the dry cleaner and hung in their closets; she would admit a television repairman here and an interior decorator there and listen to their holiday tales and look at their holiday photos with great interest on their return.

Often there was fuss and near hysteria at the actual time of departure; limousines had not been ordered in advance, for example, or taxis could not be **hailed** on the New York streets.

This year, Miss Vogel decided **to cut through all the drama** and found a neighbourhood car service. She spoke to Frank, a man with a tired, kind face, who was at the desk, telling him she had four trips over two days, to La Guardia Airport for Heather and Heidi, to Grand Central for Janet, to Penn Station for Marion and her husband, and some secret pick-up place in New Jersey for Francesca.

'What commission are you looking for?' Frank asked wearily.

'Oh no,' Miss Vogel said. 'I was only trying to arrange something for the people in my building. They'll all pay you the rate. I don't want anything... I don't want anything for myself.'

‘You must be the only person in the world who doesn’t, then,’ said Frank.

‘It’s just their vacation. They get very fussed, you know the way people do?’

‘I don’t know the way people do,’ Frank said. ‘I’ve never had a vacation.’

Miss Vogel gave him a big smile. ‘Do you know neither have I? We must be the only people in the world who haven’t.’

A bond was established between them, and they worked out the times he would be there to pick up the holidaymakers.

He was courteous and punctual, but more than that he was kind. He waited while Janet kissed Beauty goodbye; he told Heidi she’d love Disneyland – everyone came back from it a new person; he explained to Francesca that he was a genius at finding out-of-the-way spots in New Jersey; he told Marion and her husband that an inn in the countryside was the very best vacation anyone could choose.

Miss Vogel was sorry when the last had gone. She employed Frank’s company. She would miss regular visits when she always found time to make him a coffee and give him some of her own home-baked shortbread.

To her surprise, he turned up again.

‘I was wondering, Miss Vogel, if you and I should have a vacation in New York,’ he began tentatively. ‘We could pretend we were tourists here and **see it through their eyes.**’ He looked at her, hoping that she would not laugh at this or dismiss it as a ridiculous idea.

‘A vacation in New York City?’ she said thoughtfully.

‘Well, a lot of people do, you know.’ Frank was defensive. ‘I drive them to places. I should know.’

‘That will be great,’ said Miss Vogel. ‘But first I have to do a bit of fussing. That’s essential.’

‘Yes, I’ll come around tomorrow morning. Does that give you enough time to fuss?’ he asked.

Miss Vogel worked out that she could take a five-hour vacation each day. Then she ironed her clothes carefully and laid out a different outfit for each outing. She went to a beauty parlour on the corner and got her hair and her nails done.

She prepared several picnic lunches they could have and left them ready in the freezer. She got new heels on her comfortable shoes. She checked the weather forecast. She was ready for her vacation.

They went to Ellis Island and spent the day looking at where their grandparents had come into the United States from Italy and Germany, Ireland and Sweden.

‘I bet they were four young people who never had time for a vacation once they got here,’ Miss Vogel said.

‘But they must have been adventurous young people,’ Frank replied, ‘not the kind of folk who would like to believe their descendants would be stay-at-homes.’

The next day they went to the Empire State Building to see the view and then back uptown to the zoo. Afterwards, they walked in Central Park in the sunshine.

They drove together companionably to the town where they had to mail Francesca’s postcards and talked about how odd life was with so many people living a lie – Francesca herself and the two married men who were each **taking her off** for a week. They went to Chinatown and on a tour of the stock exchange on Wall Street.

They went back to where Miss Vogel grew up and looked at the big delicacies shop, so much changed in appearance since her youth. They went to see where Frank was raised, changed so very much from when he was a boy. He pointed out where he had lived with his wife for three years a long time ago, and also the hospital where she had died.

Neither had ever been to Carnegie Hall, so they booked a concert.

And as she had seen a ball game only on television, never in reality, they went to Yankee Stadium.

And the week flew by.

Frank helped Miss Vogel to sort the mail, arrange the curtains, and arrange deliveries for the tenants. Miss Vogel went to the car-service office and brightened it up by washing the curtains and putting some colourful ornaments around.

The next week, they could no longer afford five hours a day for vacation. Like everyone else in New York, they would now know that feeling which said the holiday was over.

But for Frank and Miss Vogel, there was something new and wonderful. No longer did they **keep their thoughts to themselves**, there was someone with whom to talk over the events of the day. Not only holiday memories, but what was happening in the real world as well.

So when Frank drove Heather and Heidi back from the airport, he could report that the mother and daughter were hardly speaking and that the girl had been left alone in her hotel room looking at television, since Heather was tied up in meetings all day.

Miss Vogel could tell him that something very odd had happened in Francesca's life – perhaps both men had proposed marriage to her, both would leave their wives, but she wanted neither. Francesca was lying down with a cold compress on her eyes, trying to get the courage to tell them.

Janet told Frank in the car her holiday with her sister had been a huge mistake – there would be no more **family get-togethers**. What did people want a family for, anyway? A good dog was worth twenty sisters.

Marion told Miss Vogel that her rat of a husband had taken her to the inn only to tell her he was leaving her. And amazingly, Marion didn't really mind all that much. Once it **was out in the open**, she enjoyed the walking and peace of the countryside, and her husband had been startled and annoyed at how well she adapted to the new situation.

But nobody asked Miss Vogel if she had enjoyed her time when they were away. And if they saw Frank around the place a lot, it was because, they assumed, he was driving people. Sometimes Miss Vogel wasn't quite as available to babysit, walk dogs, listen to problems, arrange flowers. Nothing you could **put your finger on**. And if she looked happier and walked with a spring in her step and smiled with brighter eyes ... they thought she might have lost a few pounds or something.

Tony Bari's wife noticed, however. She had returned from a tedious vacation in Italy with a lot of possessive in-laws and was glad to be back in New York. Her eyes narrowed when Miss Vogel came into the shop. She always suspected Tony Bari **harboured feelings for** the daughter of the house, and if she had had any money, he would very probably have asked Miss Vogel to marry him.

‘Did you have a good vacation, Miss Vogel?’ she asked, her sharp glance taking in Miss Vogel’s improved posture, hairstyle, and general manner.

‘Very pleasant, Mrs. Bari. I stayed in New York, got to know my own city. It was delightful.’

Toni Bari’s wife, who would love to have done the same, was envious.

‘Well, at our age, Miss Vogel, we don’t expect very much from vacations, do we?’ She was trying to remove the pleased smile from Miss Vogel’s face. But she was not succeeding.

Miss Vogel paused in her choosing of expensive mushrooms, specialty cheese, and exotic olive oils and smiled confidently at the woman who had taken away her only hope of marriage and a home, merely because that woman’s father had money.

‘Oh, Mrs. Bari, how sad, how very sad to hear you say that,’ she said, as deeply sympathetic as if she were **offering condolences at a funeral**.

Toni Bari was at the other side of the shop. He was fat now and balding, his face set in lines of disappointment and greed. Life had not turned out as he might have wished. How could she ever have thought he would have made her a good husband? Had it all worked out at the time, then she would have just returned from a weary journey to Italy with this bad-tempered man. She would have known no other world but this one; she would never have gone in and out of the lives of the existing people who lived in her building.

She might have looked wistfully at the kind face of Frank, a limousine driver, if she had ever met him, and wondered what it would be like to live in easy companionship with someone who saw beauty everywhere and gain an opportunity nowhere. Tonight, for his birthday, she would cook him a great feast. They had plans for the future, plans young people were making all over the world, but were no less loving and hopeful just because Miss Vogel and Frank were no longer young.

‘Oh, Mrs. Bari,’ she repeated, her voice full of **genuine sorrow**. She had been about to ask, ‘What *is* the point of living at all if we don’t expect something from every vacation and every day?’ but it sounded a bit preachy, and Miss Vogel had **learned firsthand from** her apartment

complex that happiness does not always go hand in hand with having a lot of possessions, so instead she said that to have unrealistic dreams should not be part of the ageing process.

And head high, her shopping basket full of exotic ingredients, Miss Vogel left the delicacies shop that had once been her father's bakery and, without a backward glance, walked into the sun-filled streets of New York.

(Maeve Binchy, *The Return Journey*)



Focus on Vocabulary

I. *Explain the meaning of the words and collocations given in bold in the text and translate them into Ukrainian. Use them in context.*

stand in her way, a beau, make sound, lady of property, qualifications, classy folk, a yapping dog, coincide on a visit, cut-crystal glassware, to cement a relationship, enthuse about, pull the drapes, hail a taxi, to cut through all the drama, see it through their eyes, to take sb off, keep their thoughts to themselves, family get-togethers, be out in the open, put your finger on, to harbour feelings for sb, to offer condolences at a funeral, genuine sorrow, to learn first-hand from.

II. *Find the English equivalents of the following collocations in the story and use them in the situations of your own:*

Бути доброзичливим до кожного, бути популярною на танцях, заможні люди, завітати одночасно, різьблений кришталь, тренуватися в спортзалі, взяти когось на прогулянку, надсилати фальшиві листівки, трохи пометушитися, домосід, жити в брехні, набратися сміливості та сказати комусь, стерти задоволену посмішку з чогось обличчя, поглянути задумливо на когось, йти поруч.

III. Match each word (1–10) to the correct definition (a–j). Use them in the situations of your own:

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| 1. walk down the aisle | a) wish strongly or long for something |
| 2. home-maker | b) regular operating costs of a business |
| 3. agreeable manner | c) shared understanding or connection |
| 4. yearn | d) enter into marriage |
| 5. overheads | e) sad, discouraged or pessimistic |
| 6. bond | f) a person responsible for building maintenance |
| 7. out of place | g) realistic and sensible rather than emotional |
| 8. practical | h) feeling awkward or that one does not belong |
| 9. gloomy | i) friendly and pleasant behavior |
| 10. janitor | j) a person who manages the household |

IV. Translate the following sentences into Ukrainian:

1. Miss Vogel didn't really think they would, even though she would have been happy had their quick embraces led to a proposal.

2. Miss Vogel knew she wasn't in this category, and even though she did like his company, his big broad smile and the way his moustache tickled her cheek, she didn't weep when he told her he had finally met a lady of property and invited her to his wedding.

3. Miss Vogel had nowhere to live, she had no real qualifications to get a good job anywhere, but with her customary good humour she decided to wait until something turned up.

4. Often there was fuss and near hysteria at the actual time of departure; limousines had not been ordered in advance, for example, or taxis could not be hailed on the New York streets.

5. So when Frank drove Heather and Heidi back from the airport, he could report that the mother and daughter were hardly speaking and that the girl had been left alone in her hotel room looking at television, since Heather was tied up in meetings all day.

6. Miss Vogel paused in her choosing of expensive mushrooms, specialty cheese, and exotic olive oils and smiled confidently at the woman who had taken away her only hope of marriage and a home, merely because that woman's father had money.

V. Choose the correct letter (a, b, c, or d) for each question.

1. What was Miss Vogel's job at the apartment building:

- a) Cleaner;
- b) Doorman;
- c) Superintendent (janitor);
- d) Property manager.

2. Why didn't Miss Vogel get married:

- a) She disliked men;
- b) She chose a religious life;
- c) She never found the right opportunity;
- d) Her parents refused to let her.

3. How did Miss Vogel support the residents during their vacations:

- a) She paid for their travel;
- b) She traveled with them;
- c) She helped them prepare and took care of their needs;
- d) She ignored their requests.

4. What was Miss Vogel's reaction to never having a vacation:

- a) She felt angry;
- b) She felt disappointed;
- c) She didn't mind much until now;
- d) She was unaware of it.

5. What changed after she met Frank:

- a) She moved out of her apartment;
- b) She finally went on a "vacation" in New York;
- c) She started driving taxis;
- d) She retired completely.

VI. *Answer the questions:*

1. Why did everyone think that Victoria Vogel would surely be the first in the neighbourhood to get married?
2. Why didn't Miss Vogel ever get married?
3. How did it happen that Miss Vogel was unemployed at the age of thirty?
4. What traits of character made Miss Vogel an ideal superintendent?
5. What did Miss Vogel learn from people living in the apartment complex?
6. Was Victoria Vogel's life empty and lonely?
7. How did Miss Vogel meet Frank?
8. Why did Frank turn up after the last tenant had gone?
9. How did Victoria and Frank spend their vacation in New York?
10. How did the tenants spend their vacations?
11. What feelings did Victoria experience when looking at Mrs. Bari in her delicacies shop?

Discussion

VII. *Comment on the following quotation from the story. Say whether you agree or disagree with the statement and give your reasons:*

❖ "...happiness does not always go hand in hand with having a lot of possessions."

VIII. *Work in pairs. Ask and answer these questions.*

- ❖ Do you think it's important to take vacations? Why or why not?
- ❖ Have you ever explored your own city or town as if you were a tourist? Share your experience.
- ❖ What is more important to have your own exciting life or to be a helpful person like Miss Vogel and serve other people?

IX. Read the text first, and then decide if the following statements are True (T) or False (F):

1. The Irish economy remained closed and isolated throughout the 1960s.
2. Video game ownership in Ireland has not affected the country's visual aesthetics.
3. The largest Irish banking group made profits exceeding £800 million in 1998.
4. Ireland shows signs of rapid development and progress.
5. Ireland has the highest number of video game owners globally, impacting the country's visual aesthetics.
6. Ireland is culturally independent and does not rely on other nations.
7. Ireland still shows signs of classic underdevelopment.

CELTIC TIGER

Sometimes the phrase ‘Emerald Tiger’ is used to describe Ireland's currently booming economy. After decades of stagnation and protectionism, the Irish opened up their economy in the 1960s, and joined the European Community in 1973. They have had mixed economic fortunes since: overall, Ireland's rate of growth of national income this century may well have been the worst in western Europe. But these days the Irish are riding the highest tidal wave of prosperity they have ever known. Of course, by the time you read this, they may have been plunged into recession again. But in some economic respects Ireland has now even overtaken its old sparring-partner Britain. In 1996, for the first time in its history, the country produced more wealth per head of population than Britain did. In 1998, the largest Irish banking group reported profits of more than £800 million. In 1995, Irish consumers spent £22 billion pounds on goods and services. Ireland now has more owners of video games than any other nation in the world, thus ruining the country's visual sense even further. It's now also one place ahead of the United Kingdom in the international league table of economic competitiveness, which makes it the eleventh most competitive nation

in the world. Some economists regard this measurement as largely meaningless.

Despite its relative affluence, Ireland still betrays a lot of symptoms of classic underdevelopment. It's still a lopsided economy, heavily reliant on foreign capital, and with a weak industrial base of its own. The British never significantly industrialised the place; in fact much of Ireland was steadily de-industrialised throughout the nineteenth century. Like some Third World nations, it has a political system which partly depends on favours, tribal affinities and who you happen to prop up the bar with. Many of its legal and political institutions are hangovers from the days of colonial rule. Like some underdeveloped countries too, it's culturally dependent on more advanced countries, living in the shadow of Britain and the States despite its own robust cultural traditions. Its TV network, for example, imports a huge amount of foreign material. Some of its mentality is still deeply traditionalist, though this is everywhere eroding. And it's a migrant society, which until quite recently has been unable, like Turkey or the Caribbean, to provide enough employment at home for its own people. It would be foolish to categorise Ireland with Nigeria and Nepal, but though it clearly isn't a Third World country, some of it has a one-and-a half world feel about it.

(Extracted from Terry Eagleton's *The Truth About the Irish*)



BY THE TIME WE GET TO CLIFDEN



Before Reading

Work in pairs or small groups. Discuss the following questions:

- ❖ Do you enjoy long car trips, or do you find them tiring? Why?
- ❖ Describe your most memorable road trip. What made it special?
- ❖ Some people say the journey is more important than the destination – do you agree when it comes to car travel?

Reading

BY THE TIME WE GET TO CLIFDEN

They went on a week's holiday every year.

Not abroad since Harry didn't like foreign food and Nessa was afraid to fly.

But there were plenty of places in Ireland if you looked around you. One year they had been to Lisdoonvarna and another to Youghal. They had found nice bed and breakfast places and always kept the card in case they went back again. But they never did.

In twenty-four years of summer vacations they never once went back to anywhere, no matter how wonderful they said it was at the time.

This year the research had **come up with** Clifden. They would drive there from Dublin on a Tuesday, starting early, leaving plenty of time. They would pack sandwiches and a flask of coffee because you never knew. They began to pack their suitcases on the Friday before they left.

Better to pack early, Nessa said, because you never knew what you might forget. Harry liked to pack from a list. Wiser to write it out and tick each item off as it went into the case, he said, otherwise you could easily think that things were packed when they weren't.

Nessa brought their five pieces of silver to the bank, each one wrapped in a piece of cotton and then zipped into a little yellow bag. For the rest of the year they lived in the bottom of a cupboard. No point at all in **tempting burglars** by displaying them on shelves or anything.

Harry went round all the window locks and tested the alarm system several times. Better be sure than sorry, he always said. They wished they had a reliable neighbor who might water their little garden but sadly it was only **a wild unkempt girl** with red hair and a boyfriend who stayed overnight. No point in asking *her* to do anything for you.

They **nodded at her courteously**, always better to make friends of this kind of people rather than enemies. She used to shout, ‘Howaya, Nessa? Harry?’ which **was very forward of her** since she must have been less than half their age.

The evening before they set out for Clifden they had everything ready for the off. Sandwiches in the fridge, two eggs to boil and just enough bread to toast for breakfast. The house would be left neat and tidy to welcome them back a week later. Then Harry would have five full days **to recover** before he went back to work. It was a long, *long* journey, they knew that. They would both be very tired.

There was a ring at the door. They looked at each other in alarm. Eight o’clock at night! Nobody would call at that hour.

‘Who is it?’ Harry asked fearfully.

‘Melly,’ the voice said. ‘Can I come in, please, Harry?’

They didn’t know anyone called Melly.

‘From next door,’ the voice said. ‘It’s urgent!’

They let her in. Her red hair was spiky, she wore a horrid purple top that exposed her middle bits and jeans with patches on them. Her face was very pale.

‘I just don’t want to be alone right now. Could I stay for an hour, please? I won’t be any trouble. Please, Nessa? Harry?’

She looked from one to the other.

‘Are you unwell?’ Nessa asked. ‘Should you go to a doctor? The hospital?’

‘No, I’m frightened. Mike, my fellow, he’s been smoking bad stuff, God knows what he might do to me. I don’t want him to find me at home.’

‘Won’t he come looking for you here?’ Harry was very alarmed at inviting such trouble under his roof.

‘No, he’d never think I’d come here’, she said.

‘Well...’

They were doubtful.

‘Oh, go on, Harry, Nessa, you can keep your eye on me. I’m not going to go off with your silver or anything. Just an hour or two or whatever.’

‘I don’t know,’ Harry said.

‘Harry, you’re **a decent man**. How would you feel if I were beaten to death and you could have saved me?’

They found themselves nodding.

‘But we can’t stay up late because we’re going to the West tomorrow, and by the time we get to Clifden we could be very tired.’

‘I’ll just get my bag,’ Melly said and hopped back home, returning with a giant lime-green sack. ‘I’ve everything here,’ she said, as an explanation.

‘But ... um ... Melly, we told you we’re going to Clifden tomorrow!’

‘I’ll come with you!’ Melly said, overjoyed. ‘He’ll *never* think of looking for me in Clifden, it’s perfect.’ She smiled from one to the other.

She slept on the sofa with her **things strewn over the floor**. During the night they hear him shouting and looking for her.

‘Do you think we should *do* anything?’ Harry whispered to Nessa in bed.

‘We *are* doing something – we’re driving her to the other side of the country,’ Nessa said, trying to put the man’s raised voice out of her mind.

Next morning Melly took all the hot water for her shower and used the nice new towels they had prepared ready for their return. She made them breakfast, however, saying that she had made an omelette and divided it into three.

Harry and Nessa looked at each other, **aghast**. Their whole plans had been thrown totally out of order by this ridiculous girl whom they hardly knew. By now they should have been in their car and beyond

Lucan. Instead they were still at home, plotting how to get Melly into the car.

‘He could be looking out the window so we’d better take no risk,’ Melly warned. ‘You could lay a rug over me and I could **crawl very slowly into the back seat.**’

Then there was her lime-green sack, he would certainly recognize that. So Harry had to hide it in a back plastic bag.

‘By the time we get to Clifden we’ll be ready to go to a mental hospital,’ Nessa said into Harry’s ear.

‘If we ever get there,’ Harry whispered back. ‘She’s talking of **doing things en route.**’

That was something Harry and Nessa never did, visit anything en route. They just got their heads down and drove there, where there was. It didn’t look as if it was going to be like that this time.

When they finally got away and Melly emerged from the rug, it was nearly time to put on their audio cassette and listen to an improving book. By the time they got to Clifden this year they would have heard the three-and-a-half-hour version of Thackeray’s *Vanity Fair*. But they had reckoned without Melly. She didn’t like it at all. She did, on the other hand, like the scenery and the places they passed. She chattered non-stop about the housing estates, the road signs, the huge walled **demesnes**, the factories and the traffic, so that Harry and Nessa completely lost the story of Becky Sharp and were forced to turn it off.

‘That’s better,’ Melly said. ‘Now we can chat properly.’

She phoned ahead on her mobile to friends in Mullingar and said she wanted them to prepare lunch, that she was bringing two pals called Harry and Nessa.

They protested **vigorously**. By the time they got to Clifden it would be very late. And they did have sandwiches.

But Melly would have gone none of it. And in Mullingar the two hippies who lived in a **squat** had made a magnificent lentil and tomato dish with lots of crusty bread. The hippies were perfectly at ease with Harry and Nessa and asked them to deliver some honey to Shay in Athlone because he had a bad throat.

‘But we might not stop in Athlone,’ poor Harry began.

‘Normally you wouldn’t,’ they agreed with him. ‘But because of Shay’s sore throat you will this time, won’t you?’

Shay was very welcoming, and he made tea and toasted scones for them. He said that Harry and Nessa were Everyday Angels, that was the only phrase for it, rescuing Melly from that monster.

‘If she hadn’t met two Everyday Angels like you he’d have **trashed her house** and yours as well when you get back,’ Shay said cheerfully.

Nessa and Harry looked at each other. Their glance asked the question. Should they go home? Now, this minute? There was no time. Melly was on the mobile phone to Athenry. And then they were waving goodbye to Shay and back in the car heading west.

They were expected in this pub in Athenry, you see, there would be chicken in a basket for them when they got there and **a great gig**.

‘By the time we get to Clifden they’ll have given away our room,’ said Harry in a voice that **sounded like a great wail**.

‘Nonsense, Harry, we can give them a ring,’ Melly said.

Nessa took out her little sheet called ‘Emergency Numbers and Contacts for the Journey’ and found the number of the B&B.

‘Could you ring them, Melly?’ Nessa asked. ‘You seem to know our plans better.’

Melly saw nothing wrong with that.

‘Hiya, you’ve got a couple called Nessa and Harry coming to stay with you ... Yeah, Mr and Mrs Kelly, that’s it, it’s just that we keep getting held up on the way, you know the way it is.’

The voice seemed to know the way it was and sounded sympathetic.

‘Oh, no idea at all when, could you leave out a key and a note, you see we’re not even in Galway, only on the way to Athenry as it happens ... thank you, yes, thank you for being so understanding, see you when we see you then. Oh, and could I sleep in a chair or something for one night just till I get myself settled?’

That seemed to be agreed too.

‘Who am I? I’m Melly, I’m their great friend and neighbor, and they sort of rescued me. No, not **fussy people** at all, **dead easygoing**, you must be thinking of other people. No, real cool. We’re are going to

a gig in Athenry, maybe have a drink in Galway just to be sociable, and then we're going to get out of the car in Maam Cross and look at the goats and the sheep and smell the Atlantic, we wouldn't be with you before one or two in the morning anyway, but haven't they the week to get over it?

She leaned in between them from the back seat of the car.

'There, now that's sorted,' she said proudly.

Nessa and Harry smiled at each other, absurdly **flattered** to have been called dead easygoing and real cool.

Melly **genuinely** didn't think they were fussy people.

And by the time they got to Clifden perhaps they wouldn't be fussy people any more.

(Maeve Binchy, *The Return Journey*)



Focus on Vocabulary

I. Explain the meaning of the words and collocations given in bold in the text. Use them in the context:

come up with, tempting burglars, a wild unkempt girl, to nod at sb courteously, to be forward of sb, to recover, a decent man, things strewn over the floor, aghast, to crawl slowly into the back seat, to do things en route, demesnes, vigorously, squat, to trash her house, a great gig, to sound like a great wail, fussy people, dead easygoing, flattered, genuinely.

II. Find the English equivalents of the following collocations and use them in the situations of your own:

1) термос із кавою; 2) збирати речі за списком; 3) бути готовим до від'їзду; 4) дивитися один на одного із занепокоєнням; 5) джинси із заплатками; 6) дивитися то на одного, то на іншого;

7) наглядати за кимось; 8) розмірковувати, як посадити Меллі в машину; 9) не ризикувати; 10) сказати на вухо; 11) помахати на прощання; 12) не бачити нічого поганого в цьому; 13) влаштуватися; 14) затримуватися в дорозі.

III. *Translate the following extract from the story into Ukrainian:*

Harry and Nessa looked at each other, aghast. Their whole plans had been thrown totally out of order by this ridiculous girl whom they hardly knew. By now they should have been in their car and beyond Lucan. Instead they were still at home, plotting how to get Melly into the car.

‘He could be looking out the window so we’d better take no risk,’ Melly warned. ‘You could lay a rug over me and I could crawl very slowly into the back seat.’

Then there was her lime-green sack, he would certainly recognize that. So Harry had to hide it in a back plastic bag.

‘By the time we get to Clifden we’ll be ready to go to a mental hospital,’ Nessa said into Harry’s ear.

‘If we ever get there,’ Harry whispered back. ‘She’s talking of doing things en route.’

That was something Harry and Nessa never did, visit anything en route. They just got their heads down and drove there, where there was. It didn’t look as if it was going to be like that this time.

When they finally got away and Melly emerged from the rug, it was nearly time to put on their audio cassette and listen to an improving book. By the time they got to Clifden this year they would have heard the three-and-a-half-hour version of Thackeray’s *Vanity Fair*. But they had reckoned without Melly. She didn’t like it at all. She did, on the other hand, like the scenery and the places they passed. She chattered non-stop about the housing estates, the road signs, the huge walled demesnes, the factories and the traffic, so that Harry and Nessa completely lost the story of Becky Sharp and were forced to turn it off.

‘That’s better,’ Melly said. ‘Now we can chat properly.’

IV. Look at the map of the Republic of Ireland and mark the places which Harry and Nessa passed by on their way to Clifden.

V. Work in small groups. Answer the questions:

1. How did the Kellys usually spend their summer vacations?
2. What preparations did Nessa and Harry make that year?
3. How did Melly look when she rang at the Kellys' door?
4. Why was Melly frightened?
5. What happened the next morning?
6. Why were Harry and Nessa's plans totally thrown?
7. What information made Nessa and Harry think about going back home?
8. Who sorted the problem with late check-in at the B&B? What were the arguments?
9. Why did Nessa and Harry think that they wouldn't be fussy people anymore?

Discussion

VI. Comment on the following quotations from the story. Say whether you agree or disagree with the statement and give your reasons.

- "...Better be sure than sorry."
- "...it is always better to make friends with these kind of people (*unreliable neighbours*) rather than enemies."

Irishness in Facts and Myths

VII. Read the text and mark the following statements as T (True), F (False) or NG (Not Given):

1. The Irish are known for having one of the highest alcohol consumption rates in Europe.
2. A significant portion of the Irish population does not drink alcohol at all.

3. Drinking at home is a common practice among the Irish.
4. Some Irish pubs are not profitable.
5. Guinness's brewery was the largest in the world by 1914.
6. The best Irish pubs are those that focus on social activities rather than just drinking.
7. Drinking alcohol in Ireland is only acceptable during meals.

PUBS

Everyone knows that the Irish are among the booziest nations on earth. In fact, this may be a myth. On one reckoning, the Irish have the lowest per capita consumption of alcohol, or 'gargle' as they sometimes call it, of any of the European Union countries except Greece and Italy. Between 20 % and 30 % of Irish men and women are teetotal. It may not look that way on a Saturday night in the centre of Dublin, but it's true. Anyway, the image of the Irish as heavy drinkers was often based on Irish immigrants abroad rather than those at home. And immigrants have sorrows they need to drown.

A lot of the Irish don't drink at all, while the rest of them selflessly make up for this national deficiency by downing the stuff in generous quantities. It's also true that drinking at home isn't an Irish custom.

A lot of Irish pubs run at a loss. It's true that by 1914 Guinness's brewery was the largest in the world, and by far the biggest employer in the country." A lot of the Irish worked hard in order to render the rest of the country legless. The brewery still exports nearly a million pints of stout a day. But today some of the Irish are drinking less, not least because of the fearful price of the stuff. Heavy drinking remains an Irish custom - I have an Irish friend who regards drinking ten pints of stout a day as purely routine- but it's by no means a universal pastime.

'Stout' actually means 'strong', and is short for the phrase 'stout porter', which was the most popular drink in nineteenth-century Britain. Porter was a darker coloured beer, so-called because it was said to be popular with London market porters.

The worst pubs in Ireland, like the best ones, aren't just for drinking in. The pubs to avoid are those which have really turned themselves into fast-food joints, with piped music, fruit machines, and huge TV screens to kill off the conversation. The best pubs are those in

which drinking is part of socializing, arguing, live music sessions or just taking some time off to reflect, rather like the old-style Parisian cafe. Most Irish pubs welcome children, as most English ones don't. The Irish are genuinely fond of children, unlike those nations which dote on kids, but not other people's. Irish and English pubs are alike in that if you just want to nurse your drink undisturbed, people will leave you alone. If you don't, then they'll talk you into the ground.

In Ireland as elsewhere, drinking alcohol is strictly confined to certain times and occasions. You drink when you're sad, but also when you're happy; when you're bored, but also when something pleasant happens; when you're alone to cheer yourself up, but also in company. Drinking is okay when on holiday, but also at work to relieve the pressures. It's best to confine it to meal times, but also good to drink between meals when you're feeling at a loose end.

(Extracted from Terry Eagleton's *The Truth About the Irish*)



PACKAGE TOUR



Before Reading

Work in pairs or small groups. Discuss the following questions:

- ❖ Have you ever been on a package tour? What was your experience like?
- ❖ Some people say package tours are too restrictive – do you agree or disagree? Why?
- ❖ Imagine you're planning a vacation – would you prefer a package tour or an independent trip? Explain your choice.

Reading

PACKAGE TOUR

They met at a Christmas party, and suddenly everything looked bright and full of glitter instead of commercial and **tawdry**, as it had looked some minutes before.

They **got on like a house on fire** and afterwards when they talked about it they wondered about the silly expression. 'A house on fire'. It really didn't mean anything, like two people getting to know each other and discovering more and more things in common. They were the same age, each of them one quarter of a century old. Shane worked in a bank, Moya worked in an insurance office. Shane was from Galway and went home every month. Moya was from Clare and went home every three weeks. Shane's mother was difficult and wanted him to be a priest. Moya's father was difficult and had to be told that she was staying in a hostel in Dublin rather than a bedsitter.

Shane played a lot of squash because he was afraid of getting a heart attack or, worse, of getting fat and being **passed over** when aggressive, lean fellows were promoted. Moya went to a gym twice a week because she wanted to look like Jane Fonda when she grew old and because she wanted to have great stamina for her holidays.

They both loved foreign holidays, and on their first evening out together Shane told her all about his trips to Tunisia and Yugoslavia and Sicily. In turn, Moya told her tales of Tangiers, Turkey, and of Cyprus. Alone among their friends they seemed to think that a good foreign holiday was **the high spot of the year**.

Moya said that most people she knew spent the money on clothes, and Shane complained that in his group it went on cars or drinks. They were soul mates who had met over warm sparkling wine at a Christmas party where neither of them knew anyone else. It had been **written for them in the stars**.

When the January brochures came out, Moya and Shane were the first to collect them; they had plastic bags full of them before anyone else had got around to thinking of a holiday. They noted which were the bargains, where were early-season or late-season three-for-the-price-of-two-week holidays. They worked out the jargon.

Attractive flowers **cascading down from** galleries could mean the place was alive with mosquitoes. Panoramic views of the harbour might mean the hotel was **up an unmerciful hill**. *Simple* might mean no plumbing, and *sophisticated* could suggest all-night discos.

The thing they **felt most bitter about** was the single-room supplement. It was outrageous **to penalize** people for being individuals. Why should travel companies expect that people go off on their holidays two by two like the animals into the Ark? And how was it that the general public obeyed them so slavishly? Moya could tell you of people who went on trips with others simply on the basis that they all got their holidays in the first fortnight in June.

Shane said that he knew fellows who went to Spain as friends and came home as enemies because their outing had been on the very same basis. Timing.

But as the months went on and the meetings became more frequent and the choice of holiday that each of them would settle for was gradually narrowed down, they began to realize that this summer they would probably travel together. That it was silly to put off this realization. They had better admit it.

They admitted it easily one evening over a plate of spaghetti.

It had **been down to two choices** now. The Italian lakes or the island of Crete. And somehow it came to both of them at the same time: this would be the year they would go to Crete. The only **knotty problem** was the matter of the single room. They didn't want to rush into it by **the expediency of a double booking**. They didn't want to be put off-limits by the fact of having booked two separate rooms. Shane said that perhaps the most sensible thing would be to book a room with two beds. This had **to be stipulated** on the booking form. A twin-bedded room. Not a double bed.

Shane and Moya assured each other they were grown-ups.

They could sleep easily in two separate beds, and suppose, just suppose in the fullness of time after mature consideration and based on equal decision with no one party forcing the other... they wanted to sleep in the same bed...then the facility, however narrow, would be there for them.

They congratulated each other on their maturity and paid the booking deposit. They had agreed on a middle-of-the-road kind of hotel, in one of the resorts that had not yet been totally discovered and destroyed. They had picked June, which they thought would avoid the worst crowds. They each had savings plan. They knew that this year was going to be the best year in their lives and the holiday would be the first of many taken together all over the world.

The cloud didn't come over the horizon until March when they were **sitting companionably** reading a glossy magazine. Shane pointed out a huge suitcase on wheels with a matching smaller suitcase. Weren't they smashing, he said; a bit **pricey**, but maybe it would be worth it.

Moya thought she must be looking at the wrong page. Those were the kind of suitcases that Americans bought for going around the world.

Shane thought that Moya couldn't be looking at the right page; they were just two normal suitcases, but smart and easy to identify on the carousel. Just right for a two-week holiday. But for how many people? Moya wondered wildly; surely the two of them wouldn't have enough to fill even the smaller suitcase. Well for one person, me, Shane said **with a puzzled look**.

Between the two happy young people there was a sudden area. Up to now their relationship had been so open and free, but suddenly there

were unspoken things **hovering in the air**. They had told each other that their friends' romances had failed and even their marriages had rocked because they had never been able **to clear the air**. Shane and Moya would not be like that. But still, neither one of them seemed able **to bring up the subject of** the suitcases. The gulf between them was huge.

Yet in other ways they seemed just as happy as before. They went for walks along the pier, they played their squash and went to the gym, they enjoyed each other's friends, and both of them managed to put the disturbing black cloud about the luggage into the background of their minds. Until April, when another storm came and settled on them.

It was Moya's birthday, and she unwrapped her gift from Shane, which was a travelling iron. She turned it around and around and examined it in case it was something else disguised as a travelling iron. In the *hope* that it was something disguised as a travelling iron. But no, that's what it was.

It was lovely, she said faintly.

Shane said he knew ladies loved to have something to take the creases out on holidays, and perhaps Moya shouldn't throw away the tissue paper; it was terrific for folding into clothes when you were packing, it **took out all that crumpled look**, didn't she find it?

Moya sat down very suddenly. Absolutely on a different subject, she said she wondered how many shirts Shane took on holiday. Well, fifteen obviously, and the one he was wearing and sports shirts and a couple of beach shirts.

'Twenty shirts?' Moya said faintly.

That was about it.

And would there be twenty socks and knickers, too? Well, **give or take**. Give or take how many? A pair or two. There seemed to be a selection of shoes and belts, and the odd sun hat.

Moya felt all the time that Shane would smile his lovely, familiar, heart-turning smile and say, 'I had you fooled, hadn't I? and they would fall happily into each other's arms. But Shane said nothing.

Shane was hoping that Moya would tell him soon where all this list of **faintly haranguing questions** were leading. Why she was asking him in such a robotic voice about perfectly normal things. It was as if

she asked him did he brush his teeth or did he put on his clothes before leaving the house. He stared at her anxiously. Perhaps he wasn't showing enough interest in her wardrobe? Maybe he should ask about her gear.

That did not seem to be a happy solution. Moya, it turned out, was a person who had never checked in a suitcase in her life; she had **a soft squelchy bag** of the exact proportions that would fit under an airline seat and would pass as carry-on baggage. She brought three knickers, three bras, three shirts, three skirts, and three bathing suits. She brought a sponge bar, a pair of flip-flop sandals, and a small **tube of travel detergent**.

She thought that a holiday should never involve waiting for your bags at any airport, and never take in dressing for dinner, and the idea of carrying home laundry bags of dirty clothes was as foreign to her as it was to Shane – that anyone would spend holiday time washing things and drying them.

'But it only takes a minute,' **pleaded** Moya.

'But it takes no time at all if you **bring spares**,' pleaded Shane. 'The arms would come out of your sockets carrying that lot,' said Moya. 'We wouldn't get into the bathroom with all your clothes draped around it,' said Shane.

They talked about it very reasonably, as they had always promised each other they would do. But the rainbows had gone, and the glitter **dimmed**.

It would have been better if they had actually met on holidays, they said, with Moya carrying **the shabby holdall** and Shane the handsome and excessive luggage. Then they would have known from the start that they weren't people who had the same views about a package tour and how you packed for it. It was a **hurdle** they might have crossed before they fell in love. Not a horrible shock **at the height of romance**.

They were practical, Moya and Shane; they wondered if it would **iron itself out** if they paid the single-room supplement. That way Moya wouldn't see the offending Sultan's Wardrobe, as she kept calling it,

and Shane wouldn't be blinded by wet underwear, as he kept fearing. But no, it went deeper than that. It seemed to show the kind of people they were: too vastly different ever to spend two weeks, **let alone** a lifetime, together.

As the good practical friends they were, they went back to the travel agency and transferred their bookings to separate holidays with separate hopes and dreams.

(Maeve Binchy, *The Return Journey*)



Focus on Vocabulary

I. Explain the meaning of the words and collocations given in bold in the text. Use them in the context.

Tawdry, to get on like a house on fire, to pass over, cascade down from, to be up an unmerciful hill, to penalize, to be down to two choices, expediency of a double booking, to be stipulated, to sit companionably, pricey, with a puzzled look, hovering in the air, to clear the air, to take out all that crumpled look, faintly haranguing questions, a soft squelchy bag, a tube of travel detergent, to plead, to dim, the shabby holdall, a hurdle.

II. Find the English equivalents of the following collocations and use them in the situations of your own:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. to be the high spot of the year | 6. give or take |
| 2. written for sb in the stars, | 7. to bring spares |
| 3. to feel bitter about | 8. at the height of romance |
| 4. knotty problem | 9. to iron itself out |
| 5. to bring up the subject of sth | 10. let alone |

III. *Translate the following story into English:*

У тихому, захищеному містечку щорічний осінній фестиваль був у самому розпалі. Захід проводився на центральному майдані села, який розташовувався на крутому пагорбі. Незважаючи на важкий підйом, люди стікалися туди, охочі поринути в святкування. Серед відвідувачів були дві старі подруги – Емма та Клара, які не бачилися багато років. Вони ладнали, як риба з водою, сміялися й згадували минуле, піднімаючись пагорбом разом, їхня розмова зависала в повітрі, як останні ноти веселої мелодії.

Коли вони досягли вершини, з високих дерев, що оточували майдан, зливалися потоки різнокольорового листя, надаючи фестивалю чарівного вигляду. Захід був повний яскравих вражень, але щось було не так. Клара помітила, що на обличчі Емми з'явився ледь помітний вираз здивування, коли вони проходили повз дешевий кіоск, що продавав дорогі дрібнички. «Що трапилось?» – запитала Клара з тривогою в голосі.

Емма зітхнула, її настрій потьмянів. «Нічого», – сказала вона, намагаючись розвіяти напругу. «Я просто трохи втомилася. Розумієш, мене покарали на роботі за те, чого я не робила, і тепер у мене залишилося два варіанти: боротися або просто забути про це».

Клара кивнула з розумінням, усвідомлюючи її дилему. Вони сіли разом на лавку біля краю фестивалю, де шум був м'якшим, і відкривався чудовий вид на долину. Емма витягла зі своєї сумки потертий дорожній саквояж, який вона завжди носила на такі заходи, і почала копирсатися в ньому.

«Ти не повіриш, як безглуздо вийшло з подвійним бронюванням, що призвело до цього, – продовжувала Емма. – Мені довелося виступати на двох зустрічах одночасно, що було просто неможливо, але це було прописано в розкладі. І тепер я – винна».

Клара дістала зі своєї м'якої сумки тубик дорожнього миючого засобу. «Ось, візьми це – воно допоможе тобі не тільки розгладити одяг, а й думки».

Емма засміялася, взявши тубик. «Дякую, Клара. Ти завжди знаєш, як мене розвеселити».

Повз них пробігли діти, їхній сміх лунав у повітрі, але думки Емми були далеко. Вона відчувала тягар свого рішення, який нависав у повітрі, як невидимий бар'єр, який їй ще належало подолати.

«Мене розриває на частини, – зізналася вона. – Я хочу боротися за правду, але не хочу створювати додаткові проблеми».

«Іноді, – м'яко сказала Клара, – треба відстоювати свою думку, навіть якщо здається легше відступити. Це питання захисту себе та встановлення справедливості».

Емма кивнула, розмірковуючи над словами Клари. Фестиваль тривав навколо них, люди продовжували рухатися, не помічаючи тихої боротьби, що розгорталася на лавці. Дорогі кіоски та дешеві прикраси здавалися неважливими порівняно з рішенням, яке мала прийняти Емма. Але сидючи поруч із подругою, вона відчувала, як напруга поступово спадає.

Нарешті, Емма усміхнулася, відчувши рішучість. «Ти права. Я подолаю цю перешкоду. Пора розвіяти всі сумніви раз і назавжди».

Коли сонце почало сідати, заливаючи зелену галявину золотистим світлом, Емма й Клара встали з лавки, готові знову приєднатися до святкування. Вони залишили лавку позаду, а напруга в серці Емми почала зникати разом з вечірнім світлом, поступаючись місцем теплу дружби та мужності зустріти все, що чекає попереду.

Reading Comprehension

IV. *Describe the appearance and character of Moya and Shane.*

V. *Work in pairs. Ask and answer 5 questions about the story you have read.*

Discussion

VI. *Comment on the following quotation from the story. Say whether you agree or disagree with the statement and give your reasons.*

- ... they wondered if it would iron itself out if they paid the single-room supplement.

VII. *Read the text and mark the following statements as T (True), F (False) or NG (Not Given):*

1. The Irish are known for their strong oral tradition, which includes storytelling and folklore.

2. The majority of the Irish population speaks the official language fluently.

3. The term 'blarney' originated from an Irish chieftain's ambiguous speech to Queen Elizabeth I.

4. Irish literature is characterized by a lack of wordplay and fantasy.

5. Some Irish farmers would secretly damage their English landlord's crops after flattering them.

6. Writing was a popular escape for the Irish due to the low cost of necessary materials.

7. Most Irish writers preferred to stay in Ireland because of its thriving publishing industry.

BLARNEY

The greatest talkers since the ancient Greeks', was how the Dubliner Oscar Wilde described the Irish, with himself well in mind. This doesn't apply to all of them. In Ireland as anywhere else, there are people who can't put two words together, especially if the two words in question are 'another Guinness?' But the Irish have a strong oral tradition of folklore and storytelling, which runs back to their very early history. Irish literature is full of puns, riddles, word play and fantasy. Some people relate the Irish gift for speech to their traditional poverty, since words cost nothing, and verbal fantasy was a way of escaping harsh reality.

A wealth of words could compensate for a lack of food. Others relate it to the Irish pastime of bamboozling their British masters. The word 'blarney' derives from the sixteenth-century Earl of Blarney, who like other Irish chieftains at the time was asked to declare his loyalty to a foreign monarch, England's Queen Elizabeth I. He gave such a florid speech that nobody could tell whether he was submitting or rebelling.

The official language is Irish, but the vast majority of the population don't speak it. Politicians often preface their public speeches with a few words of Irish, but this is about as meaningful as clearing your throat.

To return to the topic of blarney: like a lot of subject peoples, the Irish used speech as a way of hiding their true thoughts from their rulers. Some Irish small farmers would pay extravagant compliments to their English landlord, and then, when night fell, would creep out and bum his crops. If the Irish are splendid writers, it's partly because writing doesn't require a lot of expensive equipment, like, say, opera or symphonies. It's also because the language which most of them now write in, English, isn't their native tongue, so that they sometimes write it with a haunting strangeness. One traditional way of getting out of Ireland was to talk or write your way out. Most Irish writers ended up in London, since Ireland didn't have much of a publishing industry, and some of the Irish became eloquent orators in the House of Commons. Deprived of wealth, the Irish were forced to live by their wits. Which takes us back to Oscar Wilde, one of the greatest Irish wits of all.

(Extracted from Terry Eagleton's *The Truth About the Irish*)



THE BUSINESS TRIP



Before Reading

Work in pairs or small groups. Discuss the following questions:

- ❖ What are some challenges people may face during business trips?
- ❖ Have you ever had a business trip where something went wrong, like a flight delay or lost luggage? How did you handle it?
- ❖ Why is it important to have a backup plan when traveling for work?

Reading

THE BUSINESS TRIP

Lena had loved him for four long years. Not that he knew, of course. Men like Shay wouldn't even consider that they could be loved silently and unselfishly like that. It didn't make sense.

He probably assumed that Lena was fond of him, admired him, and might under the right circumstances be attracted to him. But if he thought of her at all, he might have assumed that she had a private life of her own. He would never have thought that this quiet, efficient assistant of his spent her entire life, both in and out of the office, thinking about him, trying to make his life easier and better, and in her dreams trying to share that life with him.

According to Maggie, Lena was not in love. She was **suffering from an obsession, an infatuation**. It wasn't healthy for someone who was twenty-six to develop this kind of crush on a man who didn't return it and wasn't even aware of it. And however unwise it might have been to have allowed a temporary fascination **to take over**, it was positively dangerous to let it continue the way Lena had. She stopped being twenty-six and became twenty-seven, and twenty-eight and twenty-nine. Soon she would be thirty years of age, and what had she to show for it?

Lena said spiritedly that she had as much to show for it as anyone had to show for anything. She had been happy, she had made his life better. She hadn't made a public fool of herself, as so many women had. She hadn't settled for second best, as so many others had done. She loved every second of her working day, which was more than you could say for a lot of people. She was appreciated if not loved in her office, and only Maggie knew her secret. She was not an object of pity. Maggie wouldn't **tut-tut** and shake her head over coffee with the girls about Lena's foolishness. Maggie was an ally, even if she didn't understand.

Maggie was Lena's aunt. But they had always been much more like cousins or sisters. Only ten years divided them in age, and the teenage Maggie had loved the toddler, Lena, and treated her as a friend. Now Maggie, almost forty, with huge dark eyes and a great mane of black curly hair, looked and acted younger than her niece. Her life was fuller by far. Maggie's problem had never been making men love her. It had been trying to stop them from loving her unwisely. And sometimes trying to stop herself from loving them in return—equally unwisely.

She had been married twice, widowed the first time, separated the second time, but these were only small milestones in the list of Maggie's love: Sensible married men, fathers of large and settled families, wanted to throw up everything and move in with Maggie. She often had great trouble persuading them to do nothing of the sort. It wasn't that she gave them unmentionable sexual favors, she told Lena with her big dark eyes full of honesty, it was just that they saw, however foolishly, a kind of life with her where they wouldn't be hassled and troubled. They saw a strange and unrealistic freedom in living with Maggie, something they didn't have at home. Maggie would never ask them to come to the supermarket and push the trolley, Maggie wasn't a one for wanting the grass cut or the house painted, the car cleaned or the patio built up to impress the neighbors. Maggie would be happy to eat a meal of wild mushrooms and brown bread followed by strawberries. Very far from real life. Maggie would **agree with them fervently** that she was indeed far from real life and they must see her only now and then. The more she protested, the more they wanted her. Lena said she was outraged at the way Maggie got every man she wanted, and yet she, Lena, who kept all the rules, couldn't get just the one.

Lena did keep the rules as written in the women's magazines. She had shiny, well-cut hair, she was tall and slim, she had been to makeup lessons **to make the most of** her good complexion, her fair skin, and blue eyes. She dressed well and kept her clothes immaculately. Well, why wouldn't she, Maggie grumbled, if she stayed at home every evening dreaming of lover boy Shay. There was all the time in the world to iron her blouses and sponge her skirts and polish her shoes, handbags, and belts till they shone. But had it done one bit of good in the department where she wanted it to succeed? No. None at all.

Lena's friends and colleagues all said she looked very smart, but their praise and admiration was of no interest to her. Sometimes they wondered why she didn't have a man in her life. She put them off with a laugh. And apart from Maggie, nobody had an inkling.

Maggie's grumbling had always been good-natured. But now it was different. Two things were coming up: Lena's thirtieth birthday, and a business trip with the famous Shay. Yes, he had asked the loyal Lena to London with him. Driving in his car, for a whole week.

Maggie felt it was time to play the heavy aunt for the first time in her life. She sat Lena down and told her to get ready for a serious lecture.

"Oh, not now," Lena had cried. "Not now. There's so much to be done, so many preparations. I have to decide what to wear, what to say, what social plans to set up, as well as all his business meetings. Can't the lecture wait till I get home?"

"No, it can't." Maggie was **adamant**. "It's about the trip; this has to be the make-or-break time. When you come back on the ferry and drive off the ramp, Shay must either be involved with you properly or else you will have given up all notion of him."

Lena's blue eyes filled with tears. "I don't want anything as definite, as black-and-white, as that. Why does it all have to hinge on this trip?" She looked appalled at having to abandon what was after all the central part of her life.

"Because you are leaving your twenties and for the first time you are leaving the country with this beauty, and you have the rest of your life ahead of you."

"It's too frightening. I don't want to try and seduce him or something like that." Lena was trembling at the thought.

“Well, what’s all the fuss about what you’re going to wear and how you’re going to look? If you don’t want him to fancy you, why don’t you just go in an old sweater and a pair of jeans?” Maggie was ruthless.

“It’s different for you, you can make anyone fancy you.”

“So could you if you bothered. It’s got nothing to do with well-cut jackets and applying your blusher properly,” Maggie said.

“How, then?” Lena was eager.

“I’ll tell you, but only if you promise me that you will decide one way or another at the end of the week. When you come back off that car ferry, you’ll either be involved with him properly as two normal people who love each other, or you will leave that job, and put him out of your mind and heart.”

“It’s like doing a deal with the devil,” Lena complained.

“Much more like a guardian angel,” Maggie said.

They sat for three hours, Maggie with her notebook. At no stage were outfits or perfumes mentioned. There was no strategy about booking one room by mistake instead of two. There was to be no research into romantic restaurants in London where the lights would be low and there might even be violins in the background. No, if Lena was to get her man these kinds of cheap tricks were only Mickey Mouse efforts, according to Maggie. And since almost every man who moved in Dublin seemed to fancy Maggie in some way or other, she was worth listening to.

Maggie seemed shocked that Lena had worked for this man for four years, not to mention thinking that she had loved him for this length of time, and still knew so little about him. Maggie asked a string of questions. Lena knew nothing about his school days, whether he had liked it there or not, and how he had got into the business world in the first place. She didn’t know who his first employers had been, whether he had found it easy or frightening. She didn’t know what television programs he watched, and when he went to a match if it was because he knew all about the game or because he liked the sociability of it. Lena didn’t know how he got on with his two brothers and sister, how often he went to see his mother. She didn’t know if he liked being with his nephews and nieces. If he felt lonely on weekends, as so many

people did in Dublin. How he decided what to eat and whether he had a washing machine or went to the launderette.

“What *do* you know about him, for heaven’s sake?” Maggie asked with some impatience.

Lena knew all about his current and past girlfriends, and she knew the restaurants he went to, and the nightclubs, and the bills for bouquets of flowers. She knew that and she knew about him at work, where he was tough and not afraid to go into a meeting and fight.

“Well-briefed by you, of course, with reports you have been working on all weekend when you weren’t putting more henna in your hair, hoping he’d notice.”

“I love him,” protested Lena.

“No, you don’t love him at all. You don’t know the first thing about him apart from this empty social thing. You might love him when you get to know him, and he might love you. But you might find him empty.”

Lena refused to accept this but **agreed meekly** to follow Maggie’s advice. In the ship’s dining room over a meal she would begin, and in the long drive across Britain she would not veer between business talk and gossip-column chat about nightclubs she didn’t even know. She would talk to him about himself.

“Suppose he asks me about myself?” Lena asked fearfully.

Maggie didn’t much think he would, but if he did, then she was to tell him the truth. Say she was perfectly happy, she had no wish to change from her life the way it was, assure him it was satisfactory. There was nothing that drove men as mad as that – the thought that women were actually contented the way they were, not scheming and conniving.

“But that’s not strictly true. I’m not totally contented the way I am,” Lena complained.

Maggie shrugged. “You always tell me you are when I try to change you.”

It was unanswerable.

The day before the trip Maggie rang her to wish her luck. “One thing, Lena, and remember this: He will notice you, he will fancy you. Truthfully, but you may not fancy him.”

"I probably gave you much too shallow a view of him," Lena whispered in case anyone in the office would hear.

"If that was your view of him after four years of loving him, then I'm sure what you told me was very accurate," Maggie said.

Lena learned a lot that night at dinner on board ship. She learned that his mother was demanding and never satisfied, that his brothers were discontented and jealous of his success. She heard that Shay's sisters didn't know how to bring up their children properly and **gave in to them in everything**. She heard that his school was full of sadistic teachers and moronic pupils, that they had ripped him off in his first job and cheated him in his second, and he had seen them coming in his third. He liked to cook but not to wash up; he thought these service apartments he lived in were a bit cramped, but he didn't want to take on the whole palaver of gardens and roofs and drains in a house. He was probably looking for something like a town house.

In the old days, like every day up to this, Lena would have immediately said she would make inquiries about town houses, and go to endless trouble ringing up auctioneers and estate agents. This time she made no offers.

"What about your house or flat, is it what you want?" he asked, almost cursorily, as if he had felt that he might have been talking just a little too much about himself.

"Oh, it's fine. I'm very happy there," she said. She told him it was a garden flat and had plenty of light as well as nice shrubs and bushes outside big windows. He nodded briskly but seemed to look at her with slightly more interest.

On the long drive to London, they talked about friends. Shay said that he ran with a very lively crowd. No, they weren't around on weekends much, but then, he often came into the office on Saturday afternoons **to do a little catching up**. Lena knew this only too well. She had to cope with the results of it on Mondays: confused notes, complicated questions. She had begun every week for as long as she could remember by sorting out his thoughts for a secretary to type up. He had got all the credit. Somehow it was disappointing to know he came in only because he was bored on Saturday afternoons. She had thought it was ambition.

He took his washing to his mother, it turned out. She could not believe it, but it was true. He had to go and see the woman once a week anyway, and she had a machine, so it made sense to leave her one load and collect another. And she liked it; what else had she to do?

By the time the signposts saying Central London came up, Lena had opened more doors than she might have wished to in Shay's life.

He suggested they grab something to eat, and she said thank you but no. She had friends to see in London, so unless there was anything they wanted to discuss about work for the conference tomorrow, she would leave him to his own devices.

He seemed quite put out by this. Lena looked at his handsome face scowling with almost childlike disappointment.

"Don't tell me you're going **to do the clubland circuit** in London?" he asked, not very kindly.

"Lord no, that's not my world at all. Just dinner with friends."

It was true. Dinner with two old school friends – one a nun, one a nurse. They laughed and talked over old times. Something was lighter in Lena's laugh; she felt it wasn't an effort.

The next day they worked companionably at the conference, but she excused herself at lunchtime to sneak in a little shopping and said that she had a theater date in the evening. He was thoroughly bad-tempered on the second day of the conference.

"Are you going to keep running away all the time, or will we see each other at all?" he grumbled.

Big blue eyes wide, she said that honestly she was sorry...but since they never went out socially at home, she assumed it would be the same here. But, of course, she would be delighted to have dinner with him if he had anywhere in mind.

"I thought you might arrange somewhere," he said.

"Oh no, I wouldn't dream of it. If you are asking me to dinner, then you must, of course, choose where."

It would once have been her wildest dream. Not only was the place expensive and romantic, but as he told her tale after tale of being misunderstood, betrayed, cheated, having got even, he took her hand.

"You're very easy to talk to, Lena, and you look very lovely. I hadn't realized." She had smiled. It was a smile of someone who had

known that this was predictable, not of someone who thought it was perfect.

When the evening ended and he suggested a brandy in his room, she said no. Perhaps she would prefer to have the nightcap in her room, he suggested, probably thinking that this was the height of sensitivity. No nightcap at all, Lena said. She had planned this night for so long, and all it would lead to.

At one stage she began to wonder if Maggie had set her up. Every single harmless question she had asked had brought such a negative response that she had managed to strip Shay, the man she had loved for years, of any lovable quality. It was as if Maggie had known the answers in advance.

Maggie hadn't suggested that Lena talk to Shay about love.

But that night she did. They were in a restaurant looking out on the river, and he told her that he thought he loved her – yes, strange as it might seem, and having worked together for so long – but he did think he loved her.

She looked at him for a long time.

“Well, say something,” he **said petulantly**.

“I don't have any words,” she said truthfully.

He reached for her hands, but she pulled them away.

“What are you thinking about?” she asked him.

“How nice it is to love you, how there you were under my nose all the time.”

At least, she thought, at least he is honest in a childish sort of way. It must be nice for him to think he's found a ready-made love under his nose, as he put it.

For years she had seen how suitable she would be for him, how right as a companion, a friend, a wife. How much she would help his career and cope with his weaknesses.

Until tonight she had never seen what it would be like for her. A lifetime of putting up with his moods, building him up when he was low, lying for him, pretending for him. And turning a blind eye when he wanted to run with a lively crowd and do the clubs and walk the blondes.

She smiled at him affectionately. It was the way she had seen her aunt Maggie smile at a multitude of men.

“What are *you* thinking about?” he asked. He was sulking now; his declaration of love had not only not been returned, it had been smiled at, patted down, soothed away.

“I was thinking about going home, about driving out of the ferry and going home,” she said.

This was a very puzzling response. “Why, what will you do then?” he was anxious to know.

Lena wondered what she would do. She wouldn’t leave her job just because he had said he loved her and she wouldn’t love him back. She liked her work, she would stay there and overtake him if necessary. She would not fight with him or explain or apologize – Maggie never did that. She was happy in her garden flat, and now she was free as well. If some man came along – as men came along for Maggie – that she really did like, then she was free to love him.

“What will I do?” she answered him almost dreamily. The world was so full of possibilities now that the question was hard to answer. “What will I do when I get home? I think I’ll telephone my aunt.”

(Maeve Binchy, *The Return Journey*)



Focus on Vocabulary

I. Explain the meaning of the words and collocations given in bold in the text. Use them in the context.

suffer from an obsession, an infatuation; to take over, tut-tut, to agree with them fervently, to make the most of, to be adamant, to agree meekly, gave in to them in everything, to do a little catching up, to do the clubland circuit, to say petulantly.

II. Match the English equivalents of the following collocations and use them in the situations of your own:

1) закохатися в когось (такого роду), мати сильну симпатію до когось; 2) погоджуватись на менше; 3) зберігати свій одяг у бездоганному стані; 4) мати передчуття, щось підозрювати; 5) це має бути вирішальний момент; 6) залежати (від), бути вирішальним чинником; 7) засипати запитаннями / поставити низку запитань; 8) коливатися між діловою розмовою та плітками; 9) обдурити когось на першій роботі; 10) трішки випити перед сном у себе в кімнаті.

III. Read the following abstracts from the short story and fill in the gaps with the correct preposition:

1. He probably assumed that Lena was fond him, admired him, and might the right circumstances to be attracted him. But if he thought her at all, he might have assumed that she had a private life her own. He would never have thought that this quiet, efficient assistant spent her entire life, both and the office, thinking him, trying to make his life easier and better, and her dreams trying to share that life him.

2. “Well-briefed you, of course, with reports you have been working all weekend when you weren’t putting more henna your hair, hoping he’d notice.”

“I love him,” protested Lena.

“No, you don’t love him all. You don’t know the first thing him apart this empty social thing.

3. Lena learned a lot that night at dinner board ship. She learned that his mother was demanding and never satisfied, that his brothers were discontented and jealous his success. She heard that Shay’s sisters didn’t know how to bring up their children properly and gave to them everything. She heard that his school was full sadistic teachers and moronic pupils, that they had ripped him off his first job and cheated him his second, and he had seen them coming his third. He liked to cook but not to wash up; he thought these service apartments he lived were a bit cramped, but he didn’t want to take the whole palaver of gardens and roofs and drains a house. He was probably looking something like a town house.

IV. *Translate the following story into Ukrainian using the collocations from Ex. II:*

Вона й сама не помітила, як закохалася в нього – неочікувано, такого роду, коли це більше ніж симпатія, але ще не любов. Раніше вона ніколи не погоджувалася на менше, проте цього разу сумнівалася, чи варто ризикувати. У житті часто доводиться обирати, і цей вибір мав стати вирішальним моментом.

Вона завжди зберігала свій одяг у бездоганному стані – так її виховали, але внутрішній порядок зараз давався важче. Вона мала передчуття, щось підозрювала: усе залежало від однієї розмови, від того, чи він скаже правду.

Під час зустрічі він почав засипати її запитаннями, а розмова дивно коливалася між діловою темою та плітками, ніби вони не могли визначитися, ким є один для одного. В якийсь момент він зізнався, що на першій роботі його обдурили, і відтоді він не довіряє людям легко.

Увечері, залишившись наодинці, вона вирішила трішки випити перед сном у себе в кімнаті, щоб заспокоїтися. Вона розуміла: інколи не варто погоджуватися на менше, бо саме від таких рішень залежить, ким ми стаємо.

Reading Comprehension

V. *Answer the questions:*

1. What did Maggie think about Lena's love for her boss?
2. How did Maggie build relationships with men?
3. Were Lena and Maggie happy with their lives? Why/Why not?
4. What rules did Lena keep to attract Shay's attention? Did she succeed?
5. What advice did Maggie give to Lena before her business trip?
6. How did Lena manage to arouse Shay's interest?
7. What did Lena find out about Shay, his character and lifestyle?
8. What is the moral of the short story, in your opinion?

VI. *Comment on the following quotation from the story. Say whether you agree or disagree with the statement and give your reasons.*

- “There was nothing that drove men as mad as that – the thought that women were actually content the way they were, not scheming and conniving.”

VII. *Discuss in pairs what might have happened if Lena had not followed her aunt’s advice.*

Irishness in Facts and Myths

VIII. *Read the text and answer the questions that are given below.*

DUBLIN 4

Some people think that the Loch Ness monster is a myth, though the Loch Ness monster itself presumably wouldn't agree. With Dublin 4, it's the other way round: the people who live there tend to think it's a myth, whereas a lot of people who don't live there think it's real. Dublin 4 is less an actual area (though there is a Dublin postal district of that number), than a phrase used to refer to a certain intellectual elite in the city. This includes writers, broadcasters, journalists and the liberal-minded, professional middle classes in general.

To be a fully paid-up member of Dublin 4 you have to eat polenta, send your children to fee-paying schools, have a superior attitude to rural Ireland, criticise the Catholic Church and the traditional political set-up, take holidays in Tuscany or Provence, own a cottage in the west of Ireland, think nationalism frightfully old-hat, and regard Mary Robinson, the progressive-minded former President of Ireland, as a divine creature a cut or two above the Virgin Mary. To belong to Dublin 4, you also have to regard the whole existence of Dublin 4 as a myth dreamt up by the resentful masses who eat bacon and cabbage rather than polenta, send their children to state schools, can't afford to take a holiday, and when asked 'Have you read Marx?' reply 'Only where I sit down'.

Some denizens of Dublin 4 tend to see themselves as liberal-minded and the rest of the Irish as sunk in redneck opinions and rural idiocy. This is almost certainly a myth. The Irish are more likely than the rest of Europe to believe that both work and family are very important, and they place a very high value on marital fidelity. As with many people today, their values are typically a mixture of modern and traditional. Where they are more conservative than their European counterparts is on questions of authority. On the whole, the Irish are more likely to be respectful of authority than, say, the French or the Italians. Irish Catholicism is an obvious influence here, or even, further back in history, the deference paid to the chief.

(Extracted from Terry Eagleton's *The Truth About the Irish*)

Read the questions and choose the correct answer (a, b, c or d):

1. What does the passage suggest is the primary reason the concept of "Dublin 4" is considered a myth by those who live outside the area:

- a) The Dublin 4 elite see themselves as more liberal-minded than the rest of Ireland;
- b) The Dublin 4 elite are perceived as looking down on the traditional values of the Irish people;
- c) The Dublin 4 elite are resentful of the masses who cannot afford their lifestyle;
- d) The Dublin 4 elite are seen as creating the myth to maintain their exclusive status.

2. According to the passage, which characteristic of the Dublin 4 elite is most explicitly contrasted with the values of the "resentful masses":

- a) Sending children to fee-paying schools;
- b) Owning a cottage in the west of Ireland;
- c) Eating polenta instead of bacon and cabbage;
- d) Criticizing the Catholic Church.

3. The passage suggests that the Irish people's respect for authority is most likely influenced by:

- a) Their deference to the chief in history;
- b) Their modern and traditional values;
- c) Their high value on marital fidelity;
- d) Their Catholic Catholicism.

4. Which of the following best describes the overall tone the passage takes towards the concept of "Dublin 4":

- a) Skeptical and critical;
- b) Neutral and objective;
- c) Admiring and sympathetic;
- d) Dismissive and condescending.

5. Based on the information provided, which of the following is the most accurate way to characterize the relationship between the Dublin 4 elite and the "resentful masses":

- a) The Dublin 4 elite view the masses with disdain and superiority;
- b) The masses resent the Dublin 4 elite for their perceived snobbery;
- c) There is mutual respect and understanding between the two groups;
- d) The Dublin 4 elite are unaware of the resentment felt by the masses.

6. The passage suggests that the Dublin 4 elite's attitude towards rural Ireland is primarily one of:

- a) Nostalgia and romanticization;
- b) Indifference and dismissal;
- c) Curiosity and fascination;
- d) Critique and condemnation.

7. Which of the following best captures the key contrast the passage draws between the Dublin 4 elite and the "resentful masses":

- a) Wealth and poverty;
- b) Liberalism and conservatism;
- c) Tradition and modernity;
- d) Education and ignorance.



HOLIDAY WEATHER



Before Reading

Work in pairs or small groups. Discuss the following questions:

- ❖ What do you think makes a holiday "perfect"?
- ❖ Have you ever had a holiday that didn't go as planned? What happened?
- ❖ Would you ever go on holiday with someone you weren't sure about? Why or why not?

Reading

HOLIDAY WEATHER

Robert said that after dinner they would **curl up with the map** of the South of France and plan the journey. Frankie was looking forward to it. This was always a great part of the holiday, when he would sit on the sofa with his arm around her, **the fire crackling in the grate**, glass of wine at hand, and together they would point out magical names to each other. It had been like this last year, when his conference had been in Spain and they had hunted for little Spanish idylls for their rambles afterward. And the year before, when it had been in Italy, and their fingers had traced the names by the lakes.

Of course, Frankie knew that the evening would not organize itself. She would have to escape down to the shops at lunchtime to buy something she knew he would like, and this was getting more difficult since he had begun to worry about his waistline. Gone were the evenings of fillet steak, mushrooms, and garlic bread. Perhaps she might get some monk-fish – very expensive, but it did seem special – and a small selection of vegetables. She could even **top and tail** them at work; there would be so little time when she got back to her flat. She would have to rush around it tidying, of course, getting rid of all the

work things that littered the place. Well, Robert hadn't been around for over a week, so she had been doing her Open University course every evening.

Frankie thought happily about the evening ahead. She would wear her green dress, the one that he had once said matched her eyes. A long while ago. But of course, he still loved her, and people didn't have to go on about eye color forever. It would have been unnatural, and possibly a bit **repetitive**.

The only good thing about working for a man like Dale was that it took up such a small amount of time and so little brain. All that the awful Dale wanted was someone to sit in his front office and look pleasant, ask them to wait a moment while they could **thumb through** some of the fairly horrible cuttings about Dale's success in the world of public relations, and then ask them to go straight on in. Frankie was far too intelligent for this job, and that knowledge alone gave her great satisfaction. But by being with Dale and his outfit, she had an excuse to see Robert almost every day. And as far as Frankie was concerned, she would work in a coal mine or as a steeplejack if it meant being close to Robert.

Robert needed excuses to meet Frankie. Robert was married to his boss's daughter – a marriage of convenience that he had entered into at a time before he knew what true love, real love, was like.

Robert and his wife had two children, who were eight and seven. They were at the age when they could not be upset by things that had nothing to do with them; it wasn't their fault that Robert had found true love too late. Robert was the rising star in the organization; he must work harder than ever now that he intended to leave home and set up two establishments. He must make himself totally indispensable to his boss, his father-in-law, so that there would be no question of letting him go once the divorce was brought up. Frankie didn't ask when that was going to be but thought that it would be unreasonable to expect it before the children went to boarding school. Three years, perhaps?

She would wait. Naturally.

But in the meanwhile, there were wonderful things like the great summer honeymoon. They always called it that: Our Italian, Our Spanish, and now Our Riviera Honeymoon.

Frankie made her shopping list and took out the map of France. Whenever Dale passed by she looked as if she were making notes or looking up a reference. Dale would not stop to question her.

Frankie looked fine for the job, with her long dark curly hair and her bright green eyes. And even more important, she was the friend of Robert the whiz kid in Benson's. Dale would have employed any kind of person in that front desk if it kept him well in with Benson's. He regarded it as a bonus that Frankie was both bright and beautiful.

The only thing that bored Frankie was that she had to put in the actual hours in her **horseshoe-shaped desk**. If only she could have slipped away for the afternoon. She could have gone to the hairdresser and even had a manicure as a luxury; her hands would be greatly in view tonight as they traced the route south through the Côte d'Azur down from Cannes past St. Raphael to Saint-Tropez. Or should they go the other way from Cannes, over past Antibes to Nice and Monte Carlo? It was heady stuff even saying the names. Perhaps Frankie would even buy a little guidebook at lunchtime so that she would appear knowledgeable tonight.

It was all a rush, as she knew it would be. But the dinner had gone well. Robert was relaxed; he had **loosened his tie** and **kicked off his shoes**. Frankie had been able to wash her hair, and she had bought green earrings at lunchtime.

"They're lovely," he said. "The color of your eyes."

She felt that **the fuss and the bustle** had all been worthwhile. She even felt glad that she had spent that money on a dishwasher. It had been very extravagant, but Robert adored it. His wife was playing Earth Mother, according to his reports, refusing modern gadgets, but for them it was all right – there was the help and the au pair. In Frankie's flat, however, he loved to see technology. Cuts out all the fuss, he had said. They arranged the china and glass and cutlery carefully and listened to it humming away in the kitchen as Frankie got out the map.

"Darling," he said. "Wrong map, I'm afraid."

"It says Provence on top, but it's all Cannes and Nice and everywhere down on the coast," Frankie said, surprised. Normally Robert knew where everywhere was; that was why she had studied it so much in advance all afternoon.

“We’re not going, my love,” he said.

Her heart lurched with the kind of jump that almost reached her throat.

“I don’t understand.”

“Neither do I, but it’s true. Listen, don’t think I’m pleased.... Stop looking at me like that, hey?”

“Why can’t I come? We’ve always been able to swing it before. I tell Dale I’m taking my vacation, you tell Mr. Benson you need someone from Dale’s to run over the implications of the conference with you. Why can’t I come this time? Why?” Frankie knew she was sounding like a seven-year-old, but her disappointment was so huge she couldn’t hide it.

She had bought her clothes, her terribly expensive shoes, the knockout beach gear. The operation was foolproof – why was he pulling out now? Was it possible that he had found someone new? If he had cheated on his wife once, then obviously he could do it again. But don’t go down that road. And don’t cry. Frankie forced her face to stop puckering.

Robert sounded weary and resigned. “It’s not you, sweetheart, it’s me. It’s a nonstarter.”

“But you always go to the conference. You are Benson’s.” She was aghast. And yet there was a seed of hope. Suppose he had been discovered, and maybe even demoted. Did that not mean that the day they could be together might be nearer than they had thought?

“This year being Benson’s means going somewhere else and shoring up someone else’s cock-up,” he said. “A whole project is going down the Swanee, and apparently I’m the only one who can sweet-talk us back where we were. What a bloody crowd of fools he employs. I’d have got rid of three quarters of them. I will – I tell you I will one day.”

This was an old refrain. Frankie didn’t want to hear it all over again – Robert’s plans for the day when he ran the place himself. This was an old set of lines they had said to each other; she wanted to know what was new.

What was new was Ireland. A new plant, a lot of bother, nobody had been there to straighten it out, to tell the people on the ground what was happening, what was expected of them, what they could expect.

“They’re bound to be suspicious of us, think we’re in it for what we can get out of it.”

Frankie said nothing; for once she didn’t murmur her usual words of encouragement. In fact, she knew that Benson’s was in it for what they could get out of it, that’s what business was about.

“So you see what’s happened. In the very week of the conference in Cannes, I have to be over in the middle of the boglands talking to the mutinous forces over there and promising them wealth beyond their wildest dreams.”

“Can’t you go now? Before the conference?”

“Don’t you think I asked that? But old man Benson is adamant. It has to be that bloody time, something to do with some European thing or other that’s being held there. They’re much more interested in Europe over there, for some reason that escapes me. God, I could kill them for not setting it up right at the start, allowing all these discontents to grow up. If we don’t go in and fly the flag or show our face or whatever the expression is...then the whole thing could collapse like a house of cards.” He looked so handsome when he was annoyed. She could understand why so many people were impressed with him.

“Will we have any honeymoon together this year, you and I?” she asked in a small voice, looking down at the ground lest he see all the pain in her green eyes.

“You could come to Ireland,” he said doubtfully. “I can’t be tied up with them all the time. We’d have some time together.”

“To do what?” She had no maps of Ireland, she had no magical names like Juan les Pins, like Saint-Tropez.

“I don’t know, darling, I don’t know, give me space. I only heard about this today, this afternoon. We’ll do something. It could be a rest for you, getting away from it all, and then I’d escape when I could.”

A more courageous woman would have told him to forget it. A tougher woman would have told him in no uncertain terms what he could do with this halfhearted offer.

Frankie was neither brave nor tough. Which was why she found herself in the small hotel on the west coast of Ireland. A hotel called the Greener Grass standing on a low cliff over a long, empty beach. When you looked across that sea the next stop was America, they told you.

Frankie could believe it – it looked endless. And on the first days it looked gray and lonely. The seagulls calling to each other and other seabirds coming in to perch on rocks. She saw a school of porpoises go by one day, and she became familiar with the habits of a cormorant and a kittiwake and a tern and a gannet.

“I could do another Open University course in the habits of seabirds,” she said ruefully to the proprietor as he set her lobster before her at a table, which, for the third time had been set for one.

“There are worse ways to spend your time, you know.” His voice was soft, but it was distant. He was Shane, he said, a returned Irish American. He had called his place the Greener Grass because of the grass always seeming greener when it was far away. He had saved up for seven years to buy his own small hotel.

He was different from the other local people, who wanted to know all about Frankie and Robert, and what was their business in the place, did they have any children, where had they been for holidays before. Did they love the Irish way of life? Shane asked none of these questions. He had the air of someone contented with his own way of life. She saw him choosing his own vegetables from the fields where he had tilled the land to grow them. She watched him sometimes writing the menus in slow, careful, calligraphic script.

Robert set out in the early mornings and was rarely back to the Greener Grass before dark.

“Not much of a honeymoon, is it, darling?” he said more than once. Frankie saw his face, white and tired.

“The honeymoon bit is at night, remember?” she said, laughing.

But at night the weary Robert slept suddenly and soundly as soon as he got into bed. Some nights Frankie sat at the bay window, where there was a lovely three-part window seat, and looked out at the night sky over the water. Sometimes she saw Shane and his dog Tracey walking.

So he couldn’t sleep either, Frankie thought, even though he had saved seven years to build his dream and had it now in his hands.

She saw Shane bend to **pick shells** by the moonlight. He looked peaceful, she thought, and somehow at ease. Even though he didn’t really belong here, not like locals – he had been away too long, and he had a slight New York tinge to his voice.

Next morning at breakfast, she asked him about the shells.

“You sat at the window and looked out over the moonlit sea,” Shane said. Robert seemed annoyed somehow. “You didn’t tell me you couldn’t sleep.” She felt she had been disloyal.

Later Shane came and gave her some cowrie shells. “You could do another Open University course on these and still know nothing about them,” he said with a smile.

Robert liked to think that it was somehow a rest for her, that sharing some fraction of his life was reward enough for the broken promise, the conference that never was...the ribbon of the French coast not visited.

“I bet this is doing you no end of good,” he said each morning as they ate **brown soda bread** and fish just in from the sea.

For the first few days she had smiled bravely, and taken a book **disconsolately** to walk along the hilly cliff or down to the rock pool, and try to stop thinking that her life was as gray as the skies all around her.

But then one morning the sun came out, and everything was different. Even Robert seemed loath to go.

“It’s very beautiful, this place, you know,” he said as he stood beside his hired car about to head off for the day with the **mutinous men** he was finding it harder to placate than he had thought possible.

Frankie looked down at the beach she had walked so often in the dull days. Today it sparkled, as if there were little particles of precious metal hidden behind the rocks instead of soft sand. She thought she could see the cowrie shells that Shane had been collecting. The sea was twenty different colors of green and blue, with little white flecks.

“I might have a swim,” she said.

“Yes, well, be sensible. It’s the Atlantic Ocean, don’t forget.”

“Next stop, America.” Frankie laughed.

Robert looked at her, puzzled.

“I hope I won’t be too late,” he said, but doubtfully. “This lot seem to need conversation and explanation way into the night, as well as all day.”

He drove away along the road, and as Frankie looked after him up at the purple mountains and over beyond the small green fields with

their stone walk to a dark, velvety forest, she began to feel as if a film had just turned from black-and-white into Technicolor.

She ran lightly upstairs to fetch the red bathing suit that had cost her so much in the days she thought it would be seen on the Côte d'Azur. As she came down, carrying the pricy beach bag and her red and white fluffy towel, Shane's dog Tracey came up and looked at her hopefully.

"I'd be very grateful if you would," Shane said. "He needs a walk, and with today's weather I'll have the world and its wife for lunch, so I can't take him."

"I don't know a lot about dogs," Frankie began.

"Well, Tracey is half sheepdog and half setter, we think. **A lovely nature**, and he'll bark if you start to drown or if anyone comes and bothers you."

"Who'd come and bother me?" Frankie laughed, looking at the empty beach.

"I haven't seen you in that swimsuit, but it might attract a bit of local attention." He laughed too; the good weather made him seem less remote.

"Would he run away or get into a fight or anything?" It had never been part of her life, walking with **a big, bounding dog**.

"Not a chance. And as a reward, I'll come and find you and take you to a little late lunch and take Tracey off your hands."

"Oh no."

"Oh yes. It's the minimum fee for **dog minding**. There's a nice flat rock in the next bay. It makes a good table."

She had never spent a day on a beach like it. Tracey ran for sticks with never-ending energy. She really thought she could see his foolish face smile at her as she threw them again and again.

Tracey barked at the waves, but swam in and paddled near her as if to look after her when she swam. She collected shells and laid them out on the flat table rock.

Soon, far sooner than she had expected, Shane arrived with a picnic basket.

"You abandoned your lunchers. How can you expect **to earn a living!**" she said sternly.

“You’re not wearing a watch. It’s after three o’clock – they’ve all been and gone. You must be starved.”

Imagine. She had been playing with this idiotic dog for hours on a shell-covered beach, no cloud had come across the sky, and no thought of Robert and their situation had come across her mind.

Companionably they shared the picnic, local prawns, homemade bread, cheese made by some nuns in **a convent** across the valley, red shiny apples from the small orchard behind the Greener Grass.

“It’s like heaven.” She sighed as they drained the bottle of wine to the dregs.

“Thank God we don’t get weather like this all the time,” said Shane.

“Why do you say that? Because you’d have to work too hard?” Frankie had been about to say the very opposite; she had been on the point of wishing that every day could be so sunny.

“Because we would **be parched and dry**, it would not be a green island, and we’d be so used to it we wouldn’t be calling out our thanksgiving to the very heavens as we are today,” he said.

“Yes, I know, and that’s a point, but what about your business? If it was much sunnier, there would be many more people here. This beach would be full.”

“And could you and I and Tracey have had such a picnic if the beach were full?” he asked.

“We had meant to go to the South of France,” she said suddenly.

“Yes, so your husband told me, when he called to book.” Shane had his distant face on again. “He seemed very disappointed and told me in several different ways that this was not his first choice.”

Frankie was going to explain that Robert was not her husband, but she let it go. Instead she apologized for him.

“He’s normally very charming and would never have given you that impression. He **has work problems to see to** here. We had thought we could have made a holiday out of a conference in Cannes.”

“But why did he take you here, and leave you all alone?”

“I’m glad he did,” Frankie said positively. “Now, do you think it’s an old wives’ tale about not swimming after lunch, or should we risk it?”

“Just as long as we don’t go out too far, any of us,” he said, and they raced to the edge where the foam was breaking and drawing out the sand with it as it gathered for another wave.

“Have you ever been to the South of France?” he asked.

“No.” Her voice sounded small.

“Neither have I, so let’s pretend this is a hundred thousand times better,” Shane cried, and threw himself into the waves.

“You caught the sun,” Robert said when he got back earlier than usual. He had phoned to ask if dinner could be kept for him, and had been surprised and not altogether pleased to hear Shane say that his wife had had a late lunch.

“Did you tell him we were married?” Robert asked as they sat at a window table and watched the sun set, leaving red and golden paths and crisscross lines across the bay.

“No, darling, I didn’t, but in this country they are likely to assume it if we check in to the same room and you have booked us as ‘Mr. and Mrs.’”

Robert **looked at her sharply** but decided not to make it something to argue about.

“Is it better? You know, are you sorting it out up at the plant?” Frankie asked.

“Yes. I think they believe our heart is in the right place,” Robert said. “And it is?” Frankie’s face was innocent, bland. “What are you trying to say?” “Well, I mean that a lot of them came back from **jobs overseas** because they really believed that it was going to be a proper plant, not something that would pack up and fold its tent when things got a bit hairy.”

“Oh, come on, Frankie, what do you think Benson’s is, part of Mother Teresa? Of course, we have to be practical. If **things get hairy**, as you put it, we can’t stay on here forever, bleeding hearts keeping returned emigrants in beer money.”

“That’s all right, as long as they know it.”

“That’s all right whether they know it or not,” Robert flashed.

“You remind me more and more of Dale,” Frankie said. “The same cynical way of looking at everything.”

“You are beginning to remind me more and more of my wife. The same way of **picking a row** and **nagging over** everything.”

Frankie had read somewhere that you know when something is over, you know that this is the moment, but you won't accept it. You try to say it was because one person had too many tiring days negotiating, and the other person had too much unexpected sun.

Robert probably knew, too, because when he was called to the phone he went with eagerness and came back to say that some of the men needed him for a further conference.

They parted pleasantly, almost with relief.

Frankie went walking on the beach in the last rays of the sun. She felt Tracey rushing up to her before she knew Shane was on the beach as well.

"I had a friend in New York, a great friend, she was going to come here and run the Greener Grass with me. You know, a joint enterprise. Then she said she'd join me later. Then she said she needed thinking time. Then she said she'd write."

They walked in silence; there seemed no need to say anything. Frankie thought about all those years, and those two honeymoons where she had felt she needed to entertain Robert all the time, talk to him, be bright, show no hurt, no loneliness.

"He's not my husband," she said after a long time.

"Oh, I know," said Shane.

"How?"

"Labels on suitcases, his instructions about not ever calling him to the phone if the office rang but always taking a name and a time he should call at. If you were married, he would have asked you to take the messages."

After another long time Frankie asked, "Is it all right? You know, running the place as a single venture, not a joint one as you had thought?"

"Yes, it's all right. It mightn't always be single. You never know your luck."

The sea was calm now. They skimmed flat stones and made them hop.

"He'll be going back soon, I imagine," Shane said. "The lads tell me it's all settled."

"Yes, well, they wouldn't want to rely on that too much."

“They’re smarter than they sound,” Shane said with a laugh. “All us fellows who worked over the water learned a bit about business.”

“We had planned to stay on a bit when it was settled, but I don’t think so now.”

“No, he’ll want to be off. He might even catch the tail end of the Cannes thing.”

“A place where the sun shines all the time and there’s no sense of surprise?” Frankie smiled at him.

“The very spot,” Shane said.

“And what’s the weather forecast like here?” she wondered.

“Optimistic but unknown,” said Shane.

“I’ll stay,” said Frankie. “I’ll certainly stay for a while until I know how it turns out.”

They walked back to the Greener Grass **in a companionable silence**, because they knew there was no need to say anything, or plan anything, or spell anything out, or indeed say anything at all.

(Maeve Binchy, *The Return Journey*)



Focus on Vocabulary

I. *Explain the meaning of the words and collocations given in bold in the text. Use them in the context.*

curl up with the map, grate, top and tail sth, repetitive, thumb through, horseshoe-shaped desk, loosen one’s tie, kick off one’s shoes, the fuss and the bustle, her heart lurched, brown soda bread, disconsolately, mutinous men, a lovely nature, a bounding dog, dog minding, to earn a living, a convent, looked at sb sharply, jobs overseas, things get hairy, nag over, in a companionable silence.

II. Find the English equivalents of the following collocations and use them in the situations of your own:

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| 1. curl up | a) someone admired for success or appearance |
| 2. idyllic | b) to promise or talk convincingly |
| 3. indispensable | c) to sit or lie comfortably, often in a cozy position |
| 4. whiz kid | d) peaceful and picturesque in an ideal way |
| 5. trace | e) absolutely necessary |
| 6. halfhearted | f) to follow or draw along a path or surface |
| 7. mutinous | g) showing little enthusiasm or interest |
| 8. sweet-talk | h) vivid, bright colors (metaphorically means seeing things more clearly or joyfully) |
| 9. disloyal | i) rebelling or resisting authority |
| 10. technicolor | j) not faithful or supportive to someone or something |

III. Fill in the gaps in the sentences with the appropriate collocation from the list below. Translate the following sentences into Ukrainian:

work problems to see to, to pick shells, the fire crackling in the grate, to kick off her shoes, disconsolately, to thumb through, curl up with the map, to top and tail, to loosen his tie, companionable, a break from the fuss and the bustle, looked at him sharply, brown soda bread, her heart lurched, mutinous men, things get hairy, dog minding, to take jobs overseas, to pick a row, to nag over, a horseshoe-shaped desk, to earn a living, to be parched and dry.

1. On a rainy afternoon, I decided (1) _____ of the city and plan my next weekend getaway.

2. It's important (2) _____ somebody's resume before submitting it for a job application to ensure it looks professional.

3. After finishing her coffee, she began (3) _____ the latest magazine at the café.

4. The office was designed efficiently, featuring (4) _____ where employees could collaborate easily.

5. He felt overwhelmed after a long day, so he chose (5) _____ as he prepared for a relaxing evening at home.

6. After coming in from a long walk, she couldn't wait (6)_____ and sink into her favorite chair.

7. Although I enjoy the excitement of the city, sometimes I just want (7)_____ of everyday life.

8. When she heard the news about her friend's promotion, (8)_____ with unexpected joy.

9. For breakfast, I tried making (9)_____, hoping it would become a new family favorite.

10. He sat on the bench (10)_____, watching the children play while feeling lonely and out of place.

11. The captain struggled to maintain order aboard the ship, as there were (11)_____ plotting against him.

12. They weren't afraid (12)_____ over the best parking spot in front of the restaurant.

13. I'm considering (13)_____ during my summer break to earn some extra spending money.

14. Many people are now looking for ways (14)_____ that will allow them more flexibility and work-life balance.

15. She (15)_____ when he casually mentioned the deadline they had all been dreading.

16. Few people are able (16)_____ without shifting their entire family life.

17. When (17)_____ at work, I try to remind myself to stay calm and focused on the task at hand.

18. It's easy (18)_____ small details when planning an event, but it's important to keep the big picture in mind.

19. They spent the evening in a (19)_____ silence, simply enjoying each other's company without the need for words.

20. As we strolled along the beach, the children begged (20)_____ to take back home.

21. After several weeks without rain, the garden began (21)_____, desperately needing water.

22. He always has (22)_____, making it challenging to maintain a healthy work-life balance.

23. Sitting by the fireplace, I loved listening to (23)_____ as I sipped my tea.

IV. *Read the statements below and write T (True) or F (False).*

1. Frankie was uninterested in planning the holiday.
2. Robert had promised Frankie they would go to the South of France.
3. Frankie worked a demanding and intellectually challenging job.
4. Robert's marriage was based on love.
5. Frankie was happy to be with Robert, even if it meant waiting years.
6. Robert decided not to go to the conference in Cannes at the last moment.
7. Frankie quickly adjusted to the Irish coastal town and enjoyed the natural beauty.
8. Shane, the hotel owner, was overly curious about Frankie and Robert's personal life.
9. Frankie and Shane shared a quiet beach picnic and talked about the future.
10. Robert seemed pleased to hear about Frankie's day with Shane.

V. *Answer the questions:*

1. Why do you think Frankie went to so much trouble to prepare the dinner for Robert?
2. How does the story portray Frankie's emotional state throughout the events?
3. What does the beach in Ireland symbolize for Frankie?
4. Why do you think Frankie doesn't confront Robert more strongly about the broken promise?
5. How is Shane different from Robert in his behavior and attitude?
6. What does the author suggest about the nature of waiting for love?
7. How does Frankie's perception of her situation change during the story?

8. Why do you think the author included so many descriptions of nature and the setting?
9. What role does Tracey the dog play in Frankie's experience?
10. What might happen to Frankie after the end of the story?

Discussion

VI. **Comment on Frankie's words:** *"A place where the sun shines all the time and there's no sense of surprise?"*. **Do you agree or disagree? Why?**

VII. *"The sea was twenty different colors of green and blue, with little white flecks"*

How would you describe the sea?

VIII. **Debate – "Should Frankie stay with Robert?"** *Discuss this in a small group, then exchange your arguments with the other group. Each side prepares arguments and then presents them in a debate format.*

Group 1 argues that Frankie should leave Robert.

Group 2 argues that Frankie should stay with him and wait for a future together.

Irishness in Facts and Myths

IX. **Read the text and mark the following statements as T (True) or F (False):**

1. The Irish are generally more relaxed about life compared to Berlin bankers and Surrey stockbrokers.
2. Irish plumbers are known for their punctuality and reliability.
3. The phrase "The meeting starts at eight o'clock sharp" should be taken literally in Ireland.
4. The Irish are considered lazy due to their leisurely pace of getting things done.

5. The philosophy of Ahsurism is a form of Buddhism practiced in Ireland.

6. An Irish scholar once claimed there was no law-breaking in his region for several decades, but he omitted that there was no law either.

7. When registering a car in Ireland, providing all requested documents is strictly enforced without exceptions.

EASY-GOINGNESS

Not entirely a myth. The Irish can be as irascible and uptight as anyone else, but on the whole they're more relaxed about life than Berlin bankers and Surrey stockbrokers. This can be deeply annoying. If an Irish plumber says he'll fix your drains on Tuesday, it's quite likely he won't turn up. He may turn up on Friday, and won't think the delay is worth mentioning. In fact he might get quite indignant if you bring it up. Friday is pretty close to Tuesday after all, even if your kitchen flooded and drowned your kids in the meanwhile.

Irish announcements like 'The meeting starts at eight o'clock sharp' are not to be taken literally. Don't believe anyone who tells you (a) he'll ring, (b) he'll write, (c) the cheque is in the post. One of the most common lies in Ireland is 'we'll just go for one', meaning one drink in the pub. These are among the best known Irish fictions, James Joyce's *Ulysses* being one of the others.

On the other hand, all this has its advantages. If you happen to be three days late, chances are they won't even notice. Things in Ireland get done, but at a more leisurely pace than in Los Angeles. The Irish are not lazy, just laidback. Some of them practise a philosophy known as Ahsurism, which isn't a brand of Buddhism but comes from the phrase 'Ah sure'. 'Ah sure, there's time enough ...Ah sure, it'll do later ...'

The Irish have as many rules as most other countries, but some of them are purely decorative. Centuries ago, an Irish scholar boasted that there had been no law-breaking in his region for several decades. He didn't mention that there was no law either. A German friend of mine who went to register his car in Ireland was told to bring along documents to prove that he once lived in Germany but now lived in

Dublin. This included two years of German phone, gas and electricity bills, the deed of sale for his home, letters from his solicitors, and past and present employers. Aghast at this prospect, he told the office that he was unable to oblige. Oh well, they shrugged, 'Just some of them then.' You can learn a lot about the Irish from that simple phrase.

(Extracted from Terry Eagleton's *The Truth About the Irish*)



THE SPORTING DECISION



Before Reading

Work in pairs or small groups. Discuss the following questions:

- ❖ Do you believe it's possible to fall in love later in life?
- ❖ How important is appearance when you first meet someone?
- ❖ What kind of places do you think are ideal for meeting someone new – randomly or through friends?
- ❖ Do you think fate or coincidence plays a role in romantic relationships?

Reading

THE SPORTING DECISION

Martin had wondered recently whether he was now totally past the possibility of falling in love. He used to consider himself **quite a dashing lover** when he was young. Well, not technically speaking, of course, not like Casanova or anything, but Martin was never without a girl on his arm, or in his sports car. And as time went on they became ladies.

He had never married.

'No one would have me,' he'd laugh. But everyone knew this wasn't true. Martin Grey was quite a catch. A very successful lawyer in mainly high-profile cases. If you got Martin Grey to defend you, it meant that you or someone close to you had money and that your case was tricky.

He had spoken in the courts for religious communities, for bankers, for politicians, **alleged murderers**, gangland bosses and, increasingly in post-divorce-referendum Ireland, for **disturbed first wives**. His name was rarely out of the papers, he was often seen on the evening television news, his handsome animated face talking to clients.

He lived in a Georgian town house **within walking distance of** his work and the many dinner parties to which he was invited.

People had almost given up hoping that he would form a permanent relationship with anyone he met over an elegant dinner in their homes. But he was always witty and good company. He sang for his supper and was universally charming, apparently **indiscreet**, but in fact giving nothing away.

People put his ongoing bachelor status down to his having been very busy in the marrying years and now, as he was in his late fifties, to **having become too set in his ways** to change them to accommodate anyone else.

His little weakness, as he was often heard to say, was an over-concern for the horses. He was always to be seen at Punchestown, Leopardstown, the Curragh and down the country, too. He never seemed to be with anyone, but since he knew everyone all he had to do was to say to the people he met that they should all meet up in this bar or that, or in some of the hospitality tents, and he had a ready-made circle of friends for the day.

He was also interested in antique furniture, items that would suit his tall, narrow Georgian home. He never boasted about his Chippendale chairs, but he did arrange for them to be very well lit so that people could admire them, and only then would he tell a little of their origin, always slightly **self-deprecating**, as if he knew nothing about it really.

Once or twice a year he took time off from the racecourses of Europe to go to some of the major antiques markets. Which was why he found himself going into the Grosvenor House Hotel.

He was in London anyway, for a case conference on a very sticky extradition matter. Martin Grey's client was **running out of time and excuses**, but not money. **A huge refresher fee** had been handed over.

Martin decided to look at some mirrors. He knew exactly what he wanted, something with an Adamesque urn and trailing foliage on it. A mirror that he could laugh at lightly and say how strange it was to think that people were examining themselves in it as long ago as 1770.

And that was when he saw her.

He saw the most striking woman he had ever seen. She looked about thirty, a good twenty-five years younger than he was. Tall and

slim and wearing an oddly old-fashioned, full, black silk skirt with a crisp white shirt.

She had no jewellery, he noticed, and that included no wedding ring. Her hair was short and slightly damp-looking, as if she had just got out of a shower. She had a soft black leather shoulder bag, and pointed-toe, low, black shoes.

He took all this in in seconds.

She was examining different mirrors from his choice. Slightly over-ornate, he thought. They were Georgian, certainly, but they had candle-sticks attached, a little fussy for today's world, yet they had been hugely popular for a long time.

Martin pretended to look at his own choice, but all the time he watched her.

She wasn't what you would call languid, but her movements were slow, almost rippling. Yes, that was it, rippling. She reminded him of a beautiful filly stretching and arching her neck.

For the first time in his whole life he **felt an uncontrollable urge** to go straight over and put his hand on the arm of someone he did not know.

He wanted to talk to her, tell her how her particular simple style of beauty had touched him, suggest they have dinner.

He **pulled himself together** sharply. That kind of thing would be pure **sleaze**, completely vulgar. A mature man reaching out to stroke a beautiful young woman, a stranger. This wasn't what an eminent counsel did while browsing at one of the smartest antiques fairs of the season.

She would be frightened by him, repulsed. He must not even think of doing it. But he could not let her disappear from him. Not now that he had seen her.

Twice in his life he had thought he might be in love. Once with Francesca, a hopelessly unsuitable but beautiful Italian woman who eventually married one of Martin's colleagues and made the man **unspeakably miserable**. Once with Shona, an intense law lecturer who might certainly have been a suitable wife in that she could hold her own at a dinner party, and they would have had plenty in common. But Shona lacked glamour and style.

And for all that he admired her mind, Martin found it hard to overlook the fact that she wore shabby cardigans and didn't look after her hair and her nails.

Unlike this goddess who stood examining the mirrors.

How he wanted to sit opposite her **at dinner**.

He knew exactly the restaurant to suggest to her. Once they got talking...

Why was there no way to let her know that he was a really respectable person? That, if they were in Ireland, everyone would know his face and, to be honest, everyone would be pleased, almost honoured to be addressed by him?

It never mattered to Martin that he was well known, it sat lightly on him. But now, on the one occasion he needed to be recognised, he had to be in London, a city of ten million people for God's sake! How very unfair!

She had one of those long, swan-like necks that you sometimes saw on models, but yet she didn't look haughty or aloof. Not unlike a taller Audrey Hepburn, but not as pixie-like.

He ached to talk to her, to say something pleasant so that she would reply and he would hear her voice.

What would his friends say in such circumstances? The lawyers would make arch legalistic remarks. 'Would my learned friend care to inform the court what conclusion she has reached. on the sculptural girandole with scrolled acanthus leaves?'

The people he knew from racing would offer odds on it being a genuine Robert Adam piece or not. Nothing seemed right.

And soon she would move away and he would never see her again. The thought terrified him. 'Are you interested in horses?' he blurted out suddenly.

Her eyes widened in surprise. He wished he were twelve feet under the ground. She looked him up and down.

'Fairly interested,' she said eventually. She had a slight Australian accent.

'I've always wanted to go to the Melbourne Cup, Martin said foolishly.

'Well, why don't you go then?' she asked reasonably.

'Oh, I will one day,' he reassured her.

She was just about to move on, thinking presumably that she had met a madman. Martin just couldn't let her go.

'I have a wonderful tip for you for next Sunday,' he stuttered, completely unrecognizable as **the silver-tongued lawyer** who could silence a court with his opening sentence.

'You have?' She had such a lovely voice, not strident, not affected. Warm, interested.

She didn't seem to think it at all odd that a stranger should come up and offer her a tip. Maybe people were doing that all the time.

'Yes. She'll be placed. No question.' Martin's voice was still slightly shaking.

He was having a real conversation with her and she wasn't walking away in disgust or anything.

'She? It's a filly then?'

'Indeed. Called Alexander Goldrun. Great animal altogether, full of heart, runner-up in last month's Irish Guineas. On Sunday, she's in Chantilly... the four-thirty race. It's called Diane Hermes. Back her for a place now, won't you?'

'Only runner-up in the Irish Guineas?' she asked, frowning doubtfully.

'But you should have seen that race!' Martin had a light in his eye now. 'She was **runner-up** to Attraction, a horse never beaten, undefeated, before and after.'

'I see.' She was thoughtful.

'I wasn't suggesting you put the deeds of the house on her or anything,' he said with his famous Martin smile.

'No, indeed,' she agreed.

There was a silence between them.

'What were you suggesting, actually?' she asked.

'Well, I would like to have asked you out, but people don't do that to strangers, so I thought I'd do it differently. I am sort of giving you my credentials in a way by giving you this tip. And I thought that I'd also give you my name and phone number and if when Alexander

Goldrun comes in, then you might give me a ring and we could go out to dinner?'

He managed to look hopeful but laid-back at the same time. He had sent out the message that his life would continue even if she did not call him.

She looked at him for a moment.

'Fair enough,' she said.

He wrote down his name and his mobile phone number on a piece of paper and handed it to her.

'And are you a breeder, a trainer, an owner?' she asked.

'None of these things, I'm afraid, just an enthusiastic guy who hands my money over to the bookies,' he laughed.

'They must have handed some of it back. She looked at his expensive clothes.

'A bit, from time to time, but I have a day job, too, I'm a lawyer.'

'Ah, cautious to the end,' she said.

'Normally yes, this time no.'

'I'm Megan,' she said.

'I'll hear from you Sunday night then, Megan,' he said, and moved away.

He felt light-headed with excitement. She wasn't a girl who would play games. She would call when the horse romped home in the first three.

Megan wondered what it was about her that attracted lawyers.

She had just finished a four-year relationship with a sharp Sydney barrister, who really should have been with a brainless bimbo, not a business-woman.

And when she had eventually found him with such a bimbo, she had left him without a backward glance and returned his letters un-opened.

She had come to Europe to decide what kind of a fresh start she would make. For one thing, she would create a different place to live, not a minimalist, near-empty space looking out on Sydney Harbour. She wanted furnishings and items of beauty around her, like those she had seen at the antiques fair.

She'd never expected such a handsome, attractive man to approach her. Why hadn't he asked her out directly, instead of all this waiting around until some horse won some race? But that was lawyers for you,

always playing games. Megan knew a fair bit about horses. Her father had been taking her to the races since she was a child. He would be very pleased she had met up with another gambling man. The Sydney lawyer wasn't ever a man for the racecourse.

Four days now until the damn race. And suppose the horse fell? She could ring him to sympathise. Or would that be pathetic? Megan didn't do pathetic.

Martin stayed on in London. In theory he should have gone back to Dublin, but what was the point? He would be seeing Megan on Sunday night, so why waste the time going back and forth?

The next few days hung very heavy on Martin's hands.

Megan asked the porter in her hotel how she would get the results of a race in France that was not televised in Britain.

He said he'd find out.

'Oh, the Prix Diane,' he said knowledgeably. I have a tenner on Grey Lilas myself. For a place, of course.'

'Of course,' she said.

Why on earth was time going so slowly? Why had she agreed to risk her whole future with a really attractive man on the results of some horse race in France?

She paced the foyer, watching the porter, willing him to make the phone call and give her the good news.

Martin sat in his club, **clenching his fists** and unclenching them, and trying to keep his eyes away from the clock. In fourteen minutes he would ring his bookmaker.

In thirteen-and-a-half.

He must have been mad to let it all depend on this. Stone mad.

'You must have a lot on that filly,' the porter said to Megan. 'I never saw anyone so anxious.'

'More than you'd believe,' Megan said.

Only three minutes.

'Go on, Kevin, go on, Kevin Manning, ride the race of your life,' Martin Grey cried out to the walls.

Under the French skies, Latice came first, Millionaia second and Grey Lilas third. A very good fourth came Alexander Goldrun.

Martin put down the phone from his book- maker. His heart was heavy. It was a place, of course, but fourth place.

He had a very strange feeling that he was going to cry. But he knew that once he started he might never stop. The mobile phone was on his table beside him.

Megan had not telephoned.

Megan sat shell-shocked. The porter was trying not to look too pleased about Grey Lilas.

'Do they pay out on fourth?' **she croaked to him.**

'In handicaps they do, if there are sixteen or more runners,' he began.

'So it is a place then, is it?' Her face was full of hope.

'It's France, you see, they don't have bookies over there, it's all the Tote, pari-mutuel they call it, and they don't pay on fourth, no matter how many runners.'

'Would any bookie pay out on it, do you think?'

The porter was puzzled.

'Well, you could have made an individual arrangement with a bookie and agreed with him that he pay on fourth.'

'Could I?' She had hope again.

'But you didn't,' he said.

'No, I didn't,' she said.

'Did you lose much? The porter was sympathetic.

'Almost everything,' she said.

Martin waited in his club until Tuesday, then he left for Dublin. She wasn't going to ring. She might have thought that a fourth paid out. Or that it counted. But she didn't care enough.

Back to work.

Megan went to the airport going back home. on Tuesday. She was

She would put it behind her. It was a foolish thing to have agreed to. She should have spoken at the time. If she had called him and said that fourth counted, he would always have despised her. She had never run after a man. She wouldn't start running after one now.

'Which terminal?' the taxi driver asked.

Megan couldn't remember. It was three weeks since she had come into London, how could she recall the terminal where she arrived? It didn't matter anyway, there was surely transport from one to the other. And she had **plenty of time to spare.**

'Terminal One,' she said, uncaring.

Martin was in the bookstore. He would get something that would take his mind off this woman. A thriller. A good, creepy, bloodthirsty thriller.

When he got home, he would have a shower, change and sit on the terrace of his elegant Georgian house and read.

He realised with a sense of pain how very lonely his life seemed. There were long, empty years ahead.

He shook himself. It was nonsense to think like this. She might have been entirely unsuitable for him, he might have been far too old for her. He must get rid of this ridiculous sense of loss.

Megan realised that she should be in Terminal Four. She decided to have a coffee before she made the trek. A lot of the life had gone out of her.

She had enjoyed her long trip over from Australia. Now she felt tired and weary. There was a sense that she had missed something. She must get rid of such a negative feeling.

And then she saw him. His face looked grim. He was unhappy today. Not at all the boyish, eager man she had seen at the antiques fair. But still very handsome, a face of character, a warm expression. A man you could trust.

She took out her mobile phone and dialled his number.

'Hello?' His voice was as she remembered it.

'It's Megan,' she said.

'It is?' There was joy in his face, she could see it.

'Megan, where are you?' he cried. She saw how pleased he was she had called.

'At Tie Rack,' she said.

'Where?'

'A shop that sells ties and scarves about twenty metres away from you.'

He looked over, saw her, dropped his briefcase and started running towards her. She left her luggage and ran to meet him.

In an airport, it's not unusual to see people embracing. Welcoming someone home or saying goodbye.

There's usually a lot of embracing going on. But never as ardent as the way Megan and Martin held each other **with tears of relief** and the joy of discovery in their eyes.

(Maeve Binchy, *The Return Journey*)



Focus on Vocabulary

I. Explain the meaning of the words and collocations given in bold in the text. Use them in the context.

II. Match the words / phrases (1–15) from the story with their definitions (A–O). Write 5 original sentences using any of the vocabulary:

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| 1. Dashing | A. To finish in a top position (usually 1st–3rd) |
| 2. Set in his ways | B. Very lively or expressive |
| 3. Hospitality tents | C. Unwilling to change habits or lifestyle |
| 4. Self-deprecating | D. Moving smoothly in waves |
| 5. Animated | E. Proof of qualifications or abilities |
| 6. Rippling | F. Graceful and elegant in movement or appearance |
| 7. Catch | G. A person who accepts and pays out bets |
| 8. Credentials | H. To say something suddenly and impulsively |
| 9. Girandole | I. A person who is very attractive and eligible for marriage |
| 10. Place (in a race) | J. To admire oneself in a reflective surface |
| 11. Bookmaker | K. A branched decorative candle holder, often attached to a mirror |
| 12. Refresher fee | L. Speaking critically or modestly about oneself |
| 13. Unopened letters | M. Extra payment to a lawyer for additional case work |
| 14. Swan-like | N. A charming, confident man |
| 15. Blurt out | O. A sign of completely ending a relationship |

III. Translate the text into Ukrainian paying attention to the target vocabulary in bold:

Living **within walking distance of** the bustling city center, Julian had found a seemingly perfect life with **plenty of time to spare**. His **credentials** were impeccable, a testament to his years as **the silver-tongued lawyer** who often mesmerized both judges and juries. Yet, on this particular evening **at a dinner** with old friends, he felt unsettlingly restless. It was undeniable: Julian was **running out of time and excuses** to avoid introspection about his own life. As the conversation drifted across the table, Julian's mind wandered towards the emotional whirlwind caused by his past relationships. He recalled being viewed as **quite a dashing lover**, yet just beneath the surface lay a trail of **indiscreet** choices and **disturbed first wives**. More than once, his affairs were laced with **sleaze**, tainting his courtroom victories with personal defeats. From the corner of the room, a recent **runner-up** in a prestigious case approached him. She was an alleged murderer, acquitted thanks to **a huge refresher fee** paid to Julian. Though Julian cared deeply for justice, his heart still clenched his fists with an unsettling intensity whenever he pondered over whether he'd crossed lines he shouldn't have. Just then, a colleague cheerfully blurted out an anecdote that brought Julian back to the dinner. He forced a smile, but inside, he could feel an uncontrollable urge to reflect on his life choices. Was he happy, or had he simply become too set in his ways? With **self-deprecation** often masked by a confident demeanor, Julian realized he was **unspeakably miserable**. Yet, there was hope. As he **pulled himself together**, he resolutely decided to embrace change. Looking around, he saw familiar faces and felt an unexpected warmth. When an old friend joked about his melodramatic tendencies, Julian, **with tears of relief**, laughed louder than he had in years.

IV. Replace the collocations in bold with the target vocabulary from the previous exercise:

1. He showed his **qualifications** to the interviewer.
2. She **suddenly revealed** the secret without thinking.
3. The frog **made a low, raspy sound** to him.
4. He **tightened his hands into fists** in anger.

5. He had become **very rigid in his habits**.
6. The store is **close enough to walk to**.
7. He **composed himself** after the shocking news.
8. She **finished second** in the competition.
9. The politician was involved in **corruption**.
10. **Overcome with grateful tears**, she hugged the vet, whispering thanks as her one-eyed cat purred softly in her arms, alive and well after the surgery.
11. He **was suddenly compelled** to burst into song in the courtroom – an impulse he heroically suppressed until recess.
12. The barrister demanded an **exorbitant additional fee**, muttering something about “existential suffering” brought on by cross-examining a particularly smug expert witness.
13. In a moment of rare **mocking humility**, the notoriously arrogant CEO admitted, “Well, I suppose I do have the subtlety of a rhinoceros in a tea shop.”
14. Her **tactless** remark about the judge’s toupee earned her a sharp nudge from her solicitor—and a stern glare from the bench.
15. He was **something of a charming romantic**, until he tried to woo her with a sonnet plagiarised from a 17th-century poet she had once written her thesis on.

Reading Comprehension

V. State whether the following statements are TRUE or FALSE:

1. Martin Grey was a married man with a complicated past.
2. He often represented clients in minor, low-profile court cases.
3. Martin met Megan at a dinner party in Dublin.
4. Megan had just ended a relationship with another lawyer.
5. Martin gave Megan a racing tip to indirectly ask her out.
6. Alexander Goldrun won the race in Chantilly.
7. Megan didn’t know much about horse racing.
8. Martin stayed in London hoping Megan would call.
9. Megan found herself in the wrong terminal at the airport.
10. Martin and Megan never saw each other again.

VI. *Answer the following questions:*

1. What does the story suggest about the nature of unexpected connections?
2. Why do you think Martin hesitated to talk to Megan at first?
3. How did Martin try to appear confident and charming despite his nerves?
4. Do you think Megan's decision not to call immediately was wise? Why or why not?
5. Why do you think the author chose horse racing as a key element in the story?
6. What does Martin's bachelor lifestyle tell us about his personality?
7. What kind of impression did Megan make on Martin? Why?
8. How did the setting of the airport contribute to the story's ending?
9. Would the story have ended differently if the horse had placed third? How?
10. What message do you think the author wants to convey about love and timing?

Discussion

VII. *Role-Play Activity. Work in pairs. One plays Martin, and the other plays Megan. They meet again one week after the airport reunion. Develop a 3–5 minute conversation that covers:*

- ❖ Their thoughts after the race
- ❖ Why Megan didn't call immediately
- ❖ How Martin felt waiting
- ❖ Their plans to see each other again

VIII. *Work in pairs. Discuss the follow-up questions:*

- ❖ How would you react in Megan's or Martin's position?
- ❖ Can you relate to the feeling of missing a chance, then unexpectedly getting it back?
- ❖ Do you think their relationship will last? Why or why not?

IX. *Read the text and mark the following statements as T (True) or F (False):*

1. The Irish have a deep cultural and economic connection to horses, similar to the English with dogs.
2. Horse-breeding in Ireland is predominantly managed by local Irish families.
3. The Anglo-Irish gentry were known for their extreme fondness for horses, sometimes more than their own families.
4. In "Gulliver's Travels," horses are depicted as inferior to humans.
5. The Dublin Horse Show is considered a significant social event in Ireland.
6. Horse racing in Ireland is known for being more inclusive and less class-based than in England.
7. The Irish horse industry generates significant revenue, comparable to the earnings from famous Irish celebrities.

HORSES

If the English are crazy about dogs, the Irish are demented about horses. Horses in Ireland are a religion as much as a sport, a spiritual cult as well as an immensely lucrative industry. The country is commonly thought to be the best place in the world to breed them, and horse-breeders in Ireland now include a clutch of Arab multi-millionaires.

Some of the old-style Anglo-Irish gentry seemed to get off their horses only to go to bed, and even then showed definite signs of wanting to drag them between the sheets. Some of them certainly seemed to prefer four legs to two, even if the two legs in question held up their wives and children. In the Anglo-Irish Jonathan Swift's novel *Gulliver's Travels*, horses are a race of supremely rational beings, far superior to humans. The Irish playwright Brendan Behan once described an Anglo-Irish gentleman as a Protestant on a horse. There are stud farms galore on the rich central pastures of the country, and 27 race courses attended by over one million punters a year. Irish horses are one of the nation's

most glamorous, desirable exports, along with Sinead O'Connor and Pierce Brosnan. They bring in about £65 million annually in sales. The Dublin Horse Show is one of the glittering social events of the year, while in the countryside traditional hunts flourish. Horse racing in Ireland prides itself on being a more classless pursuit than it is in England, though this is questionable: the industry has traditionally been controlled by a tight group of military-style gentlemen.

(Extracted from Terry Eagleton's *The Truth About the Irish*)



CHRISTMAS TIMING



Before Reading

Work in pairs or small groups. Discuss the following questions:

- ❖ How do you usually celebrate Christmas in your family or country?
- ❖ What is your favorite Christmas memory or tradition?
- ❖ Do you prefer giving or receiving gifts at Christmas? Why?
- ❖ Some people find Christmas stressful – do you think the holiday has become too commercialized?

Reading

This would be their fifth Christmas together, or not together. But the principle was the same. Chris hated the smugness of married people who went on and on about anniversaries, as if a thing could only be celebrated when it was legit. She couldn't believe that her friends didn't know that she and Noel had got together in the winter of 1984. A magical winter when they kept finding out how much they had in common; they were both Christmas babies, one called Chris, one called Noel in deference to the season. They had both been bored rigid by the Olympic Games and never wanted to hear of a decathlon, a javelin, or a discus ever again. They had loved the film *Amadeus* and felt that at just touching thirty they were a little too old for Michael Jackson.

It had been the Christmas of Stevie Wonder and "I just called to say I love you." Chris would never forget that as long as she lived. And the way Noel did call to say he loved her, from every phone box, hotel foyer, railway station. And from the family home whenever his wife was out of earshot.

The children were so young in 1984. Noel's children. And of course, to be fair, his wife's children. They were very young, they were seven and eight. That was young. And oddly, as the years went by, they still seemed to be young. Chris couldn't understand it, everything else changed. But those children of Noel's were still clinging toddlers expecting him home, needing to be telephoned, wanting presents, demanding postcards daily on the few occasions when Noel and Chris did manage to get away together. They seemed to be getting younger in their photographs too. Or else dressing younger and assuming babyish positions. They were twelve and thirteen now. Why did they still get photographed cuddled up to Daddy, leaning on him, needing protection? Did **a devilishly cunning wife** always manage to snap them this way, knowing that these would be the pictures that got shown rather than complete family scenes?

They were very sensitive with each other, Chris and Noel. He never mentioned aspects of the family Christmas that might upset her, the parties for relatives and neighbors. She was the same with him, she never talked about how her parents always invited her father's junior partner, a man who had the huge advantage of being single. She never told him how her sisters talked to her darkly about the biological clock ticking away and how liberation was all very well but did one want to put off babies forever?

In fact Chris thought that they were much more **courteous** to each other and **anxious not to offend** than were most married couples she knew. She often did those quiz-type articles in magazines. "Are you compatible?" In all of them, answering honestly, she thought they **came out with top marks**. They always listened, fascinated, to stories of the working day. They never slouched around the house **in slovenly and unattractive gear**. Neither of them would dream of turning on a television rather than having a conversation. They were tender and giving in their lovemaking rather than selfish. They didn't need to cheat. They were **compatible**.

Sometimes she did an "Are you romantic?" test. And they were, they were!

He brought her a single flower; he remembered what she wore and praised it. She always served dinner on a table, no trays on the lap in Chris's flat.

And it was the same in the “Is he a chauvinist pig?” tests. He wasn’t, he wasn’t. With her hand on her heart she could say that he admired her mind, thought her job was worthwhile, asked her advice about his own, treated her equally in all things. There was no way she could be considered his little bit of fluff.

There were no tests she shied away from. Not even the “Will your love survive?” She went through it remorselessly and decided that it would. Triumphantly, when all others had fallen or cooled down. They had all the right ingredients for survival. They were **clear-sighted**, they knew the limitations and yet could travel to the furthestmost boundaries. Even the regular Christmas promise that next year they would be together. Properly. That wasn’t a weak link in their love. It was a necessary pronouncing of commitment.

Noel loved doing these little psychological tests too. Sometimes he found more that Chris hadn’t seen in management magazines. “Is your love life suffering because of stress?” They would laugh confidently and agree that Noel’s love life with Chris was doing nothing of the sort. He found a serious one called “Are you a cheat?” They went through it very carefully and decided that he wasn’t, because nobody was being let down. And that when the time was right everything would be out in the open.

So they had no fear of any Christmas Quiz dreamed up in a family newspaper to keep the readers happy and partially alert over Christmas. And though they were separated by many miles, they wouldn’t be unhappy on Christmas Day. Noel had a picture of Chris sitting down in her family home surrounded by sisters and brothers-in-law, nephews and nieces, and good old family friends. He could imagine her sitting by the fire and picking up this marvelous questionnaire and filling it in quietly, smiling to herself in the knowledge that he, too, would be doing it by his fireside and that everything they answered to the questions would be almost word for word the same. Chris thought of Noel, after all the family fun with those two children who seemed to have reversed the aging process, possibly getting rattles and soft toys in their stockings this year. He would ask for a little peace for Daddy to read the papers and it would be given to him. She could see him nodding and smiling over the kind of thing that might have other couples **riddled with**

anxiety. Compatible, romantic, clear-sighted, nonchauvinist, noncheating? They would win in every category. At around the same time on a crisp, cold afternoon on the day that was both Christmas and the day they had reached half of three score and ten, they sat down to do the Christmas Quiz.

This year it was in a different format. Not the usual boxes to tick for Yes and No and Possibly. Not the usual scoring scheme at the end: “If you scored over 75 you are ridiculously happy” or “If you scored under 20, are you sure this relationship is for you?”

This year it was a completely new departure. You had to write in words, sentences, not ticks and crosses. There was no scoring at the end, only the suggestion that you leave the newspaper around the house so that the loved one could read it. That’s if you wanted the loved one to change. Deep in their armchairs miles from each other, Chris and Noel, the thirty-five-year-old Christmas babies, nestled in to do the questionnaire. It was called “Those little irritations,” and under a whole lot of different headings you had to fill in the things about the loved one that caused you to wince. BE HONEST the headline screamed at you, and said there was no point in doing it unless you did it honestly.

In the house where Chris sat, children played with their new games by the tree, her sisters talked of new arrivals in the new decade, her parents slept contentedly in their chairs. Her father’s junior partner, who had the merit of being single, mended the Christmas lights and put batteries into all the gadgets that had been gift-wrapped without them. He saw Chris take up the questionnaire.

“Only a couple who were seriously mad would attempt that,” he said genially.

Chris looked at him pityingly. He must not know about her happy love life in case he ever let it slip to her parents.

“Oh that’s right, only us singles would dare to do it. Fantasy life and all that.”

He smiled at her; he looked kind of different this year, perhaps he, too, had a secret life. She drew the paper up to her closer so that she could begin without his seeing the pure contentment on her face.

In Noel’s house the children had gone out with their friends; they said there was nothing to do at home and now that they had opened their

presents, couldn't they please go up the hill and fly kites like everyone else. Noel's wife talked excitedly with her father and mother about the business she was going to start. Yes, of course it would mean a bit of travel, but the children were well grown up now and nothing made youngsters as independent as having to look after themselves a little in these formative years.

Noel opened the paper and smiled at "Those little irritations." He knew before he started that there would be no irritations, little or large, about his life with Chris.

Now, if it had been a questionnaire about him and his wife. Aha, that would be a different matter altogether! Look at the very first question.

"Does the loved one have any one phrase said over and over that drives you mad?" Chris hadn't. She was forever fresh and new in everything she said. But his wife, if she said "Let's face it" once a day she must say it four hundred times. And her other phrase was "To be strictly honest." God, how he could scream when she said that. She always felt the need to say that she was being strictly honest when she told him **the most trivial detail**, like how long she had waited for a bus or what time somebody had telephoned. "No, to be strictly honest it was at three o'clock she phoned not half-past two, but let's face it, she does phone every day." No, there was nothing at all in that category that he could hang on Chris. His wife, however, had another phrase that he hated. It was "Right?" Said as a question after the most banal statement. "I saw the new nextdoor neighbors today. Right?" Why did she say "Right?" With an effort Noel dragged himself away from this bubbling rage. The quiz was meant to be about him and Chris, for heaven's sake, and so far she had passed with flying colors. Now on to question two. "Is there any item of clothing that the loved one wears which you would like to consign to the dustbin?" Well, yes of course, that hideous mink cravat, and the line of chat that went with it. "I don't approve of killing animals for their fur, but mink are different, they're vermin, and they've never known freedom." But wait, that wasn't Chris, that was his wife. Chris wouldn't wear any kind of fur, nor would she have a list of excuses ready if she did. She wore lovely soft colors, gray-blue like her eyes and lilac sometimes, then when he would least expect it she might

appear in a scarlet dress, or a yellow sweater. No, nothing for the dustbin there. He sighed with pleasure as he thought of his luck in love. A girl who never said a word astray or wore a garment that he didn't love.

In another house Chris was Being Honest, as the headline had urged her to be. Any phrase, over and over? Well, only the way he always said "I must go to the little boys' room" when they went out to dinner, or even when they had dinner in her flat. But that wasn't something you hated. Just a bit predictable. Oh, and of course he always said "Ice and slice?" when he got her a gin and tonic, as if it were mint new. But that was sort of a joke, he had imaginary quotation marks around it. No, she wouldn't write it down, that would be nitpicking. Across from the fire she saw her father's partner. She thought he had been looking at her, but she must have imagined it, he was very busy installing new batteries. He had brought a seemingly endless supply of them, which was good thinking on the part of someone who didn't have any children of his own. Chris read on. Was there an item of clothing belonging to Noel that she would throw out, apart from the underpants with the words "Hot Stuff" on them? Well, there was the red-and-white-striped nightcap that had been funny once, and the fur hat after the Gorbachev cult, and the socks with sandals in the summer, and the driving gloves that were perfectly reasonable gloves in themselves but looked self-important on a driving wheel somehow. But these weren't real irritations. Not in the sense of being able to find a list of them.

There were twenty questions in the list. Twenty times Noel found at least five flaws in his wife and not one in his girlfriend. When Chris answered the twenty questions, however, she found twenty flaws in Noel. Twenty times, with tears beginning to start at the back of her eyes. Yes, she had found three unpleasant eating habits, and yes, she had observed two signs of **corporate dishonesty**, as well as an alarming six signs of **petty personal meanness**. She wrote none of them down. She didn't need to. It wasn't a paper to be left around to improve his habits. It was **an eye-opener**. As **the scales fell from her eyes** so did the glory seem to fall from Noel. She knew he would call soon and sing the Stevie Wonder lines down the phone. She knew she wouldn't tell him now that she knew he would never leave his home for her and furthermore she

didn't want him to. It would be an ease to him too. He wasn't a basically bad man, just a basically irritating one.

In another house, Noel had counted seven unpleasant eating habits in his wife, and such high levels of corporate dishonesty that he feared she would **be in a major criminal league** when she got her business going. Noel knew that this was the time he would tell his wife that he wanted to leave. He would tell her today, this very day. It would be fairer and she could go ahead with her plans without taking him into consideration. He hadn't realized just **how far they had grown apart**. Just how little his children needed him. What a revelation it had been.

He would tell her straight out and then phone Chris. And this time no need to go up to the bedroom saying he needed to go to the little boys' room to make the call. No need to go down the road to the phone box on the corner. He would be honest.

Noel could hardly wait to know what Chris would say. Perhaps she would leave home immediately and drive back to her flat in the city. What would there be for her to stay at home for? He would drive around to see her, take a bottle of tonic, possibly, and a lemon, she'd have gin, it would be silly to duplicate but he did know how she loved a gin and tonic with its ice and slice.

He wished he could see her now. But later, afterward, he would ask her what it had been like in the hours before he had rung to tell her that he was free.

Chris sat and played a game of electronic ice hockey with the friend of the family, her father's partner, who happened to be single and who also happened to be very nice.

They were the only ones who heard the telephone ring, and he agreed with her that there was no point in answering it. Only very irritating people rang on Christmas Day.

(Maeve Binchy, *This Year It Will Be Different*)



I. Explain the meaning of the words and collocations given in bold in the text. Use them in the context.

II. Match the words / phrases with their definitions:

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| 1. Smugness | A. Feeling or showing excessive pride |
| 2. Legit | B. Legal or officially accepted |
| 3. Clinging | C. Holding on tightly |
| 4. Courteous | D. Polite and respectful |
| 5. Fluff | E. Something trivial or not serious |
| 6. Consign | F. To throw away or get rid of |
| 7. Predictable | G. Easily expected or repetitive |
| 8. Meanness | H. Lack of generosity |
| 9. Remorselessly | I. Without pity or pause |
| 10. Self-important | J. Showing a high opinion of oneself |
| 11. Questionnaire | K. A list of questions for information or testing |
| 12. Irritations | L. Things that annoy or bother |
| 13. Genuinely | M. Truly, sincerely |
| 14. Mended | N. Repaired |
| 15. Revelation | O. A surprising realization |

III. Translate the following story into English using the target vocabulary below:

riddled with anxiety, came out with top marks, the scales fell from her eyes, incompatible, devilishly cunning wife, courteous, in unattractive gear, corporate dishonesty, an eye-opener, anxious not to offend, how far they had grown apart, be in a major criminal league, clear-sighted, the most trivial detail, petty personal meanness, in slovenly clothes.

У тихому передмісті Мейплвуда Джонатан і його диявольські хитра дружина Ерін підтримували стосунки, що трималися на зовнішньому фасаді. Для сусідів вони були втіленням зразкової пари – завжди ввічливі, обережні, аби нікого не образити. Та за цією маскою ховалися справжні «я», несумісні, як олія та вода. Джонатан,

сповнений тривоги, часто замислювався, як далеко вони відійшли один від одного з часів юного кохання. Кар'єра Ерін стрімко йшла вгору, вона досягала найвищих результатів у кожному корпоративному проєкті, хоча Джонатан підозрював, що тут не обійшлося без нечесних махінацій. Йому не давала спокою думка, що її успіхи – це не лише результат наполегливої праці. Удома Ерін завжди виглядала бездоганно – повна протилежність Джонатану, який часто носив недбало підібраний одяг або взагалі виглядав непрезентабельно, не помічаючи, як між ними почала проростати дріб'язкова особиста злість. Їхній образ гармонії розбився одного вечора, коли розмова про щось зовсім дріб'язкове відкрила Джонатану очі. І їй також – вона усвідомила, що справа не лише в різних смаках, а в глибшому нерозумінні один одного. Він побачив у ній холодну розважливість – як вона майстерно діє у світі бізнесу та особистих стосунків із точністю, яка йому була недосяжна. Його осяяло: вони навіть не грають на одному полі – цілком можливо, що вона створила для себе власну кримінальну лігу найвищого рівня.

Reading Comprehension

IV. Write T (True) or F (False) next to each statement:

1. Chris and Noel have been married for five years.
2. Chris and Noel first got together during the summer.
3. Chris believes she and Noel are very compatible.
4. Noel's children are growing more independent.
5. Chris always complains about Noel's family.
6. They never argue about each other's habits.
7. Chris and Noel score highly on relationship quizzes.
8. The Christmas quiz this year involved writing answers.
9. Chris realized she didn't actually enjoy being with Noel.
10. Noel decided not to leave his wife after the quiz.

V. Answer the following questions:

1. Why does Chris dislike traditional anniversaries?
2. What were some early signs of compatibility between Chris and Noel?
3. How did Noel balance his time between his family and Chris?

4. What does the story suggest about illusions in relationships?
5. How did Chris feel during the Christmas quiz?
6. What are some of the flaws Chris notices about Noel?
7. Why does Noel find fault with his wife during the quiz?
8. What was ironic about the Christmas quiz for both characters?
9. What does the ending suggest about the future of Chris and Noel's relationship?
10. What themes does the story explore about love, reality, and self-deception?

Discussion

VI. *Comment on the following quotations from the story. Say whether you agree or disagree with the statement and give your reasons.*

VII. *In small groups, discuss the following:*

- Do you think Chris and Noel were truly in love? Why or why not?
- What does the story tell us about romantic idealism versus reality?
- How do societal expectations influence personal relationships in the story?
- Share your opinion about the use of quizzes to evaluate relationships. Are they helpful or harmful?
- Discuss a time when you or someone you know realized a relationship wasn't what it seemed.

Irishness in Facts and Myths

VIII. *Read the text and answer the questions that are given below:*

SHAMROCK

No such thing, at least from the viewpoint of a botanist. Shamrock just means any of various plants with trifoliate leaves. Its three-in-one form symbolises the Trinity. In the nineteenth century, an Irish botanist had thirty-five specimens of shamrock sent to him for scientific examination from all over the country. They turned out to represent four

entirely different plants. Shamrock is green, of course, as befits Ireland, but green has only been the symbolic colour of the country fairly recently. Some scholars think it used to be blue. If you see an Irish person wearing green, remember that it probably has about as much significance as if you saw a Mexican wearing it. A green flag with a golden harp was for a long time the national symbol of Ireland. Henry VIII added a crown to the harp, just to signify his kingship over the country. Later Irish nationalists sometimes kept the harp but treasonably removed the crown. Towards the end of the eighteenth century in Europe, the colour green became the symbol not only of Ireland but of Liberty and Revolution in general, symbolising as it did a spring-like renewal of life. At about the same time in Ireland, the colour orange came to represent Protestant loyalty to the English crown and constitution.

In the nineteenth century, the green flag with the golden harp went on being used by Irish nationalists, since they objected to the union with Britain. But they also invented their own version of the French tricolour, which was green, white and orange. The white was meant to be a kind of symbolic link between the green (Gaelic-Catholic) and the orange (Northern-Protestant), though some see it as the blank of their mutual incomprehension. This flag flew over Dublin's General Post Office during the Easter Rising in 1916, though there was a green flag beside it, just to keep everyone happy. The tricolour was later to become the official flag of the Irish Republic. In Northern Ireland, it remains the symbol of Catholic nationalism, whereas Protestants fly the Union flag.

(Extracted from Terry Eagleton's *The Truth About the Irish*)

Read the questions and choose the correct answer (a, b, c or d):

1. What is the primary meaning of the term "shamrock" according to the passage:

- a) A type of flower found in Ireland;
- b) A plant with three leaves that symbolizes the Holy Trinity;
- c) The national symbol of Ireland;
- d) A green vegetable commonly eaten in Ireland.

2. Which color was traditionally associated with Ireland before green became the dominant symbolic color:

- a) Blue;
- b) Orange;
- c) White;
- d) Red.

3. What happened to the harp symbol on the Irish flag during the period of Irish nationalism:

- a) The harp was replaced with a tricolor flag;
- b) A crown was added to the harp;
- c) The crown was removed from the harp;
- d) The harp was made bigger and more prominent.

4. What was the purpose of the white color in the Irish tricolor flag:

- a) To represent the Gaelic-Catholic tradition;
- b) To represent the Northern-Protestant tradition;
- c) To serve as a symbolic link between the green and orange;
- d) To symbolize Ireland's neutrality and independence.

5. Which statement about the Irish tricolor flag is NOT true according to the passage:

- a) It was inspired by the French tricolor flag;
- b) It became the official flag of the Irish Republic;
- c) It was used during the Easter Rising in 1916;
- d) It represented a compromise between Gaelic-Catholic and Northern-Protestant traditions.

6. What was the significance of the color orange in Ireland during the period discussed in the passage:

- a) It represented the spring-like renewal of life;
- b) It was a symbol of Irish nationalism and revolution;
- c) It was a symbol of Protestant loyalty to the English crown and constitution;
- d) It was used by Irish nationalists to challenge the British government.

7. What is the main focus of the passage:

- a) The botanical origins and history of the shamrock;
- b) The symbolic meanings and evolution of the Irish flag;
- c) The role of color in the Irish nationalist movement;
- d) The relationship between Ireland and the United Kingdom.



A TYPICAL IRISH CHRISTMAS...



Before Reading

Work in pairs or small groups. Discuss the following questions:

- ❖ What are some typical ways people spend Christmas?
- ❖ Do you think holidays are always happy times for everyone? Why or why not?
- ❖ How do people cope with loneliness during festive seasons?
- ❖ What are some ways friends or family can help someone going through a hard time?
- ❖ If you were feeling sad, would you prefer company or time alone?

Reading

A TYPICAL IRISH CHRISTMAS...

Everyone in the office wanted to ask Ben for Christmas. He was exhausted trying to tell them that honestly he was fine.

He didn't look fine, he didn't sound fine. He was a big sad man who had lost the love of his life last springtime. How could he be fine? Everything reminded him of Ellen. People running to meet others in restaurants, people carrying flowers, people spending a night at home, a night away.

Christmas would be terrible for Ben.

So they all found an excuse to invite him.

For Thanksgiving he had gone to Harry and Jeannie and their children. They would never know how long the hours had seemed, how dry the turkey, how flavorless the pumpkin pie, compared to the way it had been with Ellen.

He had smiled and thanked them and tried to take part, but his heart had been like lead. He had promised Ellen that he would try to be sociable after she was gone, that he would not become a recluse working all the hours of the day and many of the night.

He had not kept his promise.

But Ellen had not known it would be so hard. She would not have known the knives of loss he felt all over him as he sat at a Thanksgiving table with Harry and Jeannie and remembered that last year his Ellen had been alive and well with no shadow of the illness that had taken her away.

Ben really and truly could not go to anyone for Christmas. That had always been their special time, the time they trimmed the tree, for hours and hours, laughing and hugging each other all the while. Ellen would tell him stories about the great trees in the forests of her native Sweden, he told her stories about trees they bought in stores in Brooklyn, late on Christmas Eve when all the likely customers had gone and the trees were half price.

They had no children, but people said this is what made them love each other all the more. There was nobody to share their love but nobody to distract them either. Ellen worked as hard as he did, but she seemed to have time to make cakes and puddings and to soak the smoked fish in a special marinade.

“I want to make sure you never leave me for another woman...” she had said. “Who else could give you so many different dishes at Christmas?”

He would never have left her and he could not believe that she had left him that bright spring day.

Christmas with anyone else in New York would be unbearable. But they were all so kind, he couldn't tell them how much he would hate their hospitality. He would have to pretend that he was going elsewhere. But where?

Each morning on his way to work he passed a travel agency that had pictures of Ireland. He didn't know why he picked on that as a place to go. Probably because it was somewhere he had never been with Ellen.

She had always said she wanted the sun, the poor cold Nordic people were starved of sunshine, she needed to go to Mexico or the islands in winter. And that's where they had gone, as Ellen's pale skin turned golden and they walked together, so wrapped up in each other that they never noticed those who traveled on their own.

They must have smiled at them, Ben thought. Ellen was always so generous and warm to people, she would surely have talked to those without company. But he didn't remember it.

"I'm going to Ireland over Christmas," Ben told people firmly. "A little work and lot of rest." He spoke authoritatively, as if he knew exactly what he was going to do.

He could see in their faces that his colleagues and friends were pleased that something had been planned. He marveled at the easy way they accepted this simplistic explanation. Some months back if a colleague had said he was doing business and having a rest in Ireland, Ben would have nodded too, pleased that it had all worked out so well.

People basically didn't think deeply about other people.

He went into the travel agency to book a holiday.

The girl at the counter was small and dark, she had freckles on her nose, the kind of freckles that Ellen used to get in summer. It was odd to see them in New York on a cold, cold day.

She had her name pinned to her jacket – Fionnula.

"That sure is an unusual name," Ben said.

He had handed her his business card with a request that she should send him brochures and details of Irish Christmas holidays.

"Oh you'll meet dozens of them when you go to Ireland, if you go," she said. "Are you on the run or anything?"

Ben was startled, it wasn't what he had expected.

"Why do you ask that?" he wanted to know.

"Well, it says on your card that you're a vice-president, normally they have people who do their bookings for them. This seems like something secret."

She had an Irish accent and he felt he was there already, in her country where people asked unusual questions and would be interested in the reply.

"I want to escape, that's right, but not from the law, just from my friends and colleagues – they keep trying to involve me in their holiday plans and I don't want it."

"And why don't you have any of your own?" Fionnula asked.

“Because my wife died in April.” He said it baldly, as he had never done before.

Fionnula took it in.

“Well, I don’t imagine you’d want too much razzmatazz then,” she said.

“No, just a typical Irish Christmas,” he said.

“There’s no such thing, any more than there’s a typical United States Christmas. If you go to one of the cities I can book you a hotel where there will be a Christmas program, and maybe visits to the races and dances, and pub tours...or in the country you could go to somewhere with a lot of sports and hunting and – or even maybe rent a cottage where you’d meet nobody at all, but that might be a bit lonely for you.”

“So what would you suggest?” Ben asked.

“I don’t know you, I wouldn’t know what you’d like, you’ll have to tell me more about yourself.” She was simple and direct.

“If you say that to every client you can’t be very cost effective; it would take you three weeks to make a booking.”

Fionnula looked at him with spirit. “I don’t say that to every client, I only say it to you, you’ve lost your wife, it’s different for you, it’s important we send you to the right place.”

It was true, Ben thought, he had lost his wife. His eyes filled with tears.

“So you wouldn’t want a family scene then?” Fionnula asked, pretending she didn’t see that he was about to cry.

“Not unless I could find someone as remote and distant as myself, then they wouldn’t want to have anyone to stay.”

“Isn’t it very hard on you?” she said, full of sympathy.

“The rest of the world manages. This city must be full of people who lost other people.” Ben was going back into his shell.

“You could stay with my dad,” she said.

“What?”

“You’d be doing me a huge favor if you did go and stay with him, he is much more remote and distant than you are, and he’ll be on his own for Christmas.”

“Ah, yes, but...”

“And he lives in a big stone farmhouse with two big collie dogs that need to be walked for miles every day along the beach. And there’s a grand pub a half a mile down the road, but he won’t have a Christmas tree because there’ll be no one to look at it but himself.”

“And why aren’t you there with him?” Ben spoke equally directly to the girl Fionnula, whom he had never met before.

“Because I followed a man from my hometown all the way to New York City, I thought he’d love me and it would be all right.”

Ben did not need to ask if it had been all right, it obviously had been nothing of the sort.

Fionnula spoke. “My father said hard things and I said hard things, so I’m here and he’s there.”

Ben looked at her. “But you could call him, he could call you.”

“It’s not that easy, we’d each be afraid the other would put the phone down. When you don’t call that could never happen.”

“So I’m to be the peacemaker.” Ben worked it out.

“You have a lovely kind face and you have nothing else to do,” she said.

The collie dogs were called Sunset and Seaweed. Niall O’Connor apologized and said they were the most stupid names imaginable chosen by his daughter years back, but you have to keep faith with a dog.

“Or a daughter,” Ben the peacemaker had said.

“True, I suppose,” Fionnula’s father said.

They shopped in the town and bought the kind of food they would like for Christmas, steak and onions, runny cheese, and up-market ice cream with lumps of chocolate in it.

They went to midnight Mass on Christmas Eve.

Niall O’Connor told Ben his wife had been called Ellen too; they had a good cry together. Next day as they cooked their steaks they never mentioned the tears.

They walked the hills and explored the lakes, and they called on the neighbors and they learned the gossip of the neighborhood.

There had been no date fixed for Ben's return.

"I have to call Fionnula," he said.

"She's your travel agent," Niall O'Connor said.

"And your daughter," said Ben the peacemaker.

Fionnula said New York was cold but back in business, unlike Ireland which had presumably closed down for two weeks.

"It went great, the typical Irish Christmas," Ben said. "I was about to stay on and have a typical Irish New Year as well...so about the ticket...?"

"Ben, your ticket is an open ticket, you can travel any day you like...why are you really calling me?"

"We were hoping that you could come over here and have a quick New Year with us," he said.

"Who was hoping..."

"Well, Sunset and Seaweed and Niall and myself to name but four," he said. "I'd put them all on to you but the dogs are asleep. Niall's here though."

He handed the phone to Fionnula's father. And as they spoke to each other he moved out to the door and looked at the Atlantic Ocean from the other side.

The night sky was full of stars.

Somewhere out there two Ellens would be pleased. He took a deep breath that was more deep and free than any he had taken since the springtime.

(Maeve Binchy, *This Year It Will Be Different*)



I. Explain the meaning of the words and collocations given in bold in the text. Use them in the context.

II. Match the words (1–15) with their meanings (A–O):

- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| 1. Exhausted | a) A person who lives alone and avoids others |
| 2. Recluse | b) Enjoys being with other people |
| 3. Hospitality | c) Supposedly; assumed to be true |
| 4. Razzmatazz | d) Far away; emotionally distant |
| 5. Remote | e) Kindness shown to guests |
| 6. Peacemaker | f) Excitement or noisy fuss |
| 7. Presumably | g) Lacking taste |
| 8. Sociable | h) Very tired |
| 9. Baldly | i) To become quiet, shy, or introverted |
| 10. Flavorless | j) Deeply immersed or covered |
| 11. Distract | k) Someone who helps restore peace or resolve conflict |
| 12. Steeped (in grief) | l) To divert someone's attention |
| 13. To go into one's shell | m) Put in liquid for a time |
| 14. Soaked (the fish) | n) Small brown spots on the skin |
| 15. Freckles | o) Said in a very direct, blunt way |

III. Translate the following excerpt from the story into Ukrainian and answer the questions afterwards:

Everyone in the office wanted to ask Ben for Christmas. He was exhausted trying to tell them that honestly he was fine.

He didn't look fine, he didn't sound fine. He was a big sad man who had lost the love of his life last springtime. How could he be fine? Everything reminded him of Ellen. People running to meet others in restaurants, people carrying flowers, people spending a night at home, a night away.

Christmas would be terrible for Ben.

So they all found an excuse to invite him.

For Thanksgiving he had gone to Harry and Jeannie and their children. They would never know how long the hours had seemed, how dry the turkey, how flavorless the pumpkin pie, compared to the way it had been with Ellen.

He had smiled and thanked them and tried to take part, but his heart had been like lead. He had promised Ellen that he would try to be sociable after she was gone, that he would not become a recluse working all the hours of the day and many of the night.

He had not kept his promise.

But Ellen had not known it would be so hard. She would not have known the knives of loss he felt all over him as he sat at a Thanksgiving table with Harry and Jeannie and remembered that last year his Ellen had been alive and well with no shadow of the illness that had taken her away.

Ben really and truly could not go to anyone for Christmas. That had always been their special time, the time they trimmed the tree, for hours and hours, laughing and hugging each other all the while. Ellen would tell him stories about the great trees in the forests of her native Sweden, he told her stories about trees they bought in stores in Brooklyn, late on Christmas Eve when all the likely customers had gone and the trees were half price.

They had no children, but people said this is what made them love each other all the more. There was nobody to share their love but nobody to distract them either. Ellen worked as hard as he did, but she seemed to have time to make cakes and puddings and to soak the smoked fish in a special marinade.

“I want to make sure you never leave me for another woman...” she had said. “Who else could give you so many different dishes at Christmas?”

He would never have left her and he could not believe that she had left him that bright spring day.

IV. *Read the following statements and write if they are True (T) or False (F):*

1. Ben had a wonderful time during Thanksgiving with Harry and Jeannie.
2. Ellen was from Sweden.
3. Ben and Ellen had many children together.
4. Ben always wanted to visit Ireland with Ellen.
5. Fionnula was surprised that a vice-president would book his own trip.
6. Fionnula encouraged Ben to stay with her family.
7. Niall O'Connor had a dog named Christmas.
8. Niall's wife was also named Ellen.
9. Ben and Niall never talked about their losses.
10. In the end, Ben invited Fionnula to join them in Ireland.

V. *Answer the following questions:*

1. Why did Ben find it hard to accept invitations from his colleagues?
2. How did Thanksgiving with Harry and Jeannie make Ben feel?
3. What made Christmas particularly special for Ben and Ellen?
4. Why did Ben choose to travel to Ireland?
5. What impression did Fionnula make on Ben during their conversation?
6. What was unusual about Fionnula's offer to Ben?
7. How did Ben and Niall bond during Christmas?
8. What role did the dogs, Sunset and Seaweed, play in the story?
9. Why was Ben's phone call to Fionnula important at the end of the story?
10. What do you think the final scene by the Atlantic Ocean symbolizes for Ben?

VI. *Group Discussion. Discuss with your classmates:*

- ❖ How grief and memory can influence holiday traditions.
- ❖ Whether traveling can help people cope with loss.
- ❖ What small gestures can mean the most to someone in pain?

VII. *Role Play. Work in pairs.*

One of you is Ben and the other is Fionnula. Improvise a phone conversation where Ben calls after New Year's to thank her and discuss what the future might hold for both of them.

Irishness in Facts and Myths

VIII. *Read the text and mark the following statements as T (True) or F (False):*

1. The Irish are known for their preference for solitary activities over group activities.
2. Hurling is considered the fastest field game in the world.
3. The Gaelic Athletic Association is less influential than the Catholic Church in Ireland.
4. Fishing is the most popular sport in Ireland.
5. The Irish have a tradition of turning signposts around to confuse tourists.
6. Gaelic football is a combination of rugby and soccer.
7. There is no antagonism between English and Irish sports in Ireland.

SPORT

The Irish are in general a physically robust people. Eating nothing but potatoes may have been boring, but potatoes, as we've seen, contain almost all you need for a healthy diet. When he emigrated abroad, the physical strength of the farmer could be adapted to digging canals and laying roads. Combine this stamina with the traditional Irish spirit of daring and physical courage, and the result is a sports-crazed nation of fine sportsmen and sportswomen. In fact sport is the modern version of the old Irish clannishness, popular with people who enjoy doing things

in crowds rather than pursuing solitary pleasures. Though they're also great fishermen and women. In England, fishing is the most popular sport of all, maybe because the English are a more reserved race who enjoy being on their own. 1 56 TheTruth about the Irish

The Irish play soccer, rugby and some cricket, as well as their own traditional games of hurling and Gaelic football, a sort of cross between rugby and football. Hurling is the fastest field game in the world, and camogie is a version of it for women. There are over two hundred and fifty golf courses in Ireland, and horse-racing is a religion for its fans. There can still be some antagonism between English and Irish games, with the more purist of the Irish disdaining rugby and football as imperialist plots against them. The Gaelic Athletic Association, which supervises native Irish sports, is an immensely powerful organisation, second only perhaps to the Catholic Church. Other sports in Ireland include turning signposts around in the countryside to confuse tourists, and a game played by bus drivers, which consists of four buses which were supposed to have arrived at ten minute intervals holding back for an hour and then all arriving together.

(Extracted from Terry Eagleton's *The Truth About the Irish*)



THIS YEAR IT WILL BE DIFFERENT



Before Reading

Work in pairs or small groups. Discuss the following questions:

- ❖ Who usually prepares for holidays in your family?
- ❖ Have you ever wanted to change a tradition? What happened?
- ❖ What are your feelings about holiday preparations – stressful, joyful, both?

Reading

THIS YEAR IT WILL BE DIFFERENT

Ethel wondered if it had anything to do with her name. Apart from Ethel Merman there didn't seem to be many racy Ethels; she didn't know any Ethels who **took charge of their own lives**.

At school there had been two other Ethels. One was a nun in the Third World, which was a choice, of course, but not a racy choice. The other was a gray sort of person, she had been gray as a teenager and she was even grayer in her forties. She worked as a minder to a Selfish Personality. She described the work as Girl Friday; it was, in fact, Dogsboddy, which scanned perfectly, and after all, words mean what you want them to mean.

These were no **role models**, Ethel told herself. But anyway, even if it weren't a question of having a meek name, a woman couldn't change overnight. Only in movies did a happily married mother of three suddenly call a family conference and say that this year she was tired of the whole thing, weary of coming home after work and cleaning the house and buying the Christmas decorations and putting them up, buying the Christmas cards, writing them and posting them so that they would keep the few friends they had.

Only in a film would Ethel say that she had had it up to here with Christmas countdowns, and timing the brandy butter, and the chestnut stuffing, and the bacon rolls, and bracing herself for the cry “No sausages?” when a groaning platter of turkey and trimmings was hauled in from the kitchen.

She who had once loved cooking, who had delighted in her family’s looking up at her hopefully waiting to be fed, now loathed the thought of what the rest of the world seemed to regard as the whole meaning of Christmas.

But there would be no big scene. What was the point of ruining everyone else’s Christmas by a lecture on how selfish they all were? Ethel had **a very strong sense of justice**. If **her husband never did a hand’s turn in the kitchen**, then some of the blame was surely Ethel’s. From the very beginning she should have expected that he would share the meal preparation with her, assumed it, stood smiling, waiting for him to help. But twenty-five years ago women didn’t do that. Young women whooshed their young husbands back to the fire and the evening newspaper. They were all mini-Superwomen then. It wasn’t fair to move the goalposts in middle age.

Any more than it was fair to stage a protest against her two sons and daughter. From the start those children had been told that the first priority was their studies. Their mother had always cleared away the meal after supper to leave them space and time to do their homework, or their university essays, or their computer practice. When other women had got a dishwasher, Ethel had said the family should have a word processor. Why should she complain now?

And everyone envied her having two strong, handsome sons around the house, living with her from choice. Other people’s twenty-three and twenty-two-year-olds were mad keen to leave home. Other women with a nineteen-year-old daughter said they were **demented with pleas about** living in a bed-sitter, a commune, a squat. Ethel was considered lucky, and she agreed with this. She was the first to say she had got more than her fair share of good fortune.

Until this year. This year **she felt she was put upon**. If she saw one more picture of a forty-seven-year-old woman smiling at her out of a magazine with the body of an eighteen-year-old, gleaming skin, fifty-six

white, even teeth, and shiny hair, Ethel was going to go after her with a carving knife.

This year, for the first time, she did not look forward to Christmas. This year she had made the calculation: the thought, the work, the worry, the bone-aching tiredness on one side of the scales; the pleasure of the family on the other. They didn't even begin to balance. With a heavy heart she realized that it wasn't worth it.

She didn't do anything dramatic. She didn't do anything at all. She bought no tree, she mended no fairy lights, she sent six cards to people who really needed cards. There was no excited talking about weights of turkey and length of time cooking the ham as in other years. There were no lists, no excursions for late-night shopping. She came home after work, made the supper, cleared it away, washed up and sat down and looked at the television.

Eventually they noticed.

"When are you getting the tree, Ethel?" her husband asked her good-naturedly.

"The tree?" She looked at him blankly, as if it were a strange Scandinavian custom that hadn't hit Ireland.

He frowned. "Sean will get the tree this year," he said, looking thunderously at his elder son.

"Are the mince pies done yet?" Brian asked her.

She smiled at him dreamily.

"Done?" she asked.

"Made, like, cooked. You know in tins, like always." He was confused.

"I'm sure the shops are full of them, all right," she said.

Ethel's husband shook his head warningly at Brian, the younger son.

The subject was dropped.

Next day Theresa said to the others that there was no turkey in the freezer, nor had one been ordered. And Ethel turned up the television so that she wouldn't hear the family conference that she knew was going on in the kitchen.

They came to her very formally. They reminded her of a trade union delegation walking up the steps to arbitration. Or like people delivering a letter of protest at an embassy.

“This year it’s going to be different, Ethel.” Her husband’s voice was gruff at the awkward unfamiliar words. “We realize that **we haven’t been doing our fair share**. No, don’t deny it, we have all discussed it and this year you’ll find that it will be different.”

“We’ll do all the washing-up after Christmas dinner,” Sean said. “And clear away all the wrapping paper,” added Brian. “And I’ll ice the cake when you’ve made it. I mean after the almond icing,” Theresa said.

She looked at them all, one by one, with a pleasant smile, as she always had.

“That would be very nice,” she said. She spoke somehow remotely. She knew they wanted more. They wanted her to leap up there and then and put on a pinny, crying that now she knew they would each do one chore then she would work like a demon to catch up. Buzz, buzz, fuss, fuss. But she didn’t have the energy, she wished they would stop talking about it.

Her husband patted her hand.

“Not just words, you know, Ethel. We have very concrete plans and it will begin before Christmas. Actually, it will begin tomorrow. So don’t come into the kitchen for a bit, we want to finalize our discussions.”

They all trooped back to the kitchen again. She lay back in her chair. She hadn’t wanted to punish them, **to withhold affection, to sulk her way into getting a bit more help**. It was no carefully planned victory, **no cunning ploy**.

She could hear them murmuring and planning; she could hear their voices getting excited and them shushing each other. They were trying so hard to make up for the years of not noticing. Yes, that is all it was. Simply not noticing how hard she worked.

It just hadn’t dawned on them how unequal was the situation where five adults left this house in the morning to go out to work and one adult **kept the house running** as well.

Of course, she could always give up her job and be a full-time wife and mother. But that seemed a foolish thing to do now, at this stage, when the next stage would be the empty nest that people talked about. They were all saving for deposits, so they didn’t really give her much, and they were her own children. You couldn’t ask them for real board and lodging, could you?

No, no, it was her own fault that they hadn't seen how hard she worked and how tired she was. Or hadn't seen until now. She listened happily to the conversation in the kitchen. Well, now they knew, God bless them. Perhaps it hadn't been a bad thing at all to be a bit **listless**, even though it hadn't come from within, it wasn't **an act she had put on**.

Next morning they asked her what time she'd be home from work.

"Well, like every day, around half-past six," she said.

"Could you make it half-past seven?" they asked.

She could indeed, she could have a nice drink with her friend Maire from work. Maire, who said that she was like a mat for that family to walk on. It would be deeply satisfying to tell Maire that she couldn't go home since the family were doing all the pre-Christmas preparations for her.

"You could always go to the supermarket." Theresa said.

"Am I to do any shopping?" Ethel was flustered. She had thought they were seeing to all that.

She saw the boys frown at Theresa.

"Or do whatever you like, I mean," Theresa said.

"You won't forget foil, will you?" Ethel said anxiously. If they were going to do all this baking, it would be awful if they ran out of things.

"Foil?" They looked at her blankly.

"Maybe I'll come back early and give you a bit of a hand..."

There was a chorus of disagreement.

Nobody wanted that. No, no she was to stay out. It was four days before Christmas, this would be a Christmas like no other, wait and see, but she couldn't be at home.

They all went off to work or college.

She noticed that the new regime hadn't involved clearing away their breakfast things, but Ethel told herself it would be **curmudgeonly** to complain about clearing away five cups and saucers and plates and cornflake bowls and washing them and drying them. She wanted to leave the kitchen perfect for them and all they were going to do.

She wondered that they hadn't taken out the cookery books. She would **leave them in a conspicuous place**, together with all those cookery articles she had cut from the paper and clipped together with a big clothes-peg. But she must stop fussing, she'd be late for work.

Maire was delighted with the invitation to a drink after work. “What happened? Did they all fly off to the Bahamas without you or something?” she asked.

Ethel laughed; that was just Maire’s way, making little of the married state.

She hugged her secret to herself. Her family who were going to do everything. Things were exciting at the office, they were all going to get new office furniture in the new year, the old stuff was being sold off at ridiculous prices. Ethel wondered would Sean like the computer table, or would Brian like the small desk. Nothing would be too good for them this year. But then, did secondhand goods look shabby, as if you didn’t care?

With the unaccustomed buzz of two hot whiskeys to light her home, Ethel came up the path and let herself in the door.

“I’m back,” she called. “May I come into the kitchen?”

They were standing there, sheepish and eager. Her heart was full for them. While she had been out drinking whiskey with lemon and cloves in it, stretching her legs and talking about the new office layout with Maire, they had been slaving. Poor Maire had to go back to her empty flat, while lucky Ethel had this family who had promised her that things would be different this year. She felt a prickling around her nose and eyes and hoped that she wasn’t going to cry.

She never remembered them giving her a treat or a surprise. This is what made this one all the better. For her birthday it had been a couple of notes folded over, from her husband a request to buy herself something nice. Cards from the children. Not every year. And for Christmas they clubbed together to get her something that the house needed. Last year it had been an electric can opener. The year before it had been lagging for the cylinder.

How could she have known that they would change?

They looked at her, all of them waiting for her reaction. They wanted her to love it, whatever they had done.

She hoped they had found the candied peel – it was in one of those cartons without much identification on it, but even if they hadn’t she’d say nothing.

She looked around the kitchen. There was no sign of anything baked or blended or stirred or mixed or prepared.

And still they looked at her, eager and full of anticipation.

She followed their eyes. A large and awkward-looking television set took up the only shelf of work space that had any length or breadth in it.

An indoor aerial rose from it perilously, meaning that the shelves behind it couldn't be got at.

They stood back so that she could view the full splendor of it.

Sean turned it on with a flourish, like a ringmaster at a circus. "Da-da-a-a-a!" he cried.

It was black-and-white.

"Terribly sharp image," Sean said.

"More restful, really, on older eyes, they say," Theresa soothed her.

"And you wouldn't need more than RTE 1 anyway, even if you could get it. I mean, too much choice is worse than too little," said Brian.

"I told you this Christmas was going to be different to the others." Her husband **beamed at her**.

From now on she could look at television as well as the rest of them; she'd be as informed and catch up on things and not be left out, just because she had to be in the kitchen.

All around her they stood, a circle of goodwill waiting to share in her delight. From very far away she heard their voices. Sean had known a fellow who did up televisions, Dad had given the money, Brian had gone to collect it in someone's van. Theresa had bought the plug and put it on herself.

Years of hiding her disappointment stood to Ethel at this moment. The muscles of her face sprang into action. The mouth into an oooh of delight, the eyes into surprise and excitement; the hands even clasped themselves automatically.

With the practiced steps of a dancer she made the movements that they expected. Her hand went out like an automaton to stroke the hideous, misshapen television that took up most of her kitchen.

As they went back to wait for her to make the supper, happy that they had bought her the gift that would change everything, Ethel got to work in the kitchen.

She had taken off her coat and put on her pinny. She edged around the large television set and mentally rearranged every shelf and bit of storage that she had.

She felt curiously apart from everything, and in her head she kept hearing their voices saying that this Christmas was going to be different.

They were right, it felt different; but surely it couldn't be on account of this crass gift, a sign that they wanted her forever chained to the kitchen cooking for them and cleaning up after them.

As she pricked the sausages and peeled the potatoes it became clear to her. They had done something for her for the very first time — not something she wanted, but something; and why? Because she had sulked. Ethel hadn't intended to sulk, but that's exactly what it had been. What other women had been doing for years. Women who had pouted and complained, and demanded to be appreciated. By refusing to begin the preparations for Christmas, she had drawn a response from them.

Now, what more could be done?

She turned on the crackling, snowy television and looked at it with interest. It was the beginning. She would have to go slowly, of course. **A lifetime of being a drudge** could not be turned around instantly. If, as a worm, she was seen to turn too much, it might be thought to be her nerves, her time of life, a case for a nice chat with some kind, white-coated person prescribing tranquilizers. No instant withdrawal of services. It would be done very slowly.

She looked at them all settled inside around the color television, satisfied that the Right Thing had been done, and that supper would be ready soon. They had no idea just how different things were indeed going to be from now on.

(Maeve Binchy, *This Year It Will Be Different*)



I. Explain the meaning of the words and collocations given in bold in the text. Use them in your own sentences.

II. Match the words/phrases (1–15) to their meanings (A–O):

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| 1. racy | a) to be silent or moody out of resentment |
| 2. dogsbody | b) a person who does boring or unpleasant jobs |
| 3. brandy butter | c) exhausted or extremely tired |
| 4. chestnut stuffing | d) a sweet butter-based sauce made with alcohol |
| 5. groaning platter | e) a food mixture often used to fill poultry at Christmas |
| 6. bone-aching tiredness | f) insulation for pipes or cylinders |
| 7. listless | g) someone finally standing up for themselves |
| 8. sulk | h) an apron (British informal) |
| 9. fuss | i) lacking energy or enthusiasm |
| 10. curmudgeonly | j) unnecessary or excessive activity or excitement |
| 11. pinny | k) a person made to do hard or menial work |
| 12. snow on the screen | l) visual static or interference on a TV screen |
| 13. worm turning | m) grumpy, complaining |
| 14. drudge | n) a large, heavily loaded serving dish |
| 15. lagging | o) very sharp physical exhaustion |

III. Translate the following sentences into English using the target vocabulary below:

pout and complain, take charge of their own lives, even teeth, beam at her, sulk her way into, no cunning ploy, gleaming skin, drop the subject, a lifetime of being a drudge, put on an act, in a conspicuous place, curmudgeonly, do our fair share, withhold affection, have healthy and shiny hair, it dawns on them, be demented with pleas, feel she is put upon, keep the house running, feel listless.

1. Після довгого дня на пляжі вона любила милуватися своєю блискучою шкірою в дзеркалі.
2. Він завжди самовпевнено посміхався завдяки рівним зубам, які ретельно доглядав.
3. Завдяки невеликому зусиллю їй вдалося мати здорове й блискуче волосся, яке всі захоплено відзначали.
4. Виростаючи з безліччю хатніх обов'язків, він почувався так, ніби все життя був прислужником у власному домі.
5. Після багатьох років підтримки з боку батьків брати й сестри, нарешті, взяли своє життя в руки – переїхали й почали кар'єру.
6. Під час розмови про плани на вихідні бабуся почала гарячково благати про допомогу в саду.
7. На зустрічі вона почувалася приниженою, коли всі її ідеї були проігноровані колегами.
8. Несправедливо, коли батько або мати стримують ласку як форму покарання, якщо дитина робить помилку.
9. Вона щиро вірила, що за його раптовою добротою після місяців мовчання не криється жодна хитра витівка.
10. Попри зайнятість на роботі, він усе одно стежив, щоб дружина тримала дім у порядку.
11. У особливо важкі дні я часто відчуваю млявість і брак мотивації до будь-яких справ.
12. З'ясувалося, що її життєрадісна поведінка була лише маскою, за якою вона приховувала почуття меншовартості.
13. Його буркотливий характер ускладнював родинні зібрання під час свят.
14. Коли її брат закінчив навчання, батьки усміхалися з гордістю, пишаючись успіхами своєї родини.
15. Зрештою, вони зрозуміли, що їм потрібно краще спілкуватися, щоб вирішити постійні проблеми.
16. Графік обов'язків повісили на видному місці, щоб нагадувати всім про домашні справи.
17. У здоровій родині важливо, щоб кожен виконував свою частку, аби зберегти гармонію.
18. Замість того, щоб вирішити проблему, вона воліла ображатися, змушуючи інших допомагати їй.

19. Усвідомивши, що не має рішення, він вирішив залишити цю тему, не продовжуючи безплідну розмову.

20. Замість того, щоб допомогти, він ображався й скаржився щоразу, як треба було виконувати хатню роботу.

IV. Translate the sentences below into Ukrainian. Comment on each situation below explaining what the author implies about the characters, their emotions, and their relationships. Do you think it is possible to understand a character's emotions through language?

1. They reminded her of a trade union delegation walking up the steps to arbitration.

2. A large and awkward-looking television set took up the only shelf of work space that had any length or breadth in it.

3. Years of hiding her disappointment stood to Ethel at this moment. The muscles of her face sprang into action. The mouth into an ooooh of delight, the eyes into surprise and excitement; the hands even clasped themselves automatically.

4. ...it became clear to her. They had done something for her for the very first time – not something she wanted, but something; and why? Because she had sulked. Ethel hadn't intended to sulk, but that's exactly what it had been. What other women had been doing for years. Women who had pouted and complained, and demanded to be appreciated. By refusing to begin the preparations for Christmas, she had drawn a response from them.

5. It was the beginning. She would have to go slowly, of course. A lifetime of being a drudge could not be turned around instantly. If, as a worm, she was seen to turn too much, it might be thought to be her nerves, her time of life, a case for a nice chat with some kind, white-coated person prescribing tranquilizers. No instant withdrawal of services. It would be done very slowly.

6. They had no idea just how different things were indeed going to be from now on.

V. Read the statements and decide whether they are True or False. Correct the false ones.

1. Ethel had always looked forward to Christmas until this year.
2. Her family immediately noticed she had stopped preparing for Christmas.
3. Ethel had always demanded her children help her with housework.
4. Her husband suggested that Sean should buy the tree this year.
5. The family promised Ethel that they would do everything for Christmas.
6. Ethel cried tears of joy when she received the television.
7. Ethel was surprised that sulking actually led to change.
8. She realized that true change would require slow and steady steps.
9. In the end, Ethel gave up and did all the cooking as usual.

VI. Answer the questions:

1. How does Ethel feel about her name and the other people she knew who shared it?
2. Why did Ethel used to enjoy cooking, and what changed her feelings?
3. What does the story suggest about gender roles in Ethel's marriage and generation?
4. How did Ethel's children view their roles in household responsibilities before this year?
5. What event or realization made Ethel decide to change her approach?
6. How does the family attempt to "make things different" this Christmas?
7. Describe Ethel's reaction to the television gift. Why does she react this way?
8. What deeper message is the author trying to convey through Ethel's situation?

9. Do you think Ethel's family truly understands her feelings at the end? Why or why not?

10. What do you think Ethel will do next year? Will things really be different?

Discussion

VII. Small Group Discussion. Discuss the following:

- ❖ Do you know someone like Ethel?
- ❖ Why do families often take certain people for granted?
- ❖ How can responsibilities be more fairly shared at home?

Irishness in Facts and Myths

VIII. Read the text and answer the questions that are given below:

PATRICK

Patron saint of Ireland. As such, he has the following drawbacks:

1. We don't really know who he was.
2. We don't really know where he came from.
3. He wasn't the first Christian missionary to Ireland.
4. There may have been two of him.
5. He may not have existed at all.

Apart from that, he's a grand sort of patron saint entirely. He probably came to Ireland as a slave, and he was the first individual in recorded history to write against slavery. He is also said to have driven all the snakes out of Ireland. Some people suggest that they ended up in Chicago city hall.

Several sacred places in Ireland have a special association with St. Patrick. One of them is Lough Derg in County Donegal, where the saint is said to have fasted and expelled evil spirits on Station Island in the lake. In the Middle Ages, men of high rank came to visit the spot from all over Europe; may even be that Dante's great poem *The Divine Comedy* was influenced by it. The pilgrimage, known as St Patrick's Purgatory, still flourishes each year from June to August. It lasts for

three days, on each of which only one meal, of dry bread and black tea, is permitted. Pilgrims must go barefoot, perform certain austere penances, and spend their first night without sleep in the island's church. Despite its extreme rigours, all sorts of ordinary Irish people regularly complete the pilgrimage. Other pilgrims climb Ireland's holy mountain, Croagh Patrick in Mayo, some of them barefoot. The Irish may be experts at enjoying themselves, but they're also professionals at self-denial.

(Extracted from Terry Eagleton's *The Truth About the Irish*)

Read the questions and choose the correct answer (a, b, c or d):

1. What is the main reason the passage expresses doubts about Saint Patrick's identity:

- a) We don't know where he came from;
- b) He was not the first Christian missionary to Ireland;
- c) There may have been two of him;
- d) All of the above.

2. Based on the passage, which of the following is true about Saint Patrick:

- a) He was the first individual to write against slavery;
- b) He was the patron saint of Ireland;
- c) He drove all the snakes out of Ireland;
- d) Both a) and b).

3. What is the significance of the Lough Derg pilgrimage in Ireland:

- a) It is a popular tourist destination;
- b) It is a site where Saint Patrick is said to have expelled evil spirits;
- c) It is a site of religious significance that attracted visitors from across Europe;
- d) Both b) and c).

4. What are some of the austere practices associated with the Lough Derg pilgrimage:

- a) Going barefoot and performing penances;
- b) Eating only dry bread and black tea;
- c) Spending the first night without sleep;
- d) All of the above.

5. According to the passage, what is a characteristic of the Irish people:

- a) They are experts at enjoying themselves;
- b) They are professionals at self-denial;
- c) Both a) and b);
- d) Neither a) nor b).

6. Which of the following best describes the overall tone of the passage:

- a) Reverent and admiring of Saint Patrick;
- b) Skeptical and questioning of Saint Patrick's legacy;
- c) Neutral and informative about Saint Patrick and Irish traditions;
- d) Frustrated with the lack of definitive information about Saint Patrick.

7. What is the primary purpose of the passage:

- a) To provide a comprehensive biography of Saint Patrick;
- b) To highlight the controversies surrounding Saint Patrick's identity;
- c) To describe the religious pilgrimages and traditions associated with Saint Patrick;
- d) To explore the characteristics and cultural practices of the Irish people.



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Навчальне видання

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Ірина Ковальчук — кандидатка філологічних наук, доцентка кафедри іноземних мов Державного Податкового Університету. Професійний викладач CELTA ESL з досвідом роботи в провідних університетах України. Працювала в Ірландії в School of English, Drama and Film, UCD та EC Dublin English Language School. Авторка кількох навчальних посібників з англійської мови. Практикум відображає захоплення авторки сучасною ірландською літературою та культурою.



Тетяна Чаюк — кандидатка філологічних наук, доцентка кафедри іноземних мов Навчально-наукового інституту права КНУ імені Тараса Шевченка. Сфера професійних інтересів охоплює юридичну англійську мову, переклад у правничій сфері та сучасні підходи до викладання ESP. У цьому посібнику поєднує академічний досвід із особистим зацікавленням творчістю ірландської письменниці Мейв Бінчі, пропонуючи студентам сучасні, практикоорієнтовані завдання для розвитку мовних і перекладацьких навичок.

Цей практикум — сучасний і захопливий інструмент для вдосконалення англійської мови через автентичну ірландську прозу, що поєднує мовну практику з культурним зануренням. Рекомендований усім, хто прагне розвинути аналітичне мислення, мовленнєві навички та глибше зрозуміти літературу англomовного світу.

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