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LOVERS

by

BRIAN FRIEL

Part One — WINNERS

Part Two — LOSERS



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

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(LOVERS)

Library of Congress Catalog card number 68-25335

ISBN 0-87129-245-9

LOVERS was presented by Helen Bonfils and Morton Gottlieb at the Vivian Beaumont Theatre in New York as a part of the Lincoln Center Festival. It was held over for an extended run at the Music Box Theatre before going on tour. The playbill is reproduced below.

HELEN BONFILS AND MORTON GOTTLIEB

by arrangement with Oscar Lewenstein

present

ART CARNEY

in

LOVERS

A Play in Two Parts by

BRIAN FRIEL

The Edwards-MacLiammoir Dublin Gate Theatre Production

Directed by

HILTON EDWARDS

with

**ANNA
MANAHAN**

**EAMON
MORRISSEY**

**FIONNUALA
FLANAGAN**

**BEULAH
GARRICK**

**GRANIA
O'MALLEY**

Scenery by
William Ritman

Costumes by
Noel Taylor

Lighting by
Tharon Musser

Part One

WINNERS

CAST

MAN

WOMAN

JOE

MAG

Time: The present in Ireland.

Episode 1

When the curtain rises, a MAN and a WOMAN are seated on two high-backed chairs, one D L and one D R, at the edge of the stage. They are the Commentators. They are in their late fifties and carefully dressed in good dark clothes. Each has a book on his knee--not a volume, preferably a bound manuscript--and they read from this every so often. Their reading is impersonal, completely without emotion: their function is to give information. At no time must they reveal an attitude toward their material.)

Between them and slightly upstage is Ardnageeha, the hill that overlooks the town of Ballymore. A large pentagonal platform, approached by four or five shallow steps all around would be sufficient. This is the only stage furniture.)

MAN.

At approximately 9:45 on the morning of Saturday, June 4, 1966 Margaret Mary Enright set out from her home, a detached red-brick house on the outskirts of the town of Ballymore, County Tyrone, Northern Ireland. Before she left she brought breakfast to her mother who was still in bed; and as she passed her father's surgery, which is built as an annex to the house, she tapped with the back of her fingers on the frosted glass panel of the door. In a small attache case she has her school-books and sandwiches for lunch. She cycled through the town and at High Street she met two friends and stopped to talk to them: Joan O'Hara, a classmate, and Philip Moran. They told her they planned to go boating on Lough Gorm that afternoon and asked her to join them. She said perhaps she would. Then she cycled out the Mill

Road until she came to Whelan's Brae. There she left the road and pushed her bicycle----

(MAG enters at this point. She is seventeen, bubbling with life. Although she is not really very beautiful, her vivacity gives her a distinct attraction.)

MAN.

--across the fields until she came to the foot of Ardnageeha, the hill that overlooks the town of Ballymore. She left her bicycle at the bottom of Ardnageeha, and climbed to the top. It was a glorious summer's morning. Temperatures were in the lower 70's. And there was no wind.

(When MAG gets to the top of the hill, she looks around for Joe. He has not arrived yet. She lights a cigarette, squats on the ground, and waits for him.)

WOMAN.

At roughly the same time as Margaret Enright set out, Joseph Michael Brennan left his home at 37, Railway Terrace. His mother had gone to work two hours previously and had left his breakfast ready for him. His father was still in bed and asleep. He went out through the back yard, down the mews lane and across the waste ground between the rear of Railway Terrace and the railway line. On his way across the waste ground he met some children who were throwing stones at rats. He followed the line out past the marshaling yard, under the iron bridge, and for a mile out into the country. He carried his school-books in a leather satchel. When he got to the level-crossing he cut across the fields until he came to the foot of Ardnageeha, the hill that overlooks the town of Ballymore.

(JOE enters here. He is seventeen and a half, a seri-

ous boy and a good student, interested in books.)

WOMAN.

Then he climbed to the top.

(MAG sees him coming up the hill. She goes down the far side, i. e. up stage, until she is out of sight. There she hides.)

MAN.

Margaret Enright was a pupil of St. Mary's Grammar School, run by the Sisters of Mercy. And Joseph Brennan was a pupil of St. Kevin's College, a grammar school for boys run by the clergy of the diocese. She was seventeen; he seventeen and a half. And they had their books with them because school was officially over for the year and they planned to spend the day studying for their final examinations at the end of their grammar school course. The examinations began the following Wednesday.

JOE.

Maggie! Maggie? (Shouts.) Maaaaaag!

(When he gets no response he squats on the ground, opens his bag, takes out a book, and begins to work.)

WOMAN. They stayed on top of Ardnageeha, that overlooks the town of Ballymore, from 10:00 until 2:00. They had their lunch up there. We can assume that they did some work because Joseph was an excellent student, not brilliant, but very keen and very industrious. Margaret was no scholar. She was intelligent but scattered. And we can assume that they talked some and perhaps dreamed some, because they were young and the day was beautiful. And even though the examinations were imminent, they cannot have been all that important to the young pair who were to be married in

exactly three weeks' time, on Saturday, June 25, because Margaret was pregnant.

(JOE glances up from his work and scans the land below him. No sign of MAGGIE. He returns to his book. Now MAGGIE creeps up behind him and pounces on his back, trying to push him to the edge of the hill so that he will roll down. They wrestle for a few seconds.)

JOE.

Come on! Cut it out, will you! That'll do!

MAG.

Ha! You leaped like a rabbit!

JOE.

I was looking for you. Where were you?

MAG.

Waiting for you. You're late.

JOE.

I was here at ten exactly.

MAG.

I've been here for at least half an hour.

(She throws herself on the ground in exaggerated exhaustion, produces cigarettes, and begins talking. During most of this episode JOE is studying, or trying to study. But occasionally he tunes in to her prattle. By throwing in an occasional word he gives her the impression he is conversing with her.)

JOE.

Did you walk it?

MAG.

The bike's lying at the foot of the hill.

JOE.

I didn't see it.

MAG.

Sure, you're half-blind! God, my tongue's hanging out for a reek after that!

(Inhales and exhales with satisfaction.)

Aaaaah, bliss! Sister Pascal says: You may search the lists of the canonized but you will search in vain for the saint that smoked. Maybe you'll be a saint, Joe.

JOE.

Let's get started.

MAG.

I read in a book that there are 1,200,000 nuns in the world. Isn't that fierce? Imagine if they were all gathered in one place--on an island, say--and the Chinese navy was let loose at them--cripes, you'd hear the squeals in Tobermore! I have a wicked mind, too. D'you ever think things like that, Joe? I'm sure you don't. I think that women have far more corrupt minds than men, but I think that men are more easily corrupted than women.

JOE.

We'll get a couple of hours done before we eat.

MAG (with excessive disgust).

Food! I don't care if I never see another bite ever again. My God, I thought I was going to vomit my guts out this morning! And this could keep up for the next seven months, according to Doctor Watson. The only consolation is that

you're all right. It would be wild altogether if you were at it, too. Sympathetic sickness, they call it. But it's only husbands get it. Maybe you'll get it this day three weeks--the minute we get married--God, wouldn't that be a scream! D'you know what Joan O'Hara told me? That all the time her mother was expecting Oliver Plunket, her father never lifted his head out of the kitchen sink. Isn't it crazy! And for the last three days he lay squealing on the floor like a stuck pig and her mother had to get the police for him in the end. I love this view of Ballymore: the town and the fields and the lake; and the people. When I'm up here and look down on them, I want to run down and hug them all and kiss them. But then when I'm down among them I feel like doing that--

(She cocks a snook into Joe's face.)

--into their faces. I bet you that's how God feels at times, too. Wouldn't you think so?

JOE.

I don't know how God feels.

MAG.

Why not?

JOE.

Because I'm not God.

MAG.

Oh, you're so clever! Well, I'll tell you something: there are occasions in my life when I know how God feels.

JOE.

Good for you.

MAG.

And one of those occasions is now.

(Puffing her cigarette regally.)
At this moment God feels . . . expansive . . .
and beneficent . . . and philanthropy.

JOE.

Philanthropic.

MAG (after momentary setback).

And we will not be put into bad humor by grubby
little pedants.

JOE.

Look, Mag: we came up here to study. What
are you going to do first?

MAG.

French. And then maths. And then Spanish.
And then English language and literature. And
after lunch geography and the history of the world.
I have planned a program for myself. The im-
portant thing about revising for an examination
is to have a method. What are you starting with?

JOE.

Maths.

MAG.

Then what?

JOE.

That's all.

MAG.

Only maths?

JOE.

Huh-huh.

(She considers this absurd idea for a sec-
ond. Then, because JOE is wiser in these

things than she, she readily agrees with him.)

MAG.

Then that's what I'll do, too.

(Really worries.)

My God, if the volume of a cone doesn't come up, I'm scootrified! Not that I care--I can afford to go down in one subject.

(Pause.)

Joe . . .

JOE.

What?

MAG.

What's the real difference between language and literature?

JOE.

You're not serious, Maggie!

MAG.

Don't--don't--don't tell me . . . I remember now . . . One is talking and the other is . . . books!

JOE.

Talking? . . .

MAG.

That's it.

JOE.

That's no definition! Language is----

MAG.

Don't say another word. I have it in my head. But if you start lecturing, I'll lose it again. I

have my own way of remembering things. Joe, last night again Papa asked me to let him get the flat painted for us before we move in.

JOE (doggedly).
I said I'll paint the flat.

MAG.
That's what I told him. And I was thinking, Joe . . .

JOE.
What?

MAG.
If we put a lace curtain across the kitchen window we wouldn't actually see down into the slaughterhouse yard.

JOE.
And if we wore ear-plugs all the time we wouldn't actually hear the mooing and the shooting.

MAG (softly to herself).
And even if a curtain did make the room darker, it'll still be lovely.

JOE.
I signed the lease yesterday evening.

MAG (absolutely thrilled).
It's ours now? We own it?

JOE.
Old Kerrigan was so busy working he wouldn't take time off to go into the office; so we put the document on the back of a cow that was about to be shot and that's where we signed

it. Cockeyed old miser!

MAG.

He's not!

JOE..

What?

MAG.

Cockeyed.

JOE.

I'm telling you. And crazy, too. In a big rubber apron and him dripping with blood. And cows and sheep and bullocks dropping dead all around him.

MAG.

Oh, God, my stomach!

(JOE realizes that his tale is successful. He gets up on his feet to enact the scene. MAG listens with delight and soon gets drawn into the pantomime.)

JOE.

"Drive them up there! Another beast. Come on! Come on! I haven't all day. And what's bothering you, young Brennan? Steady, there! Steady! Bang! Bang! Drag it away! Slit its throat! Slice it open! Skin it!"

MAG.

Stop--stop!

JOE.

"Another beast! Get a move on! What am I paying you fellas for?" You told me to call about that flat, Mr. Kerrigan. "Steady--bang! Bang! Damn it, I nearly missed--bang!--that's it. Drag him off. What are you saying, young

Brennan? The lease? Oh, the lease! Oh, aye,
Here we are.

(JOE produces an imaginary document
from his hip pocket.)

Best flat in town. Hell, it's all blood now.

(JOE wipes the imaginary document on
his leg.)

Come on! Another animal! There's a fine
beast for you, Brennan! Look at those shanks!
Bang! Bang! Never knew what hit him! I sign
here, son, don't I?

(JOE pretends to write; but the pen does
not work and he flings it away.)

Hell, that doesn't write."

MAG.

Bang! Bang!

JOE.

"Keep behind me, young Brennan. This is a
dangerous job."

MAG.

Let's sign it in blood, young Brennan.

JOE.

Finest view in town. And the noise down here's
great company. Bang! Bang!

MAG.

Like living in Dead Man's Creek.

JOE.

There's a bullock that looks like the president
of St. Kevin's. Bang! Bang!

MAG.

A sheep the image of Sister Paul. Bang! Bang!