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Dramatic Publishing



A COMEDY IN ONE ACT

Up the Rent

by

TIM KELLY



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY



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(UP THE RENT)

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UP THE RENT

A Comedy in One Act

For Three Men, Six Women, Extras

CHARACTERS

FRANK MULDOON *a farmer*
MARY MULDOON *his wife*
EILEEN MULDOON *his daughter*
MOTHER MULDOON *his mother*
MICKEY O'SHAUGHNESSY *a rival farmer*
THE WIDOW MacMANUS *a neighbor*
PATRICIA *a village lass*
SERGEANT BOYLE *process server*
LADY DUNTARRAN *magistrate's daughter*

VILLAGERS, if desired

PLACE: *A village in Ireland.*

TIME: *1880.*

Up the Rent

SCENE: The house of Frank Muldoon, Ireland, 1880. It's a simple cottage. At DC is a wooden table with three stools--one left of table, one right, one directly behind it. At stage R is a hearth or fireplace. At stage L is a door that leads into another part of the home. Beside the door, at UL, is a sideboard. At URC sits a large trunk. The door leading into the house from outside is UC. When the door is ajar we should be able to catch sight of the sky and, possibly, some greenery. There's a window at ULC. Maybe there's some straw scattered on the floor. Pictures, lamps, and other furnishings may be added as desired.)

AT RISE OF CURTAIN: EILEEN MULDOON, fifteen, a pert and pretty thing, is at the window (or door) looking out. Her mother, MARY, is at the hearth pouring water on a turf fire. Mary's mother-in-law, MOTHER MULDOON, a classic figure garbed in black and wearing a shawl over her head, is sitting on stool L. There are bundles of clothing tied together atop the table and a couple of shoddy suitcases on the floor DRC. MARY moves quickly and speaks with a direct quality. EILEEN is outgoing, while MOTHER MULDOON is inclined to vacillate between sentimentality and a quick tongue.)

MARY (pouring water from a kettle). We'll not leave with a warm glow in the hearth.

MOTHER MULDOON (dramatically). What's to become of us? (Then:) Could I have some tea, Mary?

MARY. I just this minute put the fire out. Didn't you see me?

MOTHER MULDOON. I did not.

EILEEN (staring out). Sure, half the village is lining the road.

MOTHER MULDOON (to MARY). I wouldn't mind if the tea was lukewarm, y'know. I could make do. (MARY crosses behind the table to door L.)

MARY (to MOTHER MULDOON, crossing). We've no time for it now. (Calling off L.) Frank, what are you doing?

MOTHER MULDOON (to herself). No time for tea, she says. (She shakes her head sorrowfully.)

MARY (calling again). Frank, do you hear me?

FRANK (from off L). Give me a minute, can't you?

MARY. It's not a question of what I can give you. Ask the police. They've the answer. (She moves back to the table and begins to check the bundles. Continuing.) I think we've everything. (Turning.) Eileen, look in the trunk and see that it's empty.

EILEEN. I've already looked.

MARY. Then look again.

EILEEN (out the window). The Widow MacManus just showed up.

MARY. I'm not surprised. She likes funerals. (EILEEN crosses to the trunk and opens it.)

(FRANK MULDOON enters from off L carrying a sack of potatoes. He's a fiery-tempered farmer filled with bombast, malarkey and an exaggerated sense of pride. He never says

anything quietly if it can be shouted.)

FRANK (the sack). I'll not be leaving them anything to stuff their bellies with.

MOTHER MULDOON. What's in the sack, son?

FRANK. Potatoes.

MOTHER MULDOON. I wish it were a pot of tea.

EILEEN. Not even a speck of dust in the trunk.

(To FRANK.) There's a fine turnout outside our door. The world and his wife are here.

FRANK (pleased). Is that a fact? (Drops the sack.)

Flattering, that is. (He strides to the window and looks out.) Ah, true. There's Kevin O'Connell and that nitwit son of his. Do you know they say the lad has eleven toes?

MOTHER MULDOON. For the O'Connells that's two more than usual.

FRANK. And Seumas Fogarty standing with the best of them. Worst planter in the west of Ireland. Grows spuds the size of grapes. Got no pride, that one.

MARY (turning to him). Eileen spotted Essie Mac Manus.

FRANK. What's she doing here? No one's dead.

MOTHER MULDOON. Since when does a banshee need a reason to visit? Let Essie MacManus in your house and you might as well be fitted for a shroud.

ALL (thoughtfully). Aye.

FRANK. Five husbands, and all of them nourishment for the worms.

MARY. I hear tell it's her cooking.

MOTHER MULDOON. She put a curse on them. Flowers die where she walks.

FRANK. Nonsense. She bored the lads to death. The woman's a dreadful pallor. (Sees something.) Oh, oh.