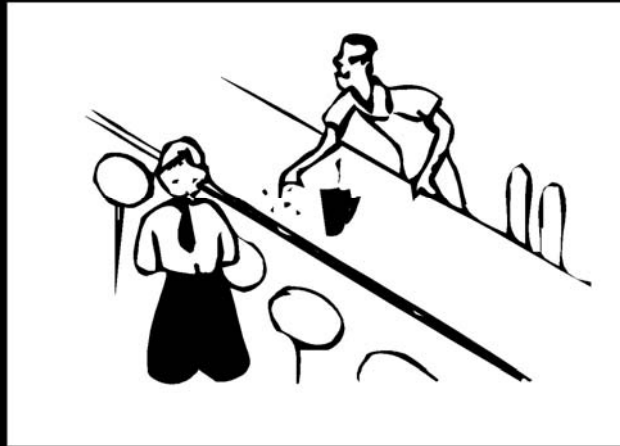


The Darlin' Hero



Charles Kray

Norman Maine Publishing

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**“Let this be a lesson
to all scruffy lumpers.
There’s no one’ll be threatenin’ the
inviolable peace of an Irish pub.”**

—Batman

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FARCE. In a dilapidated funeral home in Dublin, Patrick and Mulligan sit beside the coffin of their dearly departed friend, Jake Kilrain, and drink to Jake's final journey to the heavenly gates. Patrick and Mulligan have vowed to stay with the body until dawn, but when the whiskey runs out, the two head to Clancy's pub and take Jake's corpse with them. At the pub, they prop Jake up at the bar, and continue their drinking vigil without anyone noticing that Jake is deceased. When Clancy demands payment for the drinks, Patrick and Mulligan dash, leaving Jake with the tab. Enraged, Clancy slugs Jake and knocks him off the barstool, which makes everyone think Clancy's blow has killed Jake. The shocking news of Jake's death spurs round after round of drinks—all on the house. With each round of drinks, the story of Jake's death changes until everyone is toasting Clancy as "the darlin' hero."

Performance Time: Approximately 30 minutes.

Characters

(7 m, 1 f, 2 flexible, extras)

PATRICK: 50s, lusty, boastful, and a bit coarse, but not without charm; large man, somewhat overbearing, proudly Irish; sometimes bellows when he speaks.

MULLIGAN: 50s, small, wiry, and a bit skittish about life in general; born follower, who survives mostly through wile and chicanery.

CLANCY: 40-60, a huge red-headed giant of a man, quick to anger but of a magnanimous nature; lord of all he surveys in his bar.

BATMAN: Little man; once a valet to a general in the British Army; has taken on some of the pompous characteristics of his former boss.

MRS. WISHING: 40s, a regular patron of Clancy's bar and quite vocal; strident, drinks more than a bit; fond of Clancy and his generosity, though disdainful of most men.

MR. WISHING: Mrs. Wishing's husband; reserved and tentative.

CRONY 1, 2: They are of the same mold as Patrick and Mulligan; tend to drink and exaggerate.

OFFICER: Official and officious; quite impressed with his importance and his territorial imperative, which includes Clancy's bar.

JAKE KILRAIN: Deceased.

EXTRAS: As pub regulars.

Setting

Late 1930s, Dublin, Ireland. Dilapidated funeral parlor and Clancy's pub.

Synopsis of Scenes

Scene 1: Display room of a dilapidated funeral parlor in Dublin.

Scene 2: Clancy's, a disreputable neighborhood pub, several hours later.

Props

Coffin
Bottles of whiskey
Pub tables
Bar
Whiskey glasses
Pint glasses

Scene 1

(AT RISE: Display room of a dilapidated funeral parlor in Dublin, evening. Somewhat inebriated, Mulligan and Patrick sit behind a large but simple coffin in which lies Jake Kilrain, deceased.)

PATRICK: Well, he's gone. He's really gone. It doesn't seem the same without him, Mulligan.

MULLIGAN: No, Patrick. But no one can say that Jake Kilrain left without puttin' up a grand fight in life. Many and plenty's the man what will be nursin' an old bruise and wishin' old Jake a pleasant last journey.

PATRICK: And isn't it fitting, Mulligan, that you and I, his best friends, should sit up here with him, on his last night on this earth, and drink to the success of Jake Kilrain's final journey to the heavenly gates of St. Peter.

MULLIGAN: Well, no more fitting than if it were you or I, Patrick. Wasn't it a pact we had?

PATRICK: It was that. Many and plenty's the day the three of us sat over a bottle of Irish whiskey and a case of stout and swore that whenever any of us left this vale of tears, the others would celebrate at his side and launch him on his final journey.

MULLIGAN: And doesn't he look peaceful lyin' there, happy in the knowledge that he has not been deserted by his two staunch friends.

PATRICK: Peaceful, Mulligan? No, I think old Jake still looks like he's ready to knock the livin' bejusus out of any scruffy lumper that comes along.

(Mulligan looks at Jake.)

MULLIGAN: Ye're right there, Patrick. Old Lucifer himself would have been hard put to stop Jake Kilrain once his mind was set. Shall we have another drink, Patrick?

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PATRICK: Right ye are, Mulligan. And pour a third for Jake.

(Mulligan pours whiskey.)

MULLIGAN: Eh, Patrick. Will you be drinkin' it this time, or I?

PATRICK: We'll let Jake decide.

MULLIGAN: Again?

PATRICK: And who is better suited? You just said yourself that Jake has a mind of his own, Mulligan.

MULLIGAN: I know, Patrick, but it does seem that every time Jake does the choosin', you end up with the extra ration.

PATRICK: That's not so, Mulligan. I distinctly remember your havin' Jake's first drink.

MULLIGAN: True, Patrick. But there were over a score of later ones that Jake favored you with!

PATRICK: Well, Mulligan, you must admit, Jake always did favor me a wee bit.

MULLIGAN: I suppose, Patrick.

PATRICK: There's no suppose about it, Mulligan. Back in the time of the Trouble, when Jake and I were transportin' hunted Republicans out of the six counties of Kerry, I saved him from a Tan's bullet. I knocked in the lumper's head with a healthy brown bottle of stout. Will I ever forget the day old Jake smiled at me and said, "Patrick, darling, ye're welcome to my ration, now and ever." And that's the way it's always been with us since.

MULLIGAN: The way Jake told me, it was the other way around.

PATRICK: Never mind what he told you. It's what I told you. Jake Kilrain was always half a bleeding liar anyway.

MULLIGAN: God rest his soul.

PATRICK: Surely, God rest his soul. Well, here's to Jake, Mulligan.

MULLIGAN: To Jake.

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(They drink.)

PATRICK: And now for Jake's whiskey.

MULLIGAN: And who's to drink it this time, Patrick?

PATRICK: Can't you read it in his eyes, Mulligan?

(Mulligan looks at Jake.)

MULLIGAN: Not quite, Patrick. They're closed.

(Patrick gets up and looks.)

PATRICK: So they are. Ah, but would you look at that smile on his darlin' face, Mulligan. He's sayin', "Be my guest, Patrick."

(Mulligan looks at Jake again.)

MULLIGAN: Is that what he's sayin'?

PATRICK: With such a benevolent smile for an old comrade, could he be sayin' anything else, Mulligan?

MULLIGAN: I suppose not, Patrick.

(Patrick drinks.)

PATRICK: Here's luck, Jake.

(Mulligan picks up the bottle to pour again and finds it empty.)

MULLIGAN: Patrick, it's late and there's no more whiskey left. Shouldn't we be goin' now and let Jake have his last hours to himself?

PATRICK: Alone? Never. I swore that I would stand by him till the break of dawn on his last day. And you did the same.

MULLIGAN: So I did, Patrick.

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PATRICK: And would you desert him now and break a promise to a lifelong friend?

MULLIGAN: No, Patrick.

PATRICK: Well?

MULLIGAN: But, Patrick, it'll be a long dry siege till mornin'.

What with the well run dry, so to speak.

PATRICK: Ye're right there, Mulligan. Ye're right there. And Jake Kilrain would be the last to wish an evenin' of torturous dryness on two loyal cronies. Even on his last day.

MULLIGAN: There's truth in that, Patrick. There's surely truth in that.

PATRICK: Well, what's to do, Mulligan?

MULLIGAN: I don't know, Patrick. What's to do? *(Pause. They ponder.)* Oh, Patrick, do you think we might run down to Clancy's bar? He's still open.

PATRICK: No, Mulligan. We promised Jake we wouldn't leave him alone for a moment and that's exactly what we must do.

MULLIGAN: But, Patrick, I don't think Jake would mind if one of us ran down for a moment or so. I could be back in a twinkling with a fresh bottle to sustain us on this long, cold night.

PATRICK: A pact's a pact, Mulligan. If one stays, we all stay, the whole night, till the dawn. We're three musketeers, Mulligan. All for us, and us for all. *(He's pleased with this.)* What a fine thought, that is. Isn't that a fine thought, Mulligan?

MULLIGAN: Well, it's a dry one, at any rate.

PATRICK: Ye've a one-track mind, Mulligan. With poor Jake lyin' there, dry as a bone, ye'd leave him just to satisfy your own sinful cravin'. And after ye've sworn on a pact. Aren't you ashamed?

MULLIGAN: Aw, now, Patrick. It's just that my thirst is comin' on faster and faster while the ticky-tick of that old clock there is comin' on slower and slower. And the thought of the long night before us would be enough to send a

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stronger man than I to Clancy's for a bracin' draught of sustenance.

PATRICK: Ye've a point there, Mulligan.

MULLIGAN: Patrick, I have it.

PATRICK: Ye have what?

MULLIGAN: We're three musketeers, are we not?

PATRICK: In a manner of speakin', of course.

MULLIGAN: We are. Ye said so yourself. And you must admit that old Jake himself would be the first to insist that the fountain of goodwill be overflowin' on this the eve of his last voyage.

PATRICK: What are ye drivin' at, Mulligan?

MULLIGAN: Well, what better way to do homage to our dear departed than by attendin' him at the very place where the good cup could never run dry.

PATRICK: Somethin's comin' through to me, Mulligan, but the enormity of the message is so great, I'm a trifle wary to give voice to it. Are you makin' the suggestion that Jake accompany us to Clancy's bar?

MULLIGAN: No other!

PATRICK: Mulligan, that's sacrilegious. You can't be serious.

MULLIGAN: Why not, Patrick? We just promised to sit up all night and drink with Jake. There was nothin' said about where the keenin' would take place. Sure, there's nothin' irreverent about bringin' a friend into an atmosphere which would be a great sight more friendly than this cold hole. Sure, it would be like bringin' him home.

PATRICK: Ah, you've a great point there, Mulligan, sure enough. But how could we manage it?

MULLIGAN: Well, he's not all that heavy.

PATRICK: I don't mean that. I mean walkin' through the streets and all. An' when we get him in the bar, we can't just lay him in the middle of the floor and start orderin' drinks for him. They'd have the brass coats down on us quicker'n you could tip a bottle of stout.

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MULLIGAN: Now, Patrick, isn't he dressed for strollin' in his lovely blue suit and all? And who would notice anything except the fine gentlemen he is. When we get to Clancy's we'll just prop him up on one of those fine wooden stools, order him a nice bracer of Irish whiskey and no one will be the wiser.

PATRICK: Ye're confident of that, Mulligan?

MULLIGAN: As much as I am of Jake's last night bein' a most memorable one in the annals of Irish history.

PATRICK: Ah. It would be that. And you don't think Jake would object?

MULLIGAN: Object! Look at the dear boy. He's fair jumpin' up and down with anticipation already.

PATRICK: (*Looks closely.*) By God, Mulligan, you're right. You're absolutely right!

MULLIGAN: Look, Patrick. I think he winked at me.

PATRICK: So he did, Mulligan, so he did. Well, let's away with him. (*They start to lift him.*) Up we go, Jake me lad.

MULLIGAN: Easy now, lad. Up we go.

(*Blackout.*)

Scene 2

(AT RISE: Clancy's, a disreputable neighborhood bar, several hours later. Seated at one rickety table are Mr. and Mrs. Wishing, neighborhood loungers. Crony 1, 2 sit at a second table. Batman is seated at the bar. Behind the bar is Clancy. All attention is focused on Patrick and Mulligan, who are having a boisterous time at the bar, while Clancy is becoming progressively angrier at their loudness. Clancy has been drinking and is well along under the weather himself, but not quite so much as our heroes, who are seated at the bar with Jake between them.)

PATRICK/MULLIGAN: *(Sing.)*

"Kings may be blest, but we are glorious
O'er all the ills of life victorious.
We are musketeers three
Musketeers three are we."

PATRICK: An' a happy voyage to you, Jake me boy. May this night stay in your memory through the unceasing blackness of eternity. *(Patrick and Mulligan drink. Jake does not.)*

CLANCEY: Your friend doesn't seem too happy about goin' away. Or is he too good to drink with us common folk. Him with his fine blue suit and all.

MULLIGAN: None of that, Clancy. Jake is just a little bit sad. He's also a bit of a tipitotaler.

CLANCEY: A what?

PATRICK: He's not a great man for the wet, like Mulligan and meself.

CLANCEY: Never mind that. He'd better be a good man with the coin for what you've been drinkin' here now. I know Mulligan here never earned an honest copper in his life and wouldn't pay for a drink if he had.

PATRICK: I will not have you abusin' my comrade so.

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CLANCY: If he's your comrade, then ye're like one, and that's not two. Ye're no better than he is. But your money's good enough and I want to see the color of it.

PATRICK: A finer man than Mulligan never lived except for Jake here, and if this weren't such a solemn occasion, I'd force some of your own swill down your filthy throat and teach you a proper manner.

CLANCY: Swill, is it? Filthy throat, is it? Why ye son of a goat-herdin' ponce. Will ye be payin' for your gluttony this moment, or will I be turnin' ye up and over and squeezin' every drop of that same swill out o' your runnin' mouth?

PATRICK: And do ye think ye can do it?

CLANCY: By jaysus, I know I can do it.

(Patrick stands and Clancy straightens up. Patrick is impressed with Clancy's size. Patrick leans over to Mulligan.)

PATRICK: *(Whispers.)* Do ye think he can do it, Mulligan?

MULLIGAN: I've seen him in a donnybrook, Patrick. I know he can do it. *(Patrick eyes Clancy again. Hesitates. Then Mulligan helps Patrick out of the situation.)* Patrick, let's not honor this evil place any longer with our presence. Would a musketeer do battle with a scruffy lumper?

PATRICK: *(Grandly.)* Ye're absolutely right, Mulligan. I'll not soil my hands on the likes of him.

CLANCY: *(To Mulligan.)* Scruffy lumper is it, ye little weasel?

(Clancy reaches over the bar for Mulligan, who exits quickly.)

PATRICK: Desist man! I'll not have violence on such a night. Ye've seen the last of gentlemen in this den of iniquitous iniquity. Ye've seen the last of Patrick Hannigan!

(Patrick exits grandly before Clancy can react. Clancy finally composes himself, then realizes that they've gone without paying. He walks over to Jake.)

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CLANCY: *(To Jake.)* So they've left ye, did they? They've left ye to pay for their free carousin'. Serves you right for keepin' company with the likes of Mulligan and his ilk. But *you'll* not be gettin' away, my fancy frocked friend. Pay up. D'ye hear? Pay up! *(There is no answer from Jake.)* Now I've taken just about enough from you and your two loafer friends. Pay up or that lovely blue suit will be hanging up front of the shop, and you upside down beside it like the pawnbroker's window. *(Jake still doesn't answer. Clancy leans over the bar and is face to face with Jake – almost nose to nose.)* So you'll defy me, will ye. *(Clancy peers at Jake even more closely.)* By God, you're ugly you shadow of a whore's ghost. But you'll be uglier still if you don't pay up in a minute. *(There is still no answer from Jake.)* This is your last chance, ye dirty orange tender, I'm warning ye. *(There is still no answer from Jake.)* So you're a hero, is it? Well, I've done with heroes this many times past, and now I've done with you, me boy. God save me, I warned you! *(With that, he sends a right hook across the bar. It catches Jake squarely on the jaw and he topples off the stool and onto the floor CS. Clancy comes running around the bar, ready to do battle, bouncing around the prostrate Jake in a fighting pose. The other patrons of the bar surround the combatants.)* Get up, you dirty bastard. Get up and fight like a man. Ye're no Irishman. Ye're a ponce. Ye're the son of a ponce. Get up and fight. If you won't get up, then pay me what's due me, or I'll kick the shillings out of your bloody insides. Get up!

(Batman feels Jake's pulse.)

BATMAN: By God, Clancy, ye've killed him.

CLANCY: The devil. Get up, ye scruffy lumper, and give me my due.

(Mrs. Wishing feels Jake's head.)

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MRS. WISHING: It's true, Mr. Clancy. The poor man's as white as a corpse.

MR. WISHING: He is that!

CRONY 2: Ye've done it now, Clancy.

(Clancy is becoming a bit apprehensive and is trying to think of a way out.)

MRS. WISHING: Ah, the poor man in his fine blue suit.

CLANCY: Poor man, is it? Ye didn't see what he did to me?

MR. WISHING: What's that, Clancy?

CLANCY: *(Thinking fast.)* Ye didn't see? The dirty bastard pulled a knife on me. This long it was. The blade.

BATMAN: It's true, faith. Didn't I see the bleeder reach over the bar and have at Clancy? I had all to do to get out of the way myself. I scooted under the bar. Why faith, Clancy here saved my life.

CRONY 1: And so he did. Didn't I see it with my own eyes. Dolan and I were sittin' here watchin' him flash his big ugly blade.

CRONY 2: And wasn't it evil lookin'. Sure and when he'd done with Clancy, he'd have come after us all.

BATMAN: No question. Clancy saved us. A veritable hero. It's our lives we're owin' him.

CRONY 1: But for Clancy, it could have been any of us lyin' there. A hero he is certainly.

MRS. WISHING: Oh, dear Mr. Clancy, can we ever thank you.

CLANCY: I saw my duty and I did it.

CRONY 2: He did that.

CRONY 1: Hurrah for Clancy, a pride he is for us. A pride, no less.

BATMAN: A drink is what we're needin'. A drink to toast our own sweet hero.

CLANCY: That's a fine idea, Batman. All my friends. To the bar. The drinks are on Clancy tonight.

BATMAN: The drinks are on our hero.

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MRS. WISHING: Our darlin' hero is buyin' us drinks.

CRONY 1: Let me do the honors for our hero.

(Crony 1 runs behind the bar and pours drinks. The others lift Clancy and seat him on a stool [or on the bar] and surround him.)

BATMAN: Three cheers for our hero.

CRONY 1: Three cheers for our Clancy.

(They all drink. Pause.)

CRONY 2: And what'll we do with the lumper?

BATMAN: Let him lay.

MRS. WISHING: The devil meet and melt his lousy bones.

CRONY 2: Give the devil his due. He did put up one hell of a fight.

CRONY 1: Sure, and he was no match for our Clancy, even with his big blade.

MR. WISHING: I think we'd better call the police. Isn't that the proper thing to do when someone's been killed?

MRS. WISHING: He wasn't killed, Mr. Wishing. He was defeated.

BATMAN: As honorable and mighty a blow as was ever struck for Irish independence. Let this be a lesson to all scruffy lumpers. There's no one'll be threatenin' the inviolate peace of an Irish pub.

MR. WISHING: Still an' all, I think the police should be called to make everything legal. We can't just leave him layin' there.

CLANCY: Ye're absolutely right, Mr. Wishing. Everything must be done proper and legal.

MRS. WISHING: And isn't that just like our dear hero. Let's have another drink.

(Crony 1 pours another round.)

[End of Freeview]