



THE GINGER MAN

A SINGULAR MAN

THE SADDEST SUMMER OF SAMUEL S

THE BEASTLY BEATITUDES OF BALTHAZAR B

THE ONION EATERS

A FAIRY TALE OF NEW YORK

THE DESTINIES OF DARCY DANCER, GENTLEMAN

SCHULTZ

LEILA

MEET MY MAKER THE MAD MOLECULE

THE UNEXPURGATED CODE

DE ALFONCE TENNIS

J. P. DONLEAVY'S IRELAND

ARE YOU LISTENING RABBI LOW?

THE HISTORY OF THE GINGER MAN

THE LADY WHO LIKED CLEAN RESTROOMS

A SINGULAR COUNTRY

# THE GINGER MAN

---

J. P. DONLEAVY



GROVE PRESS  
*New York*

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, or the facilitation thereof, including information storage and retrieval systems, without permission in writing from the publisher, except by a reviewer, who may quote brief passages in a review. Any members of educational institutions wishing to photocopy part or all of the work for classroom use, or publishers who would like to obtain permission to include the work in an anthology should send their inquiries to Grove/Atlantic, Inc., 841 Broadway, New York, NY 10003.

*Published simultaneously in Canada*  
*Printed in the United States of America*

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Donleavy, J. P. (James Patrick), 1926–

The ginger man.

I. Title.

PS3507.0686G56 1988 813'.54 88-3417

ISBN-10: 0-8021-3795-4

ISBN-13: 978-0-8021-3795-1

Grove Press  
an imprint of Grove/Atlantic, Inc.  
841 Broadway  
New York, NY 10003

Distributed by Publishers Group West

[www.groveatlantic.com](http://www.groveatlantic.com)

08 09 10 10 9 8 7

# THE GINGER MAN

---

Today a rare sun of spring. And horse carts clanging to the quays down Tara Street and the shoeless white faced kids screaming.

O'Keefe comes in and climbs up on a stool. Wags his knapsack around on his back and looks at Sebastian Dangerfield.

"Those tubs are huge over there. First bath for two months. I'm getting more like the Irish every day. Like going on the subway in the States, you go through a turnstile."

"Did you go first or third class, Kenneth?"

"First. I broke my ass washing my underwear and in those damn rooms in Trinity nothing will dry. In the end I sent my towel to the laundry. Back at Harvard I could nip into a tiled shower and dive into nice clean underwear."

"What will you have to drink, Kenneth?"

"Who's paying?"

"Just been to visit my broker with an electric fire."

"Then buy me a cider. Does Marion know you've hocked the fire?"

"She's away. Took Felicity with her to visit her parents. On the moors in Scotland. I think the Balscaddoon was getting her down. Scrabbling on the ceiling and groans from under the floor."

"What's it like out there? Does it freeze your balls?"

"Come out. Stay for the weekend. Not much in the way of food but you're welcome to whatever I've got."

"Which is nothing."

"I wouldn't put it that way."

"I would. Since I've arrived here everything has been down and these guys at Trinity think I'm loaded with dough. They think the G.I. Bill means I crap dollars or a diarrhea of dimes. You get your check?"

"Going to see about it Monday."

"If mine doesn't come, I'll croak. And you're saddled with a wife and child. Wow. But at least you get it steady. And I've never got it at all. Any loose women out there on Howth?"

"I'll keep a watch."

"Look I've got to go and see my tutor and see if I can find out where they hold my Greek lectures. Nobody knows, everything is secret. No more drink for me. I'll come out over the weekend."

"Kenneth, I might have your first woman waiting for you."

"Yeah."

It was a steep hill up to Balscaddoon. Winding close to the houses and the neighbor's eyes having a look. Fog over the flat water. And the figure hunched up the road. On top it leveled and set in a concrete wall was a green door.

Within the doorway, smiles, wearing white golfing shoes and tan trousers suspended with bits of wire.

"By all means come in, Kenneth."

"Some place. What holds it up?"

"Faith."

O'Keefe went through the house. Opening doors, drawers, closets, flushing the toilet, lifting its lid, flushing it again. Stuck his head in the hall.

"Say this thing really works. If we had something to eat we'd be able to use it. They've got one of those big shops down there in the town, why don't you pop down with that English accent of yours and get some credit. As much as I like your company, Dangerfield, I'd prefer it on a full stomach."

"I'm up to my eyes already."

"And you don't look so hot in those clothes."

O'Keefe jumped on the floor of the drawing room. Pulled open the conservatory door, pinched the leaves of a dying plant and went out into the garden. Standing on the shaggy grass he gave a shrill whistle as he looked down precipitous rocks to the swells of sea many feet below. He went round the narrow back of the house, looking in the windows. In a bedroom he saw Dangerfield on his knees chopping a large blue blanket with an axe. He rushed back into the house.

"Jesus Christ, Dangerfield, what are you doing? Have you gone Asiatic?"

"Patience."

"But that's a good blanket. Give it to me if you're going to chop it up."

"Now, Kenneth, watch me. See? Put this round the neck like this, tuck in the ragged edges and presto. I'm now wearing Trinity's rowing blue. Always best to provide a flippant subtlety when using class power. Now we'll see about a little credit."

"You shrewd bastard. I must admit it looks good."

"Make a fire in the stove. I'll be back."

"Get us a chicken."

"We'll see."

Dangerfield stepped out into a deserted Balscaddoon Road.

The counter was covered with rich sides of bacon and wicker baskets of bright eggs. Assistants, white aproned, behind the long counter. Bananas, green from the Canary Isles, blooming from the ceiling. Dangerfield stopping in front of a gray haired assistant who leans forward eagerly.

"Good day, sir. Can I be of any help?"

Dangerfield hesitating with pursed lips.

“Good day, yes. I would like to open up an account with you.”

“Very good, sir. Will you please come this way.”

The assistant opening a large ledger across the counter. Asking Dangerfield’s name and address.

“Shall I bill you monthly or quarterly, sir?”

“I think quarterly.”

“Would you like to take anything with you today, sir?”

Dangerfield caressing his teeth together, his eyes darting among the shelves.

“Do you have any Cork Gin?”

“Certainly, sir. Large or small size?”

“I think the large.”

“And anything else, sir?”

“Do you have any Haig and Haig?”

Assistant calling to the end of the shop. A small boy goes behind the scenes and comes out with a bottle. Dangerfield points to a ham.

“And how many pounds, sir?”

“I’ll take it all. And two pounds of cheese and a chicken.”

Assistant all smiles and remarks. O it’s the weather. Shocking fog. No day for them ones at sea or the others either. And clapping his hands to the little boy.

“Come here and carry the parcels for the gentleman. And a very good day to you, sir.”

Up the hill, O’Keefe waiting and sweeping the packages into his arms. In the kitchen, laying them out on the table.

“How you do it, Dangerfield, I don’t know. The first time I went looking for credit they told me to come back with a letter from a bank manager.”

“It’s the blue blood, Kenneth. Now I’ll cut off a little piece of this cheese and give it to the little boy.”

Dangerfield returns to the kitchen smiling and rubbing his hands.

“What made you get all this damn booze?”

“Warm us up. I think a cold front is on the way from the Arctic.”

“What will Marion say when she gets back?”

“Not a word. These English wives are great. Know their proper place. Ought to marry one yourself.”

“All I want is my first piece of arse. Plenty of time to get snowed under with a wife and kids. Give me some of that Scotch and out of my way now while I rustle up this food. Cooking is the only work sometimes think I’m fitted for. One summer when I was working in Newport I thought of giving up Harvard. There was this Greek chef who thought I was wonderful because I could speak aristocratic Greek but they fired me because I invited some of the boys from Harvard into the club’s bar for a drink and the manager came over and fired me on the spot. Said the staff weren’t to mix with guests.”

“Quite rightly so.”



“And now I’ve got a degree in classics and still have to cook.”

“A noble calling.”

O’Keefe flipping pots and bouncing from sink to table.

“Kenneth, do you think you’re sexually frustrated and maladjusted?”

“I do.”

“You’ll find opportunities in this fine land.”

“Yeah, lots, for unnatural connections with farm animals. Jesus, the only time I can forget about it is when I’m hungry. When I eat I go mad. I sat down and read every book on sex in the Widener Library to see how I could get it. Did me no damn good. I must repel women and there’s no cure for that.”

“Hasn’t anyone ever been attracted?”

“Once. At Black Mountain College in North Carolina. Asked me to come up to her room to listen some music. She started to press up against me and I ran out of the room.”

“What for?”

“She must have been too ugly. That’s another thing against me. I’m attracted to beautiful women. Only thing for me is to grow old and not want it anymore.”

“You’ll want it more than ever.”

“Jesus, that isn’t true, is it? If that’s what I’ve got to look forward to I may as well flip myself off the end of the back garden out there. Tell me, what’s it like to have it steady?”

“Get used to it like most things.”

“I could never get used to it.”

“You will.”

“But what’s this little visit of Marion’s to mama and papa? Friction? Drinking?”

“She and the baby need a little rest.”

“I think her old man must be wise to you. How did he ever screw you out of two hundred and fifty notes? It’s no wonder you never got it.”

“He just took me into his study and said sorry son, things are just a little tight at the moment.”

“Should have said dowry or no marriage. He must have dough, an admiral. Give him the stuff, like to provide for Marion the way she’s accustomed to. Could have touched him with a few of those rosy ideas of yours.”

“Too late. This was the night before the wedding. I even refused a drink for strategy. However, he waited a good five minutes after the butler left before pleading poverty.”

O’Keefe spins holding the chicken by the leg.

“See, he’s shrewd. Saved himself two hundred and fifty nicker notes. If you had been on your toes you could have told him you had Marion up the pole and with a birth imminent you needed a little ne egg. Now look at you. All you need to do now is flunk your law exams and bingo.”

“I’m all right, Kenneth. Little money and everything’s all right. Got a house, wife, daughter.”

“You mean you pay rent for a house. Stop paying rent, no house.”

“Let me pour you another drink, Kenneth. I think you need it.”

O’Keefe filling a bowl with bread crumbs. Night outside and the boom of the sea. Angelus bells. Pause that refreshes.

“This, Dangerfield, is your blood for which your family will starve and which will finally send you all to the poor house. Should have played it cozy and married strictly for cash. Come in drunk, have a quick one and whoops, another mouth to feed. You’ll be eating spaghetti as I had to as a kid till it comes out of your eyes or else you’ll have to take your English wife and English kids and screw back to America.”

The chicken, trussed, was laid reverently in the pan. O’Keefe with a smack of the lips pushed it in the oven.

“When that’s ready, Dangerfield, we’ll have chicken à la Balscaddoon. You know, this is a pretty spooky house when it gets dark. But I don’t hear anything yet except the sea.”

“Wait.”

“Well, ghosts won’t bother me on a full stomach and certainly never if I had a full sex life. Do you know, at Harvard I finally got Constance Kelly in my power. There was a girl who strung me along for two years till I found out what a fraud American womanhood was and I squeezed her right under my thumb. But I can’t figure it out. I never could get it. She’d do anything but let me in. Holding out for wealth on Beacon Hill. I would have married her but she didn’t want to get stuck at the bottom of the social ladder with me. One of her own kind. Jesus, she’s right. But do you know what I’m going to do. When I go back to the States when I’m fat with dough, wearing my Saville Row suits, with black bria M.G. and my man driving, I’m going to turn on my English accent full blast. Pull up to some suburban house where she’s married a mick, turned down by all the old Bostonians, and leave my man at the wheel I’ll walk up the front path knocking the kid’s toys out of the way with my walking stick and give the door a few impatient raps. She comes out. A smudge of flour on her cheek and the reek of boiled cabbage coming from the kitchen. I look at her with shocked surprise. I recover slowly and then in my best accent, delivered with devastating resonance, I say Constance . . . you’ve turned out . . . just as I thought you would. Then I spin on my heel, give her a good look at my tailoring, knock another toy aside with my cane and roar away.”

Dangerfield swinging back in the green rocking chair with a wiggle of joy, head shaking in a hundred yesses. O’Keefe striding the red tiles of the kitchen floor, waving a fork, his one live eye glistening in his head, a mad mick for sure. Perhaps he’ll slip on one of the toys and break an arse bone.

“And Constance’s mother hated my guts. Thought I’d suck her down socially. Would open all the letters I’d write to her daughter, and I’d sit in Widener Library thinking up the dirtiest stuff I could imagine, I think the old slut loved them. Used to make me laugh thinking she’d read them and then have to burn them. Jesus, I repel women, damn it. Even this winter down in Connemara visiting the old folks, my cousin, who looked like a cow’s arse wouldn’t even come across. I’d wait for her to go out and get the milk at night and go with her. At the end of the field I’d try to nudge her into the ditch. I’d get her all breathless and saying she’d do anything if I’d take her to the States and marry her. I tried that for three nights running, standing out there in the rain up to our ankles in mud and cow flop me trying to get her in the ditch, knock her down, but she was too strong. So I told her she was a tub o’ lard and I wouldn’t take her to East Jesus. Have to get them a visa before you can touch an arm.”

“Marry her, Kenneth.”

“Get tangled with that beast of burden for the rest of me days? Be all right if I could chain her to the stove to cook but to marry the Irish is to look for poverty. I’d marry Constance Kelly out of spite.”

“I suggest the matrimonial column of the *Evening Mail* for you. Put no encumbrance. Man of means, extensive estates in West. Prefers women of stout build, with own capital and car for travel on Continent. No others need apply.”

“Let’s eat. I want to leave my problem uncomplicated.”

“Kenneth, this is most cordial.”

The toasted bird was put on the green table. O’Keefe driving a fork into the dripping breast and ripping off the legs. Pot gives a tremble on the shelf. Little curtains with the red spots flutter. A gale outside. When you think of it, O’Keefe can cook. And this is my first chicken since the night I left New York and the waiter asked me if I wanted to keep the menu as a memory and I sat there in the blue carpeted room and said yes. And around the corner in a bar a man in a brown suit offers to buy a drink. Comes and feels my leg. Says he loves New York and could we go somewhere away from the crowd and talk, be together, nice boy, high class boy. I left him hanging from his seat, a splash of red white and blue tie coming out of his coat and I went up to York-town and danced with a girl in a flower print dress who said there was no fun and nobody around. Named Jean with remarkable breasts and I was dreaming of Marion’s, my own tall thin blond with teeth fashionably bucked. On my way after the war to marry her. Ready to take the big plane across the sea. I first met her wearing a sky blue sweater and I knew they were pears. What better than ripe pears. In London in the *Antelope*, sitting in the back with a fine pot of gin enjoying these indubitable people. She sat only inches away, long cigarette in her white fingers. While the bombs were landing in London. I heard her ask for cigarettes and they had none. And leaning forward in my naval uniform, handsome and strong, please do have some of mine. O I couldn’t, really, thank you, no. But please do, I insist. It’s very good of you. Not at all. And she dropped one and I reached down and touched her ankle with my finger. My, what rich, lovely big feet.

“What’s the matter, Kenneth? You’re as white as a sheet.”

O’Keefe staring at the ceiling with a half chewed chicken leg hanging in his fist.

“Didn’t you hear that? Whatever that scabbling in the ceiling is, it’s alive.”

“My dear Kenneth, you’re welcome to search the premises. It moves all over the house. Even walls and has a rather disconcerting way of following one from room to room.”

“Jesus, stop it. That scares me. Why don’t you look up there?”

“Rather not.”

“That noise is real.”

“Perhaps you’d like to look, Kenneth. Trap door in the hall. I’ll give you an axe and flashlight.”

“Wait till I digest my meal. I was just beginning to enjoy all this. I thought you were kidding.”

O’Keefe at one end, carrying the ladder to the hall.

With axe cocked, O’Keefe advancing slowly towards the trap door. Dangerfield encouraging him on. O’Keefe pushing up the door, peering along the beam of light. No noise. Not a sound. Bravery becoming general again.

“You look frightened to death, Dangerfield. Think you were the one up here. Probably just some loose papers blowing across the floor.”

“Suit yourself, Kenneth. Just give me a whistle when it gets you around the neck. Go in.”

O’Keefe disappeared. Dangerfield looking up into the descending dust. O’Keefe’s footfalls going towards the drawing room. A wail. A scream from O’Keefe.

“Christ, hold the ladder, I’m coming down.”

Trap door down with a slam.

“For God’s sake, what is it, Kenneth?”

“A cat. With one eye. The other a great gaping hole. What a sight. How the hell did it get up there?”

“No idea. Must have been up there all the time. Might have belonged to a Mr. Gilhooley who lived here only he fell off the cliff out there one night and was washed up three months later on the Isle of Man. Would you say, Kenneth, that maybe this house has a history of death?”

“Where are you putting me to sleep?”

“Cheer up, Kenneth. You look terrified. No need to let a little thing like a cat get you down. You can sleep wherever you like.”

“This house gives me the creeps. Let’s build a fire or something.”

“Come into the drawing room and play a little tune on the piano for me.”

They walked along the red tiled hall to the drawing room. Set on a tripod before the baywindows, large brass telescope pointing out to sea. In the corner an ancient upright piano, its top covered with opened tins and rinds of cheese. Three fat armchairs distorted with lumps of stuffing and poking springs. Dangerfield fell back in one and O’Keefe bounded to the piano, struck a chord and began to sing.

In this sad room  
In this dark gloom  
We live like beasts.

The windows rattling on the rotten sills. O’Keefe’s twisted notes. There you are, Kenneth, sitting on that stool, all the way from Cambridge, Massachusetts, freckled and fed on spaghetti. And me, from St. Louis, Missouri, because that night in the Antelope I took Marion to dinner and she paid. And a weekend after to a hotel. And I pulled down her green pajamas and she said she couldn’t and I said you can. And other weekends till the war was over. Bye bye bombs and back to America where I can only say I was tragic and lonely, feeling Britain was made for me. All I got out of old man Wilton was a free taxi to our honeymoon. We arrived and I bought a cane to walk the dales of Yorkshire. Our room was over a stream at this late summertime. And the maid was mad and put flowers in the bed and that night Marion put them in her hair, which she let down over her blue night gown. O the pears Cigarettes and gin. Abandoned bodies until Marion lost her false front teeth behind the dresser and then she wept, wrapped in a sheet, slumped in a chair. I told her not to worry for things like that happened on honeymoons and soon we would be off for Ireland where there was bacon and butter and long evenings by the fire while I studied law and maybe even a quick love make on a woolly rug on the floor.

This Boston voice squeaking out its song. The yellow light goes out the window on the stubs of windy grass and black rocks. And down the wet steps by gorse stumps and rusty heather to the high water mark and diving pool. Where the seaweeds rise and fall at night in Balscaddoon Bay.

The sun of Sunday morning up out of the sleepless sea from black Liverpool. Sitting on the rocks over the water with a jug of coffee. Down there along the harbor pier, trippers in bright colors. Sails moving out to sea. Young couples climbing the Balcaddoon Road to the top of Kilrock to search out grass and lie between the furze. A cold green sea breaking whitely along the granite coast. A day on which all things are born, like uncovered stars.

A wet salty wind. And tomorrow Marion comes back. And the two of us sit here wagging our American legs. Marion, stay away a little longer, please. Don't want the pincers on me just yet. Great dishes or baby's dirty bottom, I just want to watch them sailing. We need a nurse for baby to wheel her around some public park where I can't hear the squeals. Or maybe the two of you will get killed in a train wreck and your father foot the bill for burial. Well-bred people never fight over the price of death. And it's not cheap these days. Just look a bit glassy eyed for a month and take off for Paris. Some nice quiet hotel in Rue de Seine and float fresh fruit in a basin of cool water. Your long winter body lying naked on the slate and what would I be thinking if I touched your dead breast. Must get a half crown out of O'Keefe before he goes. I wonder what makes him so tight with money.

Late afternoon, the two of them walking down the hill to the bus stop. Fishermen in with their chugging boats unloading catches on the quay. Old women watching on thick chilblained ankles with heavy breasts wallowing.

"Kenneth, is this not a fine country?"

"Look at that woman."

"I say, Kenneth, is this not a fine country?"

"Size of watermelons."

"Kenneth, you poor bastard."

"Do you know, Constance had a good figure. She must have loved me. How could she help it. But wouldn't let it stand in the way of marriage into some old Yankee family. Many are the days I sat on my cold arse on the steps of Widener just to watch her go by and follow her to where she was meeting some jerk with not an ounce of joy in him."

"Kenneth, you wretched man."

"Don't worry, I'll manage."

Sunday. Day set aside for emptiness and defeat. Dublin city closed, a great gray trap. Only churches doing business, sacred with music, red candles and crucified Christs. And the afternoons, long lines of them waiting in the rain outside cinemas.

"I say, Kenneth, could you see your way clear to lending me half a crown repayable Monday at three thirty one o'clock? Check tomorrow and I could pay you at the Consulate."

"No."

"Two shillings?"

"No."

"One and six?"

"No. Nothing."

“A shilling is nothing.”

“God damn it, Dangerfield, don’t drag me down with you. For Christ’s sake, my back’s to the wall. Look at me. My fingers are like wet spaghetti. Get off my back. Don’t doom us both.”

“Relax, Kenneth. Don’t take things so seriously.”

“Seriously? This is a matter of life and death. What do you want me to do? Shout with joy?”

“You’re upset.”

“I’m not upset, I’m prudent. I want to eat tomorrow. Do you honestly think these checks are going to be there?”

“Quite.”

“When you’re sitting on your arse in the poor house screaming for drink I don’t want to be next to you. Let one of us go down, that’s enough. Not both. I want to eat tonight.”

“I want some cigarettes.”

“Look, here’s my bus, I’ll give you three pence and have it for me tomorrow.”

“Kenneth, I want to tell you one thing before you go. You’re a jewel among men.”

“Look, don’t bother me, if you don’t want the three pence, I’ll take it back. It’ll pay half my fare.”

“Kenneth, you lack love.”

“Ass and money.”

Bus pulling away. O’Keefe’s head vanishing on the top deck and over a green sign, Guinness is good for you. How true.

Turning up the hill. Sunday on the desert of Edar. Great to know the old names. Do a bit of deep breathing. Lately been having the dreams of arrest. Come up from behind and grab me for committing a public nuisance. So long as it isn’t indecency. Go over to this shop and have this good man fetch me up some cigarettes.

“A fine day, sir.”

“Aye.”

“Forgive the impertinence, sir, but are you the new gentleman living up on the rock?”

“O aye.”

“I thought so, sir. And is it to your liking?”

“Splendid.”

“That’s fine, sir.”

“Bye, bye now.”

O I tell you. I tell you, names and numbers. Want to wear a sack over the face. Why don’t you come up and watch me eat? Steam open my letters and see if I wear a truss. And I like to have my wi in bare feet. Good for a woman. They say it’s great for the frigidity. I’m all for wiping that out. Come watch me through any window.

Walking up to the Summit and down there is Gaskin’s Leap, Fox Hole and Piper’s Gut. And the Casana Rock which is great for the sea birds. Bit of warmth in the air. How I like it. Lonely and Sunday. Faced with the cat. Should have locked O’Keefe up there with it. Take the ladder away. Give

him a lesson in courage.

---

A girl approached.

“Mister, could I have a light?”

“Certainly.”

Dangerfield striking a match, holding it to her cigarette.

“Thank you very much.”

“You’re welcome on a lovely evening like this.”

“Yes, it is lovely.”

“Quite breathtaking.”

“Yes, it is breathtaking.”

“Are you out for a walk?”

“Yes, my girl friend and I are walking.”

“Around the head?”

“Yes, we like it. We’ve come out from Dublin.”

“What do you do for a living?”

“Well, I guess I work.”

“At what?”

“My girl friend and I work in Jacob’s.”

“Biscuit factory?”

“We label tins.”

“You like it?”

“It’s all right. Gets boring.”

“Walk along with me.”

“All right. I’ll get my girl friend.”

Three of them walking along. Some trivia. Names, Alma and Thelma. And telling of the steamship Queen Victoria, wrecked off here at 3 o’clock on the morning of February 15th, 1853. Tragic disaster. And there is the quarry. See the stones. Built the harbor with this rock. Oh I tell you Alma and Thelma, Howth’s the great place for the history. And I might say I’m adding to it meself. In my own little way. And they thought he was having them on and they were Catholics and giggled at this Protestant face.

Little dark now. Just let me take your hands now. O a dangerous place, this Howth at night. Young women want protection. And I’ll hold your hand Alma and it’s a nice hand in spite of the work. Thelma walking ahead. Mind Alma? Thelma away in the dark. Stop here now, like this. It’s better, a little arm around you. Keep you. You like that? Well, you’re a fast worker, and kissing a stranger, what will my girl friend think? Tell her I’m such a lonely gent and you couldn’t resist a little innocent embrace. My house is here, come in? O no. A drink? I’m a member of the Pioneers. Have a glass of water then. I could come next Sunday. I’ll be in Africa in the middle of the Congo. You have a nice bosom, Alma. You shouldn’t make me do those things. Now Alma, come in for a little while and I’ll

show you my telescope. Don't be rude, besides I can't leave my friend. Honesty never gets me anywhere. Let me kiss you goodbye, Alma. Don't think I didn't like it but my girl friend would go back with a tale to my sister. Bye.

Alma running away through the evening. With her new-warmed heart touched by a stranger and I know you are thinking I would have seen your nice new underwear. Go in the drawer tomorrow for a week. And for a nice Protestant like him and there would have been chocolate and taxi rides and dances. Torturing chances, may not ever come again. Thelma, wasn't he a smasher.

Through my green haunted door. Into this house of sounds. Must be the sea. Might even come up through the floor. The cat. Just like O'Keefe with one eye. Says he can't catch a ball. And when they took him to the hospital and took it out they never told him he had only one left. Kenneth, I love you all the same. And even more if you could have buried the axe in the cat, just behind the ears. I think the drawing room the safest tonight. Don't want to crowd the demons. And have a little nightcap. And read my nice fat American business magazine. No one will ever know what it's done for me in my sad moments. My bible of happiness every month. Open it up and I'm making sixty three thousand big bucks a year. Odd three thousand makes it more authentic. And must drive into my office from Connecticut. I insist upon that. And repair evenings to my club. Difficult in New York with the Irish getting into everything. Imitating the Protestants. And I'll have a nice little family of two children. Use the best in contraception. Never should let the lust sneak up on one. Passion of the moment, a disaster over the years. Must not bungle more than twice. Could be fatal. Marion making that sucking noise with those front teeth. Sucking them in and out, surely it's not done. Just not done, that sort of thing. On and off her gums. Little circle of hair round her nipples, tickle the baba's mouth. O she'll live a long time. They'll put me to rest. But not before I've seen a bit of the corporation law and maybe later a bit of investment banking. Sebastian Bullion Dangerfield, chairman of Quids Inc., largest banking firm in the world. Then I would act. Change the interest rates in the pawn shops. Lower them? No, make them higher. People shouldn't be pawning anyway. And send O'Keefe to the Sudan so he can run naked.

Dangerfield settled with feet up and back against the wall. Wind shaking the windows. A sudden long haunted wail from the ceiling.

“God's teeth.”

Must keep a grip. Won't do to lose courage. And moaning under the floor. For the love of Jesus.

Fetching the axe, going into his room. The sea air, a great wet ghost, coming in the open window. Slamming it shut. Tearing the covers back from the bed. Make sure of no rattlesnakes. Go flush the toilet now, take the edge off the fear. And straighten out the room, make the bed. And another sup of the good Cork Gin. Wallop a little freshness into this pillow. Good grief. The room filling with floating feathers. Well God damn it. For the love of Jesus, if that's the way you want it. Off with this damn mattress.

And Dangerfield lifting the axe above a wild head, driving it again and again through the pillow. Screams of money, money. Dragging the mattress out the door, along the hall to the kitchen. Up on the table with it. And the axe is right here ready to cleave the first imposter who sets foot in this room. One more good swig of this. I'm sure it's good for the bowels and at least hurry me to bye byes. Left my soul sitting on a wall and walked away, watching me and grew cold because souls are like hearts, sort of red and warm, all like a heart.



There was a tugging at his leg. Slowly opening eyes to see the irate face of Marion looming over him on this Monday morn of chaos.

“Good God, what’s happened to the house? Why weren’t you at the station to meet me? Look at you. Gin. This is horrid. I had to take a taxi out here, do you hear me? A taxi, fifteen shillings.”

“Now, now, for Christ’s sake have some patience and let me explain everything.”

“I say, explain? Explain what? There’s nothing to explain, it’s all quite evident.”

Marion holding aloft the gin.

“All right, I’m not blind, I see it.”

‘O dear, this is frightful. Why you honestly are a cad. If Mommy and Daddy could only see what I’ve got to come back to. What are you doing on the table?’

“Shut up.”

“I won’t shut up and don’t look at me like that. What are these feathers doing all over the place? Dishes broken on the floor. What were you doing?”

“Goat dance.”

“How frightfully sordid it all is. Disgusting. Feathers in everything. You damn, damn drinker. Where did you get the money? Didn’t meet me at the train. Why? Answer me.”

“Shut up. Be quiet for the love of Jesus. The alarm didn’t work.”

“You’re a liar. You were drinking, drinking, drinking. Look at the grease, the mess, the filth. And what’s this?”

“A sea bird.”

“Who paid for all this? You had smelly O’Keefe out here. I know you did, I can smell him.”

“Just leave me alone.”

“Did you pay the milk?”

“Yes, now sweet Jesus shut up, my head.”

“So you paid it, did you? Here it is. Here it is. Exactly where I left it and the money gone. Lies. You blighter. You nasty blighter.”

“Call me a bugger, I can’t stand the gentility on top of the yelling.”

“O stop it, stop it. I don’t intend to go on living like this, do you hear me? Your brazen lies, one after the other and I was trying to get Father to do something for us and I come back to this.”

“Your father. Your father is a sack of excrement, genteel excrement, as tight as they come. What has he been doing, playing battleship in the tub?”

Marion lunged, her slap landing across his jaw. The child began to scream in the nursery. Sebastia up off the table. He drove his fist into Marion’s face. She fell backward against the cupboard. Dishes crashing to the floor. In tattered underwear he stood at the nursery door. He kicked his foot through and tore off the lock to open it. Took the child’s pillow from under its head and pressed it hard on the screaming mouth.

“I’ll kill it, God damn it, I’ll kill it, if it doesn’t shut up.”

---

Marion behind him, digging her nails into his back.

“You madman, leave the child alone, I’ll get the police. I’ll divorce you, you blackguard, coward, coward, coward.”

Marion clasping the child to her breast. Sobbing, she lay her long English body and child across the bed. The room echoing the hesitations of her wailing voice. Sebastian walked white faced from the room, slamming the broken door, cutting off the sound of suffering from a guilty heart.

Dangerfield took a late morning bus to Dublin. Sat up the top side in front, clicking the teeth. Out there the mud flats and that windy golf course. North Bull Island shimmering in the sun. Cost money to leave Marion. Vulgar blood in her somewhere, may be from the mother. Mother’s father kept a shop. Bad blood leaks out. I know it leaks out. And I ought to get out. One way on the boat She doesn’t have the nerve for divorce. I know her too well for that. Never gave me a lousy chance to explain the account. Let her rot out there. I don’t care. Got to face the facts of this life. The facts, the facts. Couldn’t square things with her. She’s good with the cheese dishes. Few days without food will weaken her. Maybe I’ll come back with a tin of peaches and cream. She’s always airing the house. Opening up the windows at every little fart. Tells me she never farts. At least mine come out with a bang.

Fairview Park looks like a wet moldy blanket. Feel a little better. O’Keefe broke a toilet bowl in that house. Fell into it when he was trying to sneak a look behind a woman’s medicine chest. Long suffering O’Keefe, bent over tomes in the National Library studying Irish and dreaming of seduction.

Amiens Street Station, Dangerfield stepping down from the bus, crossing and using the ostrich step up the Talbot Street. My God, I think I see prostitutes with squinting eyes and toothless mouths. Don’t relish a trip up an alley with one without wearing impenetrable armour and there is no armour at all in Dublin. I asked one how much it was and she said I had an evil mind. Invited her for a drink and she said the American sailors were rough and beat her up in the backs of taxicabs and told her to take a bath. She said she liked chewing gum. And when she had a few drinks she got frightfully crude. I was shocked. Asked me how big it was. I almost slapped her face. With it. Provocation I calls it. And told her to confess. Dublin has more than a hundred churches. I bought a map and counted them. Must be a nice thing to have faith. But I think a pot of Gold Label run from the barrel in the house of the aspidochelons. Settle the nerves. No time to be nervous now. With youth on my side. I’m still a young man in the late twenties, although the Lord knows I’ve been through some trying times. A lot of people tell you, caution you. Now young man, don’t get married without money, without a good job, without a degree. E. E. E. They are right.

Into the pub with stuffed foxes behind the potted plants. And the snug stained brown. Reach over and press this buzzer for action.

A young man’s raw face flicked around the door.

“Good morning, Mr. Dangerfield.”

“A fine spring morning, a double and some Woodbines.”

“Certainly, sir. Early today?”

“Little business to attend to.”

“It’s always business isn’t it.”

“O aye.”

Some fine cliches there. Should be encouraged. Too many damn people trying to be different.

Coining phrases when a good platitude would do and save anxiety. If Marion wants to make the barbarous accusation that I took the milk money, it's just as well I took it.

---

A tray comes in the discreet door.

“On your bill, Mr. Dangerfield?”

“If you will, please.”

“Grand to be having some decent weather and I think you're looking very well.”

“Thank you. Yes, feel fine.”

I think moments like sitting here should be preserved. I'd like friends to visit me at my house and maybe have a cocktail cabinet, but nothing vulgar. And Marion could make nice little bits. Olives. And kids playing on the lawn. Wouldn't mind a room a bit on the lines of this. Fox on the mantelpiece and funereal fittings. Outside, the world, I think is driven. And I'm right out in front. To keep friends photographs and letters. Me too. And women stealing alimony for young lovers. Wrinkled buttocks astride rose wood chairs, weeping signing each check. Become a lover of women over fifty. They're the ones that's looking for it. Good for O'Keefe. But he might balk. A knowledgeable man but a botcher. And now get that check. I want to see dollars. Thousands of them. Want them all over me to pave the streets of me choosey little soul.

“Bye, bye.”

“Bye now, Mr. Dangerfield. Good luck.”

Across the Butt Bridge. Covered with torn newspapers and hulking toothless old men watching out the last years. They're bored. I know you've been in apprenticeships and that there was a moment when you were briefly respected for an opinion. Be in the sight of God soon. He'll be shocked. But there's happiness up there, gentlemen. All white and gold. Acetylene lighted sky. And when you go, go third class. You damn bastards.

And walking along Merrion Square. Rich up this way. Wriggle the fingers a bit. American flag hanging out there. That's my flag. Means money, cars and cigars. And I won't hear a word said against it.

Spinning up the steps. Big black door. With aplomb, approaching the receptionist's desk. Unfallow Irishwomen of middle age and misery. Belaboring poor micks headed for that land across the seas. Giving them the first taste of being pushed around. And ingratiating to the middle western college boy who bounces by.

“Could you tell me if the checks have arrived?”

“You're Mr. Dangerfield, aren't you?”

“I am.”

“Yes the checks have arrived. I think yours is here somewhere. However, isn't there some arrangement with your wife? I don't think I can give it to you without her consent.”

Dangerfield warming to irritated erection.

“I say, if you don't mind I will take that check immediately.”

“I'm sorry, Mr. Dangerfield but I have had instructions not to give it to you without the permission of your wife.”

“I say, I will take that check immediately.”

Dangerfield's mouth a guillotine. This woman a little upset. Insolent bitch.

"I'm very sorry but I will have to ask Mr. Morgue."

"You will ask no one."

"I'm terribly sorry, but I will have to ask Mr. Morgue."

"What?"

"You must remember that I am in charge of handling these checks."

Dangerfield's fist swished through the air, landing with a bang on the desk. Receptionist jumped. And her jaw came down with a touch of obedience.

"You'll ask no one and unless that check is given me this instant I'll have you charged with theft. Do you understand me? Am I clear? I will not have an Irish serf interfering in my affairs. This irregularity will be reported to the proper authorities. I will take that check and no more nonsense."

Receptionist with mouth open. Trickle of spittle twisted on her jaw. An instant's hesitation and forced a nervous hand to deliver the white envelope. Dangerfield burning her with red eyes. A door opening in the hall. Several bog men, watching from the staircase, slipped hurriedly back to seats, caps over folded hands. A final announcement from Dangerfield.

"Now, God damn it, when I come in here again I want that check handed to me instantly."

From the door, a middle western accent.

"Say buddy, what's going on here?"

"Twiddle twat."

"What?"

Dangerfield suddenly convulsed with laughter. Spinning on his heel, he pushed open this Georgian door and hopped down the steps. The rich green of the park across the street. And through the tops of the trees, red brick buildings on the other side. Look at these great slabs of granite to walk on. How very nice and solid. Celtic lout. I'm all for Christianity but insolence must be put down. With violence if necessary. People in their place, neater that way. Eke. Visit my broker later and buy a French Horn and play it up the Balcaddoon road. About four a.m. And I think I'll step into this fine house here with ye oldish windows.

This public house is dark and comforting with a feeling of scholarship. With the back gate of Trinity College just outside. Makes me feel I'm close to learning and to you students who don't take the odd malt. Maybe I put too much faith in atmosphere.

Put the money away safely. A bright world ahead. Of old streets and houses, screams of the newly born and grinning happy faces escorting the lately dead. American cars speeding down Nassau Street and tweedy bodies of ex-Indian Army officers stuttering into the well-mannered gloom of the Kildare Street Club for a morning whiskey. The whole world's here. Women from Foxrock with less thick ankles and trim buttocks shod closely and cleanly with the badge of prosperity, strutting because they owned the world and on their way to coffee and an exhibition of paintings. I can't get enough. More. See Marion like that. Going to make money. Me. A sun out. With Jesus for birth control. This great iron fence around Trinity serves a good purpose. World in resurrection. Yellow banners in the sky, all for me, Sebastian Bullion Dangerfield.

And dear God

Give me strength  
To put my shoulder  
To the wheel  
And push  
Like the rest.

---

Spring warmed into summer. In Stephen's Green, actors were sitting in three penny chairs getting a bit of tan. Here there are great rings of flowers and ducks sliding around the sky. And citizens riding the late trams to Dalkey for a swim. On this June morning, Dangerfield came in the front gate of Trinity and went up the dusty rickety stairs of No. 3 where he stood by the dripping rust-stained sink and banged on O'Keefe's door.

A minute passed and then the sound of padding feet and latches being undone and the appearance of a bearded, dreary face and one empty eye.

"It's you."

The door was swung open and O'Keefe plodded back to his bedroom. A smell of stale sperm and rancid butter. Mouldering on the table, a loaf of bread, a corner bitten from it with marks of teeth. The fireplace filled with newspapers, old socks, spittle stains and products of self pollution.

"Christ, Kenneth, don't you think you ought to have this place cleaned up?"

"What for? Does it make you sick? Vomit in the fireplace."

"Don't you have a skip?"

"I've better things to spend my money for than having a footman. I'm leaving."

"What?"

"Leaving. Getting out. Do you want some ties? Bow ties."

"Yes. Where are you going?"

"France. Got a job."

"Doing what?"

"Teaching English in a Lycée. Besançon, where Paul Klee's mother was born."

"You lucky bastard, you're telling the truth?"

"I'm leaving in exactly an hour from now. If you watch me very, very carefully, you'll see me fill this sack with four packs of cigarettes, a pair of socks, two shirts, a bar of soap and a towel. Then I put on my cap, spit on my shoes and give them a wipe with my sleeve. I'm out that door, drop my keys on the ground at the front gate and I'm into Bewley's for a cup of coffee, alone I might add, unless you have money to pay for yourself. Then if you're still watching, I'll saunter down O'Connell Street past the Gresham and take a sharp right at the corner and you will see my slender form disappear into a green bus marked airport and finis. Do you see what I mean?"

"I can only say I'm delighted, Kenneth."

"See? System. The well ordered life."

Dangerfield waving a hand around the room.

"Is this what you call ordered? Hate to see you in disorder."

O'Keefe tapping his skull.

"Up here, Jack, up here."

"What are you going to do with that jug on the dresser? Still has the price on it."

“That? It’s yours. Do you know what that is? I’ll tell you. A year ago when I got into this hole I was full of big ideas. Things like rugs and easy chairs and maybe a few paintings on the wall, have some of these pukka public school boys up to tea to have a look at my objets d’art. I thought things would be like Harvard only I’d be able to crack into a few of the clubs as I was never able to do in Harvard. I felt it would be best to start the furnishing with a few bedroom items, so I bought that jug for one and four as you can plainly see, and that was that. Needless to say I never cracked or rubbed shoulders with these public school boys. They talk to me but think I’m a little coarse.”

“Pity.”

“Yeah, pity. I’ll give you the jug to remember me when I’m gone from the ould sod, sacked in with some lovely French doll. Jesus, if I had your accent I’d be set here. That’s the whole thing, accent. I’d beat even before I get my nose in. Anyway it won’t stop me in France.”

“I say, Kenneth, I don’t want to be personal—”

“Yeah, I know. Where did I get the money. That my friend is an affair of state which is top secret.”

“Pity.”

“Come on, let’s go. Take the ties if you want them and the jug, anything that’s left for that matter. This is the last I’ll ever see of this dreary setup. Never even had a fire in my fireplace. I’m twenty-seven years old and I feel like sixty. I don’t know, I think I’d die before I’d go through this again. Wasted time. No degree. I think I got to four Greek lectures and two in Latin in the last six months. This place is tough, not like Harvard. These boys work day and night.”

“How about these used razors?”

“Take anything. I’ll be as poor as a church mouse for the rest of me days.”

Sebastian gathered the bow ties in his fist and stuffed them in his pockets. Filled a wash cloth with razor blades and several slivers of soap. On the table, a pile of penny notebooks.

“What are these, Kenneth?”

“Those are the fruits, rotten ones I might add, of my efforts to become a great writer.”

“You’re not leaving them behind?”

“Certainly. What do you want me to do?”

“Never know.”

“I happen to know. One thing I’m sure of, I’m no writer. I’m nothing but a hungry, sexstarved son of a bitch.”

Dangerfield turning the pages of the notebook. Reading aloud.

“In the ordinary Irish American family this would have been a very happy occasion of hypocritical and genuine gaiety, but the O’Lacey’s were not the ordinary Irish American family and the atmosphere was almost sacrilegiously tense—”

“Cut it out. If you want to read it, take it. Don’t remind me of that crap. I’m finished writing. Cooking is my trade.”

Two of them passing out of the bedroom with newspapers spread on the mattress springs. Imprint of the body. January in here and June outside. Sad rat, O’Keefe, the hunk of bread gnawed. And the scullery a blackened vestibule of grease. Under the gas ring lie bacon rinds the color green and a broken cup half full of dripping; O’Keefe’s first move, no doubt, to open up a highbrow restaurant.

Lives punctuated with shrewd business deals, quick flashes of happiness ending in dismal abortion.  
Keeps one awake at night and poor as well.

---

They tripped and bounced down the worn stairs. Walked across the cobbles. O'Keefe leading, hands plunged in pockets, lilted, a caterpillar walk. Followed austerely, nervously, by the twitching Dangerfield on his bird feet. Into No. 4 to urinate.

"Pissing always gives me a chance to think. It's all the good this thing has ever done me. But I'm out. On the move again. Best feeling in the world. How does it feel to be loaded with wife and child, Dangerfield? It's a problem for you even to get out the door."

"One manages, Kenneth. Be better days. I promise you that."

"Be Grangegorman."

"Did you know, Kenneth, that Trinity graduates get preferential treatment in the Gorman?"

"Good, you'll be murdered. But you know, Dangerfield, I don't dislike you as you might think. I've got a soft spot somewhere. Come on, I'll buy you a cup of coffee even though it's bad to encourage tenderness."

O'Keefe disappearing into the porter's lodge with his keys. Porter looking at him with a grin.

"Leaving us, sir?"

"Yup, for the sunny Continent, yours truly."

"The very best of luck. always, Mr. O'Keefe. We'll all miss you."

"So long."

"Goodbye, Mr. O'Keefe."

Prancing out to Dangerfield waiting under the great granite arch, and swinging around the front gate to Westmoreland Street. They entered the smoke and coffee scented air and sat in a cozy booth. O'Keefe rubbing his hands.

"I can't wait to get to Paris. Maybe I'll make a rich contact on the plane. Rich Yankee girl coming to Europe for culture who wants to see the points of interest."

"And perhaps your own, Kenneth."

"Yeah, if she saw that I'd make sure she saw nothing else. Why is it that I can't have something like that happen to me? That guy who came around to my rooms who was over from Paris, a nice guy told me once you cracked a clique in Paris you were set. Like the theatrical crowd that he knocked around with, a lot of beautiful women looking for guys like me who haven't got looks but brains and wit. Only one drawback he says, they like to ride in taxis."

Waitress comes over and takes their order. Two cups of coffee.

"Do you want a cream cake, Dangerfield?"

"Most cordial suggestion, Kenneth, if you're sure it's all right."

"And waitress, I want mine black with two, two remember, full jugs of cream and heat the rolls a little."

"Yes, sir."

Waitress giggling, remembering a morning when this short madman with glasses came in and sat down with his big book. All the waitresses afraid to serve him because he was so gruff and had a funny



- [read online \*Mud, Sweat and Tears\* here](#)
- [A Private View \(Sir John Appleby, Book 13\) pdf, azw \(kindle\), epub](#)
- [read online \*Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, The Work of Mourning & the New International \(Routledge Classics\)\* here](#)
- [Selected Poems pdf, azw \(kindle\), epub](#)
- [read online \*UNBORED Games: The Essential Guide \(Serious Fun for Everyone\)\* pdf, azw \(kindle\), epub](#)
- [read online \*Travels in the History of Architecture\*](#)
  
- <http://rodrigocaporal.com/library/Mud--Sweat-and-Tears.pdf>
- <http://www.netc-bd.com/ebooks/Une-br--ve-histoire-du-temps--du-Big-bang-aux-trous-noirs.pdf>
- <http://chelseaprintandpublishing.com/?freebooks/Specters-of-Marx--The-State-of-the-Debt--The-Work-of-Mourning---the-New-International--Routledge-Classics-.p>
- <http://xn--d1aboelcb1f.xn--p1ai/lib/Selected-Poems.pdf>
- <http://www.netc-bd.com/ebooks/Alkalize-or-Die--Superior-Health-Through-Proper-Alkaline-Acid-Balance--8th-Edition-.pdf>
- <http://aseasonedman.com/ebooks/Travels-in-the-History-of-Architecture.pdf>