

Father's Day, 21 June 1992

Just as I was dashing to catch the Dublin- Cork train
Dashing up and down the stairs, searching my pockets,
She told me that her sister in Cork wanted a loan of the axe;
It was late June and
The buddleia tree in the backyard
Had grown out of control.
The taxi was ticking over outside in the street,
All the neighbours noticing it.
'You mean that you want me to bring her down the axe?'
'Yes, if you wouldn't mind, that is –'
'A simple saw would do the job, surely to God
She could borrow a simple saw.'
'She said she'd like the axe.'
'OK.' There is a Blue Cabs taxi ticking over outside
And the whole world inspecting it,
'I'll bring her down the axe.'
The axe – all four-and-a-half feet of it –
Was leaning up against the wall behind the settee –
The fold-up settee that doubles as a bed.
She handed the axe to me just as it was,
As neat as a newborn babe,
All in the bare buff.
You'd think she'd have swaddled it up
In something – if not a blanket, an old newspaper,
But no, not even a token hanky



Tied in a bow round its head.

I decided not to argue the toss. I kissed her goodbye.

The whole long way down to Cork

I felt uneasy. Guilt feelings.

It's a killer, this guilt.

I always feel bad leaving her

But this time it was the worst.

I could see that she was glad

To see me go away for a while,

Glad at the prospect of being

Two weeks on her own,

Two weeks of having the bed to herself,

Two weeks of not having to be pestered

By my coarse advances,

Two weeks of not having to look up from her plate

And behold me eating spaghetti with a knife and fork.

Our daughters are all grown up and gone away.

Once when she was sitting pregnant on the settee

It snapped shut with herself inside it,

But not a bother on her. I nearly died.

As the train slowed down approaching Portarlinton

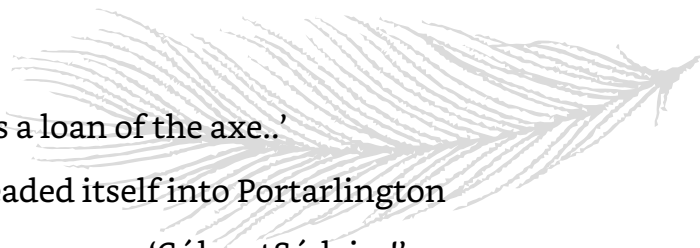
I overheard myself say to the passenger sitting opposite me:

'I am feeling guilty because she does not love me

As much as she used to, can you explain that?'

The passenger's eyes were on the axe on the seat beside me.





'Her sister wants a loan of the axe..'

As the train threaded itself into Portarlinton

I nodded to the passenger 'Cúl an tSúdaire!'

The passenger stood up, lifted down a case from the rack,

Walked out of the coach, but did not get off the train.

For the remainder of the journey, we sat alone,

The axe and I,

All the green fields running away from us,

All our daughters grown up and gone away.

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