

FINBAR

--- STAIR

the guards, stationed in Carrick. And, like he was fifty-odd, and still only a sergeant, so, like, he was no Sherlock Holmes. You know? (They laugh.)

He wasn't "Walsh of the Yard" or anything like that. And they moved in. He had three daughters who were teenagers, and a youngfella who was married back near Longford there. So the ... daughters were with him and the missus. And I knew them a little bit because that was the year Big Finbar died, God rest him, and they arrived about the time of the funeral so ... you know, I met them, then. And I was living on my own because me and Big Finbar were the only two in it at that time. So I was the bachelor boy, and a gaggle of young ones after moving in next door. Yo ho! You know? (They laugh.)

And around that time I would have been wondering what to do, Valerie, do you know? Whether to sell it on or farm it or, you know. I was twenty-two, twenty-three, you know? And it was, it would have been around eleven or twelve o'clock this night and there was a knock at the door and it was Mrs. Walsh. And she was all upset and asking me if I could come in, she didn't know what to do. The husband was at work, out on a call, and she didn't know anyone in the area, and there was a bit of trouble. So "What kind of trouble?" I says. And she says she was after getting a phone call from the young one, Niamh, and she was after doing the Luigi board, or what do you call it?

VALERIE. Ouija board.

FINBAR. Ouija board.

JACK. "Luigi board!" She was down there in the chipper in Carrick, was she, Finbar?

FINBAR. Ah fuck off. I meant the Ouija board. You know what I meant. She was after being down in ...

JACK. "The Luigi board."

FINBAR. She was after, come on now, she was after being down in a friend of hers' house or this. And they were after doing the ... Ouija board. And she phoned her mother to come and collect her. They said they were after getting a spirit or this, you know, and she was scared, saying it was after her.

And I obviously just thought, this was a load of bollocks, you know? If you'll ... excuse the language, Valerie. But here was the

mother saying she'd gone and picked her up. I mean, like, sorry, but I thought it was all a bit mad. But on the way back they'd seen something, like the mother had seen it as well. Like a dog on the road, running with the car and running after it. Like there's dogs all around here, Valerie, you know? The farmers have them. There was a big dog up there, Jack, that Willie McDermott had that time.

JACK. Oh Jaysus, yeah, it was like a, if you saw it from the distance, you'd think it was a little horse. It was huge.

JIM. Saxon.

FINBAR. That was it. Saxon.
JIM. It was an Irish Wolfhound. He got it off a fella in the north.

FINBAR. Yeah it was huge. You'd be used to seeing dogs all around the place. All kinds, but they'd be tame, like. Their bark'd be worse than their bite. So I wasn't too ... taken with this story. But she wanted me to come down to the house because when they'd got back to the house, the young one, Niamh was going hysterical saying there was something on the stairs. Like, no one else could see it. But she could. And it was a, a woman, looking at her. And Mrs. Walsh didn't know what to do. They couldn't contact the hubbie, and would I come down? I mean, what made her think there was anything I could do, I don't know. But she was panicking, you know ... So I got in the car and we went down. And Jesus, now, I've never seen the like of it. The young one was in ... bits. They had a blanket around her and she was as white, now as ... (Points to Jack's shirt.) as white as that. Well whiter, because that's probably filthy.

JACK. Ha ha.

FINBAR. But I'm not messing. And she wouldn't come out of the living room. Because she said there was a woman on the stairs. And I said, what's the woman doing? And she said, "She's just looking at me." She was terrified. Now I didn't know whether she was after taking drugs or drink or what she was after doing. So I says to phone for Dr. Joe in Carrick. This is Joe Dillon, Valerie you'd see him in the town, he still has his surgery there beside the Spar. Very nice fella. And I got through to him, and he was on his way, and the Niamh one was shouting at me to

close the living room door. Because I was out in the hall where the phone was, and she could see the woman looking at her over the bannister. Like she was that bad, now. So Mrs. Walsh phoned Fr. Donal, got him out of bed. And fair dues, like, he came down and sort of blessed the place a little bit. Like he'd be more, Vatican two. There wouldn't be much of all the demons or that kind of carry-on with him.

JACK. Jaysus, sure, he'd collapse. He's like that, *(Holds up little finger.)* Him and a demon ... *(They laugh.)*
FINBAR. But Dr. Joe gave her a sedative and off she went then, you know. And we all had a little drink, and poor Mrs. Walsh was understandably, very, you know, shaken and everything. But Fr. Donal told her not to mind the Ouija and it was only an old cod. And it was Niamh's imagination and all this. And then the phone rang, right? And it was the youngfella, the brother, who was married back in Longford. And he was all, that his baby was crying and he had it out of the cot and he was standing at the window and there was all this commotion next door. Cars in the drive and all. That an aul one who lived next door who used to mind Niamh and the other sisters when they were young and all this, who was bedridden had been found dead at the bottom of the stairs. She fallen down, and they found her. And all right, whatever, coincidence. But ... eh, that night at home, I was sitting at the fire having a last fag before the sack, and, Jack'd know the house, the stairs come down into the, the main room. And I had my back to it. To the stairs. And it's stupid now, but at the time I couldn't turn around. I couldn't get up to go to bed. Because I thought there was something on the stairs. *(Low laugh.)*

And I just sat there, looking at an empty fireplace. And I sat there until it got bright. I was like a boy, you know? I wouldn't move in case something saw me. You know that way. I wouldn't even light another fag. Like I was dying for one, and I wouldn't ... mad. But when it was bright then, I was grand, you know? Obviously there was nothing there and everything, but that was the last fag I ever had. *(Short pause.)* They moved away though, then, after that, the Walshes. *(Pause.)* Yep.
VALERIE. And that was when you moved. Down to Carrick.

FINBAR. Yeah. *(Nods slowly.)* Maybe that ... had something to do with it. I don't know.

VALERIE. Mm.

JACK. Moving down into the lights, yeah?

FINBAR. Mmm. Might be. Might be, all right. Didn't want the loneliness maybe, you know? *(Pause.)* You all think I'm a lollah now. *(They laugh.)* Ha? I'm the header says you, ha? I'm going to powder my nose I think. *(Finbar goes out door, back.)*

JACK. *(Calling after him.)* Sure, we knew you were a header. Knew that all along. *(They laugh. Pause.)* Yeah.

VALERIE. I'd imagine though, it can get very quiet.

JACK. Oh it can, yeah. Ah, you get used to it. Brendan.

BRENDAN. Ah yeah you don't think about it.

JACK. Me and Brendan are the fellas on our own. Jim has the mammy to look after, but we're, you know, you can come in here in the evenings. During the day you'd be working. You know, there's company all around. Bit of a community all spread around the place, like.

JIM. You can put the radio on. *(Pause.)*

JACK. Have you got any plans or that, for ... here?

VALERIE. Not really, I'm just going to try and have some ...

JACK. Peace and quiet.

VALERIE. Mm.

JACK. Jaysus, you're in the right place, so, ha? *(They laugh.)* You're going to have a peace and quiet ... over ... load. Oh yeah.

BRENDAN. Sure, you can always stick the head in here. Or Jack, or me or whatever, be able to sort you out for anything.

VALERIE. Thanks. I should be okay.

JACK. You're only ten minutes up the road. And Jaysus, by the looks of things you'll have a job keeping Finbar away, ha?

VALERIE. Ah he's a dote.

JACK. Jays, I've never heard him called that before, ha? Lots of other things, never that though. *(Finbar comes back.)*

FINBAR. What have you fecking heard? What are you talking about this time, Mullen, ha? About how twenty Germans were poisoned by the drink in here, last summer. *(Winks at Brendan.)* Ha?