

stew an' my heart sick, but I had sense enough to see that I'd thought at all on myself. 'Tis this to pass the time ay day to a panjandrum ay hell cats,' sez I. 'What I've said, an' what I've not said do not matter. Judy an' her dam will hold me for a promist man, an' Dinah will give me the go, an' I deserve it. I will go an' get drunk, sez I, an' forget about it, for 'tis plain I'm not a mariner's man.'

'On my way to canteen I ran against Laocelles, color-sergeant that was av E com'pany—a hard, hard man, wid a torment av a wife. 'You've the head av a drowned man on your shoulders,' sez he; 'an' you're goin' where you'll get a worse man. Come back,' sez he. 'Let me go,' sez I. 'I've thrown my luck over the wall wid my own hand!' Then that's not the way to get it back again, sez he. 'Have out wid your trouble, ye fool-bhoy.' An' I told him how the matter was.

'He sucked in his lower lip. 'You've been thrapped,' sez he. 'U Sheehy wud be the better for a man's name to hers as soon as can. An' ye thought ye'd put the comther on her,—that's the natural vanity of the baste. Terence, you're a horn fool, but you're not bad enough to marry into that com'pany. If you said anythin', an' for all your protestations I'm sure ye did—or did not which is worse—eat ut all—lie like the father of all lies, but come out av it free av Judy. Do I not know what ut is to marry a woman that was the very spit an' image av Judy when she was young? I'm gettin' ald an' I've raird patience, but you, Terence, you've no sense ut it. Never mind if Dinah gives you the go, you've desart ut; never mind if the whole regiment laughs you an' all day. Get out av Judy an' her mother. They can't drag you to church, but if they do, they'll drag you to hell. Go back to your quarters and lie down, sez he. 'This over his shoulder, 'You must have done with this.'

'Next day I went to see Dinah, but there was no tucker in me as I walked. I knew the trouble wud come soon enough widout any handlin' av mine, an' I headed ut sore. 'I heard Judy callin' me, but I hid straight on to the Shadd's quarters, an' Dinah wud have kissed me but I put her back. 'When all's said, darlin', sez I, 'you can give ut to me if you will, but I misdoubt 'twill be so easy to come by this.'

'I had sense begun to put the explanation into show before Judy an' her mother come to the door. I think there was a verandah, but I'm forgettin'. 'Will ye not step in?' sez Dinah, pretty and polite, though the Shadd had no dealin's with the Sheehy's. Old Mother Shadd looked up quick, an' she was the fast to see the trouble, for Dinah was her daughter. 'I'm pressed for time to-day,' sez Judy as bold as brass; 'I've only come for Terence,—my promist man. 'Tis strange to find him here the day after the day.'

'Dinah looked at me as though I had hit her, an' I answered straight. 'There was some nonsense last night at the Sheehy's quarters, an' Judy's carryin' on the joke, darlin', sez I. 'At the Sheehy's quarters?' sez Dinah very slow, an' Judy cut in wid: 'He was there from nine till ten, Dinah Shadd, an' the better half av that time I was sittin' on his knee, Dinah Shadd. Ye may look an' ye may look me up an' down, but ye won't look away that Terence is my promist man. Terence, darlin', 'tis time for us to be comin' home.'

'Dinah Shadd niver said word to Judy. 'Ye left me at half past eight,' sez she to me, 'an' I niver thought that ye'd leave me for Judy,—promises or no promises. Go back wid her, you that have to be fetched by a girl! I'm done with you, sez she and she ran into her own room, her mother followin'. So I was alone wid those two women and at liberty to speak my sentiments. 'Judy Sheehy,' sez I, 'if you made a fool av me betwene the lights you should not do ut in the day. I niver promised you words or lies.'

'You lie,' sez old Mother Sheehy, 'an' may ut choke you where you stand. She was far gone in drink. 'An' tho' ut choked me where I stood I'd not change,' sez I. 'Go home, Judy. I take shame for a decent girl like you raggin' your mother out bare-headed on this errand. Here now, and have at it for an answer. I gave my word to Dinah Shadd yesterday, an' more blame to me, I was wid you last night talkin' nonsense, but nothin, more. You've chosen to try to hold me on ut. I will not be held thereby, for anythin' in the world. Is that enough? 'Judy went back all over. 'An' I wish you joy av the perjury,' sez she, declin' a curtesy. 'You've lost a woman that would have wore her hand to the bone for your pleasure; an' deed, Terence, ye've spoken plain to her. 'An' as much as Dinah is—deed I am! You've lost a fool av a girl that'll niver look at you again, an' ye've lost what ye niver had,—your comen honesty. If you manage your own money as you manage your love-makin' small wonder they call you the worst corp'ral in the com'pany. Come away, mother, sez she. 'But devil a fut would the old woman budget! 'D'you hold by that, sez she, peerin' up under her thick grey brows. 'Ay, an' wud,' sez I, 'tho' Dinah gives me the go twenty times, I'll have no truck with you or yours,' sez I. Take your child away, ye shameless woman! 'An' an' I'm ashamed,' sez she, bringin' her hands up over her head. 'Think, what are you, ye lying, schemin', weak-kneed, shirky-souled son av a suter? Am I shameless? Who put the open shame on me an' my child that we should go beggin' through the lines in the broad daylight for the broken word of a man? 'Double portion of my shame be on you Terence Mulvaney, that think yourself so strong! By Mary and the saints, by blood and water, an' by ivry sorrow that came into the world since the beginnin', the black light fall on you and yours, so that you may niver be free from pain for another when ut's not your own! May your heart bleed in your breast drop by drop wid all your friends laughin' at the bleedin'! Strong you think yourself? May your strength be a curse to you to drive you into the devil's hands against your own will! Kick-eyed you are? May your eyes see clear ivry step av the dark path you take till the hot cinders av hell put thim out! May the ragin' dry thirst in my own old bones go to you that you shall niver pass bottle full nor glass empty. God preserve the light av your understandin' to you, my jewel av a bhoy, that ye may niver forget what you mint to be an' do, when you're wallowin' in the muck! May ye see the better and follow the worse as long as there's breath in your body; an' may ye die quick in a strange land, watchin' your death before ut takes you, an' unable to stir hand or foot! 'I heard a scoldin' in the room behind, an' thim Dinah Shadd's hand dropped into mine like a rose-leaf into a muddy road. 'The half av that I'll take,' sez she, 'an' more too if I can. Go home, ye silly talkin' woman,—go home av confes'. 'Come away! Come away!' sez Judy, pullin' her mother by the shawl. 'I was none av Terence's fault. For the love av Mary stop the talkin'! 'An' you!' said old Mother Sheehy spinin', round forinst Dinah. 'Will ye take the half av that man's load? Stand off from him, Dinah Shadd, before he takes you down too—tho' that look to be a quartermaster-sergeant's wife in five years. You look too high, child. You shall wash for the quartermaster-sergeant, him he places to give you the job out av charity; but a privit's wife you shall be to the end, an' evry sorrow of a privit's wife you shall know and niver a job but wan, that shall go from you like the running tide from a rock. The pain av bearin' you shall know but niver the pleasure av giving the breast; an' you shall put away a manchild into the comen ground wid niver a priest to say a prayer over him, an' that man-child ye shall think ivry day av your life. Think long, Dinah Shadd, for you'll niver have another, tho' you pray till your knees are bleedin'. The mothers av childer shall mock you behind your back when you're wringin' over the wash-tub. You shall know what ut is to help a drunken husband home an' see him go to the yard-room. Will that please you, Dinah Shadd, that won't be seen talkin' to my daughter? You shall talk no worse than Judy before all's over. The sergint's wives shall look down on you contemptuous, daughter av a sergint, an' you shall cover ut all up wid a smiling face when your heart's burstin'. Stand off av him, Dinah Shadd, for I've put the black curse of Shieghly upon him, an' his own mouth shall take ut good. 'She pitched forward on her head an' began foam' at the mouth. Dinah Shadd ran out wid water, an' Judy dragged the old woman into the verandah till she sat up. 'I'm old an' fore, she sez, tremblin' an' eryin', 'and 'tis like I say a dale more than I mane. 'When you've ald to walk,—go,' says old Mother Shadd. 'This house has no place for the likes av you that have cursed my daughter.'

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