

That Which You Love

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Description:

During the Irish Easter Rising of 1916, two leaders of the Irish Independence Movement contemplate the rebellion and how it affects their families.

CAST:

Molly: A poor widow who sells seafood by the docks in order to support her family.

Soldier: A soldier in the British military reluctantly stationed in Ireland.

Thomas MacDonagh: A teacher at a Dublin secondary school in his late thirties. Is married to Muriel Gifford and has two children with her. An active member of an Irish liberation group.

Joseph Plunkett: A writer in his late twenties. Is engaged to be married to Grace Gifford.

Grace Gifford: An anti-British rule cartoonist who is the sister of Muriel and engaged to Joseph Plunkett.

Muriel Gifford MacDonagh: The wife of Thomas MacDonagh and a former nurse. She now takes care of her two young children in Dublin.

Father McCarthy: An old Catholic priest charged with performing mass and last rites for the prisoners of Kilmainham Gaol.

SET:

Varying locations in Dublin, the capital city of Ireland, leading up to the Easter Rising of 1916.

Docks: The city docks of Dublin. No objects required

MacDonagh Home:The home of Thomas, Muriel, and their two kids. There is a single table with four chairs.

Plunkett Home: The home of Joseph Plunkett and Grace Gifford. There is a single table with two chairs.

Kilmainham Gaol Chapel: A chapel in Dublin's largest prison. There are a few chairs facing a plain altar.

Scene 1: Docks

JOSEPH and THOMAS are on stage-left. A young woman Molly is on stage-right selling a cart of seafood.

Molly: Salted cod, fresh cockles and mussels.

A British SOLDIER comes on stage and starts harassing MOLLY.

Soldier: How about some free mussels for the fine young men that are protecting you lot?

Molly: I am sorry sir. My husband died in the Great War, and I have very little money to take care of my children, but I'd be happy to sell them to you.

Soldier: No, no, no that will not do. Mussels on the house, and put some vinegar on them.

Molly: Sir, please I can't afford to be giving it away...

The British SOLDIER shoves MOLLY to the ground. Hearing the disturbance JOSEPH and THOMAS rushes over to help MOLLY. The SOLDIER starts helping himself to the seafood in MOLLY's cart

Thomas: What was that for? She wasn't doing anything.

Soldier: She was resisting an officer trying to keep the king's peace. I'm going to have to confiscate this cart as evidence.

Thomas: You cannot do that. She needs that to survive.

Soldier: I can and I will. And you best stay out of my way unless you want to spend the next couple months in Kilmainham Gaol.

SOLDIER, while whistling, exits stage right taking MOLLY's

cart with him. JOSEPH turns to MOLLY and hands her some money.

Joseph: Here, this should help for a little while.

Molly: Thank you so much.

MOLLY walks off stage left.

Thomas: See, Joseph this is exactly what I've been talking about. The British just do whatever they want to us. Just the other day, one of my students had to leave school to take care of his two younger sisters because both his parents were arrested for no reason.

Joseph: But Thomas what can we do? They're the British empire and we are just men. They will crush any sign of rebellion like they've done for hundreds of years.

Thomas: But we are men that are fighting for our home.

Joseph: But they have a massive army, and we have no army or weapons.

Thomas: I wouldn't be so sure. *(In a hushed tone)* Some of the other professors at the University have been talking. There are a lot of people willing to fight.

Joseph: Ireland's revolted before and the British destroyed us. What makes this time different?

Thomas: The British are off in Germany fighting the kaiser. They cannot afford to fight two different wars. If we can take them by surprise and capture Dublin, the British will have to sue for peace.

Joseph: But what about your wife, Muriel? How is she okay with this? And what will my Grace think? We are to be married this year.

Thomas: Let me worry about Muriel. And Grace, the only thing I'd worry about is her fighting on the front lines.

Joseph: A free independent Ireland, wouldn't that be nice. But it's just a silly childhood dream.

Thomas: But it does not have to be just a dream. We can make it a real. We can be the ones that free Ireland.

Joseph: How would we even do this?

Thomas: The first meeting is on Sunday at 8. Go to St. Enda's school and say you have an appointment with Headmaster Pierce. I hope to see you there, I wouldn't want to do this without you.

Joseph: If you think we really have a chance, I guess I'll be there.

Joseph and Thomas exit stage right

Scene 2: MacDonagh Home

Muriel sits at a table facing stage left, Grace walks in from stage left with a stack of papers in hand from stage right. Muriel looks up and sees Grace.

Muriel: Grace, how are you?

Grace: I've been fine, very busy with my work.

Grace holds up the stack of papers.

Muriel: Oh Grace, you know I don't like you doing those cartoons mocking the British. What if the British decide to arrest you? I couldn't bear the thought of my sister rotting in Kilmainham Gaol.

Grace: I know, but this is important work, and I want to help get rid of the Brits. If I have to live out my life in a jail cell then, so be it. I will sit in that prison knowing I fought for what I love.

Muriel: You've always been the wild one. I just want what is best for you. Anyway, why did you come over?

Grace: I was dropping of these papers for Thomas. He asked me if my printer would run copies, since he is sympathetic to the cause.

Muriel: What papers?

Grace: These papers.

Grace hands one of the papers to Muriel and sets the rest down on the table.

Muriel: "Having organised and trained her manhood through her secret revolutionary organisation, the Irish Republican Brotherhood declare the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland" And its signed by a Patrick Pearse, and (gasp) my Thomas, and your Joseph. What is this?

Grace: Wait, did you not know? They have been planning this with the others for over a year now. He never mentioned anything to you about a revolution?

Muriel: I mean he's mentioned that people have been fed up with the British, but I thought it was just talk, I did not know that they were doing this. This is crazy.

Thomas walks in stage left.

Grace: I think you two need to talk. I'll see myself out now. Thomas, I left the documents on the table.

Grace exits stage left.

Muriel: Thomas, what is this?

Thomas: What is what?

Muriel: This, this, this crazy proclamation! Are you actually fighting the British?

Thomas: Muriel, I am so sorry but I am. I wanted to tell you, but if you knew anything, then the British might arrest you or worse torture you. I thought it was best for you and the kids to know nothing.

Muriel: How could you do this? I know you want Ireland to be free, but is this not a bit drastic, isn't there another way?

Thomas: When you love something, there will come a time that you must make a stand for that which you love. I love you, so I stood on the altar and proclaimed my love. I love Ireland, so I will stand up to the british and proclaim my love.

Muriel: What about our children, if this does not work, then they will grow up without a father?

Thomas: Can't you see. I am doing it for the children and our children's children. This will ensure that Irish men and women control the future of Ireland. No longer will our resources and people be exploited for the good of a foreign empire. We will establish a republic, where all Irish men and women will vote for Irish men and women to lead them. Our children will grow up only knowing freedom.

Muriel: But why does it have to be you? There are others that are willing and able.

Thomas: I have been asked to head the entire Dublin Battalion, and you know I can't sit by and watch as men and women bleed for my country.

Muriel: Fine, then I want to help too, you could use a nurse for the fight.

Thomas: I know, and you are the best nurse in the country. But I need you to be safe. If something were to happen to you, I could never forgive myself. And if something happens to both of us, the kids would be orphaned.

Muriel: Okay, but you have to promise me to do your best to stay safe.

Thomas: I promise. I will return to you and the children.

Muriel: And what happens after Ireland is free? A new country is fragile and needs people to lead it.

Thomas: Once the British are dealt with, someone else can deal with that. I will have served my country well, and it will be time to focus on the most important people in my life.

Thomas pull Muriel in for a passionate embrace.

Scene 3: Plunkett Home

Joseph is sitting at a table facing stage left looking at papers intensely. Grace walks in from stage right and hugs Joseph from behind.

Grace: You have been looking at those plans all night. Come up to bed you need some rest.

Joseph: I know, but I just want to make sure the plan is perfect and I didn't miss anything. After all, this is my plan, if it fails, it will be all my fault.

Grace: You've been planning this for over a year now. You've thought of everything. Come up to bed.

Joseph: I just want to go over it one more time.

Grace: Okay, explain it to me, then we can go to bed.

Joseph: So, when the bells of Trinity College ring noon, the revolution starts. We will take the general post office, the four court houses, and the South Dublin Union building. I will be with the new President, Patrick Pearse, and other leaders of the rebellion at the post office. Thomas will lead the charge at the court houses as he will command the biggest army, and that will have the most British resistance. Once all locations are secured, President Pearse will read the proclamation of independence establishing the new government and we will distribute the document across Ireland. Hopefully, enough people across Ireland rally to the cause and will be free to run our new government.

Grace: And what kind of new government will this be? How will it work?

Joseph: Well, Patrick Pearse will serve as an interim president and the other signers will serve as officials until we can set up elections. Then, the men and women will elect a president and representatives to serve them.

Grace: What about you? What role will you play in the new government?

Joseph: I'll serve for as long as Ireland will let me. If I'm to work for this country until I die then so be it.

Grace: And Ireland will have the smartest, bravest, and kindest person to lead our new republic. The people of Ireland will be lucky to have you.

Joseph: I am not so sure. What if I am not enough? What if the plan fails? We have only been working on it for a couple of years. Maybe we should call off the attack.

Grace: No, you have worked so hard on this. I know it will work.

Joseph: Oh Grace, what would I do without you?

Grace: I do not know, lucky for you, you will never have to find out. Once Ireland is free, we will get married, and we can serve Ireland together.

Joseph: You know I would have married you a year ago.

Grace: No, I want to marry you in Ireland. Getting a document that has the seal of the British empire is as good as trash to me. And maybe you can convince President Pearse to allow us to be the first marriage in the Irish Republic. How great would that be?

Joseph: That would be pretty great.

Grace: Now come to bed, tomorrow we will be free, and I cannot wait.

Joseph follows Grace off stage right.

Scene 4: Kilmainham Gaol Chapel

GRACE and MURIEL are stage center. GRACE is in a plain white dress sobbing quietly. MURIEL is standing to her left. FATHER MCCARTHY walks in from stage right.

Father McCarthy: *(Looking at Grace and Muriel)* I didn't think I would be performing last rites for any women today, but the British seem set on murdering the lot of you.

Muriel: No father, this is a wedding. My sister is to be married to one of the leaders of the rebellion.

Father McCarthy: A wedding in a prison! Never done this before. So, where is the groom?

Muriel: I do not know. The guards brought us into the chapel about twelve hours ago, and just...

An injured JOSEPH is dragged from stage left in chains and a hood by a british SOLDIER. The SOLDIER removes the hood.

Joseph: Grace! How did you...What are you...Why are here?

Grace: I am here to marry you. Did you think that the British could stop me from being your wife?

Soldier: Father, these two are to be married on orders of the warden. Make it short. He has an appointment in the yard soon.

Grace: *(Looking scared)* What appointment?

Joseph: I'm facing a firing squad in the morning. But marrying you, that is a fitting grand finale to my life, so Father lets make it the best wedding this prison has ever seen.

Father McCarthy: Ah yes, I am pretty sure this is the first wedding this prison has seen. *(Turning to the Guard)* Could we get the shackles removed from this man, so I can proceed with the ceremony?

The BRITISH SOLDIER goes to remove the shackles from JOSEPH. JOSEPH runs over to GRACE and holds her in his arms.

Soldier: No touching! Get on with the ceremony father.

Father McCarthy: Alright, I suppose it's best to start. Short version. We gather here today to join...um?

Grace: Grace and Joseph.

Father McCarthy: To join Grace and Joseph in holy matrimony. Grace do you take Joseph to be your lawfully wedded husband for as long as you both shall live?

Grace: Joseph, the amount of love I have for you cannot be measured. And even though we will only be married this short time, these next few hours will be the best of my life. Knowing that I am yours. All yours. And only yours. And as the years go by and I grow old. I will think back to this day. I will forget not a single hour, minute, or second of the day when I was your wife. I will cherish every moment of this. I love you and only you forever. I do.

Father McCarthy: And do you Joseph take Grace to be your lawfully wedded wife for as long as you both shall live?

Joseph: My Darling Grace, as I stand here facing my imminent death, the only thing I fear is not being able to put my love for you into words. When I surrendered in Dublin, my thoughts turned to you. As I sat in my dark cell, all I could think about was my sweet Grace. And when they march me out to die, my thoughts will be of you. So as we stand here in Kilmainham Gaol, let me savor these last few moments. Dying tomorrow breaks my heart because I will be leaving you behind. I love you so much that I could see his blood upon a rose. I do.

Father McCarthy: By the power vested in me by God our almighty Father, I now pronounce husband and wife. You may now kiss the bride.

JOSEPH and GRACE start to kiss, but are interrupted by the SOLDIER putting the hood and chains on JOSEPH

Soldier: Time to get you back to your cell. *(Turning to Muriel)* Also are you Muriel Gifford?

Muriel: Yes. I am her.

Soldier: Well, your husband Thomas left a letter in his cell addressed to you.

JOSEPH and SOLDIER walk off stage left. The SOLDIER hands MURIEL a letter. MURIEL and GRACE move to stage right and open the letter. GRACE comforts her sister as MURIEL reads the letter. Thomas, while whistling, is escorted by SOLDIER across the stage.

Muriel: My dear Muriel, as I look back at the past few days, I wonder will people say we were brave or will they say we were fools. Perhaps we are both. When I surrendered, I knew that my life was forfeited, but hopefully I could save the lives of others as I saw my brothers and sisters being slaughtered. But for the five days, we held Dublin, we were free. For a brief moment we were able to free the capital from the bondage of Britain. As I stare upon my final moments, I think of you and our children. There has never been a better, truer, purer woman than you, and never more adorable children than Don and Barbra. My only regret is leaving you without more money, but hopefully our country will recognize my sacrifice and take care of you and the children. I know I have abandoned you and the children, but I hope you can understand why I did this. My country called for freedom and I answered. I wish for my children and every child of Ireland to be free from the tyranny of the British. I have yearned that each son and daughter are members of a free Irish Republic. I knew the cost of this freedom and I am ready to pay

it. I hope the heart of Ireland beats on, and others will be willing to pay the price until every bit of British rule in Ireland is destroyed. I am proud to die for the freedom of my country. Upon my blood spilling on this prison soil, I will become part of my land. Now and forever, I am Ireland.

Gunshots from offstage.