

EMU

BY

RUTH KLIWINSKI

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WHERE AM I FROM: Bloomfield, NJ

BIO: Ruth Kliwinski is a community theater performer who is trying once more to “find her voice” through writing.

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WHAT IS KEEPING ME POSITIVE: Gardening, cooking for my kids, walking my dog

Yes, you can publish this!

CHARACTERS

Oisín: (pronounced “osh -sheen”) He is 18 years old – and is moody, with a massive chip on his shoulder. Belfast accent – not too strong

Patrick: He is 18 years old and is sweet, amiable, strong Belfast accent

Michael: He is 18 years old and is friendly, warm – country lad – neutral Northern Irish accent

Lisa: She is 18 years old, guarded but up for a laugh – accent is clipped and refined

Hilda: She is 18 years old; friendly but very conservative - accent is clipped and refined

TIME

3PM - Winter 1990

PLACE

Dunluce Castle, Bushmills, Northern Ireland

Dunluce Castle is a now-ruined medieval castle in Northern Ireland, the seat of Clan McDonnell. It was built in 1513 and it is located on the edge of a basalt outcropping in County Antrim and is accessible via a bridge connecting it to the mainland. The castle is surrounded by extremely steep drops on either side, which may have been an important factor to the early Christians and Vikings who were drawn to this place where an early Irish fort once stood. In 1639 the kitchens of the castle mysteriously collapsed into the sea.

The 5 characters appear to be a bit out of breath as the scene opens as the castle is at the top of a steep rocky climb – and there is a bit of a divide – the boys are together and the girls are together. It is late afternoon and the light is fading quickly and it seems cold & damp. All are carrying back packs and Oisín also has a guitar slung over his shoulder.

Oisín

Och this is feekin' useless

Michael

Don't be so negative Oisín they wouldn't have sent us up here for no reason

Oisín

You want to bet? It's a great reason to rid themselves fenian's for the day

Michael

But the girls are with us so that makes no sense

Patrick

Aye, Oisín shut yer gob and let's get on with it. Lisa, Hilda do you have the questions that we are supposed to be working on?

Lisa

Och aye I do. Where should we go to work on this?

Hilda

Well why don't we sit over there? It looks like a porch or entryway to the castle and at least we will have a little shelter from this wind. Its getting a wee bit cold!

Oisín

A wee bit? (*sarcastically*)

Lisa

Aye alright, sounds good. They make their way over to a front porch "ish" area of the castle and pull blankets out of their back packs. The boys sit on their blankets like pillows, the girls wrap themselves with the blankets. Oisín picks up his guitar and mindlessly starts picking strings. Lisa opens her notebook and pulls out an envelope. Right are youse'uns ready?

The Rest

Aye

Lisa

(Opening the envelope) Well it says here that the first thing we have to do is make rubbings of these objects – there are 5 so I guess 1 each?

Patrick

Aye that sounds about right. So what are they?

Lisa

A key stone, A stone from the battlements, A grave marker, A sill, A stone from the kitchen floor (what is left of it) Och and they're tryin' to be funny – don't fall in. Ha ha.

Patrick

Yea very feckin' funny

Hilda

There are graves here?

Lisa

It says grave marker, so I suppose so . . .

Michael

Oisín are you even listening?

He continues to pick at the strings not even looking at Michael

Oisín

Aye

Michael

So, what will you take?

Oisín

Whatever's left

Michael

Jesus wept Oisín you could get involved here – it's a group exercise. We were sent up here to figure out how we could get along at the retreat – and you bein' an ejit right now is not going to help us out at all.

Oisín

Fine – again I’ll take whatever’s left over, and not for nothing but this seems like the most childish exercise I have ever heard of. Feckin’ stone rubbings, like I am a cub scout or something?

Hilda

Well I don’t think cub scouts would use your language

Oisín

You don’t say? Well maybe down the Falls Road that’s exactly how cub scouts talk

Patrick

(to Oisín) Leave it alone, will ye? *They all glare at Oisín who admittedly is acting like a large child . . .*

Hilda

Right well I will find a grave marker

Lisa

Really? You’re not like freaked out about that are ye?

Hilda

Och no, what scares me is the kitchen stone – that’s an actual crime scene – all those poor souls tumbling into the sea like that. It gives me the willies

Lisa

Aye I know what you mean – oi lads, Hilda and I will get the grave marker and the battlement and youse’uns can get the other 3 – meet youse back here in 10 minutes?

Michael

Aye all right – 10 minutes. That is exactly 3.20PM don’t be late. Lads lets go to the ruined kitchen first. *(Speaking to Oisín and Patrick)* Did you know half the kitchen fell into the sea about 350 hundred years ago? Like a ton of staff just fell to their death down on those rocks – they say this whole place is haunted – come on *(the boys exit while Lisa and Hilda search the ground for a grave marking)*

Hilda

You know I remember coming to this place for a field trip when I was wee

Lisa

Aye I think I do too – what were we in P5?

Hilda

That's about right – look, look over here close to the bridge. (*They scurry over and hunch down*)
No name, just a date. 1639

Lisa

Well maybe that's when the tragedy happened. (*Lisa wonders off towards the bridge*)

Hilda

Maybe. Well hold on – let me get this (*she quickly makes a rubbing of the marker and crosses to join Lisa.*) Right so now we have to cross over there to the battlements. I think I hear the lads – come on let's go scare them like we're banshees!

Girls exit, boys reenter. Patrick holding his rubbing of a key stone, Michael with his of the sill

Oisín

Well I guess this shit hole is the kitchen. What am I supposed to do?

Michael

Just get a rubbing from any stone on the kitchen floor

Oisín

Right (*he kneels and looks out at the view*) this is so gothic and beautiful. Fuck I wish I brought my guitar over I feel very inspired to write

Patrick

Well hold the moment – your guitar is just over the bridge

Oisín

Right. (*He starts rubbing a cobblestone from the ruined kitchen floor when from off stage comes the wailing and mournful screeches of banshees. The boys are frozen in terror. The wailing gets closer and then erupts into laughter as the girls burst into the kitchen. Fuckin' hell fire that is not funny youse'uns*)

Lisa & Hilda (*Laughing*)

Lisa

Then why are we laughing?

Oisín

Piss off (He finishes his rubbing and then pauses. The others look on while the stone he was working on comes loose. He picks it up) Look there is something under here. (He picks up a small box out of the hole under the cobblestone. The others gather around – curious, a little guarded, mostly nervous about what they might find. Oisín opens the box and takes out a cloth wrapped around coins) Look, its old coins. Never seen any that look like that before . . . (the boys look at the coins)

Lisa

Aye but look at this (she holds up the cloth which is embroidered with a Celtic pentagram)

Patrick

Oisín put that stuff back the money is cursed. Look that is the sign of . . .

Lisa

(Laughing) What the devil? Youse lot are so superstitious

Patrick

(Taking offense) What do you mean, youse lot?

Lisa

You know . . .

Patrick

No I don't . . . well . . . *(Lisa just looks at him not wanting to say what she meant)* I get it . . . Catholics?

Lisa

(Defensively) Well its true isn't it? Like youse'uns have a lot of superstitions like all your symbols and statues and incense and holy water and all that trying to guard against the devil and hell and fire and brimstone and everything. I mean I bet you all go to church all the time just so you can sleep at night because of that crap they feed ye . . .

Michael

Wow that is what you think of Catholics?

Lisa

Well that is what they show in the movies and TV and stuff

Oisín

(Heated) Youse lot really believe that? You think that I am afraid of the devil?

Lisa

Well maybe not you but I think most of you . . .

Hilda

I think since we have all of the rubbings we should go back to the porch and see what's next.

Oisín

Most of us, like we're one person. Like bundle us all up – feekin' Prods

Patrick

Come on Oisín lets go back to our stuff *(they start crossing back to the porch where they left their blankets and back packs)*

Hilda

Great idea

Oisín

Shut up, you are such a do-gooder – want to make sure everyone gets along, keep the peace – guess what there is no peace until your Army leaves this place

Hilda

My army?

Oisín

Yea

Lisa

She's a Quaker, she doesn't believe in the army

Oisín

So just 'cause she doesn't believe doesn't mean that it doesn't exist. They are everywhere – just driving around pointing their guns at anyone they choose. Fuckin' intimidating us into staying in the shadows like we don't have a right to just walk around

Lisa

If the IRA would stop blowing everything up maybe the Army would leave.

Oisín

Like its only the IRA – you have the Army and the INLA – its like shooting ducks in barrel
(Silence. They Arrive back at the porch. Oisín still holding the money and Lisa the embroidered cloth. Oisín picks up his guitar again and starts strumming nonsense)

Lisa

Can you actually play that or is it just for show

Patrick

Why don't we continue with the directions from the retreat staff or else we will never finish and I really don't know what the consequences are but I would prefer not to find out

Hilda

I agree, Lisa what is next?

Lisa

(Sarcastically) You too are just perfect for each other

Oisín

We actually agree on something

Lisa

How about we summon the devil or something – because so far this hasn't been a very exciting afternoon. *(She starts waving the cloth around attempting to summon)*

Hilda

Really – we found that *(pointing at the cloth)* and the coins. Oisín what is on the coins?

Oisín

I don't know, they just seem to be pretty old. Here *(He hands them to Hilda who examines them)*

Hilda

They are so interesting – history right here! You are so lucky to have found them! Imagine they might be hundreds of years old! They could have belonged to Wolfe Tone *(she hands them back to Oisín)*

Oisín

What do you know about the United Irishmen?

Hilda

Its part of our studies for History A level

Oisín

Really? At a Protestant school?

Lisa

Yes Oisín even we Protestants learn about our Irish history. *(To Hilda)* Och you are such a swot. Right now second envelope *(she pulls it from her backpack)* “Congratulations, ice breaker is complete. Now write down what you have learned about each other so far.” This is so dumb; who the fuck cares, I thought this was supposed to be fun. I just want to go back.

Oisín

We agree on something else

Michael

We all do, but they are not picking us up until 5 so who wants to write this down?

Hilda

Since I am such a swot, I will *(she sits down and pulls her blanket around her – the rest sit in their spots – Oisín continues to fiddle with the guitar)* So what have we learned? Should we just go around and everyone can say something?

Michael

Fine – em youse'uns think if the IRA stops bombing the Army will leave

Lisa

Whats wrong with thinking that? Well you are superstitious – you see the devil in everything
(she is waving the cloth in Michael's face)

Patrick

Hold on – we never said that – you said that – you brought your own prejudice about us to that conversation

Michael

Aye, here's another – your understanding of Catholicism comes from the movies and TV

Oisín

(Pointing a Hilda) She's a Quaker – what is that anyway?

Lisa

Pretty much the opposite of a Catholic . . . no minister, no prayers, no hymns, no ceremony.
Just silence

Hilda

I can speak for myself, its simple – we are all created equally in God's eyes so there is no need for hierarchy – we pray directly to God

Lisa

As do we. I am a Presbyterian – we don't need a Priest to speak to God for us or to forgive our sins – its like we have a direct connection to God

Michael

How come there are so many types of you I have never understood that – Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian, Lutheran now Quaker?

Lisa

I guess 'cause once people started thinking outside of the catholic church they had different ideas and unlike Catholics we are allowed to think for ourselves

Michael

Why do you have to get all combative? We have choices . . .

Lisa

Like what? Can you choose to pray directly to God, can you choose birth control? Can you choose not to cross yourself when you go into church or not to use the rosary when you pray?

Oisín

Yea its called not going to Mass

Patrick

Oisín you go to Mass – what are you talking about?

Lisa

Anyone can choose not to go to church

Patrick

We don't have that choice. Its like they round us up on a Sunday

Oisín

Well there you have it Paddy I haven't set foot inside a church for 5 years. Not since my Uncle . . .
. (he gets up and walks away to light a cigarette. The boys are staring at him shocked)

Lisa

So what's the big deal?

Michael

He'll get kicked out of school if they find out that he doesn't don't go to mass. It's a massive deal

Oisín

So shut the fuck up about it then – we are almost done – 2 more months till we leave for A Levels. Its now our secret.

Hilda

I can't hand this in – I have written it all down . . . it wont be a secret will it? What about your Uncle? What happened to him?

Patrick

Don't ask

Oisín

He was shot by your feckin' Army

Hilda

Its not my army

Lisa

Ok, ok, ok, this is getting really fucked. I have an idea. Since we can't let the adults at the retreat know about any of this 'cause its none of their business and its now a secret that we all share; why don't we put this (*she rips the page out of Hilda's note book*) with the cloth and put it back under the kitchen stone? Like we are burying the differences we thought we had? (*Oisín continues to smoke – Patrick and Michael cross to Lisa and Hilda*) Like we are all the same – we are all feckin scared of the Army, we are all scared of the bombs, we are all scared that more people will die and that Church or Mass doesn't make it any better. It just doesn't

Hilda

And that violence is not the answer (*Patrick and Michael start writing. Oisín stamps out his cigarette crosses back to the group and starts playing his guitar*) Right, so are we all good with this then?

Lisa & Michael & Patrick

Aye

Hilda

Come on Lisa lets put this back (*Hilda grabs the paper and the cloth*)

Lisa

Putting the devil back in the dark hole?

Hilda

Nah we are silencing the devil with the truth. Our truths.

Lisa

What about the coins?

Oisín

I am keeping them

Lisa & Hilda

Fair enough *(the girls cross with the paper and the cloth back towards the kitchen – exit the stage. Oisín starts playing the guitar in earnest and breaks into a jazzy soulful rendition of Mountains of Mourne)*

Oisín

Oh Mary this London's a beautiful sight where the people are digging by day and by night, they don't sow potatoes or barley or wheat but there's gangs of them digging for gold in the street *(Michael and Patrick both start pulling instruments out of their back packs – Michael has a bodhran and Patrick a horn (trumpet) they both start playing along)* At least when I asked them that's what I was told so I just took a hand in this digging for gold. But for all that I found there I might as well be where the Mountains of Mourne sweep down to the sea. *(Lisa and Hilda are making their way back to the boys and yell out:*

Lisa & Hilda

Or where the kitchen falls into the sea! *(All laugh)* You know this one boys? *(Hilda and Lisa join arms and start singing and spinning a céilí dance)* I tell me ma when I go home the boys won't leave the girls alone *(the boys join in)* They pull my hair they steal my comb but that's all right till I go home. She is handsome she is pretty she is the belle of Belfast city she is a courtin' one, two, three please wont you tell me who is she! *(they all break into laughter and Michael looks into the distance)*

Michael

I think they are here to pick us up – was there anything else that we were supposed to do?

Lisa

(She digs in her backpack for the last envelope) Aye one more envelope – Thank you for participating in this retreat. Our goal is that kids from across the divide can learn that they have more in common with each other than they think. This program is called EMU – Education for Mutual Understanding. Take what you have learned and break down the barriers.

Oisín

Right well I think that's enough for one day. Here – *(he takes the coins and gives one to each of them)* Maybe that's a start.

They pick up their stuff and exit

