

words of those aul pagan songs! . . . She's right: I am a righteous bitch, amn't I?

Maggie

'She was as sweet as a rose at the dawning
But somehow fate hadn't meant it to be,
And though he sailed with the tide in the morning,
Still his heart's in the Isle of Capri.'

She now stands up and looks at her feet.

Now. Who's for a fox-trot?

Kate You work hard at your job. You try to keep the home together. You perform your duties as best you can – because you believe in responsibilities and obligations and good order. And then suddenly, suddenly you realize that hair cracks are appearing everywhere; that control is slipping away; that the whole thing is so fragile it can't be held together much longer. It's all about to collapse, Maggie.

Maggie (*wearily*) Nothing's about to collapse, Kate.

Kate That young Sweeney boy from the back hills – the boy who was anointed – his trousers didn't catch fire, as Rose said. They were doing some devilish thing with a goat – some sort of sacrifice for the Lughnasa Festival; and Sweeney was so drunk he toppled over into the middle of the bonfire. Don't know why that came into my head . . .

Maggie Kate . . .

Maggie goes to her and sits beside her.

Kate And Mr Evans is off again for another twelve months and next week or the week after Christina'll collapse into one of her depressions. Remember last winter? – all that sobbing and lamenting in the middle of the night. I don't think I could go through that again. And the doctor says he doesn't think Father Jack's mind is

confused but that his superiors probably had no choice but send him home. Whatever he means by that, Maggie. And the parish priest did talk to me today. He said the numbers in the school are falling and that there may not be a job for me after the summer. But the numbers aren't falling, Maggie. Why is he telling me lies? Why does he want rid of me? And why has he never come out to visit Father Jack? (*She tries to laugh.*) If he gives me the push, all five of us will be at home together all day long – we can spend the day dancing to Marconi.

*Now she cries. Maggie puts her arm around her.
Michael enters left.*

But what worries me most of all is Rose. If I died – if I lost my job – if this house were broken up – what would become of our Rosie?

Maggie Shhh.

Kate I must put my trust in God, Maggie, mustn't I? He'll look after her, won't he? You believe that, Maggie, don't you?

Maggie Kate . . . Kate . . . Kate, love . . .

Kate I believe that, too . . . I believe that . . . I do believe that . . .

Maggie holds her and rocks her.

Chris enters quickly left, hugging herself. She sees the boy at his kites, goes to him and gets down beside him. She speaks eagerly, excitedly, confidentially.

Chris Well. Now you've had a good look at him. What do you think of him? Do you remember him?

Boy (*bored*) I never saw him before.

Chris Shhh. Yes, you did; five or six times. You've forgotten. And he saw you at the foot of the lane. He