

The Shadow of the Glen

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{Nora goes out. The Tramp begins stitching one of the tags in his coat, saying the "De Profundis" under his breath. In an instant the sheet is drawn slowly down, and Dan Burke looks out. The Tramp moves uneasily, then looks up, and springs to his feet with a movement of terror.}

DAN {With a hoarse voice.} Don't be afeard, stranger; a man that's dead can do no hurt.

TRAMP {Trembling.} I meant no harm, your honour; and won't you leave me easy to be saying a little prayer for your soul?

{A long whistle is heard outside.}

DAN {Sitting up in his bed and speaking fiercely.} Ah, the devil mend her.... Do you hear that, stranger? Did ever you hear another woman could whistle the like of that with two fingers in her mouth? {He looks at the table hurriedly.} I'm destroyed with the drouth, and let you bring me a drop quickly before herself will come back.

TRAMP {Doubtfully.} Is it not dead you are?

DAN How would I be dead, and I as dry as a baked bone, stranger?

TRAMP {Pouring out the whisky.} What will herself say if she smells the stuff on you, for I'm thinking it's not for nothing you're letting on to be dead?

DAN It is not, stranger, but she won't be coming near me at all, and it's not long now I'll be letting on, for I've a cramp in my back, and my hip's asleep on me, and there's been the devil's own fly itching my nose. It's near dead I was wanting to sneeze, and you blathering about the rain, and Darcy {bitterly}—the devil choke him—and the towering church. {Crying out impatiently.} Give me that whisky. Would you have herself come back before I taste a drop at all?

{Tramp gives him the glass.}

DAN {After drinking.} Go over now to that cupboard, and bring me a black stick you'll see in the west corner by the wall.

TRAMP {Taking a stick from the cupboard} Is it that?

DAN It is, stranger; it's a long time I'm keeping that stick for I've a bad wife in the house.

TRAMP {With a queer look.} Is it herself, master of the house, and she a grand woman to talk?

DAN It's herself, surely, it's a bad wife she is—a bad wife for an old man, and I'm getting old, God help me, though I've an arm to me still. {He takes the stick in his hand.} Let you wait now a short while, and it's a great sight you'll see in this room in two hours or three. {He stops to listen.} Is that somebody above?

TRAMP {Listening.} There's a voice speaking on the path.

DAN Put that stick here in the bed and smooth the sheet the way it was lying. {He covers himself up hastily.} Be falling to sleep now and don't let on you know anything, or I'll be having your life. I wouldn't have told you at all but it's destroyed with the drouth I was.

TRAMP {Covering his head.} Have no fear, master of the house. What is it I know of the like of you that I'd be saying a word or putting out my hand to stay you at all?

{He goes back to the fire, sits down on a stool with his back to the bed and goes on stitching his coat.}

DAN {Under the sheet, querulously.} Stranger.

TRAMP {Quickly.} Whisht, whisht. Be quiet I'm telling you, they're coming now at the door.