

FALLING FROM GRACE

By

Tom O'Brien

A full-length play with music on the life and time of Shane MacGowan of the Pogues

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Characters

Shane MacGowan..... mid 30's plays guitar/sings

Victoria Clarke late 20's sings

Spider Stacey.mid 30's sings, plays tin whistle/beer tray

Shane's Father..... 50's

Shane's Mother.....50's

Frank Murray.....40's

John Lydon.....mid 30's

Sinead O'Connor.....late 20's

Note: All the female parts can be played by one actress. All the male parts, with the exception of Shane, can be played by one actor.

Musician 1 piano accordion

Musician 2 banjo/mandolin

One of the musicians also to play tin-whistle if necessary

FALLING FROM GRACE

Act one

Scene one

Stage left, a bar counter, lots of drink and glasses, two high stools. A wooden cross/crucifix on back wall, a street sign reading BURTON ST, a sign reading KINGS CROSS, and perhaps a 'Punk' background. Blow-up pics of Shane MacGowan, The Pogues etc. A single snare drum, an acoustic guitar and a bass guitar on stands in background. Stage right should be bare; this is where the action in Shane's mind takes place.

Two musicians in the background. One should be able to play the piano accordion, the other the mandolin/banjo. One can also play the tin whistle if desired.

Curtain up with **SHANE MacGOWAN** singing **IF I SHOULD FALL FROM GRACE WITH GOD**. **SPIDER STACEY** is in the background. He hovers between singing the chorus and bashing his head to time with a beer tray. (*in the real Pogues he played the tin whistle and the beer tray*)

Note (*the actor who plays Spider should participate in most songs, ie singing, playing the beer tray/drums/tin whistle, where appropriate. He can also play other characters, such as Shane's father, Frank Murray, Johnny Rotten etc. This also applies to the actress who plays Victoria; she can also play Shane's mother, Sinéad O'Connor, etc*)

SHANE: If I should fall from grace with god
Where no doctor can relieve me
If I'm buried 'neath the sod
But the angels won't receive me

Let me go boys
Let me go boys
Let me go down in the mud
Where the rivers all run dry

This land was always ours
Was the proud land of our fathers
It belongs to us and them
Not to any of the others

Let them go boys
Let them go boys
Let them go down in the mud

Where the rivers all run dry

Bury me at sea
Where no murdered ghost can haunt me
If I rock upon the waves
No corpse can lie upon me

It's coming up three boys
Keeps coming up three boys
Let them go down in the mud
Where the rivers all run dry

If I should fall from grace with god
Where no doctor can relieve me
If I'm buried 'neath the sod
And still the angels won't receive me

Let me go boys
Let me go boys
Let me go down in the mud
Where the rivers all run dry

VICTORIA enters towards the end of the song and Shane dances with her. The dance continues for a minute or so then the music fades. Shane is dressed in a dark suit, light open neck shirt; he wears a cross on a chain and a rosary beads round his neck. The most distinctive thing about him should be his laugh. Victoria looks very glamorous. (a Punk feeling/look should come across to the audience)

SHANE: This is Victoria. She's ...she's...ah...ah...

VICT: We're an item. (*pause*) Again.

SHANE: Yeah. We have no children. Except me. (*laughs*). Kcch...kcch...kcch. I stole that line from Brendan Behan. He stole it from someone else I expect. Probably Paddy Kavanagh.

VICT: That's slander, Shane.

SHANE; He's fucken dead. Ya can't slander the dead, can you? Anyway, I come to praise Caesar not bury him. He was one of the greatest Irish writers of my time. Or any time.

VICT: Greater than Joyce or O'Casey?

SHANE: Fucken right. Well, maybe not Joyce. Joyce was a fucken genius, he invented a whole new language. Brendan stole a few lines from both of them here and there. But where's the harm in that? I did the same meself. Kcch...kcch...kcch. Did you hear about the time he arrived in Montreal and some reporter asked

him what he was doing in Canada. ‘Well’, he said, ‘I kept reading all these ads saying drink Canada dry, so I thought I’d give it a try’.

VICT: Some people might think you’re trying to copy him.

SHANE: Maybe I’m him. His reincarnation, like. Kcch...kcch...kcch. We, the Pogues I mean, got our dress style from Brendan. Did ya notice the similarity?

VICT: The slept-in-a-ditch last night look? Yeah, I see where you’re coming from there, sweet pea

SHANE: Yeah, well we’ve all lain in the gutter in our time – and few of us were looking at the stars.

(sings)

A hungry feeling came o’er me stealing

And the mice were squealing in my prison cell

And the ould triangle went jingle jangle

All along the banks of the Royal Canal.

VICT: Very funny, Shane.

She settles herself on a stool, slightly apart from Shane. During the action they sometimes interact with each other, other times they appear separate from each other, though they are aware of each other at all times.

VICT: I was living in an Irish-speaking hell hole in West Cork when I first heard tell of Shane. I think I read about him in a magazine. He was calling himself Shane O’Hooligan and he thought was a Punk...

SHANE: I was a fucken Punk. I was **the** Punk.

VICT I was desperate to be a Punk myself, but living where I did I had to make do with a black bin liner and fishnet tights. I don’t think West Cork was ready for anything more... flamboyant. When I was sixteen I escaped to London – Golders Green, would you believe - and in my local pub I became friendly with Spider Stacey, (*Spider acknowledges them*) who played the tin whistle and sang a bit. One night he had Shane with him. He was very aggressive.

SHANE: You should feel honoured. You were in the presence of greatness. The fledgling Pogues. Kcch...kcch...kcch. Anyway, I was fucken drunk, not aggressive...

VICT: You were drunk and aggressive. And very arrogant, I thought. It was Spider’s birthday...

SHANE: Well, go on then, buy him a drink. It's his fucken birthday.

VICT: You can fuck off for yourself, Shane O'Hooligan- or whatever you call yourself these days. (*smiles sweetly*) And that was how we met.

SPIDER: (*in background*) You never did buy me that drink.

VICT: I would have done if it hadn't been for his big mouth.

SHANE: I have a lovely mouth. (*shows his teeth, or lack of them*) Go on! It was love at first sight.

VICT: For you maybe.

SHANE: Wait a minute. Arrogant...you said arrogant.

VICT: Yeah, you were. You still bloody are. (*pause*) So it was love at first sight, was it?

SHANE: Yeah, it was, like. Yeah.

VICT: And what about all your other women?

SHANE: Kcch...kcch...kcch. My other women. I never wrote a song about any of them.

VICT: You sure about that?

Shane sings a few lines

Vicoria, you left me in opium euphoria
With a fat monk singing Gloria
My girl with green eyes

SHANE: I immortalised you, know what I mean?

VICT: Like Ernest Hemingway?

SHANE: What'd'ya mean? He blew his fucken brains out. He'd just turned sixty and felt that his best days were behind him, know what I mean. It was early morning and he'd just had a blow job; he calmly walked down stairs, and blew his brains out. BANG! A nice quick ending. Mind you there's another way of looking at it; it could'a been because it was either the best – or the worst - blow job in the world. Kcch...kcch...kcch

VICT: He was mentally unbalanced; everyone knows that he'd been trying to kill himself for months. I was referring to his women. His lovers. He made all of them characters in his books afterwards.

SHANE: Did he? Cupid stunt.

VICT: Shane!

SHANE: Okay, like Papa then. Kcch...kcch...kcch

VICT; Thank you, sweet pea.

SHANE sings **VICTORIA** (c Shane MacGowan 1994. Spider and Victoria sing too, Spider playing the beer tray occasionally.

Down the dirty old streets
The Angel of the East is calling
And with a trembling hand
I open up a can
I can hear a baby bawling

Before I open up my eyes
I can feel her love inside me
But then I realize
My girl with green eyes
Is no longer there beside me

Victoria, you left me in opium euphoria
With a fat monk singing Gloria
My girl with green eyes

Only you see that I am lazy
Don't care about fame
Nor money like a child
And I'm just like a child
Who's forgotten how to smile

All the people are so busy
I have nothing to bother about
It seems that I'm different
Seems that I am strange
I'm a bumpkin, I'm a lout

Victoria, you left me in opium euphoria
With a fat monk singing Gloria
My girl with green eyes

They finish off the song dancing with each other.

VICT: I didn't fall in love with you for years. I think I was twenty. I'd known you for ages then.

SHANE: It only seemed that long. (*laughs*) Kcch...kcch...kcch

VICT: Don't you remember? It was my birthday. And somebody told you to kiss me.

SHANE: It must have been God. And did I ?

VICT: (*pushes him*) ‘Course you did. I was irresistible.

SHANE: You still are.

VICT: I know. And afterwards, on the way home in a taxi, we had an argument.

SHANE: I remember that! You were trying to tell me I knew fuck all about Sean Nos singing. Just because you came from the back of beyond in pre-historic West Cork and I was a sophisticate from London...

VICT: You came from Puckaun, which is in the back of beyond pre-historic Tipperary. And what do they know about anything in that hole!

SHANE: They know about Sean Nos singing. And dancing. And playing music. They’d sing and dance till the cows come home. All my people were musicians and singers. It was an open house there. Every night. (*pause for a drink*) Anyway, I come from Kent. Not Puckaun. Tunbridge Wells. I was born there, like, but I’d never admit coming from there. Well, maybe if you stuck hot needles in my toenails. Kcch...kcch...kcch. It only happened because my parents decided to spend Christmas with some relatives over there. Otherwise , I would’a popped out in Tipperary. And been a proper Paddy, not a plastic fucker. I was born on Christmas day. Did ya know that?

SPIDER: (*sings*) Hark now hear the angels sing...

SHANE: Fuck off, Spider.

SPIDER: Some Christmas present!

SHANE: Kcch...kcch...kcch. Anyway, back to the Sean Nos; I told you you were full of shite.

VICT: And then you kissed me goodnight. And I fell in love. (*smiles sweetly*) I moved in with you and your flat was disgusting. One room, red walls, black carpet and a mattress on the floor. Overflowing ashtrays and bottles everywhere.

SHANE: And you tried to change everything.

VICT: I tried to clean it up, yeah. Tried to clean you up. I’m still trying after all these years. (*laughs*) You still won’t have a bath.

SHANE: I had one last year. Kcch...kcch...kcch

VICT: You had five tellys – and none of them worked properly. Oh, and that crappy record player. What was that song you used to play all time? Van Morrison. (*she hums it*)

SHANE: Yeah, yeah. Astral Weeks. *(he sings a few verses and Victoria joins in)*

(ASTRAL WEEKS by Van Morrison © Caledonia Soul Music)

If I ventured in the slipstream
Between the viaducts of your dream
Where mobile steel rims crack
And the ditch in the back roads stop

Could you find me?
Would you kiss-a my eyes?
To lay me down in silence easy
To be born again, to be born again

VICT: You played it right through the night once. I'd rather take a cheese-grater to my forehead for six hours now than do that again.

SHANE: He's a poet. Like Dylan and Springsteen. You gotta listen to the words. The words are everything. *(pause)* Nice bloke, Van

VICT: Yeah.

SHANE: Even if he is a fat fucker these days.

VICT: Shane! He might call you a drunken fucker...these days.

SHANE: I'm a drunken fucker most days. You still got a soft spot for him?

VICT: *(shrugs)* Is there a point you wish to make, sweet pea?

SHANE: Well, now that you mention it, yeah. Once a womaniser, always a womaniser, wouldn't you agree?

VICT: It takes one to know one.

SHANE: *(laughs)* Kcch...kcch...kcch. Did you shag him?

VICT: Are you jealous?

Shane shrugs, then pours himself some wine and lights a cigarette.

VICT: You are jealous!

SHANE: Jealous. Kcch...Kcch...What's there to be jealous of?

Pause for a moment. Victoria places a tape recorder nearby and switches it on.

VICT: Let's forget about Van The Man and talk about you. Why don't you tell me about your Uncle Jim.

SHANE: Kcch...kcch...kcch. Uncle Jim. He used to get pissed off about how overcrowded it was because there were fourteen people living here, and it was a very small house – AS YOU CAN SEE.

VICT: Wait a minute! Where are we talking about exactly?

SHANE: Puckaun. Back of beyond Tipperary. Come on Victoria, keep up. You're the one who wants to record all this shi...stuff for posterity. Posterity ma hone! (*chuckles*) Kcch...kcch...kcch

VICT: You want it recorded too. Cos that's the only way you're gonna' remember any of it in a few years time.

SHANE: Yeah, maybe you're right.

VICT: Besides, I might write a book about it, sweet pea.

SHANE: A fucking book! You? Kcch...Kcch.

VICT: Okay, us then. We'll write a book about you.

SHANE: Book me arse! (*after a pause*) Iim used to sleep in the haystacks, ya know? You'd be playing in the haystacks and you'd suddenly realise Jim was asleep in the hay, under the tarpaulins. It was either that or sleep in the same bed as uncle John – and uncle John used to fight in his sleep. 'Fock yez, I'll fockin kill yez, ye conts'. So uncle Jim got so sick of it he would sleep in the haystacks, and in the end he never slept in a bed again. I don't like sleeping in beds meself ya know? Well I didn't till I met you.

VICT: And then the novelty wore off.

SHANE: You left me. That's when the fucken novelty wore off.

VICT: Can you blame me? I came back to our hotel room to find you in bed with a...a...

SHANE: They were big fans, know what I mean. Kcch...kcch...kcch

VICT: Sometimes you are so fucking obnoxious.

SHANE: Look, I can't help it if I'm a babe magnet. (*sings*)
I'm a babe magnet still, though I'm o'er the hill
Yeah, o'er the hill and far away
Babe magnet still, babe magnet still...

What am I supposed to do if women throw themselves at me?

VICT: You could try ducking now and again.

SHANE: You were a groupie yourself. You'd climb over your grandmother to get to a celebrity.

VICT: Fuck off! I am not a groupie. You were nobody when I met you.

SHANE: What are you doing with me if you're not a groupie?

VICT: Someone needs to look after you, sweet pea. And I don't see anybody else volunteering, do you?

SHANE: Kcch..kcch...kcch. No. But you get off on this fame thing. You said so yourself.

VICT: Okay so I have an addiction to fame. But I'm having therapy to get it out of my system. Because it's one of those things, like with heroin – you've got to try it before you can decide you are going to give it up. You should try it yourself.

SHANE: What, the heroin? I already have. Kcch...kcch...kcch. As for therapy, they'd have to drag me all the way, screaming and shouting. *(pause)* Well, they already did that, once or twice. *(he pauses for drink, then slumps at the bar and seems to go to sleep.)*

Light change to signify change of scene

Scene 2

It is Christmas day. Shane is in Bethlem psychiatric hospital, having been committed by his parents. He sits in a corner, strumming the acoustic guitar.

Shane: *(singing, trying to get the melody together)*

And the bells were ringing out for Christmas day...
You scumbag...you maggot
You cheap lousy faggot
Happy Christmas me arse...

Enter Shane's MOTHER and FATHER

MOTHER: Happy Xmas Shane

FATHER: Happy birthday son

SHANE: Happy Christmas me arse! I'm locked up here in the mad house on me eighteenth birthday, and it's, like, happy birthday Shane.

MOTHER: Don't call it the madhouse, Shane. It's a psychiatric hospital.

SHANE: Do you know it's called Bethlehem? Ironic don't you think, me being in here on Christmas day? And it being my birthday today.

FATHER: It's for your own good, son. And it's not Bethlehem, it's Bethlem

SHANE: It should be Bedlam. You had me committed. My own parents had me committed.

MOTHER: That's not true and you know it. It was voluntary. You choose it yourself.

SHANE: Like I had any choice! Did you bring me a drink?

FATHER: You know we can't.

SHANE: It's Christmas day, it's the least you could fucken do.

MOTHER: Don't talk to your father like that.

FATHER: No, he's right. It's not Christmas without a drink.

MOTHER: You'd know all about that I suppose.

FATHER: What's that supposed to mean? I'm only sayin...

MOTHER; I know what you're saying. Some example you set him, leaving him outside pubs and betting shops when you were supposed to be looking after him.

FATHER: At least I had the decency to leave him outside. I didn't pour porter down his throat like your family did back in Tipperary. And I didn't let him help himself to my valium tablets whenever he felt like one. Or two. Or three.

MOTHER: It was more than valium tablets that put him in here...

SHANE: Jesus Christ, you pair! Don't you think maybe you are both responsible? Just a little bit?

FATHER: Why, you ungrateful little...!

SHANE: You should have left me in Ireland, know what I mean. I should'a gone to school there.

MOTHER: And have your brains scrambled by Christian Brothers and Jesuits? Your father and I decided you needed a proper education after running wild in Puckaun for six years.

SHANE: And whose fault was that? You ran off to England and left me there!

FATHER: We didn't run off. There was no work, we had to go. The whole point of moving to England is that we were going to have a modern life there. It was supposed to be a great place. The streets paved with gold...

SHANE: ...And all that crap. Yeah, yeah...

FATHER: ...You could get a divorce, an abortion, trendy clothes, anything you wanted. And nobody went to Mass or said the Angelus and you couldn't be excommunicated. In England Catholicism was supposed to easygoing and air-conditioned.

MOTHER: Instead it was full of immigrants fighting each other for low paid jobs. And there was an epidemic of drugs.

SHANE: And Paddys who didn't want to be Paddys.

FATHER: What do you mean?

SHANE: Well, you pair couldn't get away from the bog fast enough, could you. What about me? I was fully Irish by the time I left there. I spoke with a Tipperary accent. How did you think I was going to fit in, in your ...trendy London? How do you think my accent went down in the playgrounds? It was Paddy this, Paddy that, Paddy you thick cunt.

MOTHER: Don't exaggerate. It wasn't that bad.

SHANE: How would you know. You spent most of your time in bed, like a zombie. Pilled out of you head. Sometimes I had to kick you in the mornings to make sure you were still alive.

FATHER: Your mother was very depressed during that period of our life.

SHANE: And you were pissed out of your mind during that period of our lives. I had to spend most of my days fighting with English fuckers who thought I was in the IRA as soon as I opened my mouth, know what I mean.

FATHER: You could have been someone.

SHANE: I could have been someone. (*sings it as he strums guitar*)

I could have been someone

Well, so could anyone...

You took my dreams from me...

FATHER: You had the brains.

SHANE: Is that why you sent me to Westminster School?

MOTHER: It was a scholarship. There's many would have given their right hands for such a chance. Instead you choose to run wild. Shoplifting, drink, drugs...

SHANE: Me in a bloody public school! It was full of toffee-nosed bastards. (*he strums on the guitar*) Do you know what I do here? I pray.

MOTHER: That's good, Shane. What do you pray for?

SHANE: Lots of things. That I get out of here soon. That I don't die in my sleep. And I pray that I don't wake up in a coffin.

MOTHER: Why would you be afraid of that?

SHANE: Dunno. (*pause*) One of the stories they used to tell me before I went to bed at night, to give me a really good night's sleep, was about a young woman who died, and she wasn't really dead, she was catatonic, and was put in a coffin, right, and in the middle of the night the priest heard banging in the church, but by the time he got there she was really dead.

FATHER: Jesus! Your relations....!

MOTHER: Is this true?

SHANE: Yeah.

MOTHER: Why did they tell you that story before you went to bed?

SHANE: I dunno. The only thing that makes sense is that they were preparing me for a hard life. A life where you were going to suffer a lot, be afraid a lot, and it was about facing up to your fears. So they'd tell you ghost stories, horrific stories before you went to bed. With the result that I didn't like going to bed. (*pause*) I still don't.

Shane sings **FAIRYTALE OF NEW YORK** (c MacGowan & Finer 1988)

It was Christmas Eve babe
In the drunk tank
An old man said to me, won't see another one
And then he sang a song
The Rare Old Mountain Dew
I turned my face away
And dreamed about you

Got on a lucky one
Came in eighteen to one
I've got a feeling

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This year's for me and you
So happy Christmas
I love you baby
I can see a better time
When all our dreams come true

They've got cars big as bars
They've got rivers of gold
But the wind goes right through you
It's no place for the old
When you first took my hand
On a cold Christmas Eve
You promised me
Broadway was waiting for me

You were handsome
You were pretty
Queen of New York City
When the band finished playing
They howled out for more
Sinatra was swinging,
All the drunks they were singing
We kissed on a corner
Then danced through the night

The boys of the NYPD choir
Were singing "Galway Bay"
And the bells were ringing out
For Christmas day

You're a bum
You're a punk
You're an old slut on junk
Lying there almost dead on a drip in that bed
You scumbag, you maggot
You cheap lousy faggot
Happy Christmas your arse
pray God it's our last

I could have been someone
Well so could anyone
You took my dreams from me
When I first found you
I kept them with me babe
I put them with my own
Can't make it all alone
I've built my dreams around you

Light change to signify passing of time.

Scene 3

Shane and Victoria continue their recording

SHANE: Where were we? Oh yeah, dying room.

VICT: The drying room?

SHANE: Not the drying room, the dying room. It was only meant to be used by those who were dying. But it got used anyway. And none of them were dying – or if they were it was only from the drink! They were all me mother's people, me uncles, John , Jim, Sean, me aunts Monica, Eileen and so on. And there was Tommy Keane the milkman. He used to come round collecting the milk y'know?

VICT: Delivering it you mean.

SHANE: No, collecting it. The extra milk we had from the cows we'd put it in churns and Tommy would take it and sell it for you in town. And he'd come around about three or four every morning just as everyone was getting ready for bed. Or who weren't getting ready for bed as the case might be, 'cause a lot of people in our house didn't go to bed. I didn't go to bed much myself. And Tommy used to turn up pissed out of his head. He needed company 'cause all his pals were comatose by then. He was one of those men who could drink all night. So he'd sit around the kitchen for a couple of hours and I'd give him another bottle of stout, and that meant I would get another one too.

VICT: How old were you?

SHANE: I suppose I was about five or six.

VICT: Five! And you'd get another bottle of stout?

SHANE: Yeah.

VICT: And how many bottles had you already had?

SHANE: Two.

VICT: Two! That's a lot for a kid.

SHANE: I used to get two a night.

VICT: And who gave you that?

SHANE: My uncle John. He used to bring it back from the boozer

VICT: And you'd still be up?

SHANE: Yeah, I'd still be up.

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VICT: Did nobody try to make you go to bed?

SHANE: No. Ah, I forgot my Auntie Monica used to try and make me. She tried to put me in the bathtub too. And I didn't want to. So I didn't.

VICT: Yeah. You have an aversion to bathing as well as sleeping.

SHANE: And they'd all say to my aunt, 'Leave the child alone. Leave the child alone'. And my granny used to have a go as well, being my granny. And they'd say to her too 'Leave the child alone, leave the child alone'.

VICT: Did they not, like, think it might be bad for you?

SHANE: They believed in letting a child do what it wanted, as long as it went to Mass. I mean not sex, y'know. I was too young to have sex. But I was allowed to smoke, drink and bet, all of which are regarded by puritans as bad habits – but I came from a very anti- puritan background. Sex was the one thing that was a no-no. Sex and blasphemy. You were allowed to say fuck as often as you wanted because that's not blasphemy. But you couldn't blaspheme the Lord. Fuck is the most popular word in the Irish vocabulary, y'know. It was in our family anyway. And I was brought up to say it from an early age. And I was smoking drinking and gambling from an early age.

Shane takes a bottle of Guinness and drinks from it.

I started earlier than Behan on this stuff. Not on the whiskey, like. Brendan said he thought whiskey was tea until he was about ten. That's because his granny kept her whiskey in the teapot. He said he became a great tea-drinker after that! And he got the taste for Guinness when she sent him out to the pub for a jug and he drank half of it on the way back, topping it up with water so she wouldn't notice.

VICT: And the gambling?

SHANE: The first horse I ever bet on was called Maxwell House. It came in at ten to one. (*laughs*) Mind you it started at eleven o'clock. Kcch...kcch...kcch. I was a regular gambler after that.

That was my auntie Norah. We'd pick out the horses and do the Irish Sweepstake together, and she'd buy me packets of cigarettes and let the men buy me drinks. And when she had me pissed and smoking like a chimney she'd start teaching me the gospels, and all about Hell and damnation. Hideously devious. The Jesuits couldn't touch her.

VICT: You liked going to church?

SHANE: I loved it. The Roman Catholic Mass is one of the most beautiful experiences a human being can be subjected to. I say subjected to, cause it's not something

you want to do; it's more like a ritual, and you're dragged to Mass every Sunday when you're little, whether you like it or not. But once you're there the whole thing takes you over.

VICT: So you became a religious maniac and a total hedonist at the same time.

SHANE: Yeah . I not only pursued pleasure, I fucken overtook it. Kcch...kcch...kcch

VICT: And now?

SHANE: I thank god I'm an atheist these days. Kcch...kcch...kcch

Shane sings STREAMS OF WHISKEY (c) Shane MacGowan 1984)

Last night as I slept
I dreamt I met with Behan
I shook him by the hand and we passed the time of day
When questioned on his views
On the crux of life's philosophies
He had but these few clear and simple words to say

*I am going, I am going
Any which way the wind may be blowing
I am going, I am going
Where streams of whiskey are flowing*

VICT: Why do you think they fed you drink as a child?

SHANE: I think the reasoning was that children who were forbidden drink became alcoholics as adults. I expect they were hoping that I'd be totally sick of it by the time I grew up.

VICT: I'd say they slightly miscalculated, wouldn't you?

SHANE: Che...che...he...he. (*pause*) Do you have a guardian angel.

VICT: I'm sure we all do, pet.

SHANE: No, I mean a proper one, like. Mine is my uncle Tommy. When he was sixteen he fell into a threshing machine and got shredded. He lived for several days after. How the hell he managed that I don't know. My great granny had a dream about it happening. She told him he shouldn't go into the fields that day. She tried to stop him, God knows how much Holy water she poured over him, but he went anyway. And when she saw them carrying him back she knew what had happened.

VICT: She was psychic?

SHANE: Yeah

VICT: Are you psychic?

SHANE: Well, I talk to dead people all the time.

VICT: Do you talk to Tommy?

SHANE: Yeah. I talk to him a lot.

VICT: What does he say?

SHANE: Not much most days. But he's kinda cheerful y'know? He's looking after me. He's looking over my right shoulder.

VICT: Right now?

SHANE: Yeah.

VICT: How do you know?

SHANE: 'Cos I feel him and see him. Unless it's me and I'm a reincarnation of him.

VICT? Both him and Brendan Behan?

SHANE: Well, it's not an exact science, like, know what I mean? Nobody knows one way or the other, do they? I don't know whose fucken reincarnation I am, do I? If I'm anybody's. But I've had the description of his death from him, the exact details of the threshing accident and the four days he took to die. He told me he saw heaven days before he died, and he was telling his mother he could see it.

VICT: And now he's your guardian angel.

SHANE: Yeah. This whole area is full of the ghosts of dead people.

VICT: Like who?

SHANE: Like...like old IRA men, black and tans...

VICT: Black and tans?

SHANE: I don't talk to them bastards. Scum of the earth they were.

VICT: But what are they doing around here?

SHANE: This place was, like, an IRA stronghold, this very house was a safe house. My grand-uncle Mikey was the commandant of the local IRA and they used to hide the men here when the Tans were searching for them. Behind all the pisspots under the bed. When the Tans got the whiff from those pots they didn't linger long in the room I can tell you. Anyway, because of the atrocities

they committed in the neighbourhood a whole division of them got taken out in a little town not far from here. There's loads of Tans buried not too far away. That's why they're wandering around, I guess. No fucken homes to go to. Nobody wants the bastards.

We hear an instrumental, WILD CATS OF KILKENNY ((c) The Pogues) for a few minutes. Shane and Victoria dance to it, and shout at the appropriate places. The music fades; lights dim to signify change of scene

Scene 4

Shane and Spider are reminiscing; it may all be going on in Shane's mind – who can say? Victoria is in the background - recording

SPIDER: The fucking Nashville Rooms!

SHANE: Kcch....Kcch. That was where I had my damascene conversion...

SPIDER: Your what?

SHANE: When I first realised I was going to be a punk. Not that the name 'punk' mean anything to us then; that was a media creation, we were just kindred spirits who scorned authority and conformity. There were no rules, no conditions - and no exclusions because you were a Paddy, or a queer, or a catholic, or were black or whatever. It championed the individual, and we enjoyed the controversy and danger that it brought. You could be who you liked, dress how you liked, y'know? Drainpipes, fishnet, rubber, plastic, home-made T-shirts, brothel creepers, Doc Martens, earring, dog chains, zips, safety pins, anything went.

SPIDER And if you wanted to make music you just got up on stage and did it. Mine was mostly adolescent shite, yeah. Like yours, I guess. But we didn't know any better, did we? None of us did. And we were getting listened to. If you had talent you just got up and did it, like. That's what being a punk was all about.

SHANE: We were listening to the Sex Pistols, The Clash, bands like that, and thought we could do just as well. It's not for me to say if we did – others can be the judge of that. Kcch...kcch...kcch

SPIDER: Nah, we were fucken good, mate. But you were different still. With your crucifixes and rosary beads, and that fucking beret.

SHANE: That was my Spanish Civil War look. I also used it to ward off evil spirits. Catholic Punks like Johnny Rotten and myself used a lot of crucifixes and stuff, but I was the first one to use rosary beads and berets.

SPIDER: Lydon. That cunt. Yeah.

SHANE: Well, he was different too. You have to give him that.

SPIDER: Yeah. You had to be different to get noticed. You had to be original. As soon as somebody copied you, you dumped it – and found something else.

SHANE: That was the whole point- being an individual. And anyway, if anything looked like it was catching on, Malcolm and Vivienne had it copied and in their shop down the Kings Road the next day. Where do you think the Pistols got their image from?

SPIDER: They thought they were true originals.

SHANE: Kcch...Kcch...They got all their clothes from Sex. And for free. I think Malcolm formed the Pistols just to advertise his clothes. He never thought they would be any good, he said so himself. Johnny was a total poser y’know? And his droning whine of a voice, he made it more droning than it was so it became really offensive. The fact that he couldn’t sing he accentuated by not even trying. But he was a brilliant front-man.

SPIDER: *(sings, imitating Rotten)*

God save the Queen
The fascist regime,
They made you a moron
A potential H-bomb

God save the queen

She aint no human being

And there’s no future

In England’s dreamland.

(Spider continues as Johnny)

I consider myself working class. And we, the working class, we’re lazy good-for-nothing bastards. We never accept responsibility for our lives – that’s why we’ll always be downtrodden. We seem to enjoy it in a perverse sort of way; we like being told what to do, led like sheep to the slaughterhouse, as it were.

I loathe the British Public School system with a passion. How can anybody have the right to a better education just because their parents have money? I find that vile. They talk with this sense of superiority, the upper classes, and they have it. They have all the right connections once they leave school, and they parasite off the population as their friends help them along. You never see that with the working classes.

SHANE: Nah, cos most of them never went to school...Kcch...Kcch...(pause)
I remember the first time I saw you. You had long hair and wore a bovver hat. You were quite fat.

'JOHN': Fuck off you seldom fed culchie.

SHANE That's a Brendan Behan line.

'JOHN' Well isn't this cosy.

SHANE: The next time you had blue hair. I'll say this; it took some bottle to wear blue hair in Finsbury Park in those days. Chee...chee.

'JOHN': If you don't accept me as I am then don't accept me at all, that's always been my motto. I was practically unlovable most of my early life. I wouldn't even let my parents go near me. From a very early age it was - "get off! Don't touch me! Leave me alone!"

SHANE: I bet you fondled yourself Kcch...Kcch...

'JOHN': Yeah, I fondled myself. But I never screamed as a youngster. That shocked my mother when she first heard the Sex Pistols. I had always been so quiet. She'd never seen that side of me. She probably thought she had raised a lunatic.

SHANE: She was right.

'John' roars at Shane and charges him like a mad bull. They tangle with each other for a few moments.

SHANE: (*exhausted*) We should do this more often

'JOHN': When we started out I was never part of the group in any meaningful way. I came and sang my songs and then went home alone. I was never invited to any parties or get-togethers; I never felt really belonged. We were the very first people – as a band I mean – to call each other cunts. We just didn't like each other, simple as that.

I was only there because of Malcolm. I had green hair and one evening Malcolm just said 'would you like to be in a band?' I said 'I can't sing. Just let me sing out of tune. Would that be alright?' I knew every Alice Cooper song upside down, backwards and inside out so I did my version of 'EIGHTEEN'

They both sing a version of EIGHTEEN (Alice Cooper)

Lines form on my face and my hands
Lines form on the left and right
I'm in the middle
the middle of life
I'm a boy and I'm a man
I'm eighteen and I LIKE IT
Yes I like it
Oh I like it
Love it
Like it
Love it

During the song, 'John' takes off his jacket and begins chopping it up with a knife.

'JOHN' I bought a suit down the Kings Road, but I didn't like it that much so I tore it to pieces and safety-pinned it back together. Malcolm loved the idea. That's how it all started. The punk thing... but...

They are broken up by the arrival of Victoria

VICT: Shane, Shane, what's going on. Come on, wake up!!

Spider fades into the background as they continue 'recording'

SHANE: I never wanted to be the front-man in the Pogues. It was supposed to be Spider...but he couldn't do it. It was just an accident.

SPIDER: (*in background*) No accident. You were born to be the Pogues front man. I think we all knew that after that first gig at the Pindar. It was you they wanted to hear, not me.

SHANE: That might have something to do with you being pissed out'a your mind and wailing like a banshee.

SPIDER: I thought we all were.

SHANE: Not completely legless. You couldn't stand up.

SPIDER: It was the best thing that could'a happened. It meant that I had to learn to play the tin whistle properly – to justify my presence in the band

SHANE; Yeah. Kcch...kcch...kcch. Otherwise we'd be anonymous today.

VICT: You were already famous, sweet pea.

SHANE: Kcch...kcch...kcch. Yeah. I was. Famous for getting my ear bitten off at a Clash gig. That was Jane from the Modettes. What we were doing was having a kind of sado-masochistic love ritual in front of the stage with broken bottles.

VICT: That sounds like fun. Was there any particular reason?

SHANE: It seemed like a good idea at the time. I got off on it, got off on the pain. It was a kick. It wasn't even sexual; she wasn't even my girlfriend, she was just a bird who grabbed me in the crowd and started biting me. And we started carving each other up with broken bottles. There was blood everywhere, but it was just a lot of blood from a nick on my earlobe, the media bullshit machine did the rest. So I was famous for fuck all. All I wanted to do was earn as much money as possible for doing fuck all.

VICT: So that was the idea behind Punk? I thought Malcolm McLaren was behind it all.

'JOHN': Well if you accept that he borrowed or stole every good idea that was going, then yeah he was. He had this manifesto, see? - and it was drawn up when he was at art school in the nineteen sixties.
BE CHILDISH, BE IRRESPONSIBLE. BE DISRESPECTFUL. BE EVERYTHING THIS SOCIETY HATES.

SHANE: We tried to live up to those ideals. Because to us there was no future. You lived for the moment, lived for the pleasure. It was completely nihilistic.

'JOHN': We took drugs, we drank, we listened to fucking awful bands. We head-banged, we slam-danced, we dressed the way we wanted to dress.

SHANE: And that made us walking targets for Lads- and this was even before all the skinhead shit. Know what I mean?

VICT: Lads?

SHANE: The Cortina boys and the football fans, y'know? So we all wore dog-chains and knives and fucking things like that. And a lot of blood was spilled. And the women fought too, 'cause we didn't give a shit. And we were speeding all the time. And violence isn't so bad y'know. When you're in a fight, getting kicked, time stands still.

VICT: I must remember that, sweet pea.

SHANE: You don't feel the pain. That's the way we thought - and felt. There was no future, anyway....
Because...what was there to look forward to? There was massive recession. There were no jobs. The only way to get money was stealing. Or think of something. Make clothes, or get a job in a sex

shop. Or a record shop. Or join a band. Anybody who could play three chords and make a lot of noise was getting record deals. That's why there were so many bands, y'know. And it looked easy. Write a few fucking crappy songs, and get up there and do it, know what I mean? Well, anything was better than the nine to five grind. A fucking dead-end job, a wife, kids?...nah, not for us (*pause for refreshments*) After that we put our first band – well, first decent band – together. The Nipple Erectors. Shortened to The Nips for obvious reasons. Kcch...kcch...kcch.

Shane and Spider sing GABRIELLE – (c The Nips 1979)

Let's go down to the old West End
Where we used to go when you were my girlfriend
Take the 73 to the city
With you sitting there, looking so pretty
I'd take you where you could shake it down, now
To the rocking part of town

A shake it up
A shake it up
A shake it up
A shake it up Gab-Gab-Gab-Gabrielle
A shake it up Gab-Gab-Gab-Gabrielle
A shake it up Gab-Gab-Gab-Gabrielle

SHANE: By late '77 the punk scene was already dead. Which is when most people woke up to it. Everyone was into it by then, so it had to die really. I mean, it was supposed to be the cult of the individual – where was there to go? Anyway, the only pure punk band were the Pistols. And they were finished.

VICT: And The Clash

SHANE: (*sings*) Breaking rocks in the hot sun

I fought the law and the law won

I fought the law and the law won

Nah. To us early Punks The Clash were only bandwagon jumpers. It was always the Pistols. They didn't give a shit about anything.

VICT: Not even themselves?

SHANE: Especially themselves. You didn't allow yourself the arrogance of self respect. Cause you're scum. Just a piece of shit, yeah?

VICT: Why did you think that?

SPIDER: Cause that's what society thought you were, you know, scum. The police thought all young people were scum. The government thought all people were scum. They still do. Democracy doesn't exist. Nobody is ever gonna get a fair deal from protesting things or fighting wars. Life is shit. Get all you can out of it. And if it involves using violence, then use it. And like, don't think about tomorrow. Tomorrow is just getting old.

VICT: Sounds like the Angry Brigade manifesto, sweet pea.

SHANE: We were the real Angry Brigade.

VICT: What were you angry about? Your mother? Your father?

SHANE: What do you fucking mean? I love my father. Kcch...kcch...kcch. He was a hundred times worse than I am. A real bastard apparently. That's what attracted my mother to him. Women seem to have a thing about bastards.

VICT: Yes, sweet pea. Being a nice guy never gets you anywhere with women.

SHANE: She says he was an obnoxious turd, but he had a boyish charm.

VICT: There you go, then.

SHANE: She hoped he would grow up and be a responsible husband when they got married, but on the contrary he started drinking and gambling more than ever.

VICT: I can see now where you got it from.

SHANE: Got what from? I spent my time sitting outside pubs and betting shops. I was a happy child.

VICT: I thought you hated him.

SHANE: That was when I was growing up. Living with him. After I moved out we became the best of mates. We even became drinking buddies.*(pause for refreshments)* A lot of us fetched up in Burton Street, Kings Cross, know what I mean. The whole area was one big squat. And it was full of talent.

VICT: Girls?

SHANE: Nah. Real talent. Musicians, writers, photographers, designers, know what I mean.

Shane sings **DARK STREETS OF LONDON** © S MacGowan 1984

FALLING FROM GRACE by Tom O'Brien tomobrien2004@yahoo.co.uk

I like to walk in the summer breeze
Down Dalling Road by the dead old trees
And drink with my friends
In the Hammersmith Broadway
Dear dirty delightful old drunken old days

Then the winter came down and I loved it so dearly
The pubs and the bookies where you'd spend all your time
And the old men that were singing
"When The Roses Bloom Again"
And turn like the leaves
To a new summertime

*Now the winter comes down
I can't stand the chill
That comes to the streets around Christmas time
And I'm buggered to damnation
And I haven't got a penny
To wander the dark streets of London*

SHANE: Now, that's proper music...Kcch...Kcch...(pause for refreshments)

Look, there was no decent live music around when the Pogues started, right? People were doing all this World music shit and we just found it very boring and annoying. We wanted to go back beyond rock and roll, and we found it in our own backyard. Irish culture, Irish music was living and breathing here in England and all around the world, it just needed jazzing up. The Clancy Brothers had done it twenty years previously, the Dubliners ten years later, it was ripe for something new. There was no generation gap with the Pogues, we played to everybody not just teenagers. We were a bar band, and we played traditional stuff - but played it with a massive kick up the arse. We sounded like we had been ploughed up by a tractor and thrown on stage. It was fun. It was supposed to be enjoyed – by us as much as the audience. (pause)

I never intended to write so many songs. And I didn't want them to be about angst and how terrible it is lying in your bedroom taking heroin and all that shit. I didn't want them to be about how bad drinking was...

VICT: But they are...!

SHANE: Yeah, but not like you mean. I wanted to celebrate taking drugs and drinking and life. I like pubs and drugs and the seedy side of life. The fact that I wrote clever lyrics – or at least were perceived to be – meant fuck all. I didn't want to be the one everyone picked on to be a genius...

VICT: So you admit you are a genius....?

SHANE: How do I fucken know? How does anyone know? But when that shit happens the group harmony is going to break up. Because the rest of the group believed it, believed all that press shit, even though I didn't. And when they - the media cunts - eventually decided I was just a stupid drunk after all, they believed that too. Kcch...kcch...kcch. 'Cause they read it in the fucking papers.

VICT: When they sacked you?

SHANE: Yeah.

VICT: Did they really sack you?

SHANE: Did I jump or was I pushed? Kcch...kcch...kcch

VICT: Well, were you?

Shane doesn't answer, he is slumped at the bar again. Lights dim to signify change of scene.

INTERVAL

Scene 6

We hear THE WILD CAT OF KILKENNY again. Spider and Victoria dance energetically to it while Shane is slumped at the bar, dreaming again. The music fades.

SHANE: Frank.! Frank! What the fuck's going on?

FRANK MURRAY, the Pogues manager, marches on stage.

SHANE: The writing was on the wall as soon as you appeared Frank

FRANK: You couldn't stand the competition, you mean.

SHANE: Look, Frank, I am not saying you weren't a creative manager, you were, but you should have worked with me not against me.

FRANK: Against you, what do you mean?

SHANE: Well, like our dress code for instance. You wanted us all neat and tidy. Yeah, what people wanted to see was us in our suits, but looking like we had been rolled around inside a dustbin in them. Know what I mean.

FRANK: That was a democratic decision. It was what the others decided.

FALLING FROM GRACE by Tom O'Brien tomobrien2004@yahoo.co.uk

SHANE: What you decided. The others just went along with it. I should'a been left to decide it. As I did before you came along. My judgement was fine. You should'a just managed us. Not made all the fucking decisions. I mean, all that fucking touring. No wonder some of us cracked up. It was relentless.

FRANK: That's what bands do. They tour. What did you think it was – a holiday camp? What you are really complaining about is that I made you into a professional outfit.

SHANE: I was never fucking professional. I'm still not. I never will be. It hasn't done me any harm.

FRANK: That's a matter of opinion. If I hadn't of dragged you out of your comfort zone you'd still be playing in front of a few hundred pissheads at the Mean Fiddler in Harlesden or some other fucking dive out in the sticks. That's not what the rest of the band wanted. I made you global. Made you what you are today.

SHANE: What do you want, a fucking medal?

FRANK: You know what the real problem was? You couldn't stand that you weren't the top dog any more.

SHANE: That's a load of bollocks, Frank.

FRANK: Oh yeah. First Elvis, then me. You couldn't handle it.

SHANE: I'll tell you what I couldn't handle, yeah? The band's change of direction. We started life as an Irish band. That wasn't good enough for you. You wanted something more... I don't fucking know...you wanted the band in your own image. Who did you think you fucking were...JC?

FRANK: Are you saying Terry Woods and Philip Chevron weren't good additions?

SHANE: 'Course they were good. But it was your vision, Frank, not ours.

FRANK: Not yours you mean. Look, you were fucken standing still. No, you weren't even doing that. You were on the slippery slope down. You had gone as far as you could. Something needed to happen.

SHANE: Yeah. I was forced to give up playing the guitar to accommodate Philip.

FRANK: You gave it up yourself. Besides it was distracting from your singing.

SHANE: No it fucking wasn't.

FRANK: Yes, it fucking was. Everybody agreed. Ask any of them. Especially when you... *(he makes a motion with his hand to signify drinking)* had too much of this.

SHANE: That was your real gripe, Frank. You wanted to curb my drinking. You had no fucken chance. Kcch...kcch...kcch. Besides, I could always handle it.

FRANK: No you couldn't. There were times when you were that much from losing it. The only thing that saved you was that the audiences were usually drunker than you were, so they never noticed.

SHANE: Yeah, well I lost interest when you took over. Know what I mean?

FRANK: That's what I mean about being professional.

SHANE: I stayed, didn't I?

FRANK: In person yeah, but not in spirit. It would have been better for everybody if you had walked away.

SHANE: Better for who? Were the Pogues a better band without me?

FRANK: No. But they weren't much good with you towards the end. How many tabs of acid were you taking every day?

SHANE: Who cares? They kept me fucking going

FRANK: I'll tell you how many. Forty or fifty. You were so out of it most of the time you were an embarrassment. Who do you think was the weakest link, Shane?

SHANE: There was no weak link.

FRANK: There's an old saying – if you can't see the weakest link then it's probably yourself.

SHANE: Fuck off, Frank

FRANK: Nobody wanted to sack you- but you gave them no choice.

SHANE: It took you a long time, especially as I made it fucken easy for you.

FRANK: Yeah? Don't you think you should have been straight with the rest of the lads. You owed them that much. Instead you hung around for three years, making everybody else as miserable as yourself. If you wanted out you should'a walked away, Shane. That would have been the honourable way.

SHANE: They weren't miserable because of me. They were miserable because you had us constantly touring, Frank. And for whose benefit? Yours mostly as far as I can see. To me touring was just as bad as being in the loony bin.

Shane sings **BOYS FROM THE COUNTY HELL** (c Shane MacGowan 1984)

(Spider and Victoria dance together during the song)

FALLING FROM GRACE by Tom O'Brien tomobrien2004@yahoo.co.uk

SHANE: On the first day of March it was raining
It was raining worse than anything that I have ever seen
I drank ten pints of beer and I cursed all the people there
And I wish that all this raining would stop falling down on me

*And it's lend me ten pounds and I'll buy you a drink
And mother wake me early in the morning*

At the time I was working for a landlord
And he was the meanest bastard that you have ever seen
And to lose a single penny would grieve him awful sore
And he was a miserable bollocks and a bitch's bastard's whore

I recall we took care of him one Sunday
We got him out the back and we broke his fucking balls
And maybe that was dreaming and maybe that was real
But all I know is I left that place without a penny or fuck all

Lights change to signify passing of time.

Scene 7

Shane and spider sitting back to back. They are doing some of the dialogue from Once

Upon A Time In America. We hear the theme music in the background. Shane is

‘Noodles’, Spider is Pasquali

PASQ: Me, I’m Pasquali Mon aldi . That’s Cal, That’s Carmine. From Cincinnati.

NOOD: Noodles. But you know my name.

PASQ: Yeah, they told us you was tough. They told us you sold you buddies like Judas. But, they told us, you got balls, you got brains. And you go get yourself doped up. You tough like a baby in a cradle.

NOOD: My powers are under a cloud.

PASQ: Then don’t work you brain so much. I can hear all them little wheels going tick-tick-tick-tick-tick-tick. You tryin’ to think how you gonna get out’a here. You ain’t. You wanna say the Hail Mary.

VOICE: He’s a Jew.

PASQ: So was Judas, no? He hung himself.

VOICE: The Hail Mary is Catholic.

PASQ: So say the Hail Moses. Then you gonna burn.

NOODLES: A million dollars is going to burn with me.

They both revert to their own characters.

FALLING FROM GRACE by Tom O’Brien tomobrien2004@yahoo.co.uk

SPIDER: How many times have we watched that video now?

SHANE: I don't fucking know. About seventy times I reckon. Kcch...kcch...kcch.

SPIDER: You were obsessed by that film.

SHANE: I'm not the one who can recite the dialogue. Word for word.

SPIDER: Yeah, well you had to do something on tour. Otherwise you'd go fucking mad. *(pause)* So what's the burning question today?

SHANE: Is Bill Gates the new Jesus Christ?

SPIDER: Is he?

SHANE: If he isn't he should be.

SPIDER: Do you still sleep standing up?

SHANE: Yeah. Sometimes.

SPIDER: With your eyes open?

SHANE: Yeah. It's useful standing at the bar. Ten minutes here and there. That's why I'm still standing when all around me have conked out. Kcch...kcch...kcch

SPIDER: How did you know Hemmingway had a blow job?

SHANE: Wha...?

SPIDER: Before he blew his brains out. You said he had a blow job.

SHANE: It's common knowledge, Spider. Besides, it was early morning. That's the best time to have a blow job.

SPIDER: Words of wisdom from the Tipperary farm boy.

SHANE: I'll have you know that I have been called a romantic of the urban brutalist school.

SPIDER; You're definitely brutal sometimes, I'll concede that

SHANE: Kcch...kcch...kcch. What did you think of Uncle Brian?

SPIDER: Costello? He was alright.

SHANE: He was an annoying little cunt.

SPIDER: He gave us our big break.

SHANE: Yeah? We would'a made it without his help. He was only interested in getting into Cait's knickers. Know what I mean?

SPIDER; Yeah, but we did okay out of it.

Both 'watch' Cait in the background, playing her bass guitar.

SHANE: She did okay out of it. She made a beeline for Elvis. Like she did with anyone famous.

SPIDER: You included

SHANE: Fuck you Stacy.

SPIDER: No, fuck you MacGowan.

SHANE: Kcch...kcch...kcch. I might be uglier but I'm still more of a babe magnet.

SPIDER; Yeah, but where's it got you?

SHANE: Nowhere. I'm nowhere now and I'll be nowhere when I die. Know what I mean.

SPIDER: They'll put that on your gravestone. KNOW WHAT I MEAN. Is there life after the Pogues?

SHANE: Course there fucken is. Kcch...kcch...kcch. Now I have a band moulded round my personality, not the other way round.

SPIDER: Is that what it was all about? (*laughs*) We fell around the world, you and me.

SHANE: Yeah. I don't know how we got from A to B.

SPIDER: It ain't the same anymore.

SHANE: Course it ain't the same. We go back a long way, me and you, know what I mean. Squatting and dossing. Long before the Pogues.

SPIDER: We are the Pogues. You, me and Jem.

SHANE: It was you and Jem really. You even came up with the name. POGUE MA HONE. (*to audience*) Yez all know what Pogue Ma Hone means, don't yez? Come on, lets hear it then. KISS MY ARSE! KISS MY ARSE!!

Kcch...kcch...kcch.

Oh yeah, the BBC got the right hump with us. Cos, like, they were playin' all our stuff, every day, and talking about this great new band Pogue Ma Hone.

SPIDER: Until somebody rang them up and asked them if they knew what Pogue Ma Hone meant.

SHANE: And they didn't have a fucken clue. That was the end of us on the BBC. They banned all our songs. Well, they didn't ban them, they just didn't play them.

SPIDER: 'We can't have kiss my arse on the BBC'.

SHANE: And the more they didn't play us the more people went out and bought our records.

SPIDER: It was the making of the Pogues.

Shane and Spider sing **THE WAXIES DARGLE** (traditional) Spider plays the beer tray.

Says my aul' wan to your aul' wan
"Will ye go to the Waxies dargle?"
Says your aul' wan to my aul' wan,
"I haven't got a farthing.
I went up to Monto town
To see Uncle McArdle
But he wouldn't give me a half a crown
For to go to the Waxies dargle."

What will ya have?!
I'll have a pint!
I'll have a pint with you, Sir!
And if one of ya' doesn't order soon
We'll be chucked out of the boozer!

Lights change to signify passing of time

Scene 7

Shane is slumped by the bar, asleep. He is dreaming. Spotlight on SINEAD O'CONNOR, who is being interviewed.

REPORT: Miss O'Connor....

SINEAD: Sinead, please

REPORT: Sinead, why did you shop Shane to the police?

SINEAD: It was for his own good. I went round to his flat and found him in a coma in the middle of the sitting room floor.

REPORT: Was it crack or heroin? We hear he is a heroin addict.

SHANE: It wasn't fucking heroin. I don't do that stuff. Well, not any more. It was prescription tranquilisers, like. The doctor prescribes them and sometimes I forget how many I have taken, know what I mean. *(to Sinead)* I can't believe you called the fucking police, know what I mean. You did it for the publicity. You'd do anything for publicity.

SINEAD: That's not true. I did it to save your relationship with Victoria.

SHANE: What's that got to do with you?

SINEAD: Don't you care that that she's going to leave you?

SHANE; It's my fucking life. It's her life

SINEAD: I care about you Shane. We all care about you. You looked in a bad way that day.

SHANE; I was born looking that way. I'm a drinker, know what I mean, but I don't take drugs. Well not that shit. Look, if I took only ten percent of all that I'm supposed to have then I'd be permanently so high I could touch the Milky Way. We gonna do this song or what?

They both sing **HAUNTED** (By Shane MacGowan (1986))

Do you remember that sunny day
Somewhere in London
In the middle of nowhere
Didn't have nothing to do that day
Didn't want to do nothing anyway

You got a way of walking
You got a way of talking
And there's something about you
And now I know I never ever
Want to be without you

I want to be haunted by the ghost
of your precious love

SHANE: Beauty and beast. Kccch...kcch..kcch

Lights fade to signify end of scene

Scene 8

Shane is cracking up. We see him in his room with a paintbrush and some paint. The walls are daubed with lines of black, yellow and red paint. He is now applying blue streaks to the wall, as well as daubing his own face and arms.

SHANE: This fucking place – this hotel – is built on a Maori graveyard. Didn't anyone consider that when they were digging it up? Shh...can't you hear them? They're talking to me. I've got to paint this whole room blue...

VICT: Why blue, Shane.

SHANE: It's bleedin' obvious innit? Blue is a warrior's colour, and 'cos I'm an honorary Maori warrior I've got to be surrounded by the colour blue. They told me I must paint it blue....*(he paints furiously)*

VICT: Where do you think we are, Shane?

SHANE: We're in Wellington...no, no, we're in Christchurch. *(pause)* Aren't we?

VICT: New Zealand was months ago. We are in Dublin now.

SHANE: Nah, nah. I can feel the Maoris talking to me. Earlier, there was two of them, in that corner there, just watching me. But I know they wanted me to paint the room...

VICT: That's the speed, Shane. The speed, or the smack, or the drink. I know. I've been there too, remember. You talk to yourself in your head when you're speeding and you get turned into two people, who talk to each other in their head. You're killing yourself, can't you see that? You're killing me.

SHANE: We're all killing ourselves one way or another. Have a fucking drink, Victoria.

VICT: I don't want a fucking drink

SHANE: You're getting boring again. I don't like it when you're boring.

VICT: Like I was last night? *(pause)* Who was she this time?

SHANE: Who was who?

VICT: Answer me you fucking prick

SHANE: I didn't ask her name. She was nobody, alright? Miss nobody. I just found her in the bed. Kchh...Kchh..

VICT: Our bed, you bastard. She tunnelled her way in, I suppose. Why you....

Victoria loses it and begins beating Shane about the head with her handbag. Shane cowers on the floor.

VICT: You bastard, you scumbag...I can't do thus any more...

Both are silent for a while, recovering.

VICT: I like a quiet life sometimes you know. Like going to bed early and getting up late. You don't go to bed at all most nights. You're up and about doing all that...crazy stuff. You're heading for a mental breakdown.

SHANE: Well cart me away then. Cos the world is going to end soon. I've seen it, know what I mean?*(he lies down on the floor and daubs himself with paint)* DO YOU HEAR? THE WORLD IS GOING TO END. WE'RE ALL FINISHED.

Shane picks up a record and begins eating it.

VICT: Stop it! What are you doing?

SHANE: I'm hungry.

VICT: A record. *(she snatches the half eaten record from him)*

SHANE: Tastes like shite. Who is it by?

VICT: The Beach Boys.

SHANE: No wonder it tastes so fucken bad. Kcch...kcch...kcch

VICT: It's no good, I can't do this any more, Shane. I need a break. We need a break. From each other.

SHANE: Don't leave me again, Victoria. Look, I'll go into hospital. Get some treatment. Please? I can't do it on my own, know what I mean.

Shane sings **THE SONG WITH NO NAME** (c Shane MacGowan (1994)

Long years ago I fell in love
With a lady proud and fair
So passionate were she and I
We made fire in the air
I loved her more than life itself
She loved me just the same
And it broke my heart
To think we'd part if she ended the affair

But I was brutal, I was ignorant
I was cruel I was brash
I never gave a damn about
The beauty that I smashed
No sadist I, I took delight
In making my Love cry
Now I'd pray for a single kiss from her
To be lashed and crucified

Lights dim to signify end of scene

Scene 8

Shane has returned home after spending several weeks in hospital for treatment. He is drawing on a large sheet of paper on the floor.

VICT: What is that?

SHANE: It's a mandala. A mandala is a representation of your soul. It just has to be a circle with four points on it. When I drew mandalas every day I stopped dreaming. Stopped having nightmares. All you have got to do is draw mandalas, study the I Ching and follow the Tao. Go with the flow. There are still enlightened people who see dragons and Tao masters who see dragons. Tao masters can push a boulder over with their little fingers. Or jump off a cliff and fly on a cloud. But we all used to be able to do that, until we tried to explain it, and basically fucked everything up. *(pause)* For ages I drew mandalas, then at some point my heart broke. Towards the end of the Pogues, and then I didn't want to do anything anymore, except take drugs...

VICT: And now?

SHANE: I'm fine again. I drew mandalas the whole time I was in the hospital.

VICT: Well, you look much better than you did a few weeks ago. And Sinead, have you forgiven her?

SHANE: Sinead was right to shop me. I was heading for the loony bin again. Look, I was seventeen when I went in the loony bin, and I don't intend to repeat it

VICT: But you did repeat it.

SHANE: Never for six months again. It taught me how to deal with hospitals really, cause I never spend longer than a couple of weeks in one now. I felt institutionalised, know what I mean.

VICT; Not really, 'cos I've never been there

SHANE: Well, you're just not used to going anywhere on your own without asking someone's permission. I suppose boarding school might do it as well, or prison. (*pause*) Or being in a band.

VICT; Being in a band institutionalises you?

SHANE; Yeah, well being on tour does. Which is why I was always such a cunt on tour. I wouldn't take orders, like the rest of them. I refused to be institutionalised again. I know I've been having a bad trip lately, but a couple of weeks in St John of God's and I'm fine again. As you can see.

Shane sings **DIRTY OLD TOWN** (c Ewan MacColl)

I met my love by the gasworks wall
Dreamed a dream by the old canal
I kissed my girl by the factory wall
Dirty old town, dirty old town

Clouds are drifting across the moon
Cats are prowling on their beat
Springs a girl from the streets at night
Dirty old town, dirty old town

I heard a siren from the docks
Saw a train set the night on fire
I smelled the spring on the smokey wind
Dirty old town, dirty old town

I'm going to make me a big sharp axe
Shining steel tempered in the fire
I'll chop you down like an old dead tree
Dirty old town, dirty old town

Lights dim to signify change of scene

Scene 9

Shane and Victoria continue their recording

VICT: Would you say you were a poet, Shane?

SHANE: Nah. Van Morrison is a poet. And Patrick Kavanagh was a poet. A great poet. Probably Ireland's greatest.

My hills hoard the bright shillings of March

While the sun searches in every pocket.

FALLING FROM GRACE by Tom O'Brien tomobrien2004@yahoo.co.uk

These are my Alps and I have climbed the Matterhorn

With a sheaf of hay for three perishing calves

In the field under the Big Forth of Rocksavage...

Now, that's poetry. His long poem 'The Great Hunger' is one of the finest poems ever written.

VICT: I don't think I've come across it. It's about the Famine?

SHANE: Kcch...Kcch...The Great Hunger is about the hunger for love, food, land, life...everything, but mostly about the hunger for sex. About men like Paddy Maguire. The countryside was full of men like Paddy – and probably still is - old, wifeless and childless, battered by the ravages of time and the harshness of their existence. Like human scarecrows, content to plough and harrow their bit of stony soil, fantasize about women, and have the occasional wank on the headland. Dublin was blessed to have geniuses like Behan and Kavanagh around at the same time. Not that they appreciated the fact; they hated each others guts.

VICT; Sounds to me like you envy them.

SHANE: Course I do. I'd like to have been there too. Maybe some of their genius would have rubbed off.

VICT: I think it has sweet pea. Even from afar.

SHANE: Kcch...kcch...kcch. Y'know Patrick never said goodbye, only 'So long'.

Shane sing a verse of ON RAGLAN ROAD (c Patrick Kavanagh)

SHANE: On Raglan Road of an autumn day I saw her first and knew
That her dark hair would weave a snare that I might one day rue
I saw the danger and I passed along the enchanted way
And said let grief be a fallen leaf at the dawning of the day

Lights dim to signify change of scene

Scene 10

Shane sits at the bar singing KITTY, a traditional air.

Oh Kitty my darling remember
That the doom will be mine if I stay

'Tis far better to part though it's hard to
Than to rot in their prison away
'Tis far better to part though it's hard to
Than to rot in their prison away.

So softly he then kissed her pale lips
T'was the same story over and ore
Hush mo mhuirnin the police are watching
And you know that I must go ashore
Hush my mhuirnin the police are watching
And you know that I must go ashore

In a day I'll be over the mountain
There'll be time enough left for to cry
So goodnight and God guard you forever
And write to me wont you goodbye
So goodnight and God guard you forever
And write to me won't you goodbye

SHANE: My mother sang that song to me all the time when I was little. I'd be sitting on her knee, know what I mean?

VICT: Would you say you were deprived as a child?

SHANE: What'dya mean deprived. My parents loved me.

VICT: Yeah, but they left you didn't they? For six years. You were reared by your grandparents and your aunts and uncles.

SHANE: They didn't have a choice. There was no fucking jobs in Tipperary in the fifties and sixties, So they had to go to England to find work. But I wasn't deprived.

VICT: You didn't mind then?

SHANE: Of course I fucking minded. But I got over it. It's called life. And despite everything the Pogues couldn't have happened anywhere else but London.

VICT: What about Ireland?

SHANE: Definitely not Ireland. We are rooted in London-Irish mythology. The songs are about you, me, London, life. Take a song like The Old Main Drag – it's about a rent-boy.

VICT: About you?

SHANE: Some people said I was a rent boy, know what I mean, as if it was some fucken fantastic revelation.

VICT: And were you?

SHANE: Well, put it this way, if I didn't go to school I certainly met the scholars. Kcch...kcch...kcch.

VICT: That's no answer.

SHANE: Look at me. Would you pay to rent me – and not a tooth in me fucken head?

VICT: You had lovely teeth when you were young.

SHANE: Yeah, I did, didn't I? Kcch...kcch...kcch. When we lived in the squat around Kings Cross we used to go to the station late at night lookin' for the mysterys. D'y'know what the mysterys are?

VICT: No.

SHANE: Young girls. Just arrived on the train, from up north , like. Probably done a runner from home. They had nowhere to stay and were planning to sleep on the station. We'd buy them a cup of tea and offer them a bed for the night. Not many declined. You could bet that most of them would be on the game before the week was out. It was the same with young guys.

VICT: Rent-boys?

SHANE: Yeah. Well they had to eat. Or get a fix. Most of them were druggies, and they saw it as easy money, know what I mean. They all thought London was the holy grail. Like bees around a honey pot they were, only it turned out to be more like a poisoned chalice. *(he strums his guitar)* So I wrote a song about it

Shane sings THE OLD MAIN DRAG (c) Shane MacGowan

When I first came to London I was only sixteen
With a fiver in my pocket and my ole dancing bag
I went down to the dilly to check out the scene
And I soon ended up on the old main drag

There the he-males and the she-males paraded in style
And the old man with the money would flash you a smile
In the dark of an alley you'd work for a five
For a swift one off the wrist down on the old main drag

In the cold winter nights the old town it was chill
But there were boys in the cafes who'd give you cheap pills
If you didn't have the money you'd cajole or you'd beg
There was always lots of tuinol on the old main drag

Lights change to signify passing of time.

Scene 11

Shane and Victoria drinking at the bar. We hear WILD CATS OF KILKENNY in the background again

VICT: You told me Matt Dillon loved that song

SHANE: Did I?

VICT: Yeah. You said ‘Matt Dillon told me he loves Wild Cats of Kilkenny’.

MATT DILLON appears

‘MATT’: I really dig that song, man. I know all the words to it.

SHANE: Matt, it has no fucking words.

‘MATT’: Whatever. You know I really dig you guys. I really dig your shit. My parents dig your shit. My whole family dig your shit. I was brought up on that shit. The Clancy Brothers, the Dubliners and now the Pogues, I dig that shit.

SHANE: Well, we dig your shit too, Matt.

‘MATT’: I ‘m glad you dig my shit, guys, ‘cos I really dig your shit.

SHANE: That’s good Matt. We all dig each other’s shit

MATT fades.

VICT: We’ve been through it, sweet pea. We’ve had the affairs. We’ve had the breakups. We’ve had the nervous breakdowns. But with me it didn’t last – the connection was never strong enough with anybody else...

SHANE: Not even Van?

VICT: Especially not Van. So it must be that I genuinely like you more than anybody else.

SHANE: I would never pretend to understand you Victoria – or if I did understand you, I probably wouldn’t love you, you know

VICT: That’s very re-assuring to know, sweet pea.

SHANE: I was going to talk about marriage.

VICT: Are you asking me?

SHANE: I asked you before- you always said no.

VICT: Can you blame me!

SHANE: No, I suppose not. But I was thinking of my mother. Something she said to me one night when she was drunk. Well, we both were. Kcch...kcch...kcch. She said to me – get your arse in gear. You’re going to do the things that I never got the opportunity to do. You’re special and you’re going to be famous and I am going to make sure you are.

VICT; She was right.

SHANE; And she drummed into me not to get married. Well, not too hastily anyway. 'Don't get married until you've made enough money to be comfortable for the rest of your life. And don't marry someone weak, marry someone strong. And don't marry a stupid cow or a snob. And don't marry anybody who will take second best. And put yourself first. Always put yourself first'.

VICT: Nothing like widening your options.

SHANE: Maybe she was a little ...unrealistic. Kcch...kcch...kcch. And don't have children, she said.

VICT: You don't like children?

SHANE: No.

VICT: Why not?

SHANE: I didn't like being one. I didn't like the ones I met when I was one. And I still don't like them. They give me the creeps.

VICT: Why do you say that?

SHANE: Because they're such cruel, horrible little bastards, know what I mean. They have no fucking shame.

VICT: So you wouldn't like it if we had children?

SHANE: Jesus, you're not pregnant?

VICT: Of course not. I was just wondering if we had what would happen, that's all.

SHANE: You could look after them. Kcch...kcch...kcch.

VICT: I have enough problems looking after you. That's the end of a family then. *(pause)* Okay, I will marry you – if you can get Hello to pay.

SHANE: How much do you think we're worth?

VICT: I hear they pay up to five hundred grand.

SHANE: We'll need to round up a lot of celebrities for that amount of dosh. Kcch...kcch...kcch.

VICT; We know lots. Bono, Sir Bob, Matt, Van...

SHANE: Van...! Not bloody likely...

VICT: Okay. Cross him off then

SHANE: Sinead...

VICT: Elvis...

SHANE: Presley?

VICT: Costello...

SHANE: No fucken way...

Lights change to signify change of scene.

Scene 12

Shane at the table, writing.

SHANE: In my early hellborn nightmares in London I dreamed I was chopping up young full-breasted girls in a butcher's shop. They giggled and talked girly talk as I hacked off their arms and legs and sold them as meat to punters. Afterwards, in the back yard I met two male lions, then some very tall ebony ghouls in white monks robes. They talked to me in telepathic language that hit my subconscious, my heart and my soul but bypassed my front mind. My pleasant dreams were in colour; a black-haired schoolgirl in a blue gansy walking down a winding path in West Cork. Years later I met her in the Royal Oak in Finchley Road. She was sixteen now and her hair was long, and she was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen. She was staring at me. We stayed staring at each other for three years. By that time I realised I was completely and utterly in love with her. A friend got me to kiss her on her 19th birthday, and that was that. It started with a kiss – the thunderbolt as the Sicilians call it. I dropped my guard – and about seven women I was juggling like a wanker – and she dropped her boyfriend, and we had a mad passionate romance. All these years later I love her more than ever. I owe her my health, sanity and happiness – my blood still boils when I even think about her, which is most of the time. I hate to see her sad, love to see her happy- drinking, eating, laughing and talking. She's heaven to dance with, talk with and sleep with. God bless the day I found her, and I feel like the luckiest fucker alive.

Shane finishes writing, folds the letter then places it in his pocket. He sings RAINY

NIGHT IN SOHO (© Shane MacGowan 1991)

SHANE: I've been loving you a long time
Down all the years, down all the days
And I've cried for all your troubles
Smiled at your funny little ways
We watched our friends grow up together
And we saw them as they fell

Some of them fell into Heaven
Some of them fell into Hell

I took shelter from a shower
And I stepped into your arms
On a rainy night in Soho
The wind was whistling all its charms
I sang you all my sorrows
You told me all your joys
Whatever happened to that old song
To all those little girls and boys

Sometimes I wake up in the morning
The gingerlady by my bed
Covered in a cloak of silence
I hear you in my head
I'm not singing for the future
I'm not dreaming of the past
I'm not talking of the first time
I never think about the last

Now the song is nearly over
We may never find out what it means
Still there's a light I hold before me
You're the measure of my dreams
The measure of my dreams

Towards the end Shane and Victoria dance. Shane takes the letter from his pocket and slips it into Victoria's bag. The music fades...

Curtain

End

(c) Tom O'Brien

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