THE DEAD

an adaptation of the story by James Joyce

a play in one act



by

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CHARACTERS

Gabriel Conroy: A college professor in his late 30's.
Gretta Conroy: His wife, a woman in her early 30's.
Aunt Julia: Gabriel's aunt, a woman in her late 60's.
Aunt Kate: Gabriel's aunt, a woman in her early 70's.
Molly Ivors : A woman in her late 30's.

PLACE

Dublin

TIME

Late 19th Century

THE SCENE: ***Aunt Julia*** *and* ***Aunt Kate*** *are in a bedroom converted as a cloak room for the annual Christmas dinner-dance. There is a bed in the background on which there are some coats and an open closet. The room is starkly furnished except for a few decorations to indicate that the action takes place during the Christmas season, sometime between New Year's Day and Twelfth Night (January 6th).There is a large window on one side of the stage; on the other side is a door leading to a staircase. In the background someone is playing a waltz on a piano; music is heard throughout the play where necessary to give the effect of a festive occasion. The action takes place in Dublin, Ireland, during 1902.*

AT RISE: ***Aunt Julia****, dressed in a modest evening gown, is walking nervously back and forth, while* ***Aunt Kate****, dressed in a similarly modest evening gown, of a contrasting shade, stands near the doorway, occasionally peering out on the staircase. Several women's coats are spread on the bed.*

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Aunt Julia: Stop fretting. You know we can rely on Gabriel

Aunt Julia: But where is he? I'm depending on him again this year to carve the goose, give a speech and take care of.

Aunt Kate: Any guests who have had too much to drink.

Aunt Julia: Like Freddy Malins. I saw him earlier. He could hardly manage to keep his balance. And with his mother here, too.

Aunt Kate: She told me he promised to stay sober. She said he had taken the pledge.

Aunt Julia: Taken the pledge, indeed. He's taken the pledge ten times as far as I know and he's never stuck to it. Once a drunkard always a drunkard, I say.

Aunt Kate: You should be more understanding, Julia. After all, Freddy has his good points. He's so warm and open-hearted.

Aunt Julia: I suppose so. I'm getting so nervous about Gabriel I doubt if I know what I am saying.

Aunt Kate: There's nothing to worry about, dear. The snow has probably delayed him.

(From the outside a door can be heard opening and closing and footsteps can be heard on the staircase. ***Gretta****,* ***Gabriel's*** *wife, enters. She is slim and attractive She wears a heavy cloak.)*

Aunt Julia: Thank God, you're here. I was so worried about you. But where's Gabriel?

Gretta: He's downstairs with Lily in the pantry. Or should I call it the men's cloak room?

Aunt Julia: Whatever you like, dear. We fixed this bedroom up for the ladies.

Gretta: How convenient. I stopped for a moment and spoke to Mrs. Malins.

Aunt Kate: Did she look worried?

Gretta: (*Laughing*.) A little bit. Freddy must be up to his old tricks.

Aunt Kate: He can't stay away from the liquor.

Gretta: Don't worry about, Freddy. Gabriel will take care of him.

Aunt Kate: (*Addressing* ***Aunt Julia***.) Just the way he did last year.

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Aunt Julia: It's a comfort to have Gabriel here. A man is so much better at handling . . .
Aunt Kate: Emergencies and drunkards.

*(**Gabriel** pops his head through the doorway and enters. Unlike the other characters who have an Irish lilt in their pronunciation, **Gabriel** speaks in the voice of an upper-class Englishman, until the last scene when, under the stress of emotion, his voice takes on an Irish lilt. He is well-dressed.)*

Gabriel: May I come in? Or is this room off limits to men?

(Both aunts laugh.)

Aunts Julia and Kate: (*In unison*.) Of course, you may come in *(Both aunts kiss him on the cheek. **Gretta** begins to take her coat off.)*
Gabriel: Here, let me help you. (He helps Gretta with her coat.)
Gretta: (*Smiling and looking pleased*.) Thank you, dear.

*(**Gretta** takes the coat to the bed.)*

Aunt Julia: And how is my favorite nephew?
Gabriel: Just fine. And happy New Year to you, one and all
Aunt Julia: We were so worried. What took you so long?
Gabriel: (*Pointing to **Gretta** who has just hung up her coat*) My wife here took three mortal hours to dress herself.
Aunt Kate: Then, it was worth it. Gretta looks so beautiful.
Gabriel: She does, indeed, look beautiful.
Gretta: (*Laughing*) Thank you, dear, for the compliment.
Aunt Kate: And you, Gabriel, look so well.
Aunt Julia: (*Tearfully*) How proud your mother would have been of you. If only she could have lived to see you a full college professor.
Gretta: And a book reviewer, too.
Gabriel: (*With false modesty*.) Oh, that's overdoing it, Gretta. A short review once a week in *The Daily Express* is nothing to be proud of.

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Aunt Julia: Still and all, it's an achievement many people are not capable of. And your lovely home in Monkstown. Such an elegant neighborhood.

Gretta: Gabriel has so much to be proud of and be happy about, hasn't he?

Gabriel: I should be happy I know, but I don't seem to possess a happy nature.

Gretta: You read too many books. They make you brood.

Gabriel: (*Laughingly*) Perhaps you're right. A lack of happiness is the price I pay for intelligence.

Gretta: You're not serious, are you? That comment would be perfect in one of your book reviews.

Gabriel: Maybe I was speaking only for effect.

Gretta: My grandmother always told me it's better to speak from the heart.

Gabriel: **(***Annoyed and somewhat condescending*) I know. Your grandmother was famous for her country wisdom.

Aunt Julia: (*Wishing to change the topic*) Gretta tells me that you're not going to take a cab back to Monkstown tonight.

Gabriel: (*Turning to his wife*) No, we had quite enough of that last year, hadn't we? Don't you remember, Aunt Kate, what a cold Gretta got out of it? Cab windows rattling all the way and the east wind blowing in. Very jolly it was. Gretta caught a dreadful cold.

Aunt Julia: Quite right, Gabriel. You can't be too careful.

Gretta: That's why we're staying at a hotel tonight.

Gabriel: I've taken a room in the Gresham.

Aunt Kate: Oh, the Gresham, that's an elegant hotel.

Aunt Julia: The best in Dublin.

Gabriel: Nothing but the best for Gretta. And tonight I'm looking forward to the party and our stay in town. It will be like a miniature vacation, away from the usual routine - household chores, the children, and preparing lectures for my classes.

Gretta: And grading student papers.

Gabriel: Free. That's how I feel - completely free and I intend to enjoy every moment of my new found freedom, no matter what happens.

Gretta: Let's hope your mood doesn't change.

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Gabriel: I don't see how it can when I'm in the presence of three such charming ladies. (*Turns to his aunts and bows*.) And the prospect of staying overnight at the Gresham.

Aunt Julia: Staying at the Gresham is very wise, Gabriel. What about the children, Gretta,? You're not anxious about them?

Gretta: Oh, not for one night. Besides, Bessie will look after them.

Aunt Julia: What a comfort it is to have a servant like that, one you can depend on. There's that Lily of ours. I'm sure I don't know what's come over her lately. She's not the girl she was at all.

Gabriel: I meant to tell you that Lily was a little short with me. She almost snapped my head off.

Aunt Julia: Why, what did she say?

Gabriel: I asked her if she was still going to school. "Oh, no sir," she answered. "I'm done schooling this year and more" And then I replied, "I suppose we'll be going to your wedding one of these fine days with your young man." And she answered me with great bitterness. "The men that is now is only all palaver and what they can get out of you."

Aunt Julia: That's strange. Lily's never given back answers. That's one thing I'll not take from a servant. I'll speak to her about it, Gabriel.

Gretta: Oh, Aunt Julia, don't make such a fuss. Lily's been such a good girl all these years. It would be petty to say anything.

Gabriel: (*Annoyed*) Are you calling me petty?

Gretta: Not precisely, but, admit it, you don't understand young girls. Lily's at that age when her head is filled with romantic notions and dreams about the ideal man. In time, she'll learn there is no such thing.

Gabriel: (*Laughing*) A fine thing to say to your husband.

Gretta: You're always taking everything personally. I'm talking about young girls in general. They're sensitive when you question them about romance and marriage. I know about young girls. I was young once.

Gabriel: And still are and still lovely. I suppose you're right about Lily.

Aunt Julia: (*Wishing to change the subject*) And how heavily was the snow coming down?

Gabriel: Fairly heavily, and the papers are predicting that it will be the heaviest snowfall in years. Rotten weather, I'd call it.

Aunt Kate: But what would Christmas be without snow? I love snow this time of year. It makes everything look like a picture postcard.

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Gabriel: Then you agree with Gretta. She'd walk home in the snow if she were let. No matter how long she's lived in Dublin, she's still a country girl.

Gretta: Pay him no mind, Aunt Kate. He's really an awful bother and a worry wart about health. He's just so fussy about me and the children. Sometimes I think it's his way of controlling us. He makes Tom wear green shades for his eyes at night and has him on a course of weight training with dumbbells. And as for Eva he forces her--literally forces her--to eat hot porridge every morning and the poor child simply hates the sight of it. Oh, but you'll never guess what he makes me wear now?

Aunt Kate and **Aunt Julia:** (*In unison*) Whatever can it be ?

Gretta: Galoshes. That's the latest. Whenever it's wet underfoot, I must put on my galoshes. Tonight even he wanted me to put them on, but I wouldn't. The next thing he will buy me is a diving suit.

Aunt Julia: And what are galoshes, Gabriel?

Aunt Kate: Galoshes, Julia, goodness me, don't you know what galoshes are? You wear them over your . . .over your boots, don't you, Gretta?

Gretta: Yes, we both have a pair now. Gabriel says their the latest rage in Paris and that everyone wears them on the Continent.

Aunt Julia: (Shocked) On the Continent.

*(**Miss Ivors** enters. She is about **Gabriel**'s age and has a scholarly appearance.)*

Miss Ivors: Happy New Year everyone. What's this about the Continent?

Gabriel: (*Pompously*) Galoshes. It's the latest rage in Paris, Molly.

Miss Ivors: (*Angrily*) Paris? The Continent? That's the trouble with us Irish today. We look elsewhere to solve our problems. How will Ireland every be independent if we copy what foreigners do?

Gabriel: I see you're in a mood to quarrel, Molly, and to propagandize. We were merely talking about galoshes and you read something sinister into galoshes and . . .

Aunt Julia: (*Trying to pacify them*) It's Christmas. Let's not discuss political matters. Besides, Miss Ivors, you and Gabriel have so much in common--after all, you're both teachers. Now all of you-- (*Turning to her guests*) let's join the other guests. Have some punch and join in the dancing. And, don't forget, Gabriel. See what Freddy Malins is up to.

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*(**Aunt Kate**, **Julia**, and **Gretta** begin to leave.)*

Miss Ivors: We'll come in shortly. I want to talk shop with Gabriel for a few minutes about a new reading curriculum.

*(The others leave **Miss Ivors** and **Gabriel** alone on stage.)*

Miss Ivors: Good. Now that we're alone, we can talk.
Gabriel: About what?
Miss Ivors: I have a bone to pick with you. Who is G. C.? The mysterious book reviewer who signs his articles only with his initials.
Gabriel: I must confess, Molly, you found me out. I am that very G. C.
Miss Ivors: Now, aren't you ashamed of yourself?
Gabriel: Why should I be ashamed of myself?
Miss Ivors: Well, I'm ashamed of you. To write for a rag like *The Daily Express*. Everyone knows that paper is against independence for Ireland. It takes the unionist line that Ireland and England should always stay united.
Gabriel: Now, Molly, don't be so hard on me. I review books once a week only on Wednesdays. Books on literature, not politics.
Miss Ivors: Don't tell me that literature is above politics.
Gabriel: Let's not quarrel. There has never been anything political in my reviews. My last review was on a volume of Robert Browning's poems.
Miss Ivors: And it was a fine review. Nevertheless, by appearing in that paper, you indirectly support its political position. Gabriel, you're a traitor.
Gabriel: (*Visibly taken aback*) Traitor? You're going too far.
Miss Ivors: (*In a conciliatory manner*) I was only joking. But, to be serious, will you come for an excursion to the Aran Isles this summer? We're going to stay there for the whole month. It will be delightful out in the Atlantic. You really ought to come. It would be splendid for Gretta too if she'd come. She's from near there, from Connacht, isn't she?
Gabriel: Her people are.
Miss Ivors: But you will come, won't you?
Gabriel: The fact is I have already arranged to go . . .
Miss Ivors: Go where?

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Gabriel: You know every year I arrange to go for a cycling tour with some fellows and so . . .

Miss Ivors: But where do you go?

Gabriel: Usually to France or Belgium or perhaps Germany.

Miss Ivors: And why do you go to France and Belgium instead of visiting your own country?

Gabriel: Partly to keep in touch with the languages and partly for a change.

Miss Ivors: And haven't you your own language to keep in touch with?

Gabriel: Do you mean Gaelic?

Miss Ivors: No, not Gaelic. We patriots call our language Irish.

Gabriel: If it comes to that, Irish is not my language.

Miss Ivors: English for the English and Irish for the Irish, that's what we believe.

Gabriel: There you go turning everything into politics.**Miss Ivors:** It's people like you that make me do it. You know nothing of your own people—your own country.

Gabriel: To tell the truth, I'm sick of my own country, sick of it.

Miss Ivors: How can you say that? And why are you sick of Ireland? And if you're that fed up with your own country, why stay here? Why don't you live in France, Belgium, or Germany? (***Gabriel*** *remains silent*.) See there You've no answer. Admit it, Gabriel, you're a traitor.

Gabriel: Am I all that bad?

Miss Ivors: Almost. Do you feel above the crowd, is that it? It doesn't have to be that way. My education is as good as yours and I don't feel apart from the masses, I want all my Irish brothers and sisters to live as free individuals in an Ireland that has been liberated from the English.

Gabriel: There you go again on your soap box.

Miss Ivors: I can't help it. I believe in Irish nationalism. We all have to support our community and not be like the dead--inactive and uninvolved. We all must participate in the welfare of our country.

Gabriel: Why?

Miss Ivors: We owe it to mankind.

Gabriel: Mankind? But what do I owe to myself?

Miss Ivors: That's your problem--selfishness--thinking only of yourself as if you were not part of Ireland. There's no use talking to you. (*Pause*.) But I still look forward to your after dinner speech.

Gabriel: (*Laughing out of frustration*.) I'm sure you do. I'll try to meet your

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expectations. And perhaps we can dance later--a waltz or a quadrille?

Miss Ivors: (*Conciliatory*.) Perhaps. No hard feelings?

Gabriel: (*Bitterly*) No hard feelings.

Miss Ivors: All right. I'll forgive you if you just think about coming with us to Connacht. Let's shake hands on it, then.

(After they both shake hands, ***Miss Ivors*** *exits and* ***Gabriel*** *alone on stage takes a paper from his pocket that contains some headings and notes for his after-dinner speech. He begins to look at the paper when* ***Gretta*** *enters.)*

Gretta: There you are. Everyone's been asking for you.

Gabriel: You mean **Aunt Julia** and **Aunt Kate**. They want to know where their errand boy is, their paterfamilias, their bouncer, their orator and the carver of the goose. It's the same every year. (*He throws up his hands*.) I'm like a dependable servant.

Gretta: What happened to your resolution to stay in a good mood?

Gabriel: The truth, the plain reality of my situation. Here I am again at the beck and call of my aunts. I feel like a hired entertainer called on to perform before the vulgarians.

Gretta: How can you say that? Your aunts depend on you; they love you. By the way, did you have words with Molly? I saw her on the staircase and she seemed perturbed.

Gabriel: No words. Why? Did she say so? There were no words. Only she wanted me to go for a trip to the west of Ireland and I said I wouldn't.

Gretta: (*Clapping her hands excitedly*) Oh, do let's go, Gabriel. I'd love to see Galway and Connacht again. I haven't been there in years. Galway. It brings back such pleasant memories of my grandmother. And your mother.

Gabriel: My mother? Whatever are you talking about?

Gretta: She called me country cute.

Gabriel: (Annoyed) That was only at the beginning of our marriage.

Gretta: I always felt she thought I wasn't good enough for you. After all, you were the son of T. J. Conroy, a member of the Dublin Port and Docks Board. And what was I? A poor country girl having the gall to marry you, with a college degree and a brother who's a curate in a wealthy parish

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Gabriel: What brought this on? Mother's been dead . . .

Gretta: And she did thank me for nursing her in her last illness. Still, at times I feel that maybe she was right, that you married beneath you.

Gabriel: I thought those feelings were dead and buried by now.

Gretta: Most of the time. But they still haunt me at times. Nothing ever is completely dead and buried. Please, Gabriel, can't we go with Molly this summer?

Gabriel: (*Coldly*) You can go if you like.

Gretta: (*Resigned*) There's a nice husband for you.

Gabriel: I've made my plans for the summer and that's final. (He holds out the paper in front of him.) And now I have to make up my mind about tonight's speech. (*and then, morosely*) I should call it "A Dance of Death" or simply a "Funeral Oration."

Gretta: Whatever do you mean, Gabriel?

Gabriel: It's a joke.

Gretta: Then it's a private one.

Gabriel: I just meant that so many of the guests are so old that this may be the last occasion for them to be together before they expire.

Gretta: How morbid to think that way.

Gabriel: But true. Now to return to the speech. I've got a few ideas. Hospitality--that unsung virtue of the Irish even in this thought-tormented age. I want to mention the three Graces of course. . .

Gretta: Of course.

Gabriel: And—I don't know whether to include a quotation from Browning--Robert Browning. He's a difficult poet. Perhaps a familiar quotation from Shakespeare would be better.

Gretta: Whatever you feel is appropriate would do.

Gabriel: On the other hand, if I use Browning, people might think I was flouting my superior education and I wouldn't like to feel ridiculous. People might think I was the eternal professor lecturing his recalcitrant students. No, I'll stick with Shakespeare. After all, he appealed to the groundlings. And tonight, I have to address the vulgarians.

Gretta: How can you say that? And where is your Christmas spirit?

Gabriel: Gone, I'm afraid. These parties are a chore for me.

Gretta: And I always thought you enjoyed them.

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Gabriel: I pretend to. But how can I enjoy myself when I have so little in common with the other guests? They're really not my class of people.

Gretta: Like me?

Gabriel: Don't be silly. But to return to my speech, should I include the Browning quotation?

Gretta: Whatever you include, your aunts will be pleased. They . .

Gabriel: Are ignorant old ladies.

Gretta: How can you be so cruel?

Gabriel: It's the truth. Aunt Kate and **Aunt Julia** have never been anywhere. And what have they done? Taught voice and piano all these years in Dublin. They're mired in the past. And where have they gone and what do they know about the world at large?

Gretta: (*Laughing*) But they do know about their own little world and that's what counts. And now I'm afraid your aunts want you to look after Freddy Malins. They fear he might make a disturbance.

Gabriel: What? Is he tipsy again? Poor old Freddy. He takes the pledge annually when his mother comes for her Christmas visit and every year he breaks his pledge.

Gretta: And his mother is visibly on edge. She wouldn't want a scene. I spoke to her briefly before.

Gabriel: Then you were lucky. Last year I sat next to her and she went on and on interminably about her daughter's lovely house in Glasgow and the room they had for her facing the garden and then she went on ad infinitum about her son-in-law and what an excellent fisherman he was and how when they were on vacation he caught a huge fish and how they cooked it at the inn where they were staying. Oh, how garrulous old people are.

*(From the staircase **Aunt Julia** calls up.)*

Aunt Julia: Gabriel, we're ready to eat.

*(**Gabriel** and **Gretta** exit. Lights dim Briefly, we hear the sound of chatter and laughter from below as it rises and falls. It is approximately two hours later. All of the coats, except **Gretta**'s are gone from the bed. **Aunt Kate** and **Gabriel** are on stage.)*

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Aunt Kate: Oh, the party passed so quickly that I can hardly believe it.

Gabriel: Everyone had a good time as usual. You and Aunt Julia always give such grand parties.

Aunt Kate: With your help, of course. You were wonderful tonight, Gabriel. You did a fine job of carving the goose and your speech was excellent and so heart-felt.

Gabriel: (*Pleased in spite of himself*) Did you really enjoy it? You didn't think it was too sentimental or too difficult to follow, did you?

Aunt Kate: Not at all. I especially enjoyed the part about the past.

Gabriel: (*Flushed with praise*) Do you mean the section that started: "There are always in gatherings such as this sadder thoughts that will recur to our minds: thoughts of the past, of youth, of changes, of absent faces that we miss here tonight."

Aunt Kate: Yes, that's the passage. I thought of your mother and all the others who have passed away. It brought tears to my eyes. Can you remember the rest?

Gabriel: "Our path through life is strewn with many such sad memories: and were we to brood upon them always we could not find the heart to go on bravely with our work among the living. We have all of us living duties and living affections which claim, and rightly claim, our strenuous endeavors."

Aunt Kate: Those are precisely my thoughts. In spite of everything, the living must take care of the living.

Gabriel: Next year I promise to give an even better speech.

Aunt Kate: Next year? Who knows where I'll be next year. Don't forget I'm an old woman and . . .

Gabriel: The wine has made you melancholy.

Aunt Kate: Melancholy and realistic. Remember we've been giving these parties for more than thirty years.

Gabriel: Whatever you say, you played the piano beautifully tonight--with such passion and feeling like a young maiden.

Aunt Kate: Flattery, but thank you anyway. And how did you manage to keep Freddy Malins on his good behavior? **Aunt Julia** was so anxious about him earlier this evening.

Gabriel: It wasn't too difficult. I took him to the washroom and had him douse his face with cold water. That seemed to help him sober up.

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Aunt Kate: I think I just heard Julia saying farewell to Freddy and his mother. I hate to imagine what would have happened to Freddy if you had not come. You're a godsend. Thank you again for all your help. Julia and I could never have managed without you. You did a fine job. (*She takes out her handkerchief*.) Your mother—dear Ellen-- would have been so proud. And your speech...you're a born orator.

Gabriel: (*Falsely modest*) It was nothing, nothing at all.

Aunt Kate: That's very modest of you.

Gabriel: Then I inherit that characteristic from you. From the modest way you handled your accolades tonight. You sang beautifully. Everyone applauded so vigorously and Freddy Malins was so enthusiastic in his praise.

Aunt Kate: Freddy? He was still a wee bit tipsy, wasn't he?

Gabriel: Tipsy or not--your singing was magnificent.

Aunt Kate: Thirty years ago I hadn't a bad voice as voices go. And where is Gretta? I saw her in the hallway a moment ago. She said she'd be up shortly.

(From the hallway a melancholy song can be faintly heard being played softly on a piano.)

Gabriel: Who can that be singing?

Aunt Kate: I believe it's Bartell D'Arcy. That's strange. We asked him earlier in the evening to honor us with a song, but he refused. He said he had a bad cold. But listen, he has such a lovely voice, a pure Irish tenor.

*(**Aunt Kate** opens the door and a male voice can be heard more distinctly.)*

Voice: (*From the hallway the lyric can be heard*"
" Oh, the rain falls on my heavy locks
And the dew wets my skin,
My babe lies cold...."

*(**Aunt Kate** partially closes the door and the words fade away but the music is faintly heard.)*

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Gabriel (*Sticking his head into the hallway momentarily*) Gretta's on the staircase. She's listening so intently to the music that she seems bewitched. Oh, my God, she looks beautiful--completely transformed.

Aunt Kate: It's a simple folk tune, isn't it?

Gabriel: Yes, it is and so sad, almost like a dirge. (*Laughing to himself.)*

Aunt Kate: What is it?

Gabriel: If I told you, you might laugh . . .

Aunt Kate: Laugh about what?

Gabriel: About what I felt when I just looked at Gretta. I felt that I was young again and that Gretta and I were about to leave for our honeymoon and all the years of our married life seemed to have vanished. We were setting out again on a romantic journey. I can't account for my feelings and even now I have a heightened sense of well-being. It may be a result of the wine and . . .

Aunt Kate: the party ...And the pleasant festivities. Whatever the cause, keep up in the same mood. After all, you and Gretta have the evening and night off. And a room at the Gresham.

*(**Gretta** enters.)*

Gretta I'm sorry, Gabriel. Did I keep you waiting?

Gabriel: (Approaching Gretta and patting her): Then, it was worth the wait. You look radiant

.

*(He tries to kiss her but she turns her face aside. Flustered by the refusal, **Gabriel** continues.)*

Gretta: Thank you . . .

Gabriel: (*Flustered*) I saw you listening on the staircase and you looked so lovely that I wished that I were a painter. I would have called the picture "Distant Music."

Gretta: I couldn't pull myself away from the music and I had to congratulate Mr. D'Arcy. Oh, that song he sang was so hauntingly lovely. I hadn't heard it in such a long time. It brought back so many memories of my youth.

Aunt Kate: Happy ones, I think. You look so angelic.

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Gretta: The song is called "The Lass of Aughgrim." Strange I had forgotten the title and then Mr. D'Arcy mentioned it. But I think we should get started now. Almost everyone else has gone and I wouldn't want to wear out my welcome.

Aunt Kate: You never could, my dear. (*Turning to **Gabriel***) Neither could you.

Gabriel: (Taking **Gretta**=s coat from the bed): Here's your coat. Let me help you with it.

*(**Gabriel** slowly stands behind **Gretta**, kisses her on the back of her neck, and tries to help **Gretta** ease into the coat and sleeves. She abruptly pulls away.)*

Gretta: I can manage by myself.

*(**Aunt Julia** enters, slightly out of breath.)*

Aunt Julia: Oh, it's something dreadful outside. The snow is so deep.

Aunt Kate: I read this morning in the newspaper that snow is falling all over Ireland. We haven't had snow like this for thirty years.

Aunt Julia: And it's impossible to get a cab. Freddy Malins caught the last one and he had to argue with the cabdriver who told him the streets were impassable and only the devil would pick up passengers tonight. Fortunately, the cabdriver was going in Freddy's direction.

Aunt Kate: Thank heavens. Mrs. Malins seemed out of sorts tonight.

Aunt Julia: And what will happen to Gretta and Gabriel?

Aunt Kate: What do you mean?

Aunt Julia: How will they get to the Gresham?

Gabriel: (*Warmly*) We can walk. I'll see to it that Gretta takes care. Doesn't she look beautiful tonight? She looks the way she did when I first went courting. And Gretta loves the snow.

Aunt Julia: But remember last year she caught cold. We couldn't let that happen again. (To **Gabriel** and **Gretta**) Why not just stay here?

Gabriel: (*Crestfallen*) But I was so looking forward to staying at the Gresham. It=s so elegant and romantic and . . .

Gretta: (*Impatiently*) Be more gracious, Gabriel, and thank your aunts. Besides, I think I=d rather stay here. I suddenly feel very tired . . .

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Aunt Julia: I know we can=t offer you all the luxuries of the Gresham, but you'll be safer here with family.

Aunt Kate: And you won't put us out a bit. *(Patting the bed.)* In fact, the room is all ready for you.

Gabriel: That settles it, doesn't it?

Gretta: Yes, I think it does. I=m so tired, now.

Gabriel: (*Turning toward his aunts*) Thank you for the wonderful party and for the hospitality and once again a happy New Year.

*(**Aunt Kate** and **Aunt Julia** both embrace **Gabriel**.)*

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