A FILM SCRIPT OF

TWENTY YEARS A-GROWING

By Dylan Thomas

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DYLAN THOMAS

a film script of

TWENTY YEARS A-GROWING

from the story by
Maurice O'Sullivan

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'Here is the egg of a seabird—lovely, perfect and laid this very morning.' So wrote E. M. Forster when *Twenty Years A-Growing* by Maurice O'Sullivan was first published in English in 1933. In his unfinished film script of the first half of the book, Dylan Thomas has preserved this freshness. The script has only recently come to light, and becomes a new creation in the lovely and evocative style of its author.

* * * *

The Blasket Islands lie off the Kerry Coast in the extreme south-west corner of Ireland. They are now uninhabited except for occasional summer-time holiday-makers. The district is still Irish-speaking.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This Dylan Thomas film script is based on *Twenty Years A-Growing* by Maurice O'Sullivan, published by Chatto & Windus Ltd.

It is morning in the market-town of Dingle. A cracked school bell is ringing. The main street is wide awake: a man leans at a corner, motionless, smoking. A woman stands at an open doorway, looking at the morning. A large pig crosses the road slowly, and enters a cottage. The school bell still rings.

Then, at the top of the street, appear a countrywoman and a little boy in a smock, hand in hand. They walk on down the street towards us.

And suddenly we hear a crying and shouting, and there appear, at the top of the street and behind the woman and the little boy, a helter-skelter of children who run down towards us. And as they run, so other children come out of the cottages, on either side of the street, and join them. And they all scamper past the woman and the little boy, making quite a noise, and past us and out of the picture.

And as the woman and the little boy approach us now, hand in hand, the little boy clinging, we hear the voice of Maurice O'Sullivan the man, gently, reminiscently talking, as a person to no audience but himself and a friend.

THE VOICE And that's indeed the first thing I remember very clearly in all my life. It was in the town of Dingle, County Kerry, Ireland, and I was going on my first day to school, holding the hand of Peg de Roiste. For it was she who took care of me when my mother died, dear God bless her soul and the souls of all the dead. Faith, there in my memory still I see old Peg and myself, Maurice O'Sullivan, walking to school.

And Peg de Roiste and little Maurice O'Sullivan are walking now towards the entrance of the whitewashed village school. The cracked bell stops ringing. He clings hard to her hand, and looks up at her, and she smiles down, nodding and reassuring, as they go into the school.

Now we are in the schoolroom: a whitewashed room with rows of benches full of children and a little chair and table at the end, and a blackboard. At the end of the room, behind the table, stand two posts coming down from the roof to the floor. Peg de Roiste and Maurice sit close together on the back bench. He stares around the classroom, quiet as a mouse, his eyes wide. All the other children are making a power of noise.

The schoolmistress enters.

The noise is hushed.

THE CHILDREN Good morning, mistress.

The schoolmistress sits at her table, opens a book, looks at the children, marks down their names, silently. . . .

THE VOICE I remember there was teaching us as schoolmistress a woman who was grey as a badger, with two tusks of teeth hanging down over her lip, and if she wasn't cross, it isn't day yet. She was the devil itself, or so I thought.

Close now to Peg and Maurice: we hear him whisper timidly.

MAURICE Where are the nice sweets you said there'd be, Peg?

PEG Go up now, she's for giving you the sweets.

Maurice shakes his head and clings harder to her hand. And Peg gets up with him and takes him by the hand to the little table.

From the back of the classroom now we see the backs of Peg and Maurice and the face of the schoolmistress.

MISTRESS Who are you and what is your name?

MAURICE They call me Maurice.

MISTRESS Maurice what?

MAURICE Maurice.

We hear Peg whisper to the mistress, who nods and writes in her book.

Then the mistress rises and goes to a cupboard and takes out a big tin of sweets and puts it on the little table before Maurice.

We TRACK UP towards the table. Maurice timidly puts his hand into the tin and takes out a sweet in the shape of a horse.

MAURICE (with wonder) A horse.

The mistress nods.

He puts his hand in again and takes out another-shaped sweet.

MAURICE (a little louder) A boat.

She nods.

He dips and takes out another two sweets, one in each hand. He raises his hands to show Peg.

MAURICE (shrill with excitement) Oh, a man. And a pig.

MISTRESS Be a good boy now and go back to the bench. And come to school every day.

MAURICE I *will.*

Holding his treasures, he goes to the back bench.

MISTRESS You will, surely.

And Peg goes past him, and touches his hand, and is gone.

And we see Maurice close, as he sits in contentment, sucking the sweet horse, and the children in unison begin to recite their morning lesson.

Dissolve To:

The children in the playground, kicking a football. Maurice among them. The football strikes him on the head, and bounces off. The others go on playing, but Maurice, standing alone, lifts up his head to the sky and howls, like a child alone in the world.

Dissolve To:

Dingle main street, at morning again, with the cracked bell ringing.

And down the street, scattering the chickens, come the noisy children, Maurice among them.

Cut To:

The classroom. Maurice is now sitting on a bench in the middle, a little boy next to him who is Mickil Dick.

All the children are repeating a lesson. And through their voices and the voice of Maurice we hear:

THE VOICE I was going to school every day, growing older and bigger and none the wiser at all, I am guessing, and it was the gentleness and the sweets had long grown cold. It seemed to me there was nobody in the world had a worse life than myself. I did not know what I wanted, but I knew it was not to be kept indoors all day, like a baby or a girl. I wanted to be, oh, I knew not where . . .

And we see, as the Voice speaks, that Maurice is not joining in the speaking-aloud of the lesson but is lost in a world of his own mazy making. Suddenly the mistress's voice cuts across the voices of the children, and they stop.

MISTRESS'S VOICE Maurice O'Sullivan.

He raises his eyes. We do not see the mistress, but only, close, the benches of children.

MISTRESS'S VOICE You are dreaming again. Come here.

Maurice rises and crosses out of the picture.

MISTRESS'S VOICE Put out your hand.

We see the intent faces of the children staring at the invisible punishment. One child nudges another, smiling. But most are dead quiet. We hear the sound of a stinging slap.

Mickil, next to Maurice's empty place on the bench, winces and involuntarily draws back his hand.

Another stinging slap.

Mickil's face is set and white.

Another slap.

Maurice returns; takes his place; sits stiffly, staring in front of him with very bright eyes.

And the children begin to recite together again.

Maurice moves his lips. We hear very softly, through the voices of the children, the voice of the child Maurice.

MAURICE Your soul to the devil, you old herring. . . .

Now Maurice is coming out of a Dingle cottage—a cottage not in the main street we have seen before but in a country road. He carries his school-books hung over his shoulder. With him is Mickil. And once more the cracked school bell is ringing, but farther off than before.

They dawdle down the road together, their school-books swinging, slashing off the tops of the roadside ferns, idly kicking the stones.

MAURICE I don't know why in the world we are going to school, on a day like this, Mickil.

MICKIL We could be having the day under the hedge . . .

MAURICE We could be playing the devil up on the Hill of the Cairn, or making shapes out of sticks . . .

MICKIL Or snatching the bags of sugar out of the hands of the old men in the poor-house . . .

MAURICE Or dabbling in the boghole, by God. . . . Oh, when will I be a grown man, Mickil, with a pony and cart and a clay pipe maybe. . . . Whisht! Who's that there?

Up the road towards them come two women and a man. They wave at Maurice and Mickil and walk on straight towards them. Maurice turns and runs in the other direction, and hides in the hedge.

From the hedge we see what he sees: the man and the

women talking to Mickil and pointing up, smiling, towards the hedge. One of the women puts an orange in Mickil's hand, and the other woman gropes in her bag for a present. And, still from the hedge, we see Maurice run back towards them, stopping shyly a yard away.

WOMAN Why did you run away just now?

MAURICE (bashfully) Nothing. . . .

WOMAN Do you know who I am?

MAURICE I do not.

WOMAN I am your aunt, my treasure.

She takes Maurice up in her arms and kisses him, then puts him down again but holds him close to her.

And the other woman kisses him also.

WOMAN That is another aunt, too, and this is your uncle.

MAN (An elaborate greeting in Irish.)

The school bell stops ringing.

MAURICE What sort of talk has that man?

WOMAN That's Irish.

MAURICE What's Irish?

WOMAN Oh, wait now till you go home, that is the time you will have the Irish.

MAURICE Where is my home? We have no Irish at all in this home here.

WOMAN This is not your home, Maurice. Your home is in the Blasket.

Maurice looks, without understanding, at the faces of his aunts and his uncle.

MAN ..... (a speech in Irish).

And the speech is softened so that, through it, we hear:

THE VOICE (softly) But I was as blind to what he was saying about the Blasket as the herring leaping in the Bay of Dingle . . .

MAURICE (to the woman, who still holds him close) What is the Blasket?

WOMAN It is an island.

MAURICE Is it a long way away? Over the sea?

WOMAN It is ten miles from Dingle . . .

MICKIL Ten miles, God be with us . . .

FIRST WOMAN Oh, hear him. You were born on the Blasket, Maurice, asthore, and because you were only half a year old when your mother died . . .

SECOND WOMAN Dear God bless her soul and the souls of all the dead . . .

FIRST WOMAN . . . your father sent you to Dingle to be cared for by Peg de Roiste. Has she never been telling you that? . . .

WOMAN And your father is for coming out before long to take you home at last. Would you like that, Maurice?

MAURICE Who is my father?

WOMAN Isn't it often your father was talking to you? You should have known him long ago . . .

MAURICE I don't know which of the men he is, for many come . . .

WOMAN Oh musha, youth is a queer thing. . . .

And the women give Maurice and Mickil sweets, apples and oranges.

And the man comes up to them both, and, talking Irish, solemnly shakes their hands. As he talks, Maurice and Mickil look at one another in wonder. Then he takes money from his pocket and gives Maurice a half a crown and Mickil a shilling . . .

And the two aunts kiss Maurice again.

FIRST WOMAN Now we go to see Peg de Roiste. Farewell, and a blessing (in Irish).

SECOND WOMAN Farewell, and a blessing (in Irish).

MAN Farewell, and a blessing (in Irish).

And they go up the road.

CLOSE-UP of Maurice and Mickil. Mickil outs his shilling for Maurice to see.

MICKIL I never saw a penny as bright as that. . . . Where is yours?

MAURICE Look, mine is bigger.

MICKIL I don't know what we had better buy with them . . .

MAURICE Marbles and boats and . . . Oh, Mickil, the bell has stopped!

And they race down the road.

The classroom.

The mistress is chalking on the blackboard, her back to the children.

The door creaks open and Maurice and Mickil creep in to their places on the bench.

They look up fearfully at the blackboard and the mistress, who has not turned round.

Under the words of the lesson chalked on the blackboard, she writes:

MAURICE AND MICKIL ARE AN HOUR LATE.

The two boys look at each other furtively.

The mistress writes:

MAURICE AND MICKIL STAND UP.

The mistress turns from the board. The two boys stand.

MISTRESS And what kept you so late?

Now, from the angle of the mistress, we see the benches, the seated children, and Maurice and Mickil standing. Mickil is pouting, getting ready to cry; he makes a little, whimpering noise.

MISTRESS'S VOICE Have done with your snivelling and answer my question.

MAURICE We weren't here in any place but when we were coming to school we met some kinsfolk of mine and they kept us talking.

MISTRESS Isn't it a fine excuse you make up! Go out now and cut a good fat rod and bring it in to me, my good boy, the way I won't hear any more of your blather.

Maurice goes out of the classroom.

We see him now walking across to a hedge outside the school, opening his penknife.

He seizes a stout branch, looks at it, lets it spring back. He seizes another. Still too stout. He cuts off a thin branch, canes his own hand lightly, gently with it.

CUT TO the same cane coming down hard on his outstretched hand.

TRACKBACK to see Maurice and Mickil before the mistress's table.

It is now Mickil's turn. Three blows. Maurice has his hands behind his back.

The mistress scolds them to the two posts at the end of the classroom and ties them up and goes back to her blackboard. She wipes out the words about Maurice and Mickil and continues to chalk up the lesson.

Dissolve:

Now the blackboard is entirely covered with the words and figures of the lesson.

Maurice and Mickil are still tied to the posts.

There is a knock at the door. The mistress turns around quickly, looks at the door and then looks at the two boys.

Another, sharper knock.

She hurries to the door and opens it.

The parish priest comes in.

Cut To:

CLOSE SHOT of the two boys, who whisper delightedly to each other.

MAURICE It is with us now, my boy.

MICKIL You will see some sport.

MAURICE It is now we have the bright smiles.

From the end of the classroom near the posts we see the priest talking to the mistress.

MICKIL The devil take you, do you see the look on the mistress? . . .

The priest, at the top of the classroom, is looking around him.

PRIEST I see all of the children but Maurice and Mickil now . . . where are they in the world?

MAURICE
MICKIL } Here we are, Father.

The priest comes over from the top of the classroom towards us and towards the two boys.

PRIEST Oh, what is the meaning of this? Who tied you here?

MAURICE The mistress, Father.

PRIEST And why?

MAURICE I will tell you, Father. When Mickil and I were coming to school we met some kinsfolk of mine and they kept us talking, the way we were an hour late.

As the priest beckons the mistress over, Maurice winks at Mickil.

PRIEST What is this you are after doing to the poor little children?

MISTRESS Oh, father, I beg your pardon, I was for putting a little fear into them. . . .

Maurice shows his hands to the Father.

MAURICE Look, Father . . .

PRIEST Oh, my shame.

He turns to the mistress.

PRIEST I will make short delay of putting you out of the school if you go on with this work. Untie them at

once, and if I find that you set hands on them again you will have news to tell. . . .

After the first few words (and as the mistress unties the boys) the priest's speech is softened into the background so that we hear:

THE VOICE (softly) This was the first time I ever saw anger on a priest, and I said to myself that it comes on them as any other man . . .

Cut To:

LONG SHOT of Maurice and Mickil running up the hill of the Cairn, past the black bog, into the dusk. And as they run, calling to each other in the still evening, we hear:

THE VOICE And the end of it was we had the rest of the day off, and we played, I remember, on the Hill of the Cairn till the dark came . . .

We follow the boys up the hill, and as the dusk grows deeper we hear:

THE VOICE Was it that night, I wonder, that I dreamed a dream I have never forgotten? That night or another, who cares, for the tale of a man's life is beyond the bother of the clock and he must try to remember it the best he may . . .

And Maurice and Mickil have vanished into the darkness, and now there is nothing but darkness, and now again the darkness lifts and we are in a cottage room lit only by firelight. We move down the room, past dresser and table and chairs, and come to a bed where Maurice and Mickil lie together awake but silent. The voice is talking throughout.

THE VOICE I only know it was a winter's night, very wild, with the patter of snow on the window panes, and myself stretched out on the flat of my back in the fine cosy bed, and ever thinking of the Blasket.

We come closer and closer to Maurice and Mickil, and their eyes close and they fall asleep, the firelight moving their faces.

THE VOICE But falling asleep, I was dreaming all of a sudden not of the Blasket at all but that Mickil Dick and I were walking through a fine green meadow, gathering flowers. When we had gathered our fill of them, we sat down, talking of school and brilla-bralla, as is the habit of children.

After a while it seemed that Mickil fell asleep—and I asleep that was dreaming it all. While I sat thinking what a strange thing was that same sleep, what would I see come out of his mouth but a pretty butterfly.

Through this we see a LONG SHOT of Maurice and Mickil walking in a meadow, picking flowers. Half of the great meadow is in sunlight, half in deep dusk through which we see the strange shapes of trees moving and strange hills.

Closer now, we see the children sit down by a stream, their arms full of flowers. They sit in the sunlight. We hear birds singing above them, but, from a distance, we hear, too, the note of the owl as though it came from the dark half of the great meadow.

And closer still we see a butterfly fly above Mickil sleeping.

We see the butterfly fly away down the meadow.

Still it is flying.

Maurice is running along the sunlit meadow.

Still the butterfly is flying.

Maurice is running along the sunlit meadow towards the dusk. And as he runs, so the sunlight behind him grows suddenly dusky and the dusk before him lightens.

Still the butterfly is flying.

It flies on to a gate.

Birds are singing.

Beyond the gate with the butterfly perched upon it is a sunlit meadow.

Maurice is running towards the gate and the butterfly. And behind him is deep dusk, and the note of the owl.

He reaches the gate and the butterfly flies away, into the sunlit meadow.

And Maurice climbs the gate. And climbing the gate, he is suddenly in deep shadow.

With a spring he is over. Over into the sunlight.

Still the butterfly is flying.

In the meadow lies a horse's skull.

Maurice kneels by the skull.

The butterfly flies through the eyes of the skull.

The sunlit field is darkening, dusking.

The butterfly flies out of the mouth of the skull.

The butterfly is flying.

Maurice rises and runs through dusk towards the gate which stands at the entrance to a sunlit meadow.

The butterfly is flying.

Maurice climbs the gate, in deep shadow.

With a spring, he is in sunlight.

He runs along the sunlit meadow.

Mickil is lying asleep. The butterfly flies over his face, and is gone.

Maurice sits by his side, looking into Mickil's face.

Mickil wakes, yawns, stretches.

And we hear the voice of Maurice the child saying, as he sits by waking Mickil in the sunny meadow, by the stream:

MAURICE It seems, when a man dreams, a white butterfly do be coming out of his mouth . . .

The meadow is sunlit no longer, but in deep dusk. The deep dusk deepens into darkness.

Then it is light again, morning light, and we are in the cottage room again, by the bedside of the two boys. Mickil is awake, sitting up, looking at Maurice, who is still speaking:

MAURICE . . . and walking away; and when it comes again it is then he wakes.

And Mickil burst into a shout of laughter. And Maurice awakes.

MICKIL Och, listen to the way he is talking in his sleep . . .

And he bursts into laughter again . . .

CLOSE-UP of the two boys.

Dissolve:

To CLOSE-UP of the two boys in the classroom, sitting on the bench . . .

We hear in the background a boy reciting his lesson.

MICKIL (whispering) And a butterfly was after coming out of my mouth. Faith, it was my tongue!—like this . . .

Mickil puts out his tongue.

MAURICE Put in your tongue or the pooka will bite it off.

MICKIL It is all tales and hobgoblins with you, my boy . . .

The sound of the boy reciting in the background stops.

MAURICE I had another dream. I dreamed there were fine ships puffing up Dingle Market . . .

The mistress's voice cuts across Maurice's whisper.

MISTRESS'S VOICE Maurice!

MICKIL (in a whisper) It is all over with us now. We are dead men.

MISTRESS'S VOICE Come here.

Now we see Maurice go up to the mistress's table. He is holding out his right hand, gingerly, in front of him, prepared for the worst.

A ragged boy, twisting his cap in his hands, stands by the table.

MISTRESS (sourly) It is you are the fine gentleman now. A message has come that there is someone outside to speak to you . . .

MAURICE It is my father, by God.

And Maurice runs out of the classroom.

Cut:

At the entrance to the school stand Maurice's two aunts, his uncle and another man with a parcel under his arm.

Maurice runs out excitedly, but stops when he sees them all and will come no closer.

The mistress has followed Maurice and is standing on the threshold. He stares at his uncle, then at the other man.

MAURICE Is this my father?

FIRST AUNT This is your father, Maurice.

And Maurice walks slowly up to his father, and his father embraces him.

FATHER Would you like to go home with me today?

MAURICE I would indeed, what sort of place is it?

FATHER Oh, a fine place.

MAURICE Will we be going now?

FATHER As soon as you have dressed in this nice suit of clothes here, we will be going in the name of God.

MAURICE Will there be trousers?

FATHER Trousers, indeed, and a jacket, and a shirt, and a collar and a cap and . . .

MAURICE We will be going, surely. . . . I will go in now so, and say goodbye to Mickil.

He walks into the school: quietly, a little stiffly and self-consciously: a small dignified boy in a child's smock.

In the classroom he stretches out his hand to Mickil. They stand for a few seconds, without speaking. We see them close. Then:

MAURICE (in a formal way, as befits a small boy about to become a man, but gently still, and with affection) Goodbye, Mickil, I am going home to the Blasket today and I hope I shall see you again in health and happiness.

But Mickil is still a child, and his eyes are full of tears.

MICKIL Oh, so do I, so do I, Maurice . . .

CUT BACK to the entrance to the school. The mistress, on the top step, is talking down to the father.

MISTRESS Indeed you should know what you are doing, taking the child home when he is just learning his scholarship, and if you left him here he would have a livelihood for ever . . .

FATHER Och, my pity on your head, he's a boy from the Blasket Isles.

MISTRESS And so he will lose his English and so he will be a fool when he grows up. Where and how will he get a job without the English?

FATHER Isn't it better still for him to have the two languages? And another thing, you don't know yet what way Ireland will turn out. Faith, a boy should grow up at home, and his home is in the Isles.

MISTRESS (suddenly softens) The poor little child . . .

Dissolve:

The road outside the school. The aunts and the uncle and the mistress are standing by a horse and cart. Along up the street towards them comes Maurice in his new breeches, jacket, shirt, collar, cap, shoes and black stockings, whistling a tune and taking steps as long as his father's.

The aunts and uncle greet him with delight, the women fussing around him.

FIRST AUNT Faith, you are a grown man, God bless you.

SECOND AUNT Turn round till I see the back now.

UNCLE ..... (admiration in Irish).

FIRST AUNT They fit you as well as if the tailor had made them.

MAURICE Oh, Father, I am a great sport for fineness.

And the two aunts kiss and fondle him, with little inarticulate murmurs, and make him show off his fine suit again and press money into his hand. And as he sulkily takes their kisses, in the embarrassed dignity of his new manhood, we hear:

THE VOICE (softly) Oh, don't I remember it now. I thought they were after tearing me asunder with their kisses, for women are the very devil for cuddling and coddling and all the like. Why wouldn't they take it fine and soft like a man?

The mistress, unsmiling, suddenly thrusts a coin in Maurice's hand. Then the father climbs into the cart, and the uncle after him, and Maurice after him. The aunts cling on to the sides of the cart. And now we see that the heads of the children of the school are peering round the door, Mickil's among them.

Maurice waves to the children on the steps, waves to his aunts.

And the cart starts off, rattling over the cobbles.

As it goes off we see the mistress hurrying towards the school, shooing the children with her hands.

The heads disappear.

Now we see, in LONG SHOT, the cart trotting along towards Slea Head.

Now, in LONG SHOT, it is moving towards the cliff head.

Now, close, it is stopping right on the wild cliff head in the noise of wind and sea, and Maurice is standing up in the cart staring down on the white crests of the sea.

MAURICE Where? Where?

And the father points to the north-west, to the Blasket Islands.

THE FATHER There to the north-west. Over there.

And, from the cart stopped at the high, windy edge, we see the island, and hear:

THE VOICE I could not speak, a lump came in my throat. I saw little white houses huddled together in the middle of the island, a great wild hill straight to the west with no more houses to be seen, only a tower on the peak of the hill and the hillside white with sheep. I did not like the look of it.

MAURICE But how will the horse and cart get over there?

THE FATHER We will go in a curragh.

They all climb down from the cart.
A little way away from them.

MAURICE But what sort of thing is a curragh?

They stand now on the cliff edge, looking out to the island: Maurice small and still between the two tall men.

And suddenly the head of a man appears over the cliff edge, then his shoulders, then his body, then he is all there, standing on the very edge, the wind blowing his hair and his clothes. There is no sign of a path for him to have climbed. He appears just like that: a man, suddenly comes up over the cliff.

MAURICE Oh, look, look, the man has come up out of the sea.

The man walks towards them. There is a post-bag on his back.

MAURICE Oh, who is that, Father? Did he fly up like a bird?

THE FATHER Faith, he is the King of the Island . . .

MAURICE (in wonder) Do all kings come up like that?

And the King—a 'fine, courteous, mannerly, well-favoured man'—approaches the two men and the boy. And he greets the boy first.

THE KING (in Irish) Musha, how are you now?

MAURICE (in English) Thank you very much.

THE KING The devil, I think you have no understanding of the Irish . . .

MAURICE I have not.

THE KING You will. And how does it please you to be going to the island?

MAURICE It does not look too nice altogether . . .

THE KING It does not neither, just a rock torn off the land and sitting down in the sea. But there is no place like it in the world. Come down now.

And the King takes Maurice's hand and they walk to the very place on the edge of the cliff where the King had appeared, and the uncle waves his hand and gets into the cart and drives off, and the father follows Maurice and the King.

Maurice and the King stand on the cliff edge, the wind tumbling their hair and gusting about them.

Maurice looks down at the sea.

MAURICE Do we jump?

But the King walks over the cliff, Maurice clutching his hand. And they disappear.

From the cliff edge we look down at the King, Maurice and the father walking down a steep path to the quay and the many curraghs that are laid there.

And close we see Maurice pointing to the curraghs, and we hear:

THE VOICE (softly) Oh, do not I remember it now. There on the quay were twenty black beetles twice as big as a cow . . .

And we hear Maurice's voice, following quickly on these words.

MAURICE Do the big beetles bite?

And the two men and the boy walk on down again the steep path, and the King is shouting with laughter. And an echo takes up his laughter.

And as the laughter echoes on, we PAN UP the high cliff. Near the top of the cliff perches a big black bird. And as the echo dies, we hear through the crashing of the sea waves:

MAURICE'S VOICE Look at the big bird! Oh, Lord, how do you keep your senses up there at all!

Now the father, the King and Maurice are walking along the quay, the sea noise greater. And we see a curragh being carried from the slip, but we cannot see the man who carries it and it looks, indeed, as though the curragh is walking by itself.

MAURICE Oh, the beetle!

THE FATHER Faith, that's a curragh.

MAURICE Do we go in that strange thing to the island?

THE FATHER We do.

And Maurice is shaking his head, as one who would say: 'Lord help us.'

And now the curragh is afloat, and the King, the father and a fisherman are in it. From the quay we see the curragh mounting the waves and hear:

THE VOICE And in the black beetle with my father and the King we journeyed to the island. This was the beginning and Dingle and the school had vanished entirely.

Now in LONG SHOT, the curragh is in mid bay, and we hear all the time the voice speaking:

THE VOICE The wind had dropped. There was not a breath in the sky, a dead calm now on the water, a wisp of smoke rising up straight from every chimney on the island, the sun as yellow as gold shining over the Pass of the Hill slopes from the west. The beauty of the place filled my heart with delight.

And now, from the island, we see the curragh come in, and hear the voices of people and the barking of dogs; all echoing.

The curragh draws alongside the slip. Maurice, the King and the father get out. And from behind them on the slip we see people coming down by every path and children running, and dogs barking about their feet, all coming down towards Maurice. And we hear:

THE VOICE Oh, the island that day said Welcome, and Welcome.

And behind the voice we hear, softly, the echoing sound of Welcome, Welcome, in Irish, called by many voices.

The crowd closes round the King, the father and Maurice, but it is the children who come most close to Maurice and they stare at him without speaking.

Now an old man, the grandfather, comes out of the crowd and walks towards Maurice, and the close circle of children is broken, and the grandfather embraces Maurice.

THE GRANDFATHER Musha, God bless your life, my heart and my blood.

MAURICE Who are you?

THE GRANDFATHER Och, isn't it a strange thing that you would not know your own grandfather. You shall call me Daddo. Come up with me now . . .

The grandfather takes Maurice by the hand and together they climb up the path from the quay. The children follow them, dancing and calling. From the top of the path we see them climbing towards us. First one woman, then another, darts out of the crowd and kisses him, and we hear:

THE VOICE Oh, the kisses they gave me then, the women of the island, I might have been a soldier returning from the holy wars but I would rather the frost than that to be done to me.

Now the grandfather and Maurice are walking past the village houses: long, low, narrow houses, many of them dug into the steep slope of the hill for shelter from the

wind. And old women hurry out of the houses and take Maurice in their arms and they murmur:

ONE OLD WOMAN Maurisheen, asthore.

ANOTHER OLD WOMAN Oh, my joy.

ANOTHER OLD WOMAN Welcome as summer coming . . .

And they all kiss him, and behind him are always the island children, staring at a wonder.

And as the last woman kisses him, we hear:

THE VOICE A nasty habit in women, I thought, but I held my tongue.

Now the grandfather and Maurice come to the O'Sullivans' house.

Two boys and two girls come out and stand, silent, at the door.

The grandfather stops.

THE GRANDFATHER Eileen, Maura, Shaun, Pierce . . .

And the four children step towards Maurice.

THE GRANDFATHER Here is your brother, Maurice . . .

And the children move nearer Maurice, smiling; Brigid's arms are held open.

Dissolve:

To the interior of the O'Sullivans' house, evening. The walls are bright with lime, a fine flowing fire sending warmth into every corner, a dog lying in the cinders, sugan chairs pushed back against the walls. There is a spinning-wheel in a corner.

A young man is squatting near the hearth, playing a melodeon . . .

Boys and girls are dancing; Maura the sister is dancing alone among them.

The father and the grandfather sit at a table at the end of the room; there is a bottle on the table; all around them is the smoke of their pipes, and we see them through smoke; cloudy, immemorial peasant figures.

And the dancing goes on.

Then the boys and girls sit down on the floor, and clap their hands.

And shyly the sister Eileen steps out of the smoky darkness near the end table, and sings.

At the end of a verse, we hear, from the cloudy table, the voice of the grandfather crying:

GRANDFATHER My love for ever, Eileen.

And as she sings, so children dance, we move again, and we move slowly, around the room, to sad-and-gay music, round the firelit hearth, the player, and the corner seat where Maurice, alone, half dreaming, half awake, watches and listens, and the table of smokers and drinkers, and Eileen's voice fades.

And then, out of that smoky end of the room, comes the voice of the grandfather singing 'Eamonn Magaine'.

And moving away again, towards Maurice in his corner, we hear:

THE VOICE I would feel a shiver of delight in my blood as I sat listening that first evening of my homecoming, and it was no wonder, with the sweetness of the song and the tremor of the voices. I did not understand the

meaning of the words, but the voice and the tremor and the sweetness were clear to me.

Very slowly the room is growing darker, but the music goes on. And Maurice's head is nodding.

THE VOICE . . . no wonder with the sweetness and the singing and the noise of the sea and the darkness and the sweetness and the singing and the darkness . . .

And the voice fades slowly on the last words, and Maurice is asleep in his chair in the darkening corner, and with the singing and the music of the melodeon mingles the surging of the sea.

And, as the picture FADES OUT, we hear only the surging of the sea.

Fade In:

To the sea breaking on the island cliffs.

Now a seagull is flying over the sea.

We follow the flight of a seagull over the sea towards the island.

We follow the flight of a seagull through the sky above the island.

We PAN DOWN the sky, from the flying seagull, to see, in LONG SHOT, a man, a boy and an ass moving away towards Hill Head . . .

Closer now we see that the man and the boy are the grandfather and Maurice. And we hear Maurice's voice, and the grandfather's voice closely, clearly, as though they were near us, though they are still in LONG SHOT.

MAURICE Oh, it is a grand day to be on the island, Daddo.

THE GRANDFATHER There is no place like it . . .

And now the CAMERA moves around the island. We see the Great Skellig and Skellig Michael, and Iveragh to the south-east, and herring-gulls around the trawlers in the bay. And over the sea sounds we hear the singing of larks.

MAURICE Shall I be living here always and always, going after a load of turf with the old ass in the morning, or up at the sparrow's chirp to go lobster fishing with my father, or gathering the birds' eggs, or dragging the sea for herrings, or after the seals and the rabbits . . . ?

THE GRANDFATHER Och, the day will come . . .

And as the grandfather speaks, we CUT TO him and Maurice, close, standing on Hill Head.

MAURICE What day, Daddo?

We see them now from a low level so that they are great simple figures against the moving clouds.

THE GRANDFATHER Let it be gone from your head now. It's a fine, grand day today, praise to God on high!
There was music of birds flying over
the green grass
and little fish in hundreds
frolicking in the nets . . .

MAURICE Is that from a song?

THE GRANDFATHER It is indeed, from an old song. Come now, boy. . . . Come.

He turns away . . .
CUT TO the grandfather and Maurice loading turf on to the ass.

MAURICE Were you ever away from the Blasket, Daddo?

THE GRANDFATHER My sorrow, I spent a great part of my life going out to the islands all around, and it is little shoe or stocking was worn in those days, not even a drop of tea to be had, nor any thought of it.

MAURICE No tea at all!

GRANDFATHER There was no flour to be bought, no tea or sugar. Upon my word, it wasn't bad for that time. We had our food and our own clothes—the gathering of the strand, the hunt of the hill, the fish of the sea and the wool of the sheep. The devil a bit was there to buy some tobacco, and you could get a bundle of that for threepence. . . .

Many was the day we would leave the house at sunrise and we would not come home again until the blackness and the blindness of the night, myself and Stephen O'Donlevy . . .

And Pad Mor and Shaun O'Carna, dear God bless their souls, for they are all on the way of truth of now. . . .

Close, we see him straighten up from the loading of the turf, and look out at the sea. There are tears in his eyes.

THE GRANDFATHER Did ye never hear how the life of man is divided? Twenty years a-growing, twenty years in blossom, twenty years a-stooping, and twenty years declining.

MAURICE I never heard that before.

The grandfather smiles.

THE GRANDFATHER Indeed, it is many things you have never heard before. Go on with you now. . . . Be happy when you can . . .

And now we see, in LONG SHOT, the grandfather, Maurice and the ass on the path towards the village. Maurice is running, scampering and dancing on all sides of the slow patiently moving old man and loaded ass.

Now Maurice is running along the strand of white sand towards the harbour. We hear, loud, the noise of the waves; and the barking of dogs we do not see, hollow, as though in caves; and the cries of the gulls.

Now with another boy, Tomas Owen Vaun, he is striding along the hill path towards Horse Sound, two dogs with them. The dogs run off into the deep grass and ferns and begin to bark: the high eager bark of the hunter. The boys run after them.

Now Maurice and Tomas are striding on towards the Scornach; they both have rabbits slung over their backs. And we hear:

THE VOICE In a man's life there are twenty years a-growing. And here on the island, for me, they were growing slow to the din of the sea and the singing of ten thousand birds as I was up in the morning with Tomas and the dogs hunting the rabbits in the ferns after the shippens, the fat little puffins, and the seagulls' eggs on Scornach cliffs.

And, while the voice speaks, we see Maurice and Tomas reaching the top of the Scornach. We look down, from their eyes, at the great cliff sickening to the sea. They put their rabbits in a hole, and Tomas begins to climb down the

cliff, light as a goat through the screes. Maurice climbs, slowly and fearfully, after him: a long way after him.

And we look down from the clifftop and see Tomas far below us, and Maurice clinging on not so far below, staring up at us, the blue sea below him and all around him the great noise of birds. We hear, through wind, sea and birdery, the blown voice of Maurice crying.

MAURICE Oh, holy Father, isn't it a dangerous place I am in?

He moves cautiously, along a cliff ridge. Great numbers of birds fly all around him.

Now, from below, we look up at the little figure of Maurice on the cliff face, and hear:

THE VOICE Oh, kittiwakes, herring-gulls, puffins, guillemots, sea-ravens, razorbills, black-backed gulls and petrels, you frighten the life out of a sinner with your crying and flying. . . .

And now, closer to Maurice, we see him groping in a burrow between the rocks, groping and digging and scratching. Suddenly he pulls out his hand. There is a baby puffin in it. And, holding the puffin out, he turns, perilously, and calls down the cliff:

MAURICE Tomas . . .

And the echo answers:

ECHO Tomas.

And another echo, and another, and another; each farther off.

He moves about the face of the cliff, thrusting his hand into the hidden nests of the puffins.

Now on the cliff edge, we see Maurice climbing up, and over his shoulder is hanging a rope on which many puffins are tied together.

He reaches the clifftop, and flops down there, his puffins at his side.

Then he whistles down the cliff. And the echoes take the whistle and multiply it and throw it about in the wind and lose it.

And, after the echoes, comes:

TOMAS'S VOICE I'm coming. . . .

And soon he has climbed up to the clifftop, dirty and smiling. He has made a sack of his jersey, and hung it, heavy, over his back.

MAURICE What have you got?

TOMAS I have guillemots' eggs, razorbills' eggs and seagulls' eggs, my boy . . . why didn't you come down with me?

MAURICE (slyly) Och, I was frightened. I got nothing at all.

And he rises and lifts up his bundle.

TOMAS What have you there?

MAURICE (in a casual voice) Oh, puffins. Just puffins. Just thirty-six puffins, that's all. . . .

And his casualness drops away from him, and he begins to dance, whirling his rope of birds. Now we see only the roped birds whirling.

Now we see only a skein of birds whirling through the sky.

TOMAS Upon my word, you're a great hunter.

CUT BACK to Maurice.

MAURICE I'm the happiest hunter on the hills of Kerry.

Now his birds are still.

TOMAS Come to see if my eggs are clean now. . . .

And he moves away, Maurice following him after he takes up the rabbits from the hole where they were left.

MAURICE Can't you see they're clean, you little blind man.

Tomas stops at a big pool in a bog hole.

TOMAS Look now, if this egg is hatching it will float on the water, but if it is clean it will sink.

He throws in an egg.
CUT TO the pool, the egg floating on it.

TOMAS'S VOICE Och, the devil take it, there is a chick in that one.

Another egg lands on the water, and floats.

TOMAS'S VOICE It is a good beginning.

Another egg lands, and floats. And another, and another.
Now the surface of the pool is covered with red-and-black-spotted eggs floating.

TOMAS'S VOICE The devil a clean one among them.

Now Maurice takes his rope of puffins and cuts it in half, and hands over half the puffins.

MAURICE Look at us now! Half apiece . . .

Tomas begins to laugh as he takes his share.

TOMAS Look at us now, indeed.

MAURICE I don't know why in the world you are laughing at me . . .

TOMAS Because anybody would think you were an ape, you are so dirty . . .

MAURICE Faith, if I am dirty as you are, the yellow devil is on me.

Tomas, still laughing, begins to strip off his clothes; and Maurice likewise.

We see them dive, naked, in the pool.

Now they are lying, half dressed, on the grass.

Tomas takes out a pipe and tobacco, and lights the pipe and puffs it and passes it, silent, over to Maurice.

And Maurice takes it and puffs it and hands it back.

He lies flat on his back staring up at the sky.

There is music through bird and wind and sea noise.

Looking up, from Maurice's eyes, at the sunset sky, we see gulls lazily wheeling.

We hear Tomas's voice singing softly . . .

Now the sky becomes blurred, and blurred birds seem to lurch across it.

MAURICE'S VOICE I'm thinking the tobacco is strong, Tomas, or a most queer storm is a-coming up . . .

CUT TO Maurice and Tomas, Maurice now smoking. Slowly he hands over the pipe to Tomas and rises to his feet.

Now the two boys are walking back towards the village, their dogs quiet at their heels, through the sea-sounding sunsetting evening. Maurice is a little unsteady on his feet.

Now we see the reflection, in water, of the houses of the village, trembling with little spots of light.

Now we see the village itself, Maurice and Tomas walking through it.

It is night nearly. Lamps are lit in every house.

An old man stands at his doorway.

TOMAS Are you well tonight, Puncan?

OLD MAN Oh, musha, I was never so bad as I am today.

The boys pass on, laughing.

TOMAS Isn't he always bad? Good night, Maurice.

(N.B. Insert two more greetings with two villagers whom we will be seeing later.)

Tomas goes in at a cottage door.

MAURICE Good night, Tomas.

Maurice walks on, one dog at his heels, and reaches his cottage.

The grandfather stands outside.

And Maurice stands by him. He looks up at the climbing moon.

MAURICE What a night it is, Daddo . . .

THE GRANDFATHER And a fine gold moon over Cnoc-a-comma. Come in now before the potatoes get cold.

And he goes in.

And the moon climbs.

Fade Out:

Fade In:

To the calm sea in the full light of morning.

Over the sea a bird is flying.

The bird is flying towards the island.

The bird is flying above the harbour.

PANNING DOWN, we see that the quayside is crowded with people and that more are flocking down towards it on every path from the village.

We see, from the quay, a curragh coming in.

Now down a path run Maurice and some boys, and we hear:

THE VOICE It is the custom of the island for everyone to be on the quay when the King is coming with the post-bag from Dunquin . . .

Maurice joins the crowd. He sees Tomas in a group of children.

MAURICE (calling) Tomas . . .

Tomas runs over to Maurice, and a little girl, Mauraid, with him.

THE VOICE (continuing, even through Maurice's cry) . . . with news from the mainland and stories from the length and breadth of Ireland and the rumours that do go about of what is happening in the wide world beyond . . .

Now the King is standing on the quay, people all around him, making a deal of noise, chattering, arguing, questioning.

Now we see him, as he talks, from where Maurice and Tomas stand, the little girl Mauraid shy by their side.

THE KING (loudly) Any man who has any spirit, let him take a curragh south to Ventry next Sunday. There is going to be a great race in it.

Shaun Fada speaks from the crowd.

SHAUN FADA They won't go, no fear of it. Don't you see them yourself as lazy as any cripple from here to Belfast?

A VOICE Listen to Shaun Fada. He's so lazy . . .

Another young man, Padrig O'Dala, speaks from the crowd.

PADRIG O'DALA Did you hear of any curragh to be going in for it?

THE KING Indeed there are—a curragh from the Cooas, one from Ballymore and another from Leitriuch.

The people press round the King again, talking and quarrelling, and he is lost to sight.

Children run away, up the village paths, their voices high, we hear:

CHILDREN'S VOICES Are you going to the races? I am now. Are you going, Padrig?

Close, we see Maurice and Tomas and Mauraid.

TOMAS There'll be racing and dancing and games, all day long, and oh, the crowds!

MAURICE Let's go . . .

TOMAS Oh, the devil, let's go . . .

They turn from the quay and begin to climb up towards the village. Mauraid runs by their side.

MAURAID Will you be after taking me too?

TOMAS A girl!

MAURICE Stay at home with you, Mauraid. Let the men be. Girls with their kissing and silly ways . . .

And Maurice and Tomas run on up the path . . .

Now we see the boys and girls of the island all gathered in groups in the village, talking.

Hens cluck and peck in the dirt.

Maurice and Tomas approach the gathering from different ends of the village. They meet on the fringe of a group of boys.

MAURICE (excited) What does your father say?

TOMAS Arra, man, all I got was a clout on the back which threw me out on my mouth.

MAURICE It is the same with me. We'll creep out unknown. Be up with the chirp of the sparrow, so . . .

Tomas winks.

MAURICE Let's be pretending we cannot go, and set up a wail.

They join the group of boys near them . . .

A BOY Are you going to the races?

TOMAS Not me. . . . I had a cuff on the head for the asking.

MAURICE Oh, sorrow, nor me. I was kicked out of the house like a football. It's a cruel world. Are you going yourself?

ANOTHER BOY I am, indeed.

TOMAS Oh, the luck of you.

And Maurice and Tomas go off, conspirators . . .

Dissolve To:

The interior of Maurice's cottage. Moonlight through the window. The cottage is still and silent save for the ticking of the clock.

We hear, very softly:

THE VOICE Tick tock, tick tock . . . believe me, my two eyes never closed . . . tick tock, tick tock . . . all the night awake in the moonlight I was waiting counting the tick tock of the clock . . .

As the voice speaks, we TRACK UP slowly to Maurice's bed at the far end of the room.

Now the light of dawn comes through the window.

THE VOICE . . . waiting for the dawn and the crying of the cock from Padrig's yard. . . . Then—up at a spring!

We see Maurice jump out of bed and begin to dress. He washes himself in a bowl of water, and cuts a bite of bread, and as he quickly dresses and washes and eats we hear:

THE VOICE . . . an egg would not be broken under my feet for the lightness of my tread for fear I might be heard on the floor . . .

Then, stealthily, he opens the door and looks out at the early morning sky and runs down the village as we hear:

THE VOICE Oh, the morning then would have raised the dead from their graves—an edge of golden cloud over Mount Eagle from the sun that was climbing in the east, a calm on the sea, not a stain in the sky and the lark singing sweetly above my head . . .

And now, in the wonderful morning, Maurice and Tomas are running down the village path towards the quay.

A voice calls to them.

A VOICE Goodbye! Goodbye!

They stop for a moment and turn to look up to the top of the path. Mauraid stands there, alone, waving.

They wave back, and run on down to the quay.

A curragh is afloat, three men in it, another man about to climb in.

TOMAS Hurry, hurry. . . . There's Shaun Tigue and Shaun Tomas . . .

They rush up to the curragh.

MAURICE Shaun, will you take us?

SHAUN TIGUE Where are ye going?

TOMAS The races!

MAURICE The races!

Shaun Tigue beckons them to jump in.

Now the curragh is moving through the water, away from the island.

Now, from the curragh, we look back at the quay which is dotted with figures, and at the paths down which other

figures are moving. . . . Now, from the curragh, we look back at the island.

Other curraghs are moving off from the island.

Now the curragh is in mid bay, guillemots, razorbills and petrels on the water, the four men stripped to their shirts rowing hard. Maurice and Tomas sit huddled together.

TOMAS I was never on the sea so early . . .

MAURICE It's you're the old stay-a-bed, boy. The sea's been up and about all night . . .

TOMAS When I am a man, I shall always be riding on the sea. As soon as the dawn I'll be rowing and riding . . .

SHAUN TOMAS When you are a man, you'll be tired of the sea . . .

TOMAS Not me!

MAURICE Not me! . . .

Shaun Tigue, in the bows, points to a big, white-breasted bird floating down with the tide.

SHAUN TIGUE Do you see the loon?

MAURICE Wouldn't you think it was a young gannet now?

Shamus Kate, an old man rowing in the middle, speaks as he rows, without looking up.

SHAMUS KATE That is a bird never stepped on dry land . . .

SHAUN TOMAS And where do they lay then, Shamus Kate?

SHAMUS KATE Out on the sea . . . out on the sea.

SHAUN TIGUE And wouldn't you say that the sea would carry off the egg?

SHAMUS KATE On my oath it does not, for she lays it between her two thighs and she keeps it there till the chick is hatched.

MAURICE I believe you. . . . Oh, the strange things!

Now the curragh is nearing the great cliff of the mainland. They all take off their shoes and draw their trousers above their knees, and leap out and draw the boat over the stones above high water.

And Maurice and Tomas scramble into their shoes again, and are off, off up the cliff.

They run up the cliff, and are gone . . .

Now they are walking towards the chapel in Bally-na-houn.

They stop at the entrance to the chapel, and stand with many people there, but on the edge of the crowd.

MAURICE What is this place?

TOMAS Bally-na-houn, and farther than this I've never been in all my life . . .

He stares in wonder at the chapel.

TOMAS Oh, isn't it a big house! How was it built at all?

The people begin to go into the chapel, and Maurice and Tomas follow.

Inside the chapel, we see them, close, sitting in the last pew.

We hear, as a background, the voice of the priest.

Tomas is staring around him. Suddenly he sees that a man in the front of the chapel has turned his head and is looking at him.

TOMAS (in a whisper) Oh, I'll be killed, my father is over there and he is looking at me.

Maurice looks, and sees that another man has turned his head towards them.

MAURICE (in a whisper) My father, too. And Pierce. Oh, they will kill us . . .

And the two boys bow their heads.
The voice of the priest rises.

Cut To:

The outside of the chapel.

Maurice and Tomas run out and away from the chapel. And then the rest of the worshippers come out. Maurice's father and Tomas's father look around them, but the boys are gone. The fathers smile and walk off with the others.

The boys are climbing the Hill of Classach. We see them, in LONG SHOT, climbing quickly.

Now they are on top of the hill. And, close to them now, we look down with them at the parish of Ventry.

TOMAS (in astonishment) Oh, Maurice!

And we see south over Ventry parish, and Maurhan parish, and north to Kill parish, green, flowered fields on all sides, a lonely house here and there away at the foot of the mountain, Ventry harbour lying south-east, three or four sailing-boats at anchor and a few curraghs beetling across the water.

TOMAS Isn't Ireland wide and spacious now?

MAURICE Oh, she is bigger than all this. I remember Dingle where I was long ago.

TOMAS Where is that?

MAURICE (pointing) To the south of Mount Eagle . . .

TOMAS Lord, I always thought there was nothing in Ireland, only the Blasket, and Dunquin, and Iveragh. . . . Oh, Maurice, it is a *grand* day we will have . . .

And at those words Tomas runs, goat-leaping, down the hill, towards Ventry parish, and Maurice runs after him.

They are walking through Ventry village. Many people are abroad, in their holiday best. Tomas eyes them with admiration.

MAURICE Och, fine as paycocks, look at them strutting. The dandy men.

TOMAS They must be millionaires, surely.

And the two boys walk on up the street, gazing everywhere with pride and wonder, until they reach a shop. They stop and look into the window. Over their shoulders we see the goods in the window: boots, cloth, tobacco, caps, groceries, tarred rope, apples and sweets.

MAURICE There's toffee apples . . .

TOMAS . . . and hard gums, and gobstoppers, and rock . . .

MAURICE Oh, if we had money now . . .

TOMAS Don't mind that . . . isn't it our brothers and sisters will be giving us the pennies?

MAURICE Maybe . . .

They turn from the window, and sit on the ledge, facing the village street.

TOMAS And what's more, when my father is drunk, believe me, it is easy to get money out of him.

They sit for a moment in silence. Visitors to the races pass them up and down the street. A young man with big shiny boots, tightly fitting trousers, a hard hat, a buttonhole, and a girl on his arm, passes by.

TOMAS Who would that gay one be, I wonder . . .?

MAURICE Maybe he is the mayor . . .

TOMAS The devil, they are coming!

Along the street towards them come Maurice's father and his brother Shaun and his sister Maura and Tomas's father . . .

MAURICE (in a whisper) Let on we are perished with the hunger . . .

And the two boys bend their heads as the others reach them.

MAURA Musha, look where the two changelings are . . .

SHAUN And how did you come to be here now . . .?

MAURICE'S FATHER It's no good talking. They would do anything they liked . . .

He puts a ten-shilling note in Maurice's hand and a crown in Tomas's.

TOMAS'S FATHER Don't you know that youth does be gay?

He puts a ten-shilling note in Tomas's hand and a crown in Maurice's.

MAURICE'S FATHER Off with ye now and spend the day as ye please . . .

And, laughing and smiling, the fathers and sister and brothers go off up the street, and Maurice and Tomas rush into the shop . . .

Cut To:

Ventry strand.

There is a great crowd on the strand, and a great noise of hucksters shouting their wares and fair-men shouting their games and people laughing and bargaining and children being children.

The two boys stand and watch the crowd in amazement. A hurdy-gurdy is playing.

MAURICE Did you ever see such a crowd?

TOMAS Oh, Lord, where will food be found for them all?

They walk along the strand, past a hoop-la stall; and a little hand-worked roundabout and a man with rings and a stick to throw them on; and a cripple with a banjo, singing 'Danny Boy' through the noise of the invisible hurdy-gurdy; and a loud solitary man performing card tricks to an audience of half a dozen small children and an ass: he is shouting, 'Hallo, hallo, hallo! Come on, ladies and gentlemen: someone for the lucky club! Hallo, hallo, hallo!' A little farther along the strand is gathered a big bulk of people. Their laughter reaches the boys, and they run towards the crowd, towards the roaring wall of backs, and squeeze in to the front.

With them we see, in a cleared space on the sands before the crowd, a barrel and a man tucked inside it.

People are throwing blocks of wood at the barrel, trying to hit him. But they all miss, and after every shot the man sticks his head up and puts out his tongue.

And the man with the wooden blocks, near the barrel, is shouting:

THE MAN Hurray, hurray, here is Sammy-in-the-Barrel willing to keep his head for any man. Three chances for a penny. Come on! Come on, lads! Come on, kill him, boys!

And Sammy-in-the-Barrel puts out his head and roars.

And Maurice nudges Tomas, and Tomas nudges Maurice, and at last Maurice goes timidly out from the front of the crowd and buys three blocks.

Now, from behind him, we see Maurice take a shot. An old man with flowers in his hat stands, encouraging, by his side.

OLD MAN A great shot, my love . . .

The block hits the edge of the barrel. And before Sammy has had time to put out his head, Maurice aims again. And up Sammy bobs to take it straight on the nose. He lets out a great howl.

The old man dances with delight, crying: 'Musha, my love for your hand for ever.' And the crowd shout. And Sammy drags himself out of the barrel, howling and cursing.

And Tomas rushes from the crowd and grabs Maurice and they both run off down the strand, behind them the noise of the crowd's laughter and Sammy's howling and the old man calling and the music of the hurdy-gurdy and the hoarse shouts of the card-man and 'Danny Boy', fading.

The boys run on over the strand. Suddenly they see four curraghs drawn up in line in the bay, the men stripped and their oars stretched forward.

Now, from behind them, we see them face on, jumping

in the air, till they are on the edge of the strand. The strand is thickly lined with people, clattering, clamouring, disputing, praising, disparaging, like a swarm of bees buzzing on a fine day of harvest.

Now we are close to Maurice and Tomas; they sit on their heels on the rock; across them, across their hair wild in the wind and their sparkling eyes and their whistling lips, we see the four curraghs and the crews, bare to the waists, tensed ready; and we hear, scattered among the voices of the crowd, coming out clear for a moment then drowned again, blown away by the wind or the sea-din, these separate voices:

VOICES A barrel on Ballymore . . .
Cooas Cooas Cooas . . .
My love for Ballydavid . . .
Leitriuch, Leitriuch . . .
whiz by like lightning . . .
Och, the killing of the cattle on you . . .
you are standing on my daughter . . .
Cooas Cooas . . .
A gallon for every baby in Ballymore . . .
Ballydavid . . .

TOMAS Oh, Lord, now which is which in the world?
Who shall we shout for? . . .

A voice shouts loud behind them.

VOICE Shout for Cooas . . .

And, back now from Maurice and Tomas, we see that the voice belongs to an old man standing on a rock just behind them. He is a fat, tipsy old man, a bottle jutting

from his pocket, with his tall hat tied on to his head by string . . .

Maurice wriggles round on his heels to the old man. He shouts through the noise.

MAURICE Which curragh is Cooas?

OLD MAN Oh, the devil take you, it's that one there . . . and Tigue Dermod in the middle of it . . .

The old man waves wildly, and we see the first curragh with a man as tall as a giant in the middle . . .

And we PAN from the first curragh along the other three as the voice of the old man continues shouting through the shouts of the crowd.

THE OLD MAN'S VOICE And that's Ballydavid. And that's Leitriuch. And that's Ballymore.

Now we see the four curraghs.
A gunshot.
The curraghs race through the water.
We hear:

THE OLD MAN'S VOICE Boo, boo, boo!

And we cut to the old man to see him dancing drunkenly on his rock, trying to pull off his hat, but the strings will not allow it.

THE OLD MAN Pull Tigue, Tigue, Tigue . . .

CUT TO the Cooas curragh. The noise of the crowd rises.
CUT TO the four curraghs racing.

MAURICE'S AND TOMAS'S VOICES Pull Tigue . . .

CUT TO Maurice and Tomas, shouting, squatting on their heels, pulling at the wind as if they themselves were racing.

MAURICE AND TOMAS Tigue, Tigue, Tigue . . .

CUT TO the Cóoas curragh.

THE OLD MAN'S VOICE Remember your ancestors! Cooas, Cooas . . .

CUT TO the old man staggering on his rock as he shouts and dances and thrusts black tobacco into his mouth and shouts through the tobacco with the juice running down his chin . . .

And the boys' voices take the cry of 'Cooas Cooas' as we CUT TO:

The four curraghs, the Cooas curragh leading . . .

THE OLD MAN'S VOICE Bravo, Tigue. Bravo, bravo . . .

CUT TO the old man. Waving and shouting and chewing he slips off the rock and is up to his knees in the water . . .

CUT TO the Cooas curragh pulling farther and farther from the other three.

THE OLD MAN'S VOICE (above the noise of the crowd) My love, my love . . .

CUT TO the old man wading deeper into the water.

THE OLD MAN My love to you for ever, oh, flower of men . . .

CUT TO Maurice and Tomas laughing and clapping . . .

CUT TO the Cooas curragh sweeping forwards. Tigue's oars are lifted high to show they are the victors . . .

CUT TO the old man, deep in the water crying.

THE OLD MAN Oh, flower of men! Flower of men!

And at last, with a great heave, he tears his hat off his head and sends it skimming across the water.

Now Maurice and Tomas run, with the whole running crowd, towards the slip.

Now the crowds are at the slip, but they do not stop. They wade out into the sea to the curraghs, stretching out their hands. The old man is leading them.

From a curragh we see the crowd reach the Cooas crew near us, and the old man, hatless, tears pouring from his eyes, grasping the hands of Tigue Dermod and crying, up to his waist in water:

THE OLD MAN Man beyond all men! Musha, love of my heart, my little jug . . .

And other hands are grasping Tigue and the rest of the crew.

Now from the slip we see the curragh, and all inside it, lifted high on a hundred hands and borne towards us.

And now the Cooas crew and the crowd throng from the slip up towards the village. We see them approaching us, the grand Tigue and the dripping-wet old man arm-in-arm at the head of the procession.

Cut To:

Maurice and Tomas, arm-in-arm too, like two small victors, marching at the end of the procession.

The procession moves into the public house.

CUT TO Maurice and Tomas entering the public house.

From the door we look into the packed bar. In the middle of the floor stands Tigue Dermod, a gallon pot in his hand. The old man is handing gallons over from the bar to the

Cooas crew and their supporters laughing and crowding around them.

We move slowly into the bar, towards the counter and the backs of drinking men. We move up to the backs of a group of tall and burly men. And we see, between them, little Maurice and little Tomas.

Between the shoulders of the burly drinkers we see the face of the barmaid smiling down at the two boys, whose heads are only just above the counter.

Now, from behind the counter, we see the heads of the two boys, and hear:

MAURICE (in an unnaturally deep voice) Two pints.

The barmaid laughs.

THE BARMAID Two pints? And have ye money?

MAURICE AND TOMAS We have.

The barmaid pushes two pints across to them. Maurice pays.

From behind the counter still we see the faces of the two boys very close.

MAURICE (to Tomas, in a whisper) Maybe it will make us drunk.

TOMAS Not us.

MAURICE Did you ever drink before?

TOMAS Arra, man, I did, that night they had the barrel in the house of Dermod O'Shea. I drank a pint and never got drunk.

We see Maurice's hand come up with the pint pot. Then his face is buried in it. We see only the heads of the two

boys: Tomas looking at Maurice, and Maurice half hidden behind his pint. Then the pint is lowered.

MAURICE It is good.

Up comes Tomas's pint. Maurice looks on with interest. Down comes the pint.

TOMAS Oh, it has a foul taste, I will never drink it.

MAURICE I will tell you why you get a foul taste in it. It is because you are only sipping it. When you raise your glass to your mouth, make no stop till you have to draw breath.

Both pint pots are now raised. We see only the two heads half hidden behind the pots, and the fingers clutching the handles. Down the pots come.

TOMAS I think you are right. Let us have another.

His hand brings down his pot with two bangs on the counter.

Now, from behind the counter, across the full and empty pots and bottles, and through the crowd of drinkers against the bar, we see the Cooas crew in the middle of the floor, the old man among them. They all have gallon measures in their hands. They are all drunk. The old man stands on his toes and puts his hand on the muscles of Tigue's arm. Tigue is drinking. The great arm is raised to hold the gallon.

THE OLD MAN Musha, musha, isn't strength a fine thing!

Tigue lowers his gallon, and opens his mighty mouth.

TIGUE (in a high, hoarse, weak voice) Up Cooas! Up Cooas!

And he drinks again.

THE OLD MAN Up Cooas! Up Cooas!

Sea-water drips from his clothes.
A hand stretches out from the crowd near him and takes the old man by the hair.

THE OWNER OF THE HAND What the devil is that talk. Ballymore. Ballymore.

Closer now, we see Tigue slowly lower his gallon and raise a great knotted fist.

TIGUE (to the owner of the hand, in his high weak voice) If I let down this sledgehammer you will be dead . . .

They all laugh . . .
The hand lets go of the old man's hair.

THE OLD MAN Cooas, Cooas . . .

CUT TO Maurice and Tomas, seen from behind the counter.

TOMAS I will fight him myself . . .

MAURICE I will hold your coat.

And suddenly the laughter of the bar is blurred. We hear, through the blurred laughter and the thick cries:

THE VOICE A man will always remember the unpleasant things that do happen, and I remember that at that

moment the house began to go round me like a laughing top. . . . There were two Tomases where there was only one before, and he reeling like a man in a high wind . . .

We see Tomas blurred and wavering, and hear Maurice's voice.

MAURICE (in a small voice) Something ails me, Tomas . . .

And the blurred laughter rises.

Now, from the street outside, we see Maurice and Tomas weaving out of the pub.

MAURICE Your face is green, Tomas Over Vaun.

TOMAS Arra man, it is not, I could drink a barrel of it yet . . .

And with these words Tomas falls against a wall. And they both, their backs to us, lean over the wall. And looking at the two boys leaning over the wall, we hear:

THE VOICE Isn't it great folly for any man to be drinking at all, I thought. And isn't it youth that's foolish. And this is the last time, indeed, I thought. And oh, dear, dear, dear . . .

Dissolve To:

Maurice and Tomas walking on the road from the village of Ventry, and away from us.

The sun is sinking.

Many people are taking the road also. They pass us, down the road, into the sunset. The cripple with his banjo under

his arm; an old man pushing his hurdy-gurdy; children silently sucking sweets, half sleeping as they walk, clutching their mothers' or fathers' hands; Sammy-in-the-Barrel, with his barrel on his back; couples arm-in-arm; two drunk tinkers; a young man playing the melodeon as he goes.

Dissolve To:

A curragh moving over the moonlit sea towards the island.

The music of the melodeon is heard in the distance, and the voices of men far off.

Closer now, we see that in the curragh are Maurice's father and brother and sister, and Tomas's father and brother, and Maurice and Tomas in the stern.

And Tomas's brother is singing 'Skellig's Boy', fine and slowly and softly.

We are close now to the stern.

MAURICE (softly, lazily half asleep) Oh, what a day! I never thought there was such a day to be had in all the world! Oh, the games and the singing and the shouting and the racing . . .

Tomas is eating a stick of rock.

TOMAS I'm thinking that sweets are nicer than porter, Maurice . . .

MAURICE (very softly) Such a day . . .

Now in LONG SHOT, the curragh is moving through moonlight near to the island.

And from the distant, unseen mainland, we hear a crying and an echoing of:

'Cooas Cooas
Ho-lee-ho-hup-
Ho-lee-ho-hup',

a crying and an echoing, and then a fading of all sound.

Fade Out:

Fade In:

On the island village. Bright morning light. We move along the village, slowly. As we move, we hear:

THE VOICE Every day was a fine, grand day, sun or rain, for a growing boy on the sweet wild island, I thought then and I think still. . . . Going to school in the mornings, I would wish my neighbours the good day as they were working or setting about their work or sitting in the sun . . .

We are moving along the village slowly: the village awake and at work.

At a cottage door sits, on a sugan chair, the Puncan of the village. His arms are folded, he is chewing tobacco.

MAURICE'S VOICE Good morning to ye, Puncan.

The Puncan spits.

THE PUNCAN Faith, I have seen better . . .

We move on.

Outside a cottage Shaun Teague and Shaun Tomas are setting out their nets in the sun.

MAURICE'S VOICE Good morning, Shaun Teague and Shaun Tomas. How will be the mackerel tonight?

They go on setting the nets.

SHAUN TEAGUE Och, there'll be plenty, with all the gannets about, there was never such a day for them . . .

We move on. Outside a cottage two women are washing clothes in a tub.

MAURICE'S VOICE Good morning to ye, Kate O'Shea and Kate Joseph . . .

They go on washing.

KATE O'SHEA Good morning to ye, Maurice. (To Kate Joseph) Did you ever see such a shirt in all your life? . . . I'm thinking all the dogs in the island have been after chewing the tail . . .

We move on, the words trailing after us. Outside a cottage Padrig O'Dala and Tomas's father and Paddy Tim are mending their lobster pots . . .

MAURICE'S VOICE Good morning to ye.

TOMAS'S FATHER Tell Tomas not to be forgetting the turf after school now . . .

We move on. Outside a cottage, Mauraid is scattering food for the chickens which cluck and peck all around her . . .

MAURICE'S VOICE Good morning, Mauraid . . .

She looks up and smiles.

MAURAID (shyly) Good morning to ye, Maurice. . . . Will you be on the cliff tonight to see the fishing?

We move on.

MAURICE Arra, I will.

MAURAID Shall I look at the fishing with you, Maurice?

We move on, her words trailing after us, on along the clustered village with its men working at pots and nets, sharpening tools, cutting wood, and a clatter of pots and pans and the sound of women's voices coming out of the open cottages . . .

THE VOICE Or on days when there was no school, maybe I would be lying with my daddo, stretched out on the turf, gazing down at the fish-filled sea . . .

And as the voice speaks, the picture DISSOLVES to the cliffs, and we PAN along the cliffs to where the figures of Maurice and the grandfather are lying. Closer to them, we see that the grandfather's eyes are closed in sleep. Maurice is lying on his belly, looking out to sea. It is afternoon.

MAURICE Do you know where I am looking, Daddo? I am looking at America. Oh, it is a fine place surely, all its chimneys touching the sky and everybody rich as captains. . . . Do you think that I will ever be going to America when I am a young man, Daddo?

The grandfather does not answer.

MAURICE Daddo, Daddo . . .

Maurice turns around and looks at the old man sleeping, and we hear:

THE VOICE I remember thinking, looking down at the face of the old man asleep . . .

MAURICE'S VOICE You were one day in the flower of youth, but, my sorrow, the skin of your brow is wrinkled now and the hair on your head is grey. You are without suppleness in your limbs and without pleasure in the grand view to be seen from this hill. But, alas, if I live, some day I will be as you are now . . .

As Maurice gazes at the old man asleep, and as we hear his voice, his lips do not move.

Now Maurice puts out his hand and gently pulls the old man's beard. The old man opens his eyes.

THE GRANDFATHER Oh, Mirrisheen, I fell asleep. Am I long in it?

MAURICE Not long at all.

THE GRANDFATHER And were you speaking to me in my sleep? I seem to have heard your voice, a long way away . . .

MAURICE I was letting on I could see America across the water but all I could see were the waves and the old gulls. . . . Shall I ever be going to America, Daddo?

THE GRANDFATHER Upon my word, it is likely. The young are ever after going away over the water, and they leave the old country cold and poor as a house without children . . .

MAURICE Then I shall stay on the island then, and be a fine fisherman . . .

THE GRANDFATHER Musha, my heart, a man of the sea never had a good life and never will . . .

MAURICE Och, where I shall go then?

THE GRANDFATHER I don't know what way you will go but only to follow your nose in the end of all.

And as he speaks the grandfather is filling and lighting his pipe. And when it is alight Maurice takes out of his own pocket a blackened clay and lights it, bowl to bowl, from the grandfather's pipe. He draws the smoke down deep, and the old man smiles. They lie together, over the noisy sea, smoking and smiling . . .

Dissolve To:

The sea. It is evening.

A bird is flying over the sea.

A bird is flying over many, many curraghs out on the sea.

A bird is flying over the cliffs of the island.

We PAN DOWN on to the cliffs above the strand.

All the women of the village are sitting on their haunches on the edge of the cliff, looking out at the curraghs.

Behind them along the cliff stand old men and children, Maurice and the grandfather and Tomas among them. And we hear:

THE VOICE And on a night of mackerel fishing I would stand among the children and the old men of the village on the cliff over the strand, looking out at the curraghs and hearing the women calling and crying across the water to their men . . .

Close now to the women on their haunches, we hear:

ONE WOMAN Your soul to the devil, throw the head of your net behind them . . .

She is waving her arms, her hair is streaming in the wind . . .

KATE O'SHEA (screaming) Tigue, Tigue, draw in your nets. . . . Och, my pity to be married to you, you good-for-nothing . . .

ANOTHER WOMAN My love for ever, Dermod . . .

KATE O'SHEA Pull to the south with you . . . aie, aie . . .

A voice comes back across the water from the curraghs.

A VOICE May the yellow devil fly away with you . . .

ANOTHER WOMAN Over there! Over there! Patrick, are you stone blind . . .?

And all the women are calling and crying, Kate O'Shea screaming in Irish at the top of her lungs. Their shawls are thrown off, they are flailing the wind with their arms.

Now close to a group of old men near the roaring women, we hear:

FIRST OLD MAN (groaning) Ooooh . . .

SECOND OLD MAN Arra, what ails thee?

FIRST OLD MAN What ails me is a pain in my head listening to those seal-cows of women . . .

THIRD OLD MAN (pointing to Kate O'Shea) Kate is giving out . . .

And Kate is now only croaking curses . . .

SECOND OLD MAN The devil a wonder short of her having a throat of iron . . .

FIRST OLD MAN She can croak louder than a bull-seal can bellow. . . . Och, to be married to a thunderclap . . .

But all the noise of the women is suddenly hushed. We are close now to Maurice and the grandfather.

THE GRANDFATHER Look boy, your father is drawing in his net . . .

And now, on the water, we see Maurice's father in his curragh drawing up the heavy net, every mesh with a fish in it.

The air is loud with the roaring of the sea and the splashing and thrashing of the mackerel and the creak of the curraghs, and through all the noise we hear the voices from the clifftop, close at our ears:

FIRST OLD MAN Musha, it is straight down with fish . . .

SECOND OLD MAN O Lord, O Lord, I doubt he won't land all he had . . .

THIRD OLD MAN Look at him now, he is cutting the net . . .

And, from close on the water, we see Maurice's father cutting his nets.

FIRST OLD MAN Och, the lucky man who gets the cut piece of the net, it is *all* his . . .

And now there is a commotion among the curraghs . . . They all begin rushing up to get the cut piece of the net.

SECOND OLD MAN Lord, Lord, how many mackerel are there then in the sea?

THIRD OLD MAN Praise to God for His gifts . . .

Now the cut piece of the net is drawn up into a curragh.

Now the curragh of Maurice's father is moving across the shining sea.

Now, from the water, close to the cliff, we look up at the women on the edge: a long line of women, squatting on their haunches, shawls over their heads, silent, utterly unmoving against the darkening sky.

And we hear, softly, a woman's voice, the voice of Kate O'Shea:

KATE O'SHEA Praise to God for His gifts.

Dissolve To:

The interior of Maurice's cottage. Close, we see a table piled with apples and oranges and sweets and cakes and tarts, and we hear voices and the laughter of young girls, and the noise of the wind outside.

We TRACK back to see the whole room; the lamps alight, a great peat fire burning, the ticking clock.

Maurice's sisters, Maura and Eileen, are busy at the hearth and over the pots on the fire. Mauraid is scattering white sand on the floor. Other girls are washing plates and setting knives and forks on the table. And we hear:

THE VOICE Praise to God for His gifts,
for a roof and a fire,
a red red fire in the cold winter night
in a house on the edge of the seas.
And the wind be wild and the house do be bright . . .
and the girls do be as busy as bees . . .
Winter had come to the island, and Halloween was upon us, and outside in the blowing dark the boys were hunting thrushes.

And we are outside the house now, on the wild island: the island thrown up black against the phosphorous sea.

We see the bobbing pinpoints of lanterns on the stormy cliffs.

Now we are closer to the cliffs. Three lanterns bob towards us, and then stop. In their light we see the faces of Maurice and Tomas and a youth, Padrig Peg . . .

Padrig lifts his hand out of his oilskin pocket.

We see the hand close, in the lantern light. It is full of dead thrushes.

PADRIG Six.

Tomas puts out his hand.

TOMAS Three here.

Maurice puts out his hand.

MAURICE One. I had my hands around two more but they pecked me like puffins.

A bird's cry—giog-giog-giog—comes out of the darkness.

MAURICE (whispering) What is that?

PADRIG It is a peewit. . . . It's blinded in the light. . . . What did you think it was . . .?

Padrig thrusts his hand into a sparse and wind-blown bush and pulls out the bird still crying. The crying stops.

PADRIG Now we will go down Seal Cove. . . . Quiet! Dead quiet! Take it fine and easy. Don't be afraid.

Cut:

Now we see, from the cliff edge, the three lanterns

bobbing down the cliff. The noise of the sea shouts up to us. Blackness, and the three lights bobbing. Blackness, and the hollow shouting of the sea.

Cut:

Now we are close to the three boys standing in the cove. They move their lanterns slowly in half-circles, illuminating the great rocks and the sea breaking upon them, and we hear:

THE VOICE (softly) You would think the living and the dead were there with the roar of the waves and the hiss of foam . . .

PADRIG Don't be afraid. And don't speak a word till we get across to the patch of soil there. The thrushes are all sleeping now . . .

Now we see the lanterns bobbing across the cove, and across the crevice and the patch of soil.

Close, we see Padrig thrust his hand into the crevice and draw out a thrush. And again. And again. And again. As he is capturing the sleeping birds, so Maurice and Tomas, moving their lanterns to light the battering sea, speak fearfully:

TOMAS Are you afraid at all?

MAURICE The devil a bit . . .

TOMAS It's often my father told me that people had been heard speaking here . . .

MAURICE Oh, whisht, Tomas, do not say that. . . .

TOMAS But they were not people indeed.

MAURICE Faith, it is I know they were not. . . .

Now from another part of the cove we see the wavering lanterns, we see mighty waves roaring in and crashing on the rocks.

Now the three lanterns' lights move up the cliff.

Now from the edge of the cliff we look down on to the three lights climbing up towards us. They come closer. We see, in the lantern light, the three boys scrambling up and clinging on to one another's coat tails.

Now the light is blindingly near us.

And now we are back in the bright cottage, at the end of the room farthest from the door. It is full of boys and girls. The girls are beginning to pluck the sparrows heaped on a table.

The door is flung open. The wind hurling in, and then Maurice and Tomas and Padrig, spindrift-wet and wild-haired.

There is a noise in the house, of the voices of children merry together, and a boy calls out, and his cry is taken up by other voices, as the three enter.

A BOY How many have you?

ANOTHER BOY How many now . . .?

ANOTHER BOY Oh, look at them all . . .

A BOY I got twenty . . .

PADRIG Faith, we have twenty-eight . . .

The three throw their thrushes on to a table . . .

Cut To:

The thrushes roasting on the fire. We hear the music of a melodeon.

PAN ALONG the room slowly from the fire.

A young man is sitting on the floor, back against the wall, playing the melodeon. . . .

Four girls and four boys are dancing a set, which is a dance like the old quadrille.

Boys and girls are sitting at the table, eating. Some stand, eating the little roasted birds with their fingers, watching the dancing.

A girl is sitting on a boy's knee.

Boys are leaping up at a big apple hung by a rope from the rafters, trying to take bites out of it.

Now we are close to a tub of water and a little group of boys and girls, Mauraid and Maurice among them, kneeling around it.

A boy and a girl, at the same time, throw a bean each into the water.

MAURAID (softly, looking at Maurice) If the beans sink in the water, it is a sign that Michael and Brigid do love one another. . . .

THE GIRL BRIGID Och, they are floating. . . .

Mauraid puts a bean in Maurice's hand.

MAURAID Will you try?

Maurice throws the bean into the water, and, as he does so, Mauraid throws one in also.

We see the beans sink in the water. . . .

Now we see close the faces of Mauraid and Maurice.

And now nearly all the boys and girls are dancing. The melodeon is playing a gay tune. Maurice is dancing with Mauraid . . . the music rises.

Fade Out:

Fade In:

On the sea.
The sea is violent.
The sea is still.
The sea breaks against the rocks.
The sea laps the rocks.
A bird is flying over the rough sea.
A bird is flying over the calm sea.
A bird is flying over the sea.
A bird is flying over a single curragh on the sea.
And through this we hear:

THE VOICE The life of a boy a-growing
on the little island
was a great coming and going;
sea loud or silent
as a flock of snowing—
a great coming and going
of the weathers and the birds
and the seasons and the tides
and the singing of the Irish words
and the love of the world besides . . .

And behind the words of the voice, and through the changing voices of the wind and the sea, we hear the same words very softly spoken in Irish.

And now we are close to the curragh, and Maurice and Padrig Peg and the grandfather are sitting and rowing there.

THE VOICE Fishing for mackerel or herring
in the Great Sound
or out after pollock on the Wild Bank
where the cries of a million birds were falling—

riding the wild waves in a Samhain wind
or turning in spring time
to the island of Inish Vickallaun—
There was so much to be done
under the moon and the sun
I cared for nothing
save the island people and the island ways
and the great passing of the days
to the sounding of the waves . . .

Through the words of the voice we see the curragh in the Great Sound, and on the Wild Bank; we see the nets raised, empty and full; we see the curragh moving on choppy and on glassy water.

Now we are close to the curragh again, Maurice and Padrig and the grandfather there with dogs at their feet.

THE GRANDFATHER Do you see the house on the Inish now?

The grandfather points out to the Inish Island.

MAURICE I do not.

THE GRANDFATHER Look carefully at the middle of the island and you will see the sun sparkling on something. . . .

From the curragh, we see the house high on the Inish, caught in the sun.

PADRIG It was there I was born, but only the birds and the beasts do live there now.

THE GRANDFATHER It was once a fine place; now the weeds grow over the paths and all the houses but the one are fallen in the wind and the rain.

Now the curragh is closer to the Inish.

MAURICE Oh, listen, listen.

And we hear from the Inish a noise which takes an echo out of the coves. Gurla-gu-hu-hu-golagon! Gurla-gu-hu-hu-golagon!

THE GRANDFATHER (smiling) Have I not told you often that spirits are to be seen and fairy music to be heard above in the Inish?

MAURICE What is it, Daddo?

THE GRANDFATHER Row on, row on . . .

Again we hear the noise of Gurla-gu-hu-hu-golagon! And its echo in the coves.

Now the curragh is closer to the Inish.

PADRIG Look in now, and keep your eyes on the shingle . . .

And we see, from the water, a great number of seals stretched at full length, sunning themselves on the strand.

MAURICE'S VOICE Och, the seals are sleeping in the sun . . .

THE GRANDFATHER'S VOICE And do you think they are sleeping? Look, boy. . . .

We hear the grandfather and Padrig give a great roar.

The seals raise their heads.

Then away with them to the water, at a wonderful swiftness.

They are spouting in the water.

Now we are close to the strand; not a seal to be seen, save only the rings they have left in their wake.

Now Maurice, the grandfather and Padrig are climbing an old path up the Inish cliff.

Now they are within sight of the house at the foot of a little hill.

The dogs are barking and chasing in and out of the ferns, the tall grass and the bracken. We see rabbits running.

Now we are near the house: a little low hut with a felt roof, ruins in plenty around, weeds and nettles growing among them. The dogs, each with a rabbit in his mouth, run up to the two men and the boy, who take the rabbits away from them.

The men and the boy stand alone on the island in the setting sun.

THE GRANDFATHER The house of Shaun O'Carna stood there.

We see a few pieces of rotten wood in the deep and tangled grass.

And we PAN along the nettled and weedy wilderness. . . .

PADRIG'S VOICE Here my father was born and his father before him—there was the schoolroom there—here were the fine paths where we climbed up to the sheep on the hills—there was singing and dancing and great story-telling in all the fine stone houses—nothing now, nothing, nothing . . .

CUT BACK to the three.

THE GRANDFATHER My sorrow, the day will come when the Blasket is empty too and the houses in ruin and nothing to be seen but the green grass.

MAURICE Faith, never, Daddo.

THE GRANDFATHER The young will be going away from the island, as they went away from this place—over the sea to America, into the towns and the cities . . .

The sun is setting behind the Foze Rocks, and nothing to be seen beyond them but the sky like a great shining wall. Now the three are moving up the little hill, the grandfather's voice continuing.

GRANDFATHER'S VOICE . . . the young will go and the old will be left. And after the old are dead and are on the way to truth, there will be no more fishing nor hunting nor fowling on the island and all will be ruin . . .

We are in the churchyard half way through the grandfather's words, by the old chapel. The two men and the boy are standing in the middle of the churchyard. Above the ruin is a cross.

THE GRANDFATHER (softly) Maybe it will come that *all* the little islands, *all* the little places where men do make a livelihood together out of the gathering of the strand and the hunt of the hill and the fish of the sea will be empty and forgotten . . .

MAURICE I shall stay on the island . . .

THE GRANDFATHER (smiling) You will be most lonely, for you will be the only one. . . . Come now, let us go down to the little house. . . .

And they move away out of the darkening churchyard.

Dissolve To:

The entrance of the Inish house. The grandfather opens the door. Maurice peers past him into the room. We see

the room from Maurice's angle. The walls are whitened with flaking lime. A rabbit scampers out of the room through a hole in the wall.

Now, from the end of the room opposite the door we see the grandfather enter, followed by Maurice and Padrig.

The grandfather crosses to the hearth, his arms full of ferns. He kneels and begins to make a fire of the ferns, saying over his shoulder:

THE GRANDFATHER You be going out and laying traps for the morning, Padrig. Maurice, open two of the rabbits now and hang the other two outside the house. . . .

He lights the fern.

CUT TO Padrig sweeping the floor of the room with a brush of ferns.

CUT TO Maurice skinning the rabbits with his knife.

CUT TO two rabbits hung on a nail outside the window in the deepening darkness.

CUT TO the grandfather, Maurice and Padrig sitting, the old man in a broken chair, the others on fern-heaps on the floor, near the fire, eating from a steaming pot. A lantern is lit. Moonlight streams through the window on to the fire and the seated figures. We hear the noises of the wind and the sea.

They have finished eating. The two men light their pipes.

MAURICE I think I can hear the seals. Olagon olagon.

And we hear, through wind and sea, the far noise of the seals.

MAURICE I wonder, Daddo, would you believe that the seals are people put under magic?

He looks up at the old man, his face white in the moonlight.

PADRIG I have heard it, and upon my word I would believe it, for they are just like old women keening.

THE GRANDFATHER Some years ago there was a man went from the Blasket hunting the seals, about the month of November, because the young seals were born. It was back in Bird Cove it happened. . . .

In moonlight and firelight Padrig and Maurice on the ferns stare up at the old man speaking, his pipe a-glowing.

THE GRANDFATHER When he came out of the boat he saw a young seal up in the head of the cove. He went up after it, stick in hand, as was the custom when they went seal-hunting. . . .

MAURICE (in a whisper) Yes, yes . . .

THE GRANDFATHER And the cow-seal leapt straight at him, snarling. But he clambered up on the ledge on the side of the cove, and when he had reached it, would you believe it, the cow-seal spoke out to him. 'If you are in luck', said she, 'you will leave this cove in haste, for be it known to you that you will not easily kill my young son'; and she went back again to her young one. 'For the sake of the world,' the man cried out to his mate in the boat, 'back her in as quick as you can.' And they were off. And from that day till the day he died, that man never saw a day's health. . . .

MAURICE (softly) Faith, I believe it. . . .

Now in the moonlit room—the fire and lantern out—

the two men and the boy lie, each in a corner, on a bed of ferns. . . .

Close to Maurice, we see that he is not sleeping but that his eyes are wide open. . . . He is looking up at the moonlit night through the cobwebbed window.

We look up at the night from Maurice's angle. The two rabbits hang on a nail outside, at the side of the window, moving slightly in the wind, half-dancing on air.

We see a hand, an arm, pass across the window to the rabbits. The hand lifts the rabbits off the nail.

Very close to Maurice, we see his eyes strained wide, his mouth rounded. We hear his terrified whisper: 'O Lord, save me from the fairies.'

As the hand, dangling the rabbits, slowly draws back across the window and vanishes, Maurice screams.

He leaps to his feet, runs over to Padrig, kicks him.

Padrig turns in bed.

PADRIG (sleepily) What ails you?

MAURICE Oh, oh, Padrig, it is something I saw outside going off with the rabbits . . . a long hooking hand . . .

PADRIG Musha, my pity for your brass head. Go to sleeeep . . .

He turns back to sleep.

Maurice creeps to the corner where the Grandfather lies.

The grandfather is lying on his back, his hands folded across his chest like those of a dead man, his lips smiling.

And Maurice creeps back to his own corner and burrows under the ferns and heaps them over his head until not an inch of him can be seen.

Dissolve To:

The room, in the light of morning, seen through cobwebs: through the cobwebbed window.

Padrig is rising, rumpling his hair and stretching. He goes across the room, through cobwebs, to the grandfather's corner, bends down and taps him on the shoulder.

Now we are inside the room.

PADRIG The bright day is here. Wake up, wake up, Grandfather O'Sullivan . . .

The old man is immediately awake. He sits upright in bed.

THE GRANDFATHER Good morning to ye, Padrig.

He puts out his hand for his pipe and matches on the floor near him.

Now Maurice is coming up slowly out of his refuge of ferns.

Padrig moves away. We hear him whistling.

The grandfather looks across to where Maurice's head is visible among the ferns.

THE GRANDFATHER And what were the delusions that came on you last night, Mirrisheen?

MAURICE (in wonder) You were asleep. Can you hear what is said when you are sleeping?

THE GRANDFATHER Never better.

Maurice scrambles out of the ferns, and stands brushing them off him in the middle of the room.

Still we hear Padrig's whistling.

MAURICE Upon my word, they were no delusions at all, but I saw the long arm and the hand and I saw it take the rabbits off the nail. . . .

THE GRANDFATHER Don't you know that no one dead would take the rabbits?

He is smoking happily now, a venerable old man sitting on the floor, up to his waist in ferns.

MAURICE I don't know, but alive or dead he took them . . .

THE GRANDFATHER And what is the living man on this island?

The whistling, off, stops.

PADRIG'S VOICE Faith, Maurice, you were right.

Now, from the end of the room, we see Padrig standing at the open door, the bright morning and the wild fields behind him, holding a tin in his hand.

PADRIG The rabbits are gone. A sailor must have come ashore and taken them, and look, what did he do but slip a tin of tobacco under the door, as is the custom with them. . . .

MAURICE Why didn't the dogs be barking outside?

THE GRANDFATHER Dogs *like* sailors.

MAURICE But what would a *living* sailor be doing on the Inish in the middle of the night?

THE GRANDFATHER (in the voice of a man ending an argument for once and for all) And what would a *dead* sailor be doing with tobacco. . . . We will set out now. . . .

And he jumps up out of the ferns, nimble as a young man. . . .

Now, in LONG SHOT, we see the grandfather, Maurice and Padrig walking through the thigh-deep grass of the Inish.

We hear the dogs barking.

We see the three figures bending every now and then and lifting up a rabbit and tying the rabbit on to the pole which Padrig carries across his back. The pole is hung with rabbits like dark, furry washing on a line.

We see them on the edge of the cliff.

One by one, they go over the edge of the cliff.

Now there is nothing to be seen on Inish Vickallaun but the wild fern and grass blowing and the birds flying and crying over.

SYNOPSIS OF THE SECOND HALF OF

'TWENTY YEARS A-GROWING'

HERE follows a sequence of a wake on the island. In this sequence we see, for the first time, the grown-up people of the island all together drinking and story-telling. And we see the life of the island for the last time through a child's eyes (for in the next sequence Maurice has grown from childhood to adolescence). We see and feel the fears of a child at the coming and the appearance of death. His imagination is stirred by the stories of his grandfather at the wake: stories of strange deaths and strange risings, stories as old as the island, as old as Ireland, as old as peasants. And one of these stories we see enacted: a short half-dream sequence to balance the first dream of the butterfly and the skull.

After the drinking and the story-telling, the singing and the keening, we DISSOLVE to the coffin being carried through the island and down the windy paths to the sea. And as we see the coffin descending, we hear the voice of Maurice O'Sullivan saying that a part of him, too, died that night: a whole, deep part of his life: his childhood.

Now we see a funeral procession of curraghs across the water as we FADE OUT.

We FADE INTO a fine and sparkling morning on the island. As the CAMERA PANS along the island we hear Maurice's voice saying: 'Oh, it was a grand and lovely thing indeed,

growing up by that old loud sea, growing from a child into a youth. . . .' And the CAMERA reaches Maurice as a youth. He is looking after sheep on the cliffside, the sun yellowing in the west and a lark singing above. He sees lambs gambolling together.

And suddenly, over the brow of the cliff, appears a man. His coming-up is similar, in feeling and unexpectedness, to that of the King of the Island when Maurice first leaves Dingle and comes home. And just as the appearance of the King was the announcement to Maurice of a new and marvellous life, a life old as the hills and without any doubts at all, so the appearance of the man now announces the beginning of doubt, introduces into the idyllic timelessness of the island the first sound of the time-bound outer world and the first suggestion of adult responsibility.

The man is an Englishman. (In O'Sullivan's book he is George Thompson, the translator of *Twenty Years A-Growing*.)

The next sequence shows the growth of friendship between Maurice and the Englishman. Maurice is showing and explaining his own world; he is, in fact, putting forward the ageless argument for the dignity and beauty of life in the small peasant community. The Englishman is explaining *his* own world: the world of the vast community: the modern world: paradise of money and the clock. (It should be mentioned here that the Englishman will *not* be made an unsympathetic character: he is not the serpent in the garden but the voice of the world beyond the Blasket horizon. He is the voice that is heard in all man's growing up. 'There is a world beyond your own,' that voice has always said.)

And now we see life on the island from Maurice's new viewpoint. We see him trying to adjust his new ideas to the peasant tradition. We see and hear the inevitable conflict: shall he remain on the island, knowing that the life of small

peasant communities is noble and suffering, dignified and poor, beautiful and bitter, or shall he go into the wide, unknown world, forsaking his tradition?

And we build his relationship with Mauraid, now a child no longer but a young girl. And the conflict of ideas and the love of boy and girl rise together to a climax. Through all Maurice's adolescent life we are watching the departure of youth from the island, discontent and emigration. And the climax comes with Mauraid's decision to go to America along with the rest; and her going.

Now Maurice, of all the young people, of all those whom we saw in the happy early sequence, is alone on the island.

The Englishman appears again, to introduce the final argument. His is the voice of the outer world, the voice and the call, not necessarily of America but even of the outer world of Ireland itself. This voice and call are strengthened, in Maurice's mind, by his wish to join Mauraid. But against this is his own conviction of the rightness and the goodness of life on the island. And this conviction is expressed for him, finally, by the grandfather; by the enduring figure, the eternal peasant.

And Maurice remains upon the island. He faces poverty, privation, labour and loneliness; he faces a life without Mauraid and without help; but he is sure.

THIS beautiful, tender and imaginative film script by Dylan Thomas has only recently been discovered.

'Here is the egg of a seabird—lovely, perfect and laid this very morning.' So wrote E. M. Forster when *Twenty Years A-Growing* by the Irish writer, Maurice O'Sullivan, was first published in English in 1933 (it was originally written in Irish). It is upon this well-known autobiography that Dylan Thomas based his unfinished film script dealing with the first half of the book, and in it he has preserved the freshness which evoked Mr Forster's words.

The script is fully characteristic of the dramatist of *Under Milk Wood* (Dent, *Twelfth Impression*), for here as in that notable 'play for voices' Thomas demonstrates his fine, uncluttered sense of drama, combining the poetic with a simple, profoundly moving truth. The material he had to work on was of considerable fascination, for it portrays O'Sullivan's childhood on the lonely Blasket Islands, which lie off the Kerry Coast in the extreme south-west corner of Ireland. They are now uninhabited except for occasional summertime holiday-makers. The district is still Irish-speaking.