

## 27 Lower Patrick Street

**Richard Maxwell**

JACK DOYLE wasn't in the best of humour as he went down the fields to look at his cattle. He hadn't slept a wink all night; a toothache, it was paining him for a couple of weeks now and he had to do something about it and would have, but for his fear of going to the dentist. He had teeth out a few years earlier and swore he would never go back.

"You will have to go and get it out," his wife Kate said when he came back. He had only two teeth left and tried everything to ease the pain. Jack and Kate had their family reared, but they were all gone. Emigration had taken its toll. The two boys, Tom and Jim were in London and Jane was in New York. Jack, a man in his early seventies had just three cows left, something to keep him occupied. He dreaded the night ahead.

"There is a bus going into town tomorrow," Kate said firmly. "And you are going to be on it." When she made up her mind about something, nobody would change her. Jack was up early after another sleepless night. He looked at the cattle, shaved, got dressed and started walking the short distance to the main road.

"Don't forget the seeds," Kate shouted after him. A great gardener, Jack had the garden dug up and ready for sowing. Being an old age pensioner he had the free travel and a medical card as well. At ten o'clock the bus arrived. There were a good few on it. He went down to the back. Joe Reilly was sitting in a seat on his own. They lived just a few fields apart, but hadn't seen each other for a while. Joe was also an OAP and had a medical card as well.

"Any news Jack?" Joe said as he sat down beside him. "It's nice to get away for the day."

"I am not looking forward to it" Jack

replied glumly. "I'm going to the dentist. I haven't slept a wink the last few nights."

"I am going to have my eyes tested," Joe said. "And while I'm in town I'll call to the chiropodist and kill two birds with the one stone. I have a corn on the sole of my foot and like your toothache it's killing me."

"I have a few things to get," Jack said when they arrived in town. "I'll meet you in the Corner House at one o'clock and we'll have a drink."

He knew he'd need a couple before he went to the dentist. Jack got his messages and Joe was in the Corner House when he arrived. Two bottles of Guinness and two half ones was the first order.

"The same again," Jack said when they finished the first round.

"My appointment is at two o'clock," Joe said.

"I'll go to the dentist," Jack announced. Both men got up and went their separate ways.

"We will meet again here until bus time," Jack said. He walked down the street. The toothache seemed to ease when he got to the dentist's. On arriving at the door a man came out with a hankie over his mouth. That was enough, his past experience there flashed across his mind. He made a U-turn and headed back for the Corner House, had another drink. About an hour later Joe arrived.

"Well how did you get on Jack?" he asked.

"He wouldn't take it out," was the reply. "An abscess, he might take it out next week." There was no way he would tell Joe the truth.

"I got my eyes tested," Joe said. "The optician put drops in, my sight is blurred and I got it hard enough to get back this far. My glasses will be ready next week. I'll go down to the chiropodist now, you had better come along as my eyesight isn't back to normal."

The two men got up and left the Corner House and headed down Main Street.

"I am not too sure of the location,"

Joe said. "But we will enquire. I was there a few years ago, but my eyesight was better then," he added. A middle aged lady came towards them.

"Can you tell me where the chiropodist's place is please?" he asked politely.

"Go down to the Garda Station, turn left down Lower Patrick Street, pass the bicycle shop on your right and I'm nearly certain it's the second door from there."

Joe thanked her and continued on as directed, knocked on the door of No 27 a couple of times before it was opened by a middle aged Asian lady.

"Good day gentlemen," she said in broken English. "Come in and take a seat."

The two men went in and sat down. A young man came down the stairs and went out the front door.

"He is very young to have trouble with his feet," Jack remarked casually.

"It's this auld corn that's bothering me," Joe said. "I had it out a couple of years ago, but the dammed thing is back." None of this seemed to be getting through to the middle aged lady. There was clearly a language barrier between them.

"It's fifty euro each," she said. "And you pay in advance."

"That's an awful lot," Joe replied.

"I thought the medical card would cover it. Jack is all right, he only came along to help. I got drops in my eyes and my sight isn't the best."

Joe opened his wallet and gave her the fifty euro. He turned to Jack, "I can't stick it any longer, I just have to get it taken out."

"I'd like a receipt," he said, but got no response.

He turned again to Jack. "I always keep the receipts. I don't want to be getting a bill for this in a month's time."

"Go upstairs and it's the second door on your right," the lady said.

"You come up with me," Joe said to Jack. "My sight isn't back to normal yet and I might need help."

The two went upstairs. A young

woman also of Asian origin opened the door, and the two men walked in.

"I am sorry," she said in broken English. "I can only take one at a time."

"I'll wait downstairs," Jack said. "Gimme a shout if you need help."

"And now sir," she said. "I would like to make you happy."

"And you will," Joe replied. "If you cut this damm'd thing out. I haven't slept a wink for a week."

By this time he had the sock and boot off. "It's as hard as the Hob of Hell," he said, holding his leg up. "And very sore when you touch it."

The young lady seemed puzzled by all this. Suddenly, there was a lot of noise from downstairs, and the young lady quickly left the room. Joe went to the door and looked out, another young lady came out from the next room and hurried downstairs. With sock and boot in one hand Joe hobbled down after her. Three uniformed members of the Garda were just arresting the three ladies.

"I am charging you with running a brothel," said the sergeant "Anything you say may be taken down and used in evidence."

Joe and Jack were stunned.

The Sergeant turned to the two men. "And what are two old fogies like you doing here?"

"I thought the chiropodist worked here," Joe answered in a feeble voice. "I only wanted the corn taken off," he said, pointing to his bare foot.

"I got my eyes tested as well and Jack came along to help. I was nearly blind after getting in the drops."

"The chiropodist moved from 27 Lower Patrick Street to Main Street three weeks ago. We had this place under surveillance following a tip off," the sergeant said.

The three women were taken to a waiting patrol car.

"Put back on your sock and boot," he told Joe. "The two of you will have to

come to the station."

"What about my fifty Euro?" Joe asked innocently.

"We now have evidence that money changed hands," the sergeant replied.

The two men were taken to a second patrol car. A crowd had gathered on the street wondering what was going on.

"Keep your head down," Jack whispered, as they were driven away. "I hope nobody we know saw us or we are finished. Why the hell did you mention the fifty Euros?"

"I don't know, I just don't know," Joe whispered back.

They were taken to the Garda Station. "I am not saying anything," Jack said when the sergeant asked for a statement. "We are the innocent victims of all this. We were in the wrong place at the wrong time."

"Ok," the sergeant said. "But I have to make a report on this. I'll have a word with the 'Super' and see what I can do" He left the room. Ten minutes later he came back.

"I talked to the 'Super'. That's the last you will hear about it."

Both men heaved a huge sigh of relief. "What about my fifty Euros?" Joe asked for a second time.

"I'm afraid that's the last you will hear about that too," the sergeant replied with a smile.

The bus was pulling in at the Corner House when they arrived. They went down to the back and sat down.

"We'll go back next week," Joe said. "I'll get an appointment with the chiropodist, my glasses will be ready, and you can get your tooth out."

"I'll see you next week," Jack said as the two men parted.

"Well, how did you get on Jack?" Kate said when he arrived home.

"He wouldn't take it out," Jack replied. "An abscess. I have to go in again next week."

"There was a lot of excitement about

town today," Kate said. "Did you hear about it?"

"No," Jack answered quickly. "What happened?"

"It was on the news at four o'clock," she replied. "The Garda raided a brothel in Lower Patrick Street, arrested three women. An eyewitness told a reporter that they were taken away in a patrol car. Shortly after that he saw two men brought out and driven away in another Garda car."

"Two young men I suppose?" Jack asked.

"No," Kate answered. "According to the eyewitness they were two elderly men wearing caps and one of them walked slowly with a limp, and I nearly forgot to tell you Jack that the eyewitness also said that a photographer from the local paper was there as well.

I am looking forward to next week's edition," she said gleefully. "Aren't you Jack?"

It fell on deaf ears. "What's the world coming to?" She continued. "Two auld eejits with more money than sense. I hope they are named and shamed. God help them if they are married and their wives see them. I for one wouldn't like to be in their shoes." Jack's heart sank right down into his boots.

"I'll go and see the cattle," he said in a feeble voice. He saw Joe in the distance checking his, called him over.

"Did you hear we were on the news and had our pictures taken?" He asked when they met.

"Mary heard it," Joe replied. "We'll go back next week as we arranged and hope for the best."

"How did I get into such a mess?" Jack said to himself as he walked home. "Out of the frying pan and into the fire."

He blamed the toothache, Joe's corn, his eye drops and everything he could think of that brought him next or near *27 Lower Patrick Street*.