

# Finn McCool and His FEARLESS WIFE

By Kristi Thielen

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**Pioneer**  
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# FINN MCCOOL AND HIS FEARLESS WIFE

By KRISTI THIELEN

## CAST OF CHARACTERS (In Order of Appearance)

	<i># of lines</i>
SHILLELAGH .....	45
leprechaun; hot-tempered, brash, daring	
SHANNON.....	27
leprechaun	
SHAY.....	44
leprechaun; Shannon's twin	
MRS. SULLIVAN.....	22
washerwoman	
MRS. RAFFERTY .....	25
another	
THE SWEENEY SISTERS*	
EILEEN .....	17
ambitious but bad singer	
COLLEEN .....	14
another	
ROSALEEN.....	13
another	
CONNOR.....	19
their son	
FIONA.....	18
their daughter	
FINNEGAN MALONE.....	14
farmer	
KERRY MALONE .....	17
his wife	
CAITLIN DONAHUE.....	15
schoolteacher	
HER PUPILS* .....	10
ASHLING	
BRENNNA	
CECILY	
DARA	
MAYOR O'SHEA .....	22
mayor of Limerick	
BRIDGET O'SHEA .....	18
his vain wife	
REGAN DRISCOLL.....	14
seamstress	
HALEY KEENAN .....	14
her widowed sister from Dublin	
ALANA REILLY .....	15
rich lady; pompous and stuffy	
DR. TALULA O'MALLY .....	26
physician	
DARBY NIVEN.....	20
candle maker	
MURPHY QUINN .....	21
baker	
CASSIDY O'ROURKE .....	19
general store merchant	
OONA MCCOOL .....	75
his wife	
FINN MCCOOL.....	49
inveterate boaster	



BANSHEE QUEEN .....	ruler of the fairies	7
HER FAIRY COURT:		
SALVANI.....	a Romanian fairy	2
CANDELAS.....	an Italian fairy	2
NISSE .....	a Norwegian fairy	2
PILLIWIGN.....	an English fairy	2

#### \*FLEXIBLE CASTING

Several or all of CAITLIN'S PUPILS can be played by boys, in which case their names can be ADAM, BRIAN, CECIL and DANIEL.

The SWEENEY SISTERS can become the SWEENEY BROTHERS, in which case their names can be CULLIN, PIERCE and VAUGHN.

#### SETTING

Time: In the 1910s

Place: The town square of Limerick, Ireland

Along the UPSTAGE wall is an outline of a small Irish town, with trees and modest homes or backdrops suggesting the exteriors of buildings. There is a stone wall visible, too, and three large blocks of stone beside it. DOWN LEFT and RIGHT are trees or bushes behind which actors can hide. These set pieces should mask actors' exits and entrances so those who are hiding can leave the stage and come back unseen. Entrances can be made LEFT, RIGHT and through the AUDIENCE—do whatever is feasible in your particular space.

## FINN MCCOOL AND HIS FEARLESS WIFE

### ACT ONE

#### Scene One

1 AT RISE: The FORESTAGE IS DARKENED and the BACKSTAGE LIT so that we see the outline of a small Irish town with trees, buildings, modest homes. SHILLELAGH comes down the aisle from the AUDIENCE and up ONTO THE STAGE. She is brash and daring, with a hot temper. She  
5 mutters to herself as she moves, obviously very angry with someone.

**SHILLELAGH:** Where is she? The devil take her, I say! She promised to be here and she's not. A fine how-do-you-do this is! There's nothin' worse than a leprechaun won't keep her word to another leprechaun. (*Having arrived ONSTAGE, SHILLELAGH looks this way and that, then addresses the AUDIENCE in exasperation.*) Have you seen her? Dressed all in green she is, so you'd know her directly. Answers to the name of "Shannon." Bah! I'll give her what fer when I find her. We were goin' to have such a lovely day, a-lyin' here and watchin' all the tomfoolery that goes on in Limerick, thanks to  
10 that great braggart, Finn McCool. But do I want to watch it meself? No, says I! If only Shannon were here. Why, I'd be willin' to part with half me gold just to see her here, this instant. (*Thinks about this statement a bit.*) Yes, I would. (*SHANNON leaps up from some hiding place and confronts SHILLELAGH.*)

20 **SHANNON:** Aha! I heard that, Shillelagh. Every word. So here I am. So give me half your pot of gold and make it quick now!

**SHILLELAGH:** What? Hiding from me? Just so's I say somethin' rash and then you'd hold me to it. I'll give ye none of me gold—not a piece!

25 **SHANNON:** (*Sly.*) There's nothin' worse than a leprechaun won't keep her word to another leprechaun.

**SHILLELAGH:** Bosh! Well, I'm not givin' up me gold that easy-like. I've got a test for you, Shannon.

**SHANNON:** I can pass any test.

30 **SHILLELAGH:** Can you, now? Well, I'm goin' to put somethin' from me pocket behind me back. I want you to guess what it is. An' if you do, I'll give you half me gold, surely. (*Takes something from her pocket and puts it behind her back. She does a little dance to distract SHANNON, moving this way and that, but facing SHANNON at all times.*)

35 **SHANNON:** Now let me think, let me think. Hmmmm. (*Slowly stalks SHILLELAGH about the stage. The two move about until SHANNON arrives at a tree or other protuberance that she quickly ducks behind.*)

- 1 **SHILLELAGH:** Shannon! Hey! What's the matter? Where'd you go?  
(*SHAY pops up, acting like Shannon.*) There you are. Now quickly—  
don't be toyin' with me.
- SHAY:** Oh, my. What does Shillelagh have behind her back? I think it  
5 could be—a—pigeon feather.
- SHILLELAGH:** (*Registers amazement and brings her hand out from  
behind her back. She is indeed holding a pigeon feather. Suspicious.*)  
Sooooo... an' how did you know that, I wonder?
- SHAY:** I'm the cleverest leprechaun in all of Ireland, Shillelagh, and the  
10 richest, too, for I have all me own pot of gold an' half of yours!
- SHILLELAGH:** So you have, so you have. But it may not last long.
- SHAY:** An' what's next for us on this fine day? Why did you want to  
meet me here, anyway?
- SHILLELAGH:** For a bit of fun, of course. To watch the folk of Limerick  
15 and see what happens next to Finn McCool. (*Several TOWNSPEOPLE  
begin to filter silently ONSTAGE, engaged in unheard conversation.  
This continues under the following dialogue.*)
- SHAY:** Finn McCool? That good-fer-nothin' braggart? What foolish  
boast has he made this time?
- 20 **SHILLELAGH:** Only that he's the strongest man in all of Limerick. So  
he says.
- SHAY:** Does he now? And him bein' as weak as a kitten? How will he  
get hisself out of this fine kettle of fish?
- SHILLELAGH:** That's what we're about to see. Come, Shannon, let's  
25 find a good spot fer watchin' the silliness! (*SHAY doesn't respond.*)  
Shannon? Shannon? Haven't ye heard me? You do recall yer name  
is Shannon?
- SHAY:** (*Confused.*) What? Oh, yes. Of course that's my name. I haven't  
forgotten. Where shall we hide?
- 30 **SHILLELAGH:** (*Points to a spot away from SHANNON'S hiding place.*)  
Here—quickly! An' not a moment too soon. Mornin's just dawned  
on Limerick and the fun is about to begin. (*She and SHAY hide.*  
[*NOTE: They now EXIT and will RE-ENTER toward the end of the  
scene so they appear to have been in the bushes all along.*] **SOUND**  
35 **EFFECT:** A ROOSTER CROWS. More TOWNSPEOPLE filter ONSTAGE  
into the background, miming conversation and activity. SULLIVAN  
and RAFFERTY step DOWNSTAGE and into a pool of light. Each  
carries a basket of washing and staggers a bit under the load. They  
sit and begin to scrub laundry against washboards.)
- 40 **SULLIVAN:** Ah, me. The sun's barely up and already me back is achin'.  
And me feet. The wanderin' miseries, that's what I have. The  
wanderin' miseries.



1 **RAFFERTY:** Sure an' we'd be better off if we weren't washerwomen.  
An' the only washerwomen in all of Limerick, at that. Dirty clothes,  
dirty clothes, every day!

**SULLIVAN:** No sooner do we wash 'em, then they're back in the basket  
5 again, dirty. And do we make good money for our labors?

**RAFFERTY:** We do not! Especially when it's the dirty clothes of that  
high and mighty Bridget O'Shea. Married to the mayor so she  
thinks she can treat us like we're nothin' at all. (*Lifts the heavy  
basket.*) Oh! If only I was as strong as Finn McCool. Then I'd lift this  
10 basket as if it were a dainty teacup.

**SULLIVAN:** (*Lifts her basket.*) Ohhhh, me back! An' where's me darlin'  
son, Clancy, to help me?

**RAFFERTY:** An' me own son, Sean, to help me?

**SULLIVAN:** Clancy! Clancy? Where are ye?

15 **RAFFERTY:** Sean! Sean! Come help yer mother now. Sean? (*She and  
SULLIVAN cross UPSTAGE out of the light. TOWNSPEOPLE continue  
to cross the UPSTAGE, conversing soundlessly with each other. The  
SWEENEY SISTERS—ROSALEEN, EILEEN and COLLEEN—cross  
DOWNSTAGE into the light. EILEEN has a book on her head for a  
20 posture exercise.*)

**ROSALEEN:** That's it. Back straight, head up. You need perfect posture  
if yer to be a great actress on the stage in Dublin!

**EILEEN:** (*Dreaming big.*) An' now, I make me entrance in Act One, in my  
debut as Juliet... (*The book falls from her head with a bang.*) Well,  
25 maybe posture isn't so important for Shakespeare.

**COLLEEN:** It's our singin' we should be workin' on. A singin' actress  
is a fine thing indeed.

**ROSALEEN:** An' with those singin' lessons we're takin' from Mrs.  
Reilly, we're soon to be the greatest performers ever came from  
30 Limerick!

**EILEEN:** Quick now, let's practice that new song. The one they're singin'  
in America. (*The three stand close, clear their throats, smooth their  
skirts and assume comically stiff postures. As they do, CONNOR  
steps DOWNSTAGE into the light, across the stage. He carries a sack  
35 of seed potatoes and a hoe. When the SWEENEY SISTERS sing, he  
looks off into the AUDIENCE, listening to them.*)

**SWEENEY SISTERS:** (*Sing horribly out of tune.*)

Sweet Rosie O'Grady,  
My dear little Rose.  
40 She's my steady lady,  
Most ev'ryone knows.  
And when we are married,

1 How happy we'll be.  
I love Sweet Rosie O'Grady and  
Rosie O'Grady loves me!

**CONNOR:** (*Teases them.*) Who let those cows out of the barn?

5 **SWEENEY SISTERS:** (*Ad-libs of indignation.*) Well! I never. How dare he? My word!

**ROSALEEN:** Ooh, that Connor Malone! Nothin' but the son of a potato farmer, an' he thinks he can make fun of our singin'!

**EILEEN:** When we get to Dublin and become great actresses—

10 **COLLEEN:** —an' we will!

**EILEEN:** —he'll be sorry fer laughin'. We're goin' to be the most famous persons ever come from Limerick.

**COLLEEN:** As famous as Finn McCool. The strongest man in all Ireland.

15 **EILEEN:** Says Finn himself. I heard it from Mrs. Rafferty, the washerwoman. Finn can lift not one but three cornerstones from the village wall without strainin' a single muscle.

**COLLEEN:** He's the finest man in all Limerick. So take that, Connor Malone!

20 **ROSALEEN:** Eileen, Colleen, let's practice our singin' on the way to Mrs. Reilly's house fer our lesson.

**EILEEN:** She'll hear us comin' up the street.

**COLLEEN:** So will half the town. An' what a pleasure that will be fer them! (*The SWEENEY SISTERS move UPSTAGE and out of the light, singing "Sweet Rosie O'Grady" in their terrible caterwaul. CONNOR laughs at the sound. He is joined by his sister, FIONA, who carries a sack of potatoes.*)

**FIONA:** Connor! Don't be pullin' faces at the Sweeney sisters. We've got work to do.

30 **CONNOR:** But, Fiona, did you hear that singin'? It's bad enough to curdle milk!

**FIONA:** Never mind. Have you done as we planned?

**CONNOR:** I have. Asked Cassidy O'Rourke if I can work at his shop until the end of the day tomorrow, after me chores are done at home, an' he said yes. How did ye fare with Darby Niven?

35 **FIONA:** He'll take me on as an assistant candle maker for the day and be happy to do it. I'm to be at his shop first thing in the mornin'.

**CONNOR:** We'll have the money in no time!

**FIONA:** Hush now. Mother and father are right behind me. They musn't hear! (*KERRY and FINNEGAN step DOWNSTAGE into the light. They, too, carry sacks or parcels or shopping items.*)

- 1 **FINNEGAN:** An' what are the two of you gabbin' about?
- FIONA:** (*Quick, to cover.*) Oh! Well... all about Finn McCool and his mighty boast.
- CONNOR:** He's the strongest man in Ireland and Scotland combined.
- 5 He can carry six cornerstones from the village wall and smile while he does it.
- KERRY:** Splendid indeed. But fer now, I'd like to see youse two carry those sacks of potatoes to Mayor O'Shea's house. And be quick. Yer father and me want to get back to the farm before dinnertime.
- 10 **FINNEGAN:** Kerry, let's go to Murphy Quinn's for a loaf of soda bread.
- KERRY:** An' to Mr. O'Rourke's fer some thread and new sewin' needles.
- FINNEGAN:** (*To FIONA and CONNOR.*) Meet yer mother and me at the candle makers when yer done. (*He and KERRY begin to leave; KERRY pauses for a moment.*)
- 15 **KERRY:** Six cornerstones? (*FINNEGAN and KERRY EXIT. FIONA and CONNOR watch them leave.*)
- CONNOR:** They're goin' to be so surprised, Fiona!
- 20 **FIONA:** Hush, Connor. (*CONNOR and FIONA scurry OFF into the shadows. From the darkened part of the stage, we see CAITLIN, carrying a wooden yardstick, leading her PUPILS along. They skip and chant with great enthusiasm.*)
- PUPILS:** Finn McCool is bold and brave,
- 25 He's our hero true.  
Limerick's blessed by such a man  
Can do what he can do!
- CAITLIN:** (*Sharply.*) Children! That's quite enough! Ashling, Brenna, Cecily, Dara—step lively. And when we get to school, take out your spelling books and get to work right away.
- 30 **PUPILS:** Yes, Miss Donahue. (*The PUPILS skip OFF, repeating their chant. We hear CONNOR laugh and then see SULLIVAN and RAFFERTY cross the stage with their heavy loads. THE SWEENEY SISTERS are seen in silhouette; ROSALEEN now is trying to walk with the book on her head. It falls and the three exclaim before they disappear into the shadows. As they go, MAYOR and BRIDGET O'SHEA step DOWNSTAGE into the light.*)
- 35 **BRIDGET:** ...and it isn't too much money, so I resent the implication!  
No one expects the mayor's wife to wash her own laundry, Alan.
- 40 **MAYOR:** I wasn't elected mayor because everyone in Limerick admires a spendthrift. Folks expect me to live like a common, everyday man—humble and economical.



1 **BRIDGET:** Economical! Ha! With all the money you spend on  
waistcoats? You're as vain as a peacock. (*Looks at herself in a  
small mirror from her handbag.*) And I should know. (*Snaps the  
mirror shut and drops it in her bag.*) And as for humble—why, you're  
5 no more humble than Finn McCool, him with his “I can lift eight  
cornerstones.”

**MAYOR:** I heard seven.

**BRIDGET:** Eight I heard, or me name isn't Bridget O'Shea. And I  
wonder what Finn's wife, Oona, has to say about all this talk?

10 **MAYOR:** Never mind Finn's wife. It's me own wife we were discussin'.  
You an' the money you waste on those gossipy washerwomen.  
When we should be settin' an example for all of Limerick by livin'  
modestly and washin' our own clothes.

**BRIDGET:** Oh, I'll wash me own clothes, all right. Just as soon as you  
15 wash all yer fancy clothes. The ones sewn specially for you by that  
seamstress, Regan Driscoll.

**MAYOR:** (*Caught.*) Now, Bridget, that's an entirely different matter.

**BRIDGET:** (*She's won the argument.*) Ha! (*The O'SHEAS move OFF into  
the shadows, still bickering. The PUPILS ENTER and run by again,  
giggling and chased by a harried CAITLIN, and EXIT. KERRY and  
20 FINNEGAN ENTER and EXIT, consulting a shopping list. SULLIVAN  
and RAFFERTY cross the stage, carrying bundles of laundry. They  
call for their sons as they go.*)

**RAFFERTY:** Sean? Sean! Where are ye?

25 **SULLIVAN:** Clancy? Clancy! Come help me now! (*Begins to cross  
UPSTAGE and OUT but not before she catches sight of the bickering  
BRIDGET. SULLIVAN gives BRIDGET an ungainly and abrupt curtsy;  
BRIDGET haughtily nods her head in response. REGAN, carrying a  
sewing basket, steps DOWNSTAGE into the light. She is accompanied  
30 by her sister, HALEY, who is from Dublin and is dressed a bit more  
elegantly than her sister. The two laugh as if they have just shared  
a joke.*)

**REGAN:** But, it's a lovely little town, even so. Though not so grand as  
Dublin, I admit. I hope you'll enjoy your stay with me.

35 **HALEY:** Of course I will. And I'll keep busy, too, what with me project  
to tend to. But, Regan, how do you keep body and soul together  
in this little place? Who has need of a fancy seamstress, such as  
you? Everyone I've seen is a potato farmer.

**REGAN:** We've shopkeepers, too, Haley—a baker, a candle maker  
40 and a dry goods merchant. I've made some fine dresses for the  
schoolteacher, Caitlin Donahue, though that lady does have severe  
tastes—



1 **CAITLIN:** *(From OFFSTAGE, drilling her students.)* And the capital city of Ireland is?

**PUPILS:** *(From OFFSTAGE.)* D-U-B-L-I-N. Dublin!

**REGAN:** I've also made some very elegant waistcoats for Mayor O'Shea.

5 Alas, he pays me as poorly as his wife does her washerwomen. But I get by. *(Brightens.)* Enough of that, though. Before you go, you'll surely want to meet our most famous citizen, Finn McCool. A remarkable man. The strongest man in Ireland, Scotland or Wales. He can lift nine cornerstones from the village wall an' with no  
10 effort at all—at all.

**HALEY:** Finn McCool? I must write down that name. *(Reaches into her bag for a pencil stub and a little notebook.)* Finn McCool. Got it. *(CONNOR and FIONA ENTER from opposite sides of the stage, hurrying to meet their parents. Each reaches the pool of light at the  
15 same time. CONNOR jostles REGAN; FIONA jostles HALEY.)*

**REGAN:** Oh!

**HALEY:** Oh!

**FIONA:** Pardon me, ma'am.

**CONNOR:** Forgive me, please, Miss Driscoll.

20 **FIONA:** Hurry, Connor! *(KERRY and FINNEGAN ENTER and are seen UPSTAGE in silhouette; they wave to FIONA and CONNOR, who wave back.)*

**CONNOR:** There they are! *(He and FIONA cross to their parents.)*

**REGAN:** The Malone children, Connor and Fiona. Well-meaning, but a  
25 bit excitable.

**HALEY:** *(Writes in her notebook.)* Hmmm. I'll make note of that. I might want to use it. *(REGAN and HALEY step UPSTAGE and OUT of the light. We see MAYOR in the shadows, pursued by BRIDGET, crossing the upper part of the stage. They are still bickering. DR. TALULA  
30 O'MALLY, a self-possessed lady carrying a doctor's bag, ENTERS the DOWNSTAGE pool of light, accompanied by ALANA, a lavishly dressed woman, rather pompous and stuffy, who carries a medicine bottle.)*

**ALANA:** An' I hope this cough medicine works, Dr. O'Mally. I have such  
35 a delicate throat, I do, an' I must be able to sing with my voice students to set a good example.

**O'MALLY:** Oh, my, yes. What would ever become of the Sweeney sisters if it weren't for you teachin' 'em, Mrs. Reilly? *(From the UPSTAGE silhouettes, we see the SWEENEY SISTERS gathered together. COLLEEN has a book on her head. They sing the first four bars of  
40 "Sweet Rosie O'Grady." The book falls from COLLEEN'S head.)*

**ALANA:** *(Warmly.)* Such lovely girls.

1 **O'MALLY:** *(Not in agreement.)* Hmmmm.

**ALANA:** *(Examines the medicine bottle.)* Two teaspoons, morning and night—

**O'MALLY:** —an' you'll be singin' like a songbird.

5 **ALANA:** I feel better already. What a blessin' that Limerick should have one of the first women doctors in Ireland. You've put us on the map, Dr. O'Mally.

**O'MALLY:** I'll never been as famous as Finn McCool. Did you hear he's the strongest man in all Great Britain?

10 **ALANA:** Nine cornerstones! What a feat! But what of you? Are you off to another patient, now?

**O'MALLY:** The schoolteacher, Miss Donahue. She wants me to examine her students fer chicken pox, mumps, whooping cough, scarlet fever and bubonic plague. Again.

15 **ALANA:** *(Alarmed.)* Are they all that sick, truly?

**O'MALLY:** Healthy as horses, they are. It's Miss Donahue herself needs a doctor. *(Touches her head in explanation.)* Tends to exaggerate every ache and pain, she does.

20 **ALANA:** Thank goodness I'm not one to exaggerate my condition. *(Waggles the medicine bottle at O'MALLY as a good-bye gesture and steps out of the light. O'MALLY observes this departure.)*

25 **O'MALLY:** *(Dryly.)* Yes. Thank goodness. *(REGAN and HALEY cross, and REGAN points out something of interest to her sister. BRIDGET and MAYOR cross from the opposite side of the stage. BRIDGET is shaking her finger at her husband. When he sees REGAN, he turns and steers his wife away, so she doesn't see the seamstress. DARBY, the candle maker, and MURPHY, the baker, cross DOWNSTAGE and come into the light where O'MALLY stands. DARBY carries several boxes marked "tallow." MURPHY wears a flour-covered apron. His hair is mussed and he has some flour on his face.)*

30 **DARBY:** The bread pans are too heavy. That's why your arms ache.

**MURPHY:** Bah! Every baker lifts heavy pans.

**DARBY:** An' that hot oven. No wonder yer fingers get burned.

35 **MURPHY:** What of it? It's you I worry about. Coughin' and strugglin' fer breath from the fumes of those chemicals in yer shop.

**DARBY:** An' how else would I make candles for everyone in Limerick?

**MURPHY:** An' those blisters on yer hands—up to the elbows.

40 **O'MALLY:** *(Genuine concern.)* Is there anything I can do fer you gentlemen?

**DARBY/MURPHY:** Oh, no, Doctor—we're as right as rain.



- 1 **MURPHY:** But I don't mind telling youse, I wish I was Finn McCool, him being able to lift nine cornerstones as if they were a tin of biscuits! There's no one in America who can do it!
- DARBY:** Such a man! An' his wife, Oona, how proud she must be.
- 5 **DARBY/MURPHY:** Good day, Doctor.
- O'MALLY:** Good day, gentlemen. (*DARBY and MURPHY step back into the shadows. LIGHTS are very slowly beginning to RISE across the stage under the following snatches of conversation.*)
- ROSALEEN:** An' once our singin' lesson is done, we'll go the general  
10 store and see if Cassidy O'Rourke has some new sheet music to sell.
- COLLEEN/EILEEN:** Yes, let's!
- BRIDGET:** ...I said nothin' of the sort, and furthermore, if I were mayor of Limerick—
- 15 **MAYOR:** Well yer not, so keep silent!
- FINNEGAN:** ...and I don't know what's got into the both of you.
- KERRY:** You laugh like each of you was the cat that ate the canary!  
(*CASSIDY crosses and steps into the light. He wears a shopkeeper's apron and is accompanied by OONA, who has an especially serene look about her—confident but with great humor. She carries several bundles in brown paper wrapping.*)
- 20 **CASSIDY:** If yer husband has any trouble with those new tools, tell him to bring them right back. I'm a respectable merchant I am. I stand behind my goods.
- 25 **OONA:** (*Warmly.*) I've long known you to be a good man, Mr. O'Rourke. An' if me husband, Finn, has any displeasure, I'm sure he'll come to you directly. He isn't one to hide his thoughts. We all get to know what's in his head.
- CASSIDY:** He's home soon, then?
- 30 **OONA:** Not soon enough.
- CASSIDY:** A remarkable man.
- OONA:** Oh, surely.
- CASSIDY:** Nine cornerstones!
- OONA:** (*Confused.*) Mr. O'Rourke—?
- 35 **CASSIDY:** Yer husband, Finn! Able to carry nine cornerstones, all about and back again, without feeling the effect.
- PUPILS:** (*From OFFSTAGE.*)  
Finn McCool is bold and brave.  
He's our hero true!  
40 Limerick's blessed by such a man  
Can do as he can do!

1 **CAITLIN:** *(From OFFSTAGE.)* Children! Attention, please! *(The LIGHTS creep UP even further under the following exchanges from both DOWNSTAGE and UPSTAGE.)*

**CASSIDY:** I heard about it from Darby Niven, and he heard it from  
5 Fiona Malone, who heard—

**MAYOR:** *(Admiring.)* —Finn McCool!

**OONA:** —from everyone in town, I expect.

**CASSIDY:** An' amazin' man!

**OONA:** So they say.

10 **EILEEN:** Finn McCool.

**CASSIDY:** When he returns home—

**OONA:** —presently—

**HALEY:** Finn McCool?

**REGAN:** Finn McCool!

15 **CASSIDY:** Tell him how much I admire him.

**SULLIVAN:** Finn McCool.

**RAFFERTY:** Finn McCool.

**OONA:** Oh, I'll tell him, you may be sure.

**MURPHY:** Finn...

20 **FINNEGAN:** ...McCool...

**OONA:** There's so much I'll be sayin' to me husband the very minute he arrives. *(CASSIDY tips his hat to OONA and steps away from her. The LIGHTS now RISE more and more. The VOICES we hear grow louder and more eager; they overlap.)*

25 **MAYOR:** First citizen of Limerick...

**CONNOR:** ...strongest man in Ireland...

**RAFFERTY:** ...three cornerstones...

**KERRY:** ...six cornerstones...

**ALANA:** Nine!

30 **PUPILS/CAITLIN:** *(ENTER.)* Finn McCool!

**FINNEGAN/KERRY/MAYOR/BRIDGET:** Finn McCool!

**ALL TOWNSPEOPLE:** FINN MCCOOL! *(LIGHTS come UP FULL on the village of Limerick and its TOWNSPEOPLE, who turn expectantly toward OONA, at CENTER. FINN ENTERS, his manner cheerful and bold. He smiles broadly at everyone and doffs his cap in some grand manner.)*

35 **OONA:** Finn, me darlin' husband. The way you sneak into town, it's a wonder anyone knows ye live here at all.

**FINN:** Good day to you, everyone!

- 1 **TOWNSPEOPLE:** Good day, Finn. *(Turn to each other and begin mimed conversations. FINN'S smile fades as he studies their eager expressions and OONA'S less than eager one. He moves to his wife and draws her aside.)*
- 5 **FINN:** *(A bit uneasy; he knows he's in trouble.)* Oona, isn't it a fine spring day?
- OONA:** It is at that. And I hear you've been busier than ever, Finn.
- FINN:** *(Warms up to begin a tall tale.)* Indeed. I'd not have gotten back this soon if it weren't fer the fact that I ran from the river to the
- 10 walls of town in two minutes flat and carrying a water barrel under each arm.
- OONA:** Two minutes!
- FINN:** So I said! *(OONA snaps her fingers; the TOWNSPEOPLE FREEZE.)*
- 15 **OONA:** And where are they now?
- FINN:** What?
- OONA:** The water barrels.
- FINN:** I... oh... they... the water barrels? Well, by the time I reached Limerick, I was so mad with thirst, I drank 'em all up. And so back
- 20 I took 'em to the river's edge and there they be.
- OONA:** And there they'll stay. If they really exist.
- FINN:** Oona! Are you sayin' you don't believe me?
- OONA:** I'm sayin' yer the biggest liar ever put on pants.
- FINN:** I never lie. I merely color the truth.
- 25 **OONA:** An' you've painted a regular rainbow in Limerick this mornin'.
- FINN:** *(Defensive.)* I don't know what you mean.
- OONA:** Before you left fer the river and the water barrels and all that nonsense—
- FINN:** It certainly isn't!
- 30 **OONA:** Don't be interruptin' me! Before ye left, ye spoke to everyone in town and filled their heads with silliness about yer being the strongest man in Ireland.
- FINN:** Me?
- OONA:** Do you remember just how many people you bragged to?
- 35 **FINN:** Only one. *(OONA waits, observing him.)* Maybe... three. Or four... *(OONA still waits.)* It might have been... seven. *(And still she waits.)* Half the town. *(FINN hangs his head.)*
- OONA:** You said you could lift three cornerstones from the village wall with no effort.
- 40 **FINN:** I did.

- 1 **OONA:** Except the story grew legs and walked about, so that now everyone has heard the new, improved story.
- FINN:** An' that is?
- OONA:** "Finn McCool, the strongest man in Europe and America, can  
5 lift nine cornerstones from our village wall and carry them across the way and back, as if they were nothin' but air."
- FINN:** (*Astonished.*) There's no such man alive can do such a thing!
- OONA:** Unfortunately for you, all of Limerick believes it. And they'll be expectin' a demonstration.
- 10 **FINN:** Maybe they won't.
- OONA:** They will.
- FINN:** What am I to do? What will they do when they learn the truth? Oona, I'm afraid to face them.
- OONA:** An' there's the savin' grace. Fer you may be afraid, but I'm not.
- 15 **FINN:** (*Relieved.*) You'll help me?
- OONA:** (*Mysterious.*) We'll see. (*Snaps her fingers; the TOWNSPEOPLE UNFREEZE and turn to OONA and FINN. OONA steps to the MAYOR and BRIDGET.*) Mayor O'Shea and Mrs. O'Shea! How well yer lookin' on this fine mornin'.
- 20 **BRIDGET:** Alan and I were just talkin' about you, Finn.
- MAYOR:** Finn McCool, the first citizen of Limerick! (*TOWNSPEOPLE cheer.*)
- OONA:** (*Indicates the MAYOR.*) After His Honor, of course. (*TOWNSPEOPLE applaud; the MAYOR doffs his hat.*)
- 25 **BRIDGET:** But, Finn, you must give us a demonstration of your remarkable skill.
- TOWNSPEOPLE:** Yes! Yes!
- MAYOR:** Nine cornerstones! As if they were nothin' at all!
- BRIDGET:** How can you do it?
- 30 **FINN:** (*Stricken.*) Yes, how can I—
- OONA:** Why there's nothin' to it at all, at all. Carrying nine cornerstones, that is. (*The TOWNSPEOPLE gasp.*) It's child's play fer Finn, the strongest man alive! An' he'll demonstrate it fer you this very instant. (*The TOWNSPEOPLE respond with "oohs" and "ahs" while*
- 35 *FINN gives them a nervous smile.*) Go ahead, Finn. There are the cornerstones, right there. (*The TOWNSPEOPLE part to reveal the wall, along which lies a stack of three very heavy cornerstones.*)
- FINN:** But, Oona—
- OONA:** Go on, Finn. Carry those three cornerstones from here... (*Points to the stack.*) ...to there! (*Points to a place across the stage.*)
- 40



1 **FINN:** Yes, Oona. (*Squares his shoulders, crosses to the cornerstones and struggles to lift them. He manages to do it and carefully carries them across the stage and sets them down. The TOWNSPEOPLE applaud politely.*)

5 **OONA:** An' now, Finn, carry those three from there... (*Points to the three cornerstones he has just set down.*) ...to there. (*Points to a place elsewhere on the stage.*)

**FINN:** As you say, wife. (*Heaves a sigh and reaches for the three cornerstones. He is tiring and the effort calls for more exertion than before. He picks the stones up and—more slowly than before—carries them across the stage to the designated spot. When he straightens up he quickly tries to mask his fatigue with nonchalance. The TOWNSPEOPLE applaud, a bit more enthusiastically than before.*)

10  
15 **OONA:** An' now, me darlin', one last time. Won't ye carry these three cornerstones from there... (*Points to the cornerstones he has just set down.*) ...to here? (*Points to area before her. The TOWNSPEOPLE turn eagerly to FINN. He is anything but eager, yet knows he must comply. He knits his brows, rolls up his sleeves, spits on his hands and leans forward to pick up the cornerstones. The burden staggers him; he lifts slowly, slowly, until his back is straight. He lumbers across the stage and puts the three cornerstones at OONA'S feet. The TOWNSPEOPLE applaud with much enthusiasm. FINN gives the crowd a devil-may-care smile, then turns to OONA—and reveals a face full of weary anguish.*) An' there you have it!

25 **O'MALLY:** But—

**RAFFERTY:** —didn't you say—

**CAITLIN:** I thought that he—

**OONA:** Could lift nine cornerstones! An' so he did. How many stones did he carry from there to there? (*Points to indicate the first lift.*)

30 **TOWNSPEOPLE:** Three.

**OONA:** An' how many from there to there? (*Points to indicate the second lift.*)

**TOWNSPEOPLE:** Three.

**OONA:** And from there to here? (*Points to indicate the third lift.*)

35 **TOWNSPEOPLE:** Three!

**OONA:** Now tell me, schoolchildren—how much is three plus three plus three?

**PUPILS:** Nine!

40 **OONA:** Finn McCool, the strongest man in all the world! (*Smiles triumphantly, but FINN is not so sure the TOWNSPEOPLE will buy this. He tenses for a minute, watching them as they allow this irregular*)



1 *logic to sink in. Then, they explode in wild applause and cheers. OONA beams at FINN, who poses hero-style for the TOWNSPEOPLE.)*

**OONA:** An' now, if you don't mind, we'll be sayin' "good day" to you all, fer Finn has so much to do at home, tryin' out the new tools  
5 we just bought this day.

**FINN:** (*Eager to leave.*) Oh! Why, yes, Oona. How right you are. (*The TOWNSPEOPLE turn away from the MCCOOLS and engage in private conversation. OONA and FINN quickly move to the EXIT.*) It's a fine thing I married you, Oona. I was scared to death of them!

10 **OONA:** Fine, indeed. For every boastful husband should have a fearless wife. (*The MCCOOLS EXIT. The LIGHTS begin to slowly FADE during the following exchanges.*)

**EILEEN:** (*As she puts a book on ROSALEEN'S head.*) Back straight, Rosaleen.

15 **COLLEEN:** We'll have better posture than all the actresses in Dublin, put together! (*The SWEENEY SISTERS EXIT.*)

**CAITLIN:** Ashling! Brenna! Cecily! Dara! Off we go, and I want no nonsense from ye.

**PUPILS:** (*Chant as they skip toward EXIT.*)

20 Finn McCool's a hero true,  
He has won the day!  
Proven he can rightly do  
All that he will say! (*CAITLIN and her PUPILS EXIT.*)

**FINNEGAN:** You took the potatoes to the O'Sheas as you were told?

25 **FIONA:** Yes, Father.

**KERRY:** An' we got soda bread—two loaves—from Murphy Quinn.

**CONNOR:** An' Mother her needles?

**KERRY:** So I did.

30 **FINNEGAN:** We're done then. Let's be off for home. (*He and KERRY EXIT; FIONA and CONNOR watch them go.*)

**FIONA:** Tomorrow's the day, Connor, we start our new positions.

**CONNOR:** An' once we have the money, what a fine gift we'll buy them!

**KERRY:** (*From OFFSTAGE.*) Children?

**FIONA/CONNOR:** Comin'! (*They both EXIT.*)

35 **ALANA:** Doctor, there is one other ailment of mine that I've thought of mentioning to you. Of course, I hate to be a bother—

**O'MALLY:** And what could that be, Mrs. Reilly?

**ALANA:** Well it isn't much, you understand, but I do have this ringin' in me ears.

40 **O'MALLY:** Ringin'?

**ALANA:** Also a great ache in me left knee.

- 1 **O'MALLY:** An' ache, have you?  
**ALANA:** An' did I mention the bunion? *(She and O'MALLY EXIT.)*  
**REGAN:** Let's get home quickly, so you can read me what you've written so far.
- 5 **HALEY:** Well, I hope my ear for dialogue has served me well.  
**REGAN:** Surely it has. Oh, what fun your project is turnin' out to be. *(She and HALEY EXIT.)*  
**MAYOR:** An' so, dear Bridget, I hope I've made you understand the importance of thrift.
- 10 **BRIDGET:** Indeed, Alan. And I hope you've come to understand that what's good for the goose is good for the gander.  
**MAYOR:** Bridget!  
**BRIDGET:** Alan! *(She and the MAYOR EXIT.)*  
**DARBY:** *(To MURPHY.)* Another busy day in Limerick.
- 15 **MURPHY:** Home to the strongest man in Ireland—in the world!  
**DARBY:** An' to the finest baker—  
**MURPHY:** —whose best friend is the county's finest candle maker. *(DARBY and MURPHY bow to each other, laugh and then EXIT.)*  
**CASSIDY:** *(With a package of tools in his hands.)* Mrs. McCool? Mrs.
- 20 McCool? You forgot the tools you bought from my store! *(EXITS. The LIGHTS have now FALLEN until they are little more than a pool of light into which step SULLIVAN and RAFFERTY. They set down their heavy baskets as they speak.)*  
**SULLIVAN:** Well, Mrs. Rafferty. An' here we are again.
- 25 **RAFFERTY:** With chapped hands and achin' backs.  
**SULLIVAN:** An' more dirty clothes to wash and wash.  
**RAFFERTY:** If only I had the powers of the little people. I'd be off over the hill with me pot of gold, and I'd never fill a washtub again!  
**SULLIVAN:** An' where is me son, Clancy, when I need him? Clancy!
- 30 **RAFFERTY:** Sean? Where are ye, son? It's Mother callin'! *(SULLIVAN and RAFFERTY EXIT from opposite ends of the stage. SHILLELAGH and SHAY REAPPEAR from their hiding place, SHAY still pretending to be SHANNON. SHILLELAGH laughs, perhaps throwing herself down to kick her feet in the air.)*
- 35 **SHILLELAGH:** The great fools! Three plus three plus three! Ha!  
**SHAY:** I don't know why Oona does it.  
**SHILLELAGH:** Mortals are impossible to understand.  
**SHAY:** We must come back tomorrow, the two of us!  
**SHILLELAGH:** Aye—and if Finn McCool should do any more idle
- 40 boastin', well, I might just step into the story.

1 **SHAY:** For what reason?

**SHILLELAGH:** To add to the fun, me girl! I might want to play a trick on Finn—and on me old enemy, the Banshee Queen, as well.

**SHAY:** You'd stir up trouble with the Banshee Queen? She's a powerful  
5 force, she is. An' you already have trouble enough, just from me.

**SHILLELAGH:** Do I now? An' how is that?

**SHAY:** I guessed what was in yer hand. An' half yer pot of gold is rightfully mine!

**SHILLELAGH:** (*Suspicious.*) Yes... 'tis very strange that you could see  
10 right through me to what was behind me back.

**SHAY:** I'm a leprechaun who's most surprisin'.

**SHILLELAGH:** Indeed. I'm off then! Meet me again here tomorrow.

**SHAY:** I'll be here. An' bring me that gold, if you please.

**SHILLELAGH:** Perhaps. (*Aside.*) An' perhaps I'll play a trick on Shannon,  
15 instead! (*EXITS through the AUDIENCE.*)

**SHAY:** (*Watches until SHILLELAGH is out of sight.*) Or perhaps— (*And now her twin, SHANNON, leaps up from her hiding place.*)

**SHANNON:** It's we two who'll be playin' tricks—on Shillelagh! (*They laugh and dance about for a beat. BLACKOUT.*)

End of Scene One

## ACT ONE

### Scene Two

20 LIGHTS DOWN in the foreground, leaving only the BACKLIT skyline of Limerick. Two figures emerge from the town—the twin leprechauns, SHAY and SHANNON. They look about to see if anyone is stirring, then look into the AUDIENCE to see if SHILLELAGH is approaching. Satisfied that no one is near, they hug each other and dance about a bit.

25 **SHAY:** Ha ha! We're the cleverest leprechauns what ever lived, Shannon. We fooled Shillelagh!

**SHANNON:** An' we're richer fer it, too, with half her pot of gold. Poor Shillelagh—thinkin' she's so lucky because she's a leprechaun, when I'm twice as lucky, for I'm a leprechaun with a twin sister!

30 **SHAY:** She'll be here soon, so we must think. Who should sit with her today and watch the show in Limerick? Should it be the Shannon who's really Shannon— (*Points to her sister.*) —or the Shannon who's really Shay? (*Points to herself.*)

**SHANNON:** You deal with Shillelagh and I'll hide, the way you did from  
35 the beginning yesterday. Then we'll switch places and play another trick on her!



## PRODUCTION NOTES

### PROPERTIES

#### ONSTAGE, ACT ONE, Scene One:

Three large cornerstones, cutout trees and bushes, backdrop with outline of small Irish town and stone wall

#### BROUGHT ON, ACT ONE, Scene One:

Pigeon feather (SHILLELAGH)

Basket full of dirty clothes, washboard, bundle of laundry (SULLIVAN, RAFFERTY)

Book (EILEEN)

Sack of potatoes, hoe (CONNOR)

Sack of potatoes (FIONA)

Sacks or parcels, shopping list (KERRY, FINNEGAN)

Yardstick [wood, not painted] (CAITLIN)

Handbag containing a small mirror (BRIDGET)

Sewing basket (REGAN)

Bag containing a pencil stub and small notebook (HALEY)

Doctor's bag (O'MALLY)

Medicine bottle (ALANA)

Boxes marked "tallow" (DARBY)

Bundles in brown paper (OONA)

Package of tools (CASSIDY)

#### BROUGHT ON, ACT ONE, Scene Two:

Bouquet of three different colored flowers (SHILLELAGH)

Bushel basket of "household goods" for sale (CONNOR)

List (CASSIDY)

Sack of potatoes (FINNEGAN)

Bakery box (KERRY)

Basket full of dirty clothes, washboard, bundle of laundry (SULLIVAN, RAFFERTY)

Money (ALANA)

Blindfold with hidden eye-holes (OONA)

Official-looking papers (MAYOR)

Parasol (BRIDGET)

Rakes (CONNOR)

#### BROUGHT ON, ACT TWO:

Wheelbarrow covered with a large fabric drop, broom (OONA)

Royal staff (BANSHEE QUEEN)

Basket of laundry (RAFFERTY, SULLIVAN)

### SOUND EFFECTS

Rooster crowing, book falling, powerful roar

## COSTUMES

HALEY and BRIDGET should be dressed more elegantly than the other women.

MAYOR O'SHEA should have nice clothes.

ALANA should be very extravagantly dressed.

MURPHY wears a flour-covered apron.

CASSIDY wears a shopkeeper's apron.

PILLIWIGN, an English fairy, is dressed in a blue gown covered with flower petals.

SALVANI, a Romanian fairy, wears a cloak of scarlet and a circlet of autumn leaves on her head.

CANDELAS, an Italian fairy, is all in gold and may even be encircled by twinkling lights.

NISSE, a Norwegian fairy, is swathed in forest green and wears a beautiful pale green sash.

### SPECIAL NOTE ABOUT SHAY AND SHANNON

These characters are identical twin sisters. If the director is fortunate enough to have use of twin sisters—as happened in the first production of this play—the matter of their being indistinguishable in appearance is easier to convey.

If the roles are played by girls who are not twins—as was the case in the second production—the illusion of being identical can be created by casting girls of similar height and hair color, then using identical hairstyles and costumes. In this case, however, it is necessary that the actress playing Shillelagh be costumed in something that is suitable for a leprechaun, but unlike what is worn by the “twins.”



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