

Mary Irish

(w/ Skeeter & Cait)

MARY

Some of us did starve, mother.

(MARY IRISH appears).

MARY IRISH

Scarier than fuck, wasn't it?

SKEETER

God, another one? Who the hell are you?

(CAIT searches through her laptop.)

MARY IRISH

Mary Irish. Who are you?

SKEETER

I'm...writing this book.

MARY IRISH

Well, now. La de da.

~~CAIT~~

~~(to SKEETER) Can you hear that?~~

~~SKEETER~~

~~You mean that old woman standing there? Yes, I can hear that.~~

~~CAIT~~

~~Can you hear all these people.~~

~~SKEETER~~

~~What people?~~

CAIT

WHO THE FUCK IS MARY IRISH?

SKEETER

Mary Irish... (makes the connection) "Dear Wife..."

MARY IRISH

Right, lass. Wife of Patrick Irish. Who died in Libby Prison during the Civil War.

SKEETER

Lottie's Civil War letters.

MARY IRISH

Those are my letters. My husband wrote them. And thanks to him, his story is there.

SKEETER

Lady, your letters? Most of them are gone.

SKEETER

Stolen.

MARY IRISH

They were?

SKEETER

Most of them.

MARY IRISH

No!

SKEETER

Lottie was always going on and on about her Civil War letters. Someone finally stole 'em.

MARY IRISH

Someone stole my husband's letters?

SKEETER

One of the boarders.

MARY IRISH

One of *my* boarders?

CAIT

No, Lottie's.

MARY IRISH

... *my* boarders would never take a thing from me!

SKEETER

Who is this woman?

~~CAIT~~

~~I think I just found out.~~

~~(reads)~~

~~"Mary Irish, dead at ninety-one. Mary Irish, an old-time vaudeville matron, died in her home last Thursday. An actress in her youth...~~

~~(looks up at Skeeter, stunned)~~

~~...an actress in her youth, Mrs. Irish opened a boarding house on Dix Place in Boston, and served exclusively vaudeville entertainers for more than fifty years." Jesus. Mom. We just found another generation of actors.~~

MARY IRISH

Mrs. Patton, down the street. Now, she was a shyster. I'd hear stories. An actor would ask for a cake of soap. "I'm after lookin for a cake meself. An' will ye have a dhrink?" Her way of squaring all shortcomings. A pigstye too. Me, I never overbooked. Those actors, they worked so hard. I'd send the meals round to the Bijou if they couldn't get out for food.

SKEETER

I still can't get over. I though Annie was the first.

MARY IRISH

No darlin', I taught her everything she ever knew. And she sang like a bird, that one.

CAIT

What made you quit, then?

MARY IRISH

I never quit. Go on with you.

CAIT

(on the laptop)

It says right here you ran a boarding house.

MARY IRISH

Impudent, aren't you now. Listen, you get up in the morning and you do what you can because that's what you do. That's all you know how to do. There's nothing else to it. You think we had what you're looking for. You think you'll find it in that pile of papers or on your thingamajig there? Go on with your romantic notions. Romance. That's what its not. Nothin' romantic about standing there on stage with nobody in the house--'Bout not havin' any place to sleep because they won't take actors. About getting stiffed by the theatre managers, in their fine suits, twirling their mustaches. No, I made my choices. I took care of the artists.

And I never stopped. No. It's just the venues that changed.

SKEETER

I'm sorry.

MARY IRISH

Mary Irish

For what, child? You put on a bigger show than any woman this family's ever seen. And stop apologizing for every damn one of us. Listen to me, daughter. (To CAIT.) You too. You can't have it.

CAIT

What?

MARY IRISH

Whatever you think you're looking for. Not a question of can or should. No choice. It chose you. Well get to it then.

End
(MARY IRISH exits. RAY appears).

RAY

I have something to say, Skeeter. No, Mary. I'm going to call you Mary now, because I'm the one that gave you that lousy nickname which you never told me you hated when I was alive! And I'm sorry about that. Mary. That's your name, isn't it.

SKEETER

Yes.

RAY

Mary, you were worth a million of them. That's the truth. I'm sorry. I really am. Sorrier than you'll ever know that you came out thinking you were no better than Mama or me or Sheila, or anyone of them drunken hams that called themselves grandparents. You once said Papa was the one. He was the one who was the best of us. You're my kid sister, and I'm telling you who was the best of us. I know.

(He tosses a small metal object, which Skeeter catches. It's a zippo lighter. She flips the top open and flicks it.)

CAIT

Mom? Are you okay?

SKEETER

Ray was right. I should never have stopped him.

(She flicks the lighter again. A LIGHT cue. All other characters fade to black. SKEETER picks up the manuscript.)

They are not forgotten. They're all here. I am here.