THE JOSEPHINUM REVIEW
March 12, 1958

TIMOTHY AND THE SHAMROCKS

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(written age 18)

"HUSH, PAPA. You mustn't say that. Please lie back in bed."

"Don't hush me, Noreen; sure'n I won't be havin' any priest here."

"But, papa, the doctor said . . ."

"Darlin', the doctor *said* a few weeks, and right now I already feel as perk as Paddy's pig."

"But we should have the priest come."

"I've told you before—no priest. I'll not be forgettin' twenty-three years ago."

"Oh, papa! That was in Donegal. This is New York. He didn't mean anything and..."

"Sure'n if he didn't mean anything! There was a'weepin' and a'wailin' in our house on that day. Your poor mother, God rest her soul, lay dyin', like me, and the priest wouldn't come."

"But, papa, he was old and sick. He died soon after Mama—before we came to America."

"And he was makin' an effort to get there, you'll say?"

"Oh, papa, must we go through this again. I..."

"No, we'll no be quarrelin' on Saint Patrick's Day. Go on now, colleen, leave me be."

"Today's the parade, papa. Have you forgotten?"

"Sure'n I'm in a fine position to be goin' downtown."

"No, of course not, but you could watch it on television. If I leave the door of your room open and push the set against that wall, you can see it."

"Kind thought, darlin', but it's too far for me old eyes to see such a small picture."

"All right, papa, I'll be in the kitchen if you want anything."

"Kiss me, Noreen, and don't worry."

"All right, papa, Michael will be home from school soon. I'll send him in when he comes. You

"For shame, Timothy. And are you forgettin' that I'm a priest? And a bishop at that."

don't know how he has loved your living with us and . . ."

"And how he'll hate to see me go?"

"Oh, papa, that's right, but don't say it. It's almost like I hear the banshee a'wailin' outside the window."

"On the fourth floor? Go on, girl, cheer up."

It was an unusually warm March day. The window of Timothy's room was slightly ajar and a soft breeze rippled the white cheese-cloth curtains. The dust motes shown dancing in the sun buffeted one another in an airy whirlpool. Timothy looked beyond the window and out over the rooftops of countless low-rent apartment buildings—a crazy sprawl of men and mortar.

"Timothy! Timothy!" a deep voice teased. "Over here, Timothy. Can't you see me?"

"Glory be to God. No, it can't be! Noreen, come here, I'm dyin'."

"Don't call Noreen, Timothy. And you're not dying, dead, or drunk."

"No, you can't be—but you look like him—I mean like the picture in the old church at Bally-kilty."

"Yes, I am he."

"Oh, no, the leprechauns are playin' tricks on me again. Go away."

"And it's no thanks to the wee folk I'm here, Timothy. And who else would be havin' a bunch of shamrocks picked today in Donegal?"

"Here, let me see. Begorrah—you're right. You must really be Saint Patrick a'standin' there."

"As sure as there's a Blarney Stone. Now, Timothy, what's this that's goin' on around here. You'll be needin' a priest if you're wantin' to go up there."

"Sure'n I'll be havin' no priest under the same roof where I'm breathin'."

"For shame, Timothy. And are you forgettin' that I'm a priest? And a bishop at that."

"But you're a different person, a different . . ."

"Now your kettle's on the hob, Timothy me boy. That's the point — we're individuals. One is not responsible for what the other does, and we're all of the same poor clay. Why, it was old Father Shaughnessy who asked me to come down here to see you. He's been a'mopin' around up there and was nigh on to disturbin' the Almighty Himself. He's been worried about you, Timothy. He felt your hurt feelin's were his fault.... Oh! Someone's comin'. I'd best be goin'. Think about it, Timothy."

"He's gone. I just can't believe..."

"Hello, Grandpa. Who was here? I heard you talking to somebody."

"Oh, no one—no one at all, Michael."

"Whatcha got in your hand, Grandpa. Is that clovers?"

"What? Oh, these. Well...er...uh...these are shamrocks."

"Oh. We don't have those here in New York, do we, Grandpa?"

"No, not ones like these...these are Irish shamrocks....Michael, run quick and tell Father Fitzgerald to come over tonight. And when he comes, you can give him these — this bein' Saint Patrick's Day."

"Those sham...shad...clovers?"

"Oh, but never mind, Michael me lad, I'll be givin' them to him meself — this bein' Saint Patrick's Day."

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