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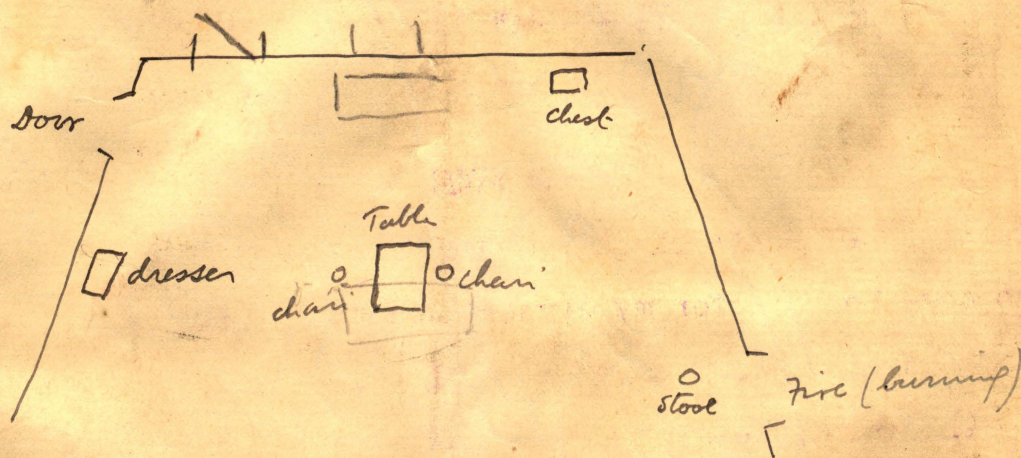
A Pot of Brim

W B Yeats

Properties

Table - 2 chairs - Three-legged stool at fire - Chest - 2 three-legged pots - Cabbage leaves, onions & plate of oatmeal - Bottle of milk (cooked) - Sack - pipe - handkerchief - Knife - stone - stick - Key of chest - hambone, knife & fork - bottle of whiskey - eggcup - bowl - Kettle of hot water - bellows

N. B. Beggar & John keeps their hats on all thro. Sibby is bareheaded.



Not much chance for a poor man to make a living here

Please return this script to W. G. Fay,
Abbey Theatre, Dublin, whose property it is.

"A POT OF BROTH"

A Farce in 1 Act

by W.B. Yeats.

SCENE. A Cottage Kitchen. Fire burning on hearth L.I.E. Door R.U.E. Table C on which are a plate of Oatmeal on L.H., onions, a head of cabbage a black, corked bottle of milk at upper end of Table. Chairs R and L of Table. Dresser with bowl and eggcup R below door. Chest in which are ham bone on plate, knife and fork, and bottle of whiskey, up stage L.

Three knocks heard. BEGGARMAN looks in through door, then enters and looks about

He has a stick and a sack.

BEGGARMAN

What sort are the people of this house, I wonder? Was it a good place for me to come to look for my dinner, I wonder (Puts stick and sack on chest and comes down to fireplace. Looks at big pot) What's in that big pot. (Looks in) Nothing at all. What's in the little pot (looks) Nothing at all. (Goes round in front of table and up R). What's in the bottle, I wonder (Goes behind table, uncorks bottle, excitedly, and drinks. Splutters) Milk! Milk in a bottle! I wonder they wouldn't afford a tin can to milk the cow into! X What's in that chest (Tries to open) Locked! (Smells at keyhole) There's a good smell there. There must be a still not far (Sits on chest. Shouts ^{heard} and loud, frightened cackling) What in the earthly world is going on outside. Anyone would think it was the Fianna hEireann^{*} at their hunting!

SIBBY'S VOICE

Stop the gap. Let you stop the gap John! Stop that old schemer of a hen flying up on the thatch like as if she was an eagle!

* from. Fin (as of a fish) na hairan

* JOHN'S VOICE

What can I do Sibby. I all to had my hand on her when she flew away.

SIBBY'S VOICE

She's out into the garden. Follow after her. She has the wide world before her now

BEGGAR

Sibby he called her. I wonder is it Sibby Conneely's house I am in. If that's so, it's a bad chance I have of going out heavier than I came in. I often heard of her, a regular old slave driver that would starve the rats. An old niggard that, her eyes on kippeens, that would skin a flea for its hide. It was the bad luck of the world brought me here and not a house or a village between this and Tubber. And it isn't much I have left to bring me on there. (Sits L of table and begins emptying his pockets on table) There's my pipe and not a grain to fill it with. There's my handkerchief that I got at the Coronation dinner. There's my knife and nothing left of it but the handle. (Shakes out sack) And there's the crumb of the last dinner I got, and the last I'm likely to get till to-morrow. That's all I have in the world, unless the stone I picked up to peg at that yelping dog awhile ago. (Takes stone out of other pocket) ^(Rises) In the time long ago I usen't to have much trouble to get a dinner getting over the old women and getting round the young ones. I remember the time I met the old minister on the path and sold him his own flock of turkeys. My wits used to fill my stomach then, but I'm afraid they're going from me now with all the hardship I went through (Cackling heard again and cries)

SIBBY'S VOICE

Catch her. She's round the bush. Put your hand in the nettles, dont be daunted. (A choked cackle and prolonged screech)

BEGGAR

There's a dinner for somebody any way. That it may be for myself. How will I come round her I wonder. There's no more pity in her heart than there's a soul in a dog. If all the saints were standing there barefoot, she'd bid them call another day. It's myself I have to trust to now and my share of talk (Looks at stone) I know what I'll do. I know what a friend of mine did one time with a stone, and I'm as good a man as he is anyway. Now Sibby, if I don't do it one way, I'll do it another. My wits against the world (Sits at fire and sings)

There's broth in the pot for you old man
There's broth in the pot and cabbage for me.
There's broth in the pot for you old man
And beef for Jack the Journeyman.

I wish you were dead my gay old man
I wish you were dead and a stone at your head
I wish you were dead my gay old man
And I'd marry Jack the Journeyman.

JOHN'S VOICE

Bring it in, bring it in Sibby. You'll be late with the priest's dinner.

SIBBY'S VOICE

Can't you wait a minute till I draw it (Enter JOHN R.D. BEGGAR rises.

JOHN

(Starts) I didn't know there was any one in the house (Crosses behind table to fire

BEGGAR

It's only this minute I came in, tired with the length of the road I am and fasting since morning.

JOHN

(Looks into pots) I'll see if I can find anything here for you....I don't see much...May be there's something in the chest (BEGGAR goes up L. JOHN takes key from hiding place at back of hearth goes up and opens chest.

takes out hambone and bottle and places them on table. Enter SIBBY R.D. carrying hen almost plucked. She crosses and sits R of table and plucks remaining feathers. BEGGAR sits on chest. JOHN leans on table so as to hide ham bone

SIBBY

Hurry now John after all the time you have wasted. Why didn't you steal up on the hen that time she was scratching in the dust ?

JOHN

Sure I thought one of the chickens 'd be the tenderest.

SIBBY

Cock you up with tenderness indeed ! All the expense I'm put to. (Holds up hen by neck) My grand hen I've been feeding these five years. Isn't that enough to part with. Indeed I would n't have parted with her at all but she had got tired of laying since Easter.

JOHN

Well I thought we ought to give his reverence something that'd have a little good in it.

SIBBY

A hen is a hen when it's on the table
Why couldn't the Kernans have given the priest his dinner the way they always do. What did it matter their mother's brother to have died. It's an excuse they had made up to put the expense of the dinner on me.

JOHN

Well I hope you have a good bit of bacon to put in the pot along with the hen.

SIBBY

Let me alone. The taste of meat on the knife is all that high up people like the clergy care for, nice genteel people no way greedy like potato diggers or harvest man.

JOHN

Well, I never saw the man gentle or simple wouldn't be glad of his fill of bacon and he hungry

SIBBY

Let me alone. I'll show the Kernans what I can do (Puts hen on table and rises) I have what's better than bacon, a nice bit of a ham I am keeping in the chest this good while, thinking we might want it for company (X and goes up L. JOHN dodges her from side to side to hide ^{who dodges with him} BEGGAR she throws him over to C; sees BEGGAR and starts back behind table) Who's there. A beggar is it. Then you may quit this house (points to door) if you please. We have nothing for you.

BEGGAR

(Rises and comes down L a little) It's a mistake you are making ma'am. It is not asking anything I am. It is giving I am more used to. I was never in a house yet but there'd be a welcome for me in it again.

SIBBY (L.C. at back)

Well you have the appearance of a beggar, and if it isn't begging you are, what way do you make your living ?

BEGGAR (down stage L a little)

If I was a beggar ma'am, it's to common people I'd be going and not to a nice, grand woman like yourself, that's only used to be talking with high up, noble people.

SIBBY

Well, what is it you're asking ? If it's a bit to eat you want I can't give it you for I've company coming that'll clear all before them

BEGGAR

Is it me ask anything to eat (Looks at stone) I have here what's better than beef and mutton and currant cakes and sacks of flour.

SIBBY

(Coming to him with her hands out) What is it at all ?

BEGGAR

(Mysteriously) Those that gave it to me wouldn't like me to tell that

SIBBY

(Retreats alarmed and X to JOHN who is still R.C at back) Do you think is he a man that has friends among the Shee

JOHN

Your mind is always running on the Shee since the time they made John Molloy find buried gold on the bridge of Limerick (Comes down R as he speaks) I see nothing in it but a stone.

BEGGAR

What can you see in it, you that never saw what it can do ?

JOHN

What is it it can do ?

BEGGAR

It can do many things and what it's going to do now is to make me a drop of broth for my dinner.

SIBBY

(At back R.C.) I'd like to have a stone that could make broth.

BEGGAR

No one in the world but myself has one ma'am and no other stone in the world has the same power, for it has an enchantment on it. All I'll ask of you now ma'am is the loan of a pot with a drop of boiling water in it.

SIBBY

You're welcome to that much. John, fill the small pot with water (JOHN crosses ^{front of table} and brings small pot forward L and kettle of hot water. SIBBY comes to table and stands at corner of it finishing plucking hen. BEGGAR (L.C) puts stone in pot ceremoniously. JOHN makes to pour water from kettle

BEGGAR stops him then gives a glance to attract SIBBY'S attention. Rubs stone with R coat tail; puts stone in pot. JOHN pours. BEGGAR stops him. takes stone out and rubs with other coat tail. SIBBY stops plucking and watches. BEGGAR puts stone in pot again. SIBBY and JOHN bend forward along with him, looking into pot. BEGGAR looks up; SIBBY & JOHN look up; hold picture. Then all three look down; BEGGAR & JOHN look at each other. JOHN pours water; puts down kettle and goes up L and puts ham on chest, crosses at back and comes down R. BEGGAR during this puts pot on fire. SIBBY is in front of table)

BEGGAR

There now. That's all I have to do but to put it on the fire to boil and it's a grand pot of broth'll be before me then.

SIBBY (X to him)

And is that all you have to put in it ?

BEGGAR

Nothing at all but that, only may be a bit of an herb for fear the enchantment might slip away from it. ^(sits on stool) You wouldn't have a bit of the Slan lus (pronounce Slawn loose) in the house ma'am that was cut with a black-handled knife ?

SIBBY

(Sits L of table) Or a bit of the Faravan (pronounce Far - a - vaun) that was picked when the wind was from the north

SIBBY SIBBY

No indeed I'm sorry to say there's none.

BEGGAR

Or a sprig of the Ahartalav, the father of herbs

JOHN (going up R)

There's plenty of it by the hedge. I'll go out and get it for you.

BEGGAR

O dont mind taking so much trouble; those leaves beside me will do well enough (JOHN comes down R.C. BEGGAR takes cabbage and onions and puts them in)

SIBBY

But where did you get the stone at all.

BEGGAR

Well, it is how it happened. ^{sits on stool again} I was out one time and a grand greyhound with me and it followed a hare and I went after it. And I came up at last to the edge of a gravel pit where there were a few withered furze bushes, and there was my fine hound sitting up, and it shivering, and a little old man sitting before him and he taking off a hare-skin coat (Looks round at ham bone) Give me the loan of a kippeen to stir the pot with (Takes ham bone off chest quickly and puts into the pot and sits on stool again)

JOHN (R)

O ! the ham bone !

BEGGAR

I didn't say a ham bone. I said a hare-skin coat.

SIBBY

Hold your tongue John, if it's deaf you're getting.

BEGGAR

(Stirring pot with ham bone) Well as I was telling you, he was sitting up, and one time I thought he was as small as a nut and the next minute I thought his head to be in the stars. Frightened I was.

SIBBY

No wonder, no wonder at all in that.

BEGGAR

He took the little stone then - that stone I have with me - out of the

side pocket of his coat, and he showed it to me. "Call off your dog," says he, "and I'll give you that stone, and if ever you want a good drop of broth or a bit of stirabout, or a drop of poteen itself, all you have to do is to put it down in a pot with a drop of water and stir it awhile, and you'll have the thing you were wanting ready before you."

SIBBY

Poteen : Would it make that

BEGGAR

It would ma'am; and wine, the same as the Clare Militia uses.

SIBBY

(Half rising) Let me see what does it look like now.

BEGGAR

Dont look at it for your life ma'am. It might bring bad luck on anyone that would look at it and it boiling. I must put a cover on the pot or I must color the water some way. Give me a handful of that meal (SIBBY holds out a plate of meal, he puts handful in pot)

JOHN

Well he's a gifted man

SIBBY

It'd be a great comfort to have a stone like that (She has hen in her lap)

BEGGAR

And there's another thing it does ma'am since it came into Catholic hands. If you put it into a pot of a Friday with a bit of the whitest meat in Ireland in it, it'd turn it as black as black.

SIBBY

That's no less than a miracle. I must tell Father Jones about that.

BEGGAR

But to put a bit of meat with it any other day of the week it would do it no harm at all, but good. Look here now ma'am. I'll put that nice little chicken you have in your lap in the pot for a minute till you see (Puts it into pot)

JOHN

(Sarcastically) It's a good job this is not a Friday (Sits R of table)

SIBBY

Keep yourself quiet John, or you'll get a knock on the head, like the King of Lochlann's grandmother. (*Lochlann*)

JOHN

Go on, go on. I'll say no more (Rests left arm on table and right arm on back of chair and turns his back on her)

BEGGAR

If I'm passing this way some time of a Friday, I'll bring a nice bit of mutton or the breast of a turkey, and you'll see how it'll be no better in ten minutes than a fist-full of bog mould.

SIBBY

(Rising quickly) Let me take the chicken out.

BEGGAR

Stop till I help you ma'am. You might scald your hand. I'll show it to you in a minute as white as your own skin where the lily and the rose are fighting for mastery. Did you ever hear what the boys in your own parish were singing after you being married from them, such of them that had any voice at all and not choked with crying or senseless with the drop of drink they took to comfort them and to keep their wits from going with the loss

Philomel , I've listened oft
To thy lay, near weeping willow -

No, that's not it - it's a queer thing the memory is -
~~xxxxxxx~~

'Twas at the dance at Dermody's,
That first I caught a sight of her.

No, that's not it either - ah, now I have it.

My pretty Paistin is my heart's desire,
Yet I am shrunken to skin and bone.

SIBBY:- Why would they call me Paistin?

TRAMP :- And why wouldn't they ? Would you wish them to
put your right name in a song, and your man ready to
knock the brains of any man will as much as look your
side of the road?

SIBBY :- Well, maybe so.

TRAMP :- I was standing by the man that made the song, and he
writing it with an old bit of a carpenter's pencil,
and the tears running down.

My pretty Paistin is my heart's desire,
Yet I am shrunken to skin and bone
For all my toil has had for its hire
Is drinking her health when alone.

(business SIBBY)

Oh I would think that I had my fee,
Though I am shrunken to bone and skin,
Could I but drink my love on my knee
Between two barrels at the Inn.

(repeat business)

TRAMP :- Wait now 'till you hear the end.
, Nine nights I lay in longing sore
Between two bushes under the rain
Thinking to meet my love once more
I cried and whistled but vain, all vain,

Philomel , I've listened oft
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Between two bushes under the rain
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of you (SIBBY sits L again complacently)

SIBBY

Did they do that indeed.

~~BEGGAR~~

~~They did ma'am. This is what they used to be singing (Sings)~~

~~The spouse of Naoise, Erin's woe
Helen and Venus long ago
Their charms would fade, their fame would flee
Beside mo gradh, mo stor, mo chree,
My Sibby O !~~

*Nay - see or
Nay - she*

~~(SIBBY rises, with fork to take hen. BEGGAR puts her down again)~~

~~Her eyes are grey like morning dew
Her curling hair falls to her shoe
The swan is blacker than (Looks round for a simile then
at his hand) my nail
Before my queen, my Granuaile
My Sibby O~~

~~(SIBBY rises again. Same business, Wait till you hear the end)~~

~~The King of France 'd give his throne
To share her pillow (What's the rhyme at all)
So would I myself~~

~~(SIBBY keeps time with fork in her hand)~~

~~The Spanish fleet is on the sea
To carry away mo gradh mo chree
My Sibby O (JOHN rises and X R)~~

~~SIBBY~~

~~(Rises) (She and BEGGAR repeat last verse. SIBBY beats time)~~

~~The Spanish fleet etc.~~

~~SIBBY~~

(Goes across to John and points fork at him) I always knew I was too good for you.) BEGGAR quickly takes out chicken and puts it on table. SIBBY who has been standing R.C. with her arms folded conceitedly, re-collects herself and rushes over L

SIBBY

Did you take the chicken out yet ?

BEGGAR

I did ma'am. Look at it there (SIBBY sits L of table)

JOHN (R)

How is the broth getting on

BEGGAR

It's grand. It's always grand.

SIBBY

Give me a taste of it.

BEGGAR

sky woman = angel

Give me some vessel till I give this sky woman a taste of it (JOHN gives him an ^{bowl} eggcup from dresser crossing behind table to him. He fills and gives to SIBBY. JOHN gives him a bowl at same time, which ^{Beggar} he fills and drinks from. JOHN goes behind table and comes down R. SIBBY blows at hers and smells it)

SIBBY

There's a good smell on it anyway. (Tastes) It's lovely. O I'd give the world and all to have the stone that made that

BEGGAR

The riches of the world wouldn't buy it ma'am. If I was inclined to sell it the Lord Lieutenant would have given me Dublin Castle and all that's in it long ago.

SIBBY

O couldn't we coax it out of you any way at all

BEGGAR

The whole world wouldn't coax me out of it except may be for one thing. Now, I think of it, there's only one reason I might think of parting it ^{with} at all.

SIBBY

(Eagerly) What reason is that ? *(puts egg cup on table)*

BEGGAR

It's a misfortune that overtakes me ma'am every time I make an attempt to keep a pot of my own to boil it in and I don't like to be always under a compliment to the neighbours asking the loan of one. But whatever way it is, I never can keep a pot with me. I had a right to ask one of the little man that gave me the stone. The last one I bought got the bottom burned out of it one night I was giving a hand to a friend that keeps a still, and the one before that I hid under a bush one time I was going into Ennis for the night, and some boys of the town dreamed about it and went looking for treasure in it and they found nothing but eggshells but they brought it away for all that and another one...

SIBBY

(Rises) Give me the loan of the stone itself and I'll engage I'll keep a pot for it...Wait now till I make some offer to you. *(Beggan puts ham bone in sack)*

BEGGAR

(Rises. Aside) I'd best not be stopping to bargain. The priest might be coming on me. Well ma'am I'm sorry I can't oblige you *(As he goes up L)* *(Behind table)* I've no time to lose ma'am. I'm off. Well ma'am what offer'll you make

JOHN

(R) You may as well leave it for a day on trial first.

BEGGAR

(To JOHN) I think it's likely I'll not be passing this way again. *(To SIBBY)* Well now ma'am as you were so kind and for the sake of the good treatment you gave me, I'll ask nothing for it at all. Here it is for you and welcome *(Hands it across to her. She examines stone)* That you may

live long to use it. But I'll just take a little bit in my bag that'll do for supper, for fear I mightn't be in Tubber before night (Takes chicken and puts in sack) And you wont begrudge me the drop of whiskey when you can make plenty for yourself from this out (takes bottle *puts under coat*)

JOHN

(Goes to him) You deserve it, you deserve it indeed. You're a very gifted man. Dont forget the kippeen (*"I have the Kippeen"* ~~BEGGAR takes hambone also~~ *Beggar* ~~and~~ exit followed by JOHN, both singing "There's broth in the pot" etc., R.D.)

SIBBY

(L of table) Broth of the best, stirabout, poteen, wine itself he said and the people that'll be coming to see the miracle. I'll be as rich as Biddy Early before I die. (Enter JOHN R.D.) Where were you John

JOHN

I went out to shake him by the hand. He's a very gifted man.

SIBBY

He is so indeed

JOHN

And t he priest's at the top of the boreen coming for his dinner. May be you'd best put the stone in the pot again (SIBBY goes to fire, brings the pot forward; repeats business with stone; puts pot on fire; sits and blows fire. JOHN watches her put stone in pot then X and sit R of table.

CURTAIN