

**What God Hath Wrought  
~A TransAtlantic Farce~**

**John Walch**

**With Songs by Rachel Peters**

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**PRINCIPLE CHARACTERS:** (seven actors to play)

MEG - Customer Service Super Agent

RAMESH – Meg’s 15 year old son, super into programming

CONNOR – Young romantic, fastest telegraph operator in Ireland

TESSIE / OLIVIA – Young romantic, skilled Irish seamstress; young siren songstress

CURATOR – Keeper of the O’Shee name, runs the Transatlantic Cable Museum

JESSE / CYRUS FIELD – Hurling champion and father; submarine cable venture capitalist

BIDDY / MRS. CAHILL(S) – Kindly dress shop owner; Post-mistress and coffee shop owner

**POP-UP CHORUS:**

There are a number of characters who pop-in and out of the action, assign the following using the ensemble above as makes sense:

MOM, DAD, DEMONIC LITTLE BROTHER, CHAD, PASCAL, WIDOW McCLINTON, THE KNIGHT’S OF KERRY WHO CAN, CURATOR’S MUM, HATERS, OLD-TIMEY HATERS, THREE-HEADED MONSTER, ITINERANT PRIEST, SEAMUS HEANEY, AUNT DEBBIE, ETC.

**TIME AND PLACE:**

From the moment the old and new worlds shared their first innocent electronic smooch and into the great digital orgy of today. The global village where the sublime and the silly join with ache and ambition to dance an awkward Irish jig.

**ACT ONE**  
**One. August 5, 2014**

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*A woman, let's call her MEG, clicks on a power-strip and a desk lamp pops on, illuminating her in dramatic up-light. The whirl of machines snapping to life begins as she prepares for her day on behalf of Habañero's. We see she's armed with a battery of contemporary telecommunication devices: headsets, Google glasses, handsets, computers, laptops, tablets, video-chat, phones. Seriously, it should feel as if she's in full battle gear. Maybe her armor is made of sticky notes and she's decorated in medals, one big enough to read: "**Habañero's Customer Service Super Agent 2014: Meg Chambers.**" Lets kick this off in high style.*

*The hum from the irritated hive of human crankiness begins and it sounds militaristic and musical. Data bits fire like cannons and the pop-pop of incoming chats and texts provide continual artillery. Meg is in her element, in command of this battlefield. On the screen behind her, her first engagement time-stamp(s) burst into view.*

VIDEO:

CONNECTING INCOMING CHAT  
 PRIORITY LEVEL: 5 CHILIS  
 TIME-STAMP: 8/5/2014: 10.02EST.

CONNECTING INCOMING EMAIL  
 PRIORITY LEVEL: 5 CHILIS  
 TIME-STAMP: 8/5/2014: 10.04EST

*The time-stamp images build, flicker, and speed up, offering a mountain of time-stamps from over the day, week, months, years. Imagine we're seeing a live feed off the Customer Service database: calls, chats, emails, whatever that Meg has handled over the years. Oh yeah, they're all Priority 5.*

*Against this relentless torrent stands Meg. The sound of calm echoes through her as she works her magic on the machines.*

MEG (*as she responds*)

Hi, this is Meg, how can I help you?

Hi, this is Meg, I'm sorry your having problems—

Hi, this is Meg, I understand you're not satisfied—

Hi, this is Meg, I want to make you happy—

Hi, this is Meg—

Hola, mi nombre es Meg —

Bună, numele meu este Meg—

MEG— MEG— MEG— MEG— MEG— MEG— MEG— MEG— MEG—

*As she efficiently continues, the images on the screen begin to morph to:*

VIDEO:

DISCONNECTING

STATUS: RESOLVED

TIME-STAMP: 8/5/2014: 10:03EST

DISCONNECTING

STATUS: RESOLVED

TIME-STAMP: 8/5/2014: 10:06EST

*Again, the images build and speed up. As Meg continues taking care of complaints, this message bounces like a happy puppy across the screen:*

VIDEO:

STATUS: RESOLVED

STATUS: RESOLVED

STATUS: RESOLVED

RESOLVED. RESOLVED. RESOLVED.

*The sound of disconnecting terminals swells heroically. The cranky customers of Habañero's are satisfied for the day and the big world spins and spins. It gets incrementally quiet, and the images slow and fade, leaving Meg alone as she begins to power down her power-strips after another successful day.*

*BUT THEN.*

*(The inevitable: but then.)*

*Something crackles to life.*

tap tap

*It's got a different sound, more basic, grounded. And with the sound there's a shift in the world. Meg is no longer in armor, but a blouse with a well concealed coffee stain or two. The battlefield is revealed to be her little office in a lonely corner of a building surrounded by other similar buildings in a larger office park (an oxymoron?) off some odd numbered freeway.*

*Meg hears the call again:*

tap tap

tap TAP tap tap

*She looks around, no idea where it's coming from. The time-stamp image appears. It's more generic and stripped down than the others. Meg reads from her screen as the image floats weirdly across the larger screen.*

MEG (*reading on screen*)

CONNECTING SOURCE UNKNOWN

PRIORITY LEVEL: NO INFORMATION

TIME-STAMP: August Fifth, 20.17GMT. Eighteen Hundred and Fifty-Seven?

*Again, the strange:*

tap tap

tap TAP tap tap | TAP TAP TAP | tap tap tap TAP | tap

*Meg is oddly flustered. Gives the time honored "What The?" shrug as she reconnects. She speaks her basic Training Soliloquy as she types her response:*

MEG

Hi, my name is Meg. Thank you for contacting Habañero's Customer Service. Your satisfaction is my number one priority. I'm sorry, but I don't seem to have any information on the nature of your problem. How may I help you today?

*Again, with more urgency:*

tap tap

tap TAP tap tap | TAP TAP TAP | tap tap tap TAP | tap

TAP tap TAP | TAP TAP TAP | tap tap TAP

MEG (*over the tapping*)

I apologize, I'm having problems understanding. The timestamp reads Eighteen Hundred Fifty-Seven, so clearly we're having some technical issues! Maybe reconnect and we'll—

*The tapping cuts her off and strikes with more urgency; Meg knows the sound of someone in distress when she hears it—*

MEG

I understand you're upset, and trust me I want to help, but I can't understand what you are saying, are you speaking English?

*The tapping builds in urgency, volume, speed. In a flip or a swipe, Meg opens a branch conversation marked URGENT to someone named RAMESH. This is a video chat.*

MEG

Ramesh, are you there? Come on, stop obsessing over your program and pick-up for once, Ramesh! I see you there! Ramesh, hello?!

*A separate light rises on RAMESH, a kid wearing headphones somewhere, maybe in a cave or a teenager's bedroom, staring at some screens. The tapping becomes even more urgent. Meg refocuses on the trunk conversation.*

MEG

Sir or madam, please calm down, I'm here to help you, but you need to slow down, can you slow down for me? Slow down!?

*But the tapping picks up, blistering across time and echoing against history. There's no denying it. Across the world, a light ghosts up on a man tap dancing the message. There's joy in the space he's in, everything is possible, whereas Meg just gets grimmer and grimmer, she side sends another branch message.*

MEG

Ramesh, I need your help, pick-up or no more screen time!

*The tapping continues with blinding speed until finally smoke begins to emanate from Meg's screen. Ramesh scrambles, the small screen explodes and the big screen hostilely blinks:*

VIDEO:

DISCONNECTING

STATUS: UNRESOLVED

UNRESOLVED

UNRESOLVED

*The word stabs into Meg. She sits stunned. And that's where we'll leave her for now, because the tapping changes tone, takes center stage and joyfully continues.*

tap tap

tap TAP tap tap | TAP TAP TAP | tap tap tap TAP | tap

TAP tap TAP | TAP TAP TAP | tap tap TAP

*There's a party in another time and place, and we want to be where the party is. The sound of an Irish fiddle and a concertina mixes in with the tapping.*

*Connect to:*

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**Two. August 5, 1857**

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*The man dancing, let's call him CONNOR, clicks his heels with a flourish and steps out of the dance. Sounds of cannons firing in celebration. He's on the deck of an immense boat, the HMS Agamemnon. He calls to someone in the shadows.*

CONNOR

Tessie, you going to stand at the rail all night?

*Conner reaches down, cut into the deck is a great cable that he reveals.*

Come, Tessie, grab hold of the cable, future's waiting.

TESSIE

I've no use for such things, rather me a cod than a cable.

*The Irish fiddle and concertina swells and then fades.*

CONNOR

Tessie, there's still time to catch one more set.

TESSIE

Not fair, Connor, you know I'm soft for the dance.

CONNOR

But ya hang on the ship's rail the night long, looking as if you'd rather pitch yourself into Valencia Bay.

*Suddenly a burst of fireworks lights up the sky. Sound of cheers.*

Just look at it, Tessie, fire lighting up the sky, cable like lightening under water. Whole world knows it all at once and is dancing in step. The Transatlantic cable is laid, Tessie! The great cable is laid!

*Fireworks die down. Sky returns dark.*

Come, cut a buckle with me? I'm all elbows without me partner.

TESSIE

Go on, you're the finest in all of Valencia, hundred girls would jump to have a dance with ya.

CONNOR

None as pretty as the one who hangs on the rail. Don't let your worrying spoil the celebration. We'll always be together, no matter how far I go.

TESSIE

Only God knows the future, Connor; you can't make promises on what you don't know.

CONNOR

I can, because I know this:

*He taps, coyly.*

tap tap  
tap TAP tap tap | TAP TAP TAP—

TESSIE (*cutting him off*)

You been in the drink, forgot your Kerry steps?

CONNOR

It's code, Tessie. Morse code. Have a true listen, why don't ya?

*He taps and translates.*

tap tap (I)

tap TAP tap tap (L) | TAP TAP TAP (O) | tap tap tap TAP (V) | tap (E)

TAP tap TAP (Y) | TAP TAP TAP (O) | tap tap TAP (U)

I love you.

TESSIE

How come your love got to come in Morris's code?

CONNOR

Morse code. And my love comes in all ways, Tessa, always will.

TESSIE

Then how can you be leaving me?

*Tessie looks across a dark and angry ocean.*

CONNOR

Not leaving you, Tess, I'm working, making an honest wage, building a future for us.

TESSIE

You saying you won't be on this ship when she sets sail next Sunday?

CONNOR

Saying we got the cable, cable keep us connected. Think on it, Tess. This same cable from our island here, threading all the way 'cross the ocean floor, knitting together the old world with the new. I'll be sending you telegrams 'cross the wide ocean faster than the time it takes the ferry to cross the bay to Portmagee.

TESSIE

No feat there, everyone knows the Devil's in that ferry to Portmagee.

CONNOR

You get so many telegrams from me be like I'm in the next room, you'll be in a mood from all my chattering on.



TESSIE (*contemplating the ocean*)

Here, but not here. ( . . . ) It don't seem thinkable for words to cross that ocean—so far, dark.

CONNOR

Thanks to Mr. Field, it's more than thinkable.

TESSIE

Mr. Cyrus Field, there's a man I wish no ill-will toward, but why'd he have to pick Valencia to land his cable?

CONNOR

Valencia's the furthest spit of land West, nearest point between old and new.

TESSIE

And the cable just lays on the bottom of the ocean letting words pass through it like a drunken bloke?

CONNOR

Signals. Pulses of electricity traveling on copper wire to make up the code that represent words. Words like: I love ya.

TESSIE

Words aren't made to travel that far. It's not natural. Bound to snap, nothing can hold two worlds together.

CONNOR

We can, Tessie. We're like this cable. Strong. Seven coils of copper all braided together, laid out on the ocean bed, connecting us across the world.

*A new song starts, a Kerry set is being played.*

Tessie, they're calling last set, how 'bout it?

TESSIE (*again, considering the ocean, imagining the distance*)

Newfoundland. What is it?

CONNOR

Where I'll be working for a spell. The other side.

TESSIE

Sounds lonely. Like an orphaned child—Newfoundland.

CONNOR

No cable house is lonely. Always chatter, day and night, needle's always bouncing.

TESSIE

So stay in the cable house here!

CONNOR

They need good 'graphers, people who can train others, like I did with Latimer Clark here. Mr. Field appointed me: adjunct-manager.

TESSIE

Cause you're the best?

CONNOR

Cause I'm quick with tapping out the code.

TESSIE

Fastest, "telegraphs like he steps," is what they say. Once Mr. Field sees how fast you are, he'll promote you to New York, a city that can keep step with you. Half the county's dead, other half starved and fled to America during the Famine to find a crust. What lure does Ireland hold to hook you home?

CONNOR

You, Tessie.

TESSIE

Hundred Tessie's in New York is what I reckon.

CONNOR

But none as pretty as my Tessie, and the future I dream with her. Cable brings stable work, new opportunity. Mr. Field is planning a whole town on the bay to support the enterprise.

TESSIE

Me Da says it's a load of bollocks. Says we'll all come to our senses soon as it fails.

CONNOR

It won't fail, laying the cable was the great task. When he sees how the operation changes life for everyone, he'll come 'round.

TESSIE

Took him years of self-study learning to read and write, won't drop all that to learn your fancy new code.

CONNOR

He don't need to drop his learning. Just give his message to the 'grapher to code.

TESSIE

He don't trust the code. Calls ya a bunch of strutting peacocks.

CONNOR

You'll see, by the time I come back, I bet your Da himself will be sending telegrams.

TESSIE

Wouldn't wager on that, I been two long years on him just trying to let me mash his potatoes with milk and leeks 'stead of boiling them to death! Two years, Connor, how can ya leave me here for two years?

CONNOR

Seems a lifetime, I know, but two years go by in a blink.

*Tessie quivers at the thought of it.*

Specially, if you do me the honor of consenting to be me wife.

TESSIE

What you doing down there on bended knee, Connor O'Shee?

CONNOR

Tessie, I love ya and you know how I tell you they didn't have a boat big enough to hold the whole payload of cable?

TESSIE

And that's got you down on bended knee?

CONNOR

So what Mr. Field did is he split the cable in two. And this boat we're on here sailed half way out into the ocean, carrying half the cable. Another boat did the same from Newfoundland, and in the middle of the dark ocean they met—

TESSIE

How they meet? Just find each other out in the big empty ocean?

CONNOR

Just like we done, Tessie, found each other out in the middle nothing. And when the boats met, we took the two halves of the great cable, and spliced 'em, joined 'em. The two became one—stronger and complete. And that's the same cable we pulled ashore this morning, the cable that's going change the world, like you changed my world, Tessie. Join with me, why wait till I return, when we know our hearts true?

TESSIE

Ya shipping out on Sunday! No time for a wedding!

CONNOR

We do it Saturday—

TESSIE

Saturday's me Da's champion hurling match against Portmagee! He never give that up—

CONNOR

I'll take care of your Da, Tessie, I'll take care of you, take care of it all. I love, ya, Tessie.  
What do you say about that?

*A moment, the music catches the breeze.*

TESSIE

I say to you Connor O'Shee—

*She assuredly dances:*

tap tap

tap TAP tap tap | TAP TAP TAP | tap tap tap TAP | tap

TAP tap TAP | TAP TAP TAP | tap tap TAP

CONNOR

Oh, so you were listening?

TESSIE

I'm a quick study. Maybe I should be the 'grapher, eh?

*She taps it again, faster this time.*

CONNOR

You think you can, can ya?

*Now he taps the phrase, faster this time.*

TESSIE

That all the kick you got in you, Connor O'Shee?

*She taps it again, faster, they trade exchanges until finally they are tapping in  
thunderous, exuberant unison: I love you! I love you!*

tap tap

tap TAP tap tap | TAP TAP TAP | tap tap tap TAP | tap

TAP tap TAP | TAP TAP TAP | tap tap TAP!

*Connect to:*

### Three. August 9, 2014

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*Meg, rambling to a man, who for now we'll call him the CURATOR. Behind them, a simple placard that reads: Transatlantic Cable Museum, Valencia, Ireland.*

MEG

The end of civilization began on July 12, 1995. I was on a bus riding home from work, and this guy got on, more boy really, or if we're going to get technical a man-boy type—a dude. He took his seat across the aisle and stared dead ahead. Bored. Remember *boredom*, when the mind could wander, wonder? When you had to sit with yourself and feel your feelings? God, listen to me, now I sound exactly like my dad—

*Connect to DAD off, but on; present, but absent; here, but not here.*

DAD

Only boring people are bored, Meg.

MEG

My mom—

*Connect to MOM off, but on; present, but absent...*

MOM

If you're so bored, Meg, stick your finger in a socket.

CURATOR

(...) You were saying something about a tour on a coach?

MEG

Bus! Yes, and this dude losing wrestling match with boredom, so he reaches into his satchel and removes this ... device. *A bomb!* I thought: *he's got a bomb!* Now, *he's entering the coordinates into it!* The bus, block, whole city is about to explode! But ... there's no explosion just the faint sound of ... a phone ringing. My God, is he making a *call*? In public? It shocked, offended my Midwestern values in the exact same way my dear grandmother would talk about *my* mother calling *her* long distance boyfriend (now known as my father) on the one public phone in her sorority.

*Connect to GRANDMA off, but on...*

GRANDMA

Private should stay private! Talk in the hall, Joanie? Why not just send the whole fraternity a Polaroid with his hand up your skirt?

MEG

I felt super connected to my Gram at that moment—riveted and revolted. (...) *Who is this mysterious young man? What secret mission is he on?* Must be super important, because what explanation could there be to call someone from a public bus? I waited. The phone was stupid big and I could hear the tiny *ring, ring*. Then, magically a voice floated through the bus: “oh, hey babe, what’s up?”

The dude slouched against the window, and exclaimed with a borderline orgasmic, sigh: “Hey baby, I just had the most amazing burrito, *ever*. Can’t describe it, but I thought of you.”

The first public cell phone call *I* ever saw made. All this technology, this mobile miracle at work, all for breaking news about a burrito so amazing it couldn’t even be described?

CURATOR

And this brought you to Valencia? This burrito?

MEG

No, no, not exactly, because looking back, I wonder was that the end of civilization as I know it? *Or was it the beginning?* The conversation did go on. Dude did *try* to describe the amazing burrito. And just before he hung up he said: “Love ya, babe.” Is that why he called, to reach across the city to snatch a little sweet? So is it about bullshit meaningless conversations about burritos or about love? What is all this in service of?

CURATOR

All of what?

MEG

Cables, satellites, fiber-optics—global communications!

CURATOR

I wouldn’t pretend to imagine.

MEG

But I do. When it’s slow at work, I do this thing in my head, where I imagine what all the virtual conversations about burritos might sound like.

CURATOR

And you can imagine that?

MEG

It sounds exactly like this.

*The sound of all the virtual conversations ever made about a burrito on any device. It’s sublime, but....*

CURATOR

I don't hear anything.

MEG

Cause you're not in my head.

CURATOR

I'm hedging that's a good thing.

MEG

It's very crowded, my head.

CURATOR

Like a burrito, tis it?

MEG

Tis what?

CURATOR

Your head. . . .Lame attempt at a joke.

MEG

My head *is* like a burrito! You know how when you eat one, the bottom drops out? The company I work for, they over-stuff their burritos—so gaudy, so American. Shove it all in! More like torpedoes, their burritos, take a bite and out explodes this mess of beans, cheese, guacamole, salsa. It's disgusting. It's unnecessary. It's the number one complaint we get. I have dry cleaning vouchers for every major city in the U.S. Hundreds of thousands could be saved annually, if they would just deal with portion control, but do the executive muckety-mucks ever care about the metrics coming out of Customer Service?

CURATOR

Truthfully, I'm not sure what you're going on about.

MEG

The value corporate America places on its Customer Service professionals—the things they could learn from a simple online survey to those of us on the front-line!

CURATOR

Was talking about the burrito, I've never had one.

MEG

No?

CURATOR

True. Never in my life.

MEG

How is that even possible?

CURATOR

I live on a fairly remote island in Southwest Ireland?

MEG

I can't tell you how much it means to me. I feel like I'm looking at an infant, the baby Jesus, a double rainbow. It calms my mind knowing there's someone who has never partook of the burrito.

CURATOR

So this is why you've come to Valencia, to calm your mind?

MEG

No, no, you'll think I'm crazy, crazier (!) than you already do.

CURATOR

More passionate than crazy, I'd say.

MEG

Me too! I *am* passionate. Thank you. Excuse me, I'm vibrating. Duty—or *passion*—calls.

*A buzz. Meg whips out a device. On screen floats.*

CONNECTING INCOMING CHAT

PRIORITY LEVEL: 5 CHILIS

TIME-STAMP: 8/9/2014: 13.23EST.

Connect to *CHAD*, somewhere, off but on.

MEG

Hello, Chad. This is Meg. How can I help you?

CHAD

You're the eighth person I've been transferred to, don't fucking transfer me again.

MEG

I'm the end of the virtual line. Ha-ha.

CHAD

Don't fucking transfer me again.

MEG

Chad, according to your chat-chain I see you're upset about our "weak-ass salsa."



CHAD

Are you a real person?

MEG

I understand our super-spicy salsa is not spicy enough for you?

CHAD

Are you an American?

MEG

I am, but I don't see what that has to do with our "weak-ass" super-spicy salsa?

CHAD

Cause it's weak-ass. Step the F-up, Habañero! Show some *cojones*!

MEG

Chad, would a \$25 voucher make you a satisfied Habañero customer?

CHAD

Really, Meg? You disappoint, don't pay me off. I'll Tweet about this. I've got like a following, you might want to checkout hashtag #weak-ass-salsa. My re-Tweets alone could cripple Habañero's.

MEG

Chad, I share your passion to promote non weak-ass salsa. How about I send you the \$25 voucher *and* tell you an insider's secret?

CHAD

OK, now we're getting somewhere.

MEG

Most American palettes have no appreciation for the true, fiery spice of the habaño—

CHAD

So they numb it down!

MEG

We think of it as catering to the majority of our customer's tastes. But for fiery, passionate customers like you, here's the secret. When the pimply kid behind the counter asks you which salsa? Hold out your hand, and say: deliberately, meaningfully, knowingly...

The *real* salsa.

CHAD

The *real* salsa?

MEG

The *real* salsa. That's right, Chad. It exists, under-the-counter, and I promise it will restore your faith in our salsa. I've just sent the voucher...now.

CHAD (*reacting to incoming alert*)

Wow! Fifty bucks!

MEG

I doubled it because I want you to enjoy Habañero's, Chad, and know I am on your side.

*A wee moment.*

CHAD

Meg....you're blowing my mind.

MEG

I just want to give you the experience I know is possible at Habañero's.

*Another wee moment.*

CHAD

Meg, will you marry me?

MEG

Chad. I'm already married.

CHAD

Ah!! Dang it!

MEG

You're obviously someone who knows what they want. You'll find your soul mate, and I bet she won't have a weak ass.

CHAD

LMAO!

MEG

Happy to help. Be sure and fill out my survey, please!

CHAD

On it! And, Meg...thanks for hearing me.

MEG

My pleasure, Chad. Don't forget my survey, please! Have a good day!

DISCONNECTING.  
STATUS: RESOLVED.

CURATOR

The burrito outfit?

MEG

Yup. Customer Support never sleeps. I deal with—

CURATOR

Exploding burritos.

MEG

And other things, yes, Every really difficult customer gets escalated to me. I'm the fixer.  
The last stop on the train to Jordan!

CURATOR

Dry cleaning vouchers.

MEG

In the vast scheme of things, handling complaints about burritos is not exactly, exactly what you would call a calling, but I'm extremely good at it: "*so good, she inspires envy*" is what the Vice President of Customer Relations wrote on my most recent evaluation.

CURATOR

I suppose that's a compliment?

MEG

It is. Sure, there's some, many, who care more about what they'll wear on casual Friday, but not me. The VP values me so much he keeps suggesting I work from anywhere. "Take a trip, Meg!" "Get away from the office, here's a business-class voucher to anywhere!" But I didn't want to take a trip, why leave my desk? I enjoy my work. I over-commit, sure, but if that's a crime, it's a crime of passion. HR worries about "burnout", and I say to HR: HS! (Horse Shit.) But no matter how much I protest, the travel vouchers keep coming! But finally, finally I decided to take that trip. And here I am. Meg: Aug. 9, 2014. Transatlantic Cable Museum, Valencia, Ireland.

CURATOR

So this voucher is what brings you to my museum?

MEG

No, no! I'm here to find something. I'm here for love.

CURATOR

Love?

MEG

Not mine, of course, ha-ha! But for Collin O'Shitte—

CURATOR

Collin O'Shitte?

MEG (*checking her chat notes*)

Of Valencia Island?

CURATOR

Nope.

MEG

Hmmm. The signal was scrambling, so, hmm. Oh, and the time-stamp was way off, it read August 5, 1857!

CURATOR

August 5?

MEG

1857, I know! Obviously we were having technical issues, but we all had a good laugh about it around the water-cooler, I was liked that day. It's good to share a laugh—they always say share a smile, but sharing a laugh is better, because when you're laughing you're smiling, so it's a two for one! .... IT looked into the date glitch and told me the original chat is addressed to Tessie? I thought maybe it was an earlier CS agent named Tessie? But our records don't show a Tessie ever working for Habañero's.

CURATOR

Tessie?

MEG

Girlfriend, wife?

CURATOR

You're talking about Connor O'Shee?

MEG

Am I?

CURATOR

What do you know of Connor O'Shee?

MEG

I know he's unresolved. You know him then, this Connor O'Shee?

CURATOR

Everyone round these parts knows Connor O'Shee.

MEG

Wonderful! Where does he live?

CURATOR

Live?

MEG

Yes, we chatted: August fifth, we got disconnected. I tried reconnecting, but no luck. Then I hit the database. Turns out, every August fifth he tries to connect. He's logged dozens of unresolveds over the years and I won't settle for less than 100% resolution, but I've not been able to reconnect. Then I remembered the business class travel vouchers and thought: an adventure was in order, a personal visit. Here's the transcript from our chat.

*He takes the transcript from her, looks it over....curatorially.*

CURATOR

And what was dear Connor O'Shee chatting you up about?

MEG

It's in code, or that's what my son Ramesh says, it's code—

*Connect to Ramesh.*

RAMESH

Morse code, Mom, and all it says, over and over again is "I love you."

CURATOR (*overlapping, reading code*)

"I love you, I love you."

MEG

Oh, you read Morse code too! Makes sense being as you're the curator of the Transatlantic Cable Museum.

CURATOR

That I am.

MEG

My son Ramesh is obsessed with code. He's spent his whole summer making up his own code—

RAMESH

It's a *language*, Mom, a dynamic, strongly typed *programming language* designed populate expressive paradigms. And it's totally going to be open-source.

MEG

Can't understand a word he says. I encourage him to go out, hang with friends, but his only buddy is this twitchy kid named Pascal and code is all they talk about:

*Connect to Pascal.*

PASCAL

Hey Ramesh? what's your favorite html code for rendering ascii characters?

RAMESH (*dripping with disdain*)

Html? Kicking it old school? What's yours, Bill Gates?

PASCAL (*typing on screen*)

&uml;

RAMESH

Umlaut? That's your über-fav?

PASCAL

Blow me, umlauts are cool. What's yours?

RAMESH (*typing on screen*)

&nbsp;

PASCAL

Non-breaking space, that's all you got?

RAMESH

That's all I need. It's stealth. When you want something like a, uh date—

PASCAL

Like you'll ever get a date—

RAMESH (*demonstrating on the screen*)

I'm talking like a *date*, date. Like August 5 and you don't want the 5 breaking across a line no matter what cruddy resolution screen the dip-ass user is on, you slip in that non-breaking space code: August&nbsp;5 and that date will not break across any line. That shit is a solid unit, no breaks.

PASCAL

That shit is bo-  
ring.

RAMESH

&nbsp; (!)

PASCAL

&uml; (!)

RAMESH  
&nbsp; (!)

PASCAL

&uml; (!)

&nbsp; (!)

&uml; (!)

&nbsp; (!)

&uml; (!)

*Pascal and Ramesh out.*

MEG

No idea what they're talking about! The young always figuring out ways to ixnay the arentspay. Ramesh is no different, just kids being kids, right? But I digress. My son—a digression!—what a thing for a mother to say. Anyway, I've taken gobs of your time already, if you could just point me in the direction of Mr. O'Shee I'll be on me merry way! Oh, sorry, that's so wrong, speaking like I'm Irish. And probably offensive, pretending like I have me a lil' Irish lilt!

CURATOR (*moving on, re the transcript.*)

You say this came over the wire August fifth?

MEG

Is there a wee problem with that?

*Claps her hand over her mouth.*

CURATOR

There is a problem, indeed there is, and it's not a wee one, because Mr. Connor O'Shee is, in fact, long dead.

MEG

NO!

CURATOR

Yes.

MEG

Dead?

CURATOR

As the proverbial coffin-nail, he is.

MEG

But you said you knew him?

CURATOR

We all know Connor O'Shee round the ring of Kerry. Look here, I have some of me own transcripts about him.

*He pulls out a music scroll.*

MEG (*reading*)

The Sour Ballad of Connor O'Shee?

CURATOR

Whole village sings it in down at Cahill's Café every August fifth to flog him and remind us of the sin of overweening pride.

MEG

It's a musical?

CURATOR

It 'tis. Would you like to hear an archival recording from 1922 sung by the Knights of Kerry Who Can.

MEG

You have that?

CURATOR

I have everything you need to know about Connor O'Shee, except what actually, finally happened to him over in the new world.

*He brings out a child's coffin labeled:*

MEG (*reading*)

Connor O'Shee Ephemera. Why's it in a coffin?

CURATOR

Aim is to bury it when we have collected every last scrap of him.

MEG

But why a *child's* coffin?

CURATOR

Equal parts practicality and morbidity—that's the Irish way.

*He pulls out a severely warped wax record, and blows the dust from it.*



MEG

Why, why do you have so much?

CURATOR

Because, if ya must know, I'm his great-great-great grandson: Casey O'Shee.

MEG

No!

CURATOR

Yes.

MEG

No, it can't be.

CURATOR/CASEY

And yet it 'tis. Shall we have a listen, then?

*He cranks up a Victrola, drops the needle on, and it plays. Instantly, we are transported to a 1920's music hall, where the Knights of Kerry Who Can perform for your listening pleasure the Sour Ballad of Connor O'Shee.*

### THE SOUR BALLAD OF CONNOR O'SHEE

OH, HEAR NOW THE TALE OF CON-NOR O'SHEE,  
 CON-NOR O'SHEE, CON-NOR O'SHEE  
 OH HEAR NOW THE TALE OF CON-NOR O'SHEE  
 NEV-ER 'TAS A MORE FAN-CY-PANTS DREAM-ER THAN HE  
 HE LEFT HIS DEAR WIFE, PISSED A-WAY HIS OWN LIFE  
 ALL FOR A TRANS-AT-LAN-TIC SPREE,  
 A TRANS-AT-LAN-TIC SPREE

SING: LIC-KE-TY SPLI-TE-DY HIB-BI-DY JIB  
 CU-MU-LO-NIM-BUS-LY, FLOP-PI-TY-FLIP  
 O'-SHEE-MI-LY SCHLI-MI-LY DICK-LY LIMP  
 AS THE FISH OF PORT-MA-GEE!

OH, HEAR NOW THE TALE OF CON-NOR O'SHEE,  
 CON-NOR O'SHEE—CON-NOR O-SHEE— CON-NOR O'SHEE— CON-NOR O'SHEE—  
 CON-NOR O'SHEE—

*The record skips and the severe warp gets the better of it as sound waves bend and blur. The Knights of Kerry Who Can should sound spooky, unworldly as they sing his name spiced with all kinds of bizarre umlauts:*

OH HHHH'H ÇOOO OOOÑÑÑÑÑÑÑ NOR Ø!'ßßßßSHEEE É É É É É É É É

MEG

Did you hear that?

CURATOR

Record's warped, shame, it's me favorite recording of the Knights of Kerry Who Can.

MEG

I'm not talking about the warp, I'm talking about what you *hear* in the warp. There's something else, something more. Look, look! The date stamped on the record sleeve: *August Fifth*. It's the same date as my chat!

CURATOR

Cause we sing it every August fifth, a deeply engrained tradition.

MEG

And somehow that's creating a time warp—an errant sound wave washing up on the shore of a different century, Connor O'Shee trying to be heard anyway he can, trying to, I don't know, but I have an ear for this kind of distress. Play it again—No, no, play it backwards!

CURATOR

Backwards?

MEG

My demonic little brother (who's now a banker, karma ✓) used to play all his heavy metal albums backwards, searching for demonic messages, he called it....crap, crap, crap—

*Connect to Little Brother rocking out.*

LITTLE BROTHER

Backmasking! You're so stupid, you don't know anything. Behold Iron Maiden!

*Rock that air guitar riff little man: NENEER-NANEER!*

Between the songs "The Trooper" and "Still Life" one who seeks the truth can hear Satan's siren-song. Soak in some hard-core truth, Meg!

*He cranks it and indeed we hear:*

WHAT HO,' SAID THE MONSTER WITH THE THREE HEADS,  
DON'T MEDDLE WITH THINGS YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND!

LITTLE BROTHER

Don't meddle with things you don't understand, Meg! And get out of my room, bleeding girl!

CURATOR

I very much doubt the Knights of Kerry Who Can were into blackmasking.

MEG

*Backmasking. Just do it!*

*Hush.*

*Then Curator spins the record backwards. Oh it fights and resists, but eventually yields sound. First, rasp and scratch, rasp and scratch, but then the VOICE of a man, raspy, weak, but clear emerges from the ancient record.*

VOICE (CONNOR):

WHAT HAPPENED TO US, TESSIE?

I'LL NEVER UNDERSTAND.

BUT I LOVE YOU TESSIE. ALWAYS HAVE, ALWAYS WILL

PLEASE TESSIE, IF YOU CAN HEAR THIS, FIND ME.

I LOVE YOU.

*Our dear Curator, who up-to-this-point has been more of the strong, stoic, fisherman lost-in-the-net type is suddenly transformed into a giddy schoolboy.*

CURATOR

Heaven shed tears, it's me great-great-great-grand'Da! Connor O'Shee!

MEG

I knew it!

CURATOR

How is this possible? Who are you and what has brought you to me museum?

MEG

Vouchers and high-level Customer Service, trying to get a resolve—

CURATOR

An angel is what you are. You don't understand.

MEG

I've been warned not to meddle in things I don't understand.

CURATOR

Pull on ye strongest metal and meddle, you warrior, you. Meddle you should; meddle you would! This backplash is one for the ages.

MEG

But the backmask reveals little. It's like an Irish Burrito, unknowable. At the end of the day, we've solved...nothing!

CURATOR

But this *changes* everything. All me life, all me parents life, me grandparents, the O'Shee's have lived— we've lived— hard to bring myself to say...but we've lived...

*Connect to the entire O'Shee Clan, delivering a litany of shame like murmurs at church.*

O'SHEE CLAN

Under a dark cloud of humiliation—

Embarrassed of me own shadow— 'Shamed to be seen—  
With our eyes cast down— Our heads hung low.  
Afraid to love—

CURATOR

Unworthy of love. .... Me great-great-great-grand'Da brought the shame to our name. And we never-ever spoke of it. Just knew it, it's what's in our marrow—excludance, avoisian, shame. And we've collected what we could find, vigilant to take every scrap of him out of the world, put it in this child's coffin, and bury the shame of him at long last.

MEG

Super heartbreaking.

CURATOR

But this backwash changes everything.

MEG

*Backmask—*

CURATOR

He was trying to get in touch with her. He was trying as best he could, just couldn't get through. And he's still trying, he's not what they made him out to be in that bleeding Ballad. He wasn't a man who abandoned his wife. A man who turned his back on his country. Man who gave up his anchor for a cloud. Man so seduced by the promise of the future he let the present slip out of his hands like the cod in Portmagee.

NO!

Me great-great-great-grand'Da was a man fighting to get back, trying to make good. The Sour Ballad of Connor O'Shee is a lie, a sham. It should be called The *Sweet* Ballad of Connor O'Shee. Far as I'm concerned, The Knights of Kerry Who Can Go Fuck Themselves, they can! For generations, the O'Shee clan's carried this shame, and since me dear Mum passed last fortnight, I'm the only left to shoulder it.

MEG

Oh, I'm sorry about your Mom.

CURATOR

Yeah, she was a rock, me rock, but she had her flinty edges, she did, even right to the end.

*Connect to CURATOR'S MUM on her deathbed.*

## CURATOR'S MUM

Casey, you're the last O'Shee. Like a candle-opera, we've snuffed it out over the generations, one-by-one-by-one. Don't spawn. Carry it, bury it, for all of us. This is your sacred duty.

## MEG

Wow. So that's intense.

## CURATOR

True. And it's been heavy, this coffin on me back. Lord, Meg, I don't know who you be, but I want to— I want to— I want to....thank you. Thank you for relieving me of this hard, hard row to hoe.

## MEG

I'm a professional. It's what I'm good at.

## CURATOR

You have no idea how good you are.

## MEG

Thank you, that's very positive feedback. Nobody fills out my surveys. It hurts my heart a little, when I feel I help so many and yet after-the-fact, it's just—the great yawn of silence. I know *busy-busy* lives, but would it kill you to fill out my survey?

## CURATOR

You're not silence to me, you're thunder and the crash of waves! Send me that survey, I'll fill it out with gusto. Just stay with me, help me, Meg. Help me find him. Connor O'Shee. Not the Sour Ballad, but the Sweet. The *real* salsa under the counter, you know where it's hidden, Meg. Help me find him, resolve him, absolve him. Help him connect to love.

## MEG

I have a voucher for return tomorrow.

## CURATOR

You have more vouchers, endless vouchers.

## MEG

And also a son, staying at Pascal's. It's not good, when he stays there, he turns into a sort of a houseplant left in the trunk of your car? He needs light, air.

## CURATOR

Bring him here! Valencia's got the first and freshest air off the Atlantic.

## MEG

He's programming. All summer. It's all I can do to get him to stop long enough to eat a hot-pocket—

*Connect to: theme to Hot Pocket jingle.*

MEG (*cont'd.*)

For the love of God, if I could get that jingle out of my head! And I know the hot-pocket is bad, unhealthy and that makes me feel like a bad mother, like I've failed him, but I love him, and when you see your growing boy hungry, it's all you can do to, to— God, he's probably hungry right now! I need to go home.

CURATOR

And leave it unresolved?

MEG

That's. A. Hard. Word. For. Me.

CURATOR

So voucher him up and fly him over. Maybe he could use his programming skills to help us?

MEG

He's actually really good at that, finding things on line and stuff and it's what his whole program is really all about. He's been begging me to let him beta test it, but I know what he's doing with that program—he's trying to find his mother.

CURATOR

But you're his ma? You serve him the questionable hot-pockets.

MEG

Yes, yes, of course, I meant his birth mom. He's from Bangladesh, my husband and I adopted him. And I get it, I am very open with him about it, but the fact is there are no records of her. (*Tears a bit at the thought.*) He was found in a vegetable crate on the steps of a Hindu Temple, wrapped-up in a burlap sack, my baby little hot-pocket.

CURATOR

Why not let him test it out over here? Test it on finding Connor O'Shee.

MEG

That might actually work.

CURATOR

So voucher him up on the mobile, like I see you do with Chad!

*Pulling out her mobile device, suggesting she voucher him up. As he holds it, it buzzes, he jumps alarmed—*

Ah! It bit me!

MEG

Don't they vibrate over here?

CURATOR

Wouldn't know, don't have a mobile.

MEG

NO!

CURATOR

Tis true.

MEG

No burrito, no mobile, you're like Ghandi, an uncut pie. What else haven't you done?

CURATOR

There's lots I haven't done, Meg, cause of the curse. Which is why I need you.

CONNECTING INCOMING CHAT

PRIORITY LEVEL: 5 CHILIS

TIME-STAMP: 8/9/2014: 14.02EST

MEG

I need to take this.

CURATOR

You're not going to take it, Meg.

MEG

Yes, I am.

CURATOR (*is he somehow channeling Twisted Sister?*)

No, ya not going to take it. You're not going to take it anymore!

MEG (*panicked, the device buzzes hostilely*)

I-don't-know-if-I-can-do-that, it's priority 5 chili peppers

CURATOR

If that's priority 5 chili peppers, Connor O'Shee is 500 chili peppers. His lips are burning across time. Connor O'Shee's on fire! Hear him, Meg, begging on the backhand.

MEG

The backmask.

CURATOR

Never-mind what it's called just take me to it, take me back to him, Meg, take me back.

*He plays the backmask again.*

End of excerpt...