**Filled with the emptiness of death.**

The marketplace in our district in Dublin is not a place one can forget easily. Should that be the case though, it is at least a place one will remember as soon as the yellow and red cobblestones reflect the light of the sinking sun, no matter how long it has been since one left this place behind. When I looked up, the sky above us appeared to be bursting into flames and the clouds curled like smoke.

When we finally arrived, night had broken. Jumping down the coach box I handed the coachman his money and waited until the horse carriage was out of sight. I walked down the street until I stopped in front of an old house with two storeys.

Some of the glass panels were broken, some windows boarded up with musty planks. Slowly and quietly, I knocked on the wooden door and three times the sound of knuckles on wood broke through the silence of the night. Slowly the door opened, creaking, shoved open by an old crone. Curling one of her long bony fingers she motioned me to follow her. As I was striding after her through the dark corridor, only illuminated by the dripping candle in her other hand, I could barely prevent my hands from shaking and the cold breeze, touching my shoulders like the invisible hands of a shadow, was sending shivers down my spine. My guide vanished around a corner. I stopped, hesitating, slightly shaking. Was this wise? Pushing myself I stepped into a chamber after her. Two men were sitting at a wooden table, a fire was burning low in the chimney and the air was heavy with dust and the smoke of cigars hovering over the occupants of the small room like fog sheds in a swamp.

One of the two lifted his head, putting a flintlock pistol on the table. Ready to hand, he looked me dead in the eye. Slowly I untied a small leather pouch from my belt and threw it onto the table. Now the second man looked up, a spiteful grin on his face. He grabbed a key from his own belt and held it out to me. Reaching out I tried to grab it, but he pulled it back. A little laugh escaped his throat as he held out a second pistol waiting for me to grab it. As soon as I did so, he threw the key in my free hand and then his companion sent me out with a gesture of his hand, as if he was trying to chase away an annoying insect. For a second I stood still but then I ran, ran, as fast as my legs could possibly carry me. Down the street, over a bridge crossing a small stream, through small alleys and back streets. My only company was the echo of my steps on the uneven cobblestones.

Finally I reached the courthouse. As I was told, one of the windows on the ground floor had been left open. After I had climbed through it, I stopped for a second, groping for her letter in my pocket. Meanwhile I was able to recite the few lines by heart.

My dear Mangan,

meet me Friday night by the Miller’s Lake.

Don’t bother about the money and let it be my worry. The lord- and ladyship will not be expected before midnight so I will be able to get my hands on one of her loathed earrings.

With love, Bonny

Speeding up I tried to make out her small cell in the dark. Finally, there, a wooden shack, the key – fitting. As soon as the door gave in, I burst into the room. Her figure, curled up in the corner, sent a sharp pain through my body. Stains of blood on her back, hands, neck and the floor. The iron chains rattled as I turned her around and I looked into her cold blue eyes, filled with the emptiness of death.