

Tones Wolfe, Padraic Pearse of New York

I was eighteen years old when I went down to Dublin
with a fistful of money and a cartload of dreams.
"Take your time," said me father, "stop rushing like hell
and remember all's not what it seems to be:
for there's fellows would cut you for the coat on your back
or the watch that you got from your mother,
so take care, me young bucko, and mind yourself well,
and will you give this wee note to me brother?"

At the time Uncle Benjy was a policeman in Brooklyn
and me father, the youngest, looked after the farm,
when a phone call from America said send the lad over
and the old fella said "Sure, it wouldn't do any harm:
for I've spent my life working this dirty old ground
for a few pints of porter and the smell of a pound.
And sure maybe there's something you learn or you'll see
and you can bring it back home, make it easy on me."

So I landed at Kennedy and a big yellow taxi
carried me and me bags through the streets and the rain.
Well, me poor heart was thumpin' around with excitement
and I hardly even heard what the driver was saying.
We came in the Shore Parkway to the Flatlands in Brooklyn
to me uncle's apartment on East 53rd.
I was feeling so happy I was humming a song,
and I sang 'You're as free as a bird.'

Well, to shorten the story, what I found out that day
was that Benjy got shot down in an uptown foray,
and while I was flying my way to New York
poor Benjy was lying in a cold city morgue.
Well I phoned up the old fellow, told him the news.
I could tell he could hardly stand up in his shoes,
and he wept as he told me: go ahead with the plan
and not to forget be a proud Irish man.

So I went up to Nellie's beside Fordham Road
and I started to learn about lifting the load,
but the heaviest thing that I carried that year
was the bittersweet thoughts of my hometown so dear
I went home that December 'cause the old fellow died,
had to borrow the money from Phil on the side,
and all the bright flowers and brass couldn't hide
the poor wasted face of me father.

I sold up the old farmyard for what it was worth
and into my bag stuck a handful of earth.
Then I boarded a train, and I caught me a plane,
and I found myself back in the U.S. again.
It's been twenty two years since I've set foot in Dublin,
me kids know to use the correct knife and fork,
but I'll never forget the green grass and rivers
as I keep law and order in the streets of New York.