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# Journey to the World's Edge



**A Folk Tale in the Irish Tradition**

**Drama  
by  
Harry Michael Bagdasian  
and  
Ernest Joselovitz**

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"A wonderfully engaging tale that charms and challenges its audience as it takes us into the sometimes sad world of those who are 'different.' *Journey* successfully mixes the realism of a child's sadness with the enchantment and adventure that will bring her to a happy journey's end." — Diane Ney, *Plays International*

## Journey to the World's Edge A Folk Tale in the Irish Tradition

**Drama.** By **Harry Michael Bagdasian and Ernest Joselovitz.** *Cast: 6m., 9w., 11 either gender. May be doubled to 1m., 5w., 4 either gender.* This tale is about young Brigid Shawn O'Grady of long-ago County Clare in Ireland who just wants to be normal. Brigid cannot leave her house without being shunned and mocked by everyone in her village for the misshapen foot she'd been born with. She is isolated by her parents until, one day, she sets off to ask the help of the legendary Sea Mither. This powerful spirit gives Brigid a magical Bard's Rod to point her way to the well at the world's edge where Brigid will find a sage who will answer her plea. But getting there will not be easy. Along the journey, Brigid must pass three tests—one of her heart, one of her mind, and one of her courage. She meets talking animals, fanciful creatures, and a dangerous bog serpent that all challenge her to question what it means to be different. Steeped in Irish culture and legends, *Journey to the World's Edge* is about Brigid's journey toward self-esteem and courage. She finds not only the sage but also a surprising answer for the girl who, from that day onward, became known as Brigid—meaning "strength"—Shawn—meaning "one-of-a-kind"—O'Grady. *Unit set. Approximate running time: 55 minutes. Code: J42.*

Front cover: Emily Alpern Fisch, Ilse Cruces, Shanna Sorrells,  
Sarah Segal and Ethan Joseph in the Imagination Stage,  
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# JOURNEY TO THE WORLD'S EDGE

A Folk Tale in the Irish Tradition

A Play for Young Audiences

by

HARRY MICHAEL BAGDASIAN

and

ERNEST JOSELOVITZ



**Dramatic Publishing**

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With love and admiration  
we dedicate this script to our wives  
Robbie McEwen and Elaine Zvonkin Joselovitz

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# **JOURNEY TO THE WORLD'S EDGE**

A Folk Tale in the Irish Tradition

## **CHARACTERS**

(for a company of 24 players)

BRIGID SHAWN O'GRADY

and

A SEANACHAI

a circle of storytellers who play:

A Sage

Brigid's Mother

Brigid's Father - Michael Sean O'Grady

Shepherd

Street Cleaner

Schoolteacher

Baker

Tailor

Little Girl

Village Mother

Sea Mither

Kelpie

Farmer

Farmer's Wife

Giant (offstage voice) / Bog Serpent

Heron  
Pine Marten

Seanachai 1 through 6

Suggested casting for a company of 14 players (keeping in mind that all are members of the “seanachai” or story circle):

Brigid

Sage / Body of Serpent

Brigid’s Mother / Body of Serpent

Brigid’s Father / Body of Serpent

Shepherd / Pine Marten

Street Cleaner / Giant Voice / Serpent

Schoolteacher / Heron

Baker / Seanachai 2 & 5

Tailor / Farmer’s Wife / Body of Serpent

Little Girl / Body of Serpent

Village Mother / Sea Mither

Kelpie

Farmer / Seanachai 1 & 4

Heron / Seanachai 3 & 6

# JOURNEY TO THE WORLD'S EDGE

## A Folk Tale in the Irish Tradition

*Lights come up on a vast, nearly empty and quiet place. Think empty stage, for now. It is, after all, the world's edge (though no one knows that yet). It's pretty stark except for a small pond of water ringed by river stones.*

*In this vast near emptiness stands BRIGID Shawn O'Grady, an Irish farm lass of about twelve, who is intently staring at a stick in her hand. It is a Bard's Rod. We readily notice that she is wearing an oddly shaped boot, and, once she paces in agitation, it is obvious that she has a deformed foot. Away from her, unseen by BRIGID, but obvious to us, is a robed and hooded figure. BRIGID doesn't acknowledge his presence. The silence is only broken when BRIGID chants...*

BRIGID. "Tap once, twice, thrice/ Bard's Rod, point the way to the Well at World's Edge/ to what I need/ point the way."

*(She twirls around until the rod, like the needle of a compass, points across the stage at the robed and hooded figure. BRIGID is amazed. The picture is held, then...)*

BRIGID. You! You're the Sage!

SAGE. I am the Sage you seek. Welcome, Brigid Shawn O'Grady.

BRIGID. You know my name?

SAGE. And your destiny.

BRIGID. To change this misshapen foot of mine to be like my other, and like everyone else's.

SAGE. 'Tis only left for you to tell your tale to me. A seanachai [sheh-na'-quee] I summon then, a circle of storytellers, to help tell your tale. We begin as all real-life stories do...with a question.

*(A SEANACHAI, a circle of storytellers, enters. This includes the rest of the cast.)*

SEANACHAI 1. Why did you leave?

SEANACHAI 2. Why did you leave?

SEANACHAI/ALL. Why did you leave the house, your home?

*(The SAGE takes the Bard's Rod and hands it to the first SEANACHAI who enters followed by the rest of the SEANACHAI. BRIGID backs into the center of their semicircle and faces the audience as the SEANACHAI begins the story, passing the Bard's Rod one to another [BRIGID and the others speak to the audience].)*

BRIGID. That little girl I saw passing our home, one day then the next and every day. That little girl carrying those books, where is she going?

MRS O'GRADY. ...Brigid would ask me, her mother. "To school," I would tell her.

BRIGID. "School." 'Twas a new word for me. "*I* want to go to school."

FATHER. ...She would insist to me, her father. "'Tis best you stay at home," I told her.

MRS O'GRADY. "We keep you here at home for your own good," I said. "You're different, Brigid."

BRIGID. "I am?" I asked. (*A brief silence.*)

MRS O'GRADY. "Here at home," I did explain, "Here at home, you're safe."

FATHER. "You'll learn from your mother... About numbers and words," I told her.

BRIGID. I got my own book, *this* book— I learned to read with it...dreamy tales of faraway adventures.

MRS O'GRADY. She read it over and over, 'til the pages were worn.

LITTLE GIRL. Day after day Brigid would see me, a little girl, pass the O'Grady cottage on my way to the village.

BRIGID. What is a "village"?

SEANACHAI 1. ...Brigid would think...

BRIGID. Is it like my book?

(*The SEANACHAI continue...*)

SEANACHAI 2. And years went by.

SEANACHAI 3. Brigid grew up inside her world of four walls...

SEANACHAI 4. ...one window and the door locked...

SEANACHAI 5. ...reading her one book.

BRIGID (*reading from the book*). "...and the wish was granted. So the Sea Mither smiled, and disappeared again into the ocean waves."

SEANACHAI 1. Grown restless...

SEANACHAI 2. ...thinking always...

BRIGID. What's a "school"? A "village"?

SEANACHAI 3. Then, all in one day...

SEANACHAI 4. ...she saw passing by a cartful of colorful cloth and silks...

SEANACHAI 5. ...and a farmer walking home from the village carrying a stack of baked bread.

SEANACHAI 6. And a shepherd with a bundle of sheep's wool tied to his horse.

BRIGID. A school? A village? There's colorful silks in the village, and woolens and baked bread and schoolbooks and what else. What else? A place of mysteries and wonder. I must see for myself what the little girl sees every day.

*(While the dialogue/storytelling continues, the SEANACHAI begin to set up simple set pieces and props to create a village. Various SEANACHAI take up simple props and/or costume pieces to become a SHEPHERD, a SCHOOLTEACHER, a TAILOR, a VILLAGE MOTHER, a BAKER and a STREET CLEANER.)*

BRIGID. So one morning, before the sun had risen...

SEANACHAI/ALL. ...when everything was gray...

BRIGID. ...and oh-so-quiet. Not a soul was in sight.

SEANACHAI/ALL. Not a soul.

BRIGID. My mother and father asleep...I escaped...and for the first time in my walking talking life...

SEANACHAI/ALL. ...the first time in her walking talking life...

BRIGID. I left the house that confined me since infancy.

SEANACHAI/ALL. ...From the house that had confined her...

BRIGID. I'd not been allowed, since a babe, upon the streets of Kilfenora.

SHEPHERD. Never walked on the village green.

BRIGID. And there was the schoolhouse I'd not ever been inside; I peeked through...

SEANACHAI/ALL. Peeked through...

BRIGID. Rows of wooden desks!

SCHOOLTEACHER. With their inkwells and books, a world of maps upon the walls.

BRIGID. How could a place so wonderful be bad for me?

SEANACHAI/ALL. ...She went to the bake shop.

BAKER. ...Gazing at my soda bread in the window, and yesterday's dainty cakes.

SEANACHAI/ALL. To the tailor's shop.

TAILOR. Oh, and she was dazzled by the bright red dress there, and the feathered hats.

SEANACHAI/ALL. Before she knew it, the sun was up...

STREET CLEANER. And I was up.

TAILOR/BAKER/TEACHER. And so were many of us.

LITTLE GIRL (*approaches BRIGID*). Hi, what's your name? My name is Brianna.

BRIGID. Oh. I need be going home.

LITTLE GIRL. Want to play with me? (*Her mother rushes up and grabs Brianna away.*)

VILLAGE MOTHER. Keep your distance, little one! Can't you see?...IT?

BRIGID. What?



VILLAGE MOTHER (*pointing at BRIGID's foot*). *That!*  
LITTLE GIRL. Ooh, ooh! (*Wanting to touch it:*) Does it hurt?  
VILLAGE MOTHER (*pulling her child away*). She's that infant that's grown up now. The one with that ugly foot!  
BRIGID. My foot?

*(The VILLAGERS turn their backs on BRIGID; they never address BRIGID directly.)*

VILLAGE MOTHER (*to the others*). That affliction! Her frightening difference.  
BRIGID. 'Tis not my fault, ma'am.  
SHEPHERD (*to the others*). Got a hoof, like a sheep.  
SCHOOLTEACHER (*to the others*). Poor thing...twisted on the outside and inside.  
BRIGID. 'Tis nothing I've done.  
BAKER (*to the others*). That foot—what a frightening mistake.  
TAILOR (*to the others*). She's impossible to properly clothe. With that foot, not pretty at all.  
SHEPHERD (*to the others*). A monster.

*(The STREET CLEANER spits on the ground BRIGID's walked on and washes it "clean.")*

BAKER (*to the others*). She's different  
TAILOR (*to the others*). She's ugly.  
BRIGID. What have I done?  
STREET CLEANER (*to the others*). She doesn't belong.  
SHEPHERD (*to the others*). Do you see her?  
SCHOOLTEACHER (*to the others*). I don't.

BAKER (*to the others*). Not me.

BRIGID. Why won't you look at me?

TAILOR (*to the others*). Someone that ugly...

STREET CLEANER (*to the others*). ...that strange...

BRIGID. I am?

SCHOOLTEACHER (*to the others*). ...she should go away...

SHEPHERD (*to the others*). ...Disappear like she's never been here.

BRIGID (*humiliated*). I wish I could.

BAKER (*to the others*). ...I don't see her.

TAILOR (*to the others*). I never saw her.

ALL THE OTHER VILLAGERS. Me neither.

BRIGID. Stop...stop...stop!

*(Brigid's FATHER strides through the hostile circle, pushing aside one of them, then another, to his daughter, now huddled on the ground.)*

FATHER. I'm here. We're going home. *(Silenced by his look, the circle moves slowly away. Her FATHER lifts her in his arms, carries her away.)*

VILLAGE MOTHER. Shame on you, Michael Sean O'Grady!

*(As they back away, reforming their storytellers' circle...)*

LITTLE GIRL (*sadly*). Where's she going?

VILLAGE MOTHER. Who? The girl? Pretend she was never here.

SEANACHAI. And Brigid's father carried her away...

SEANACHAI. ...to the safe confines of their home.

*(He's carried her into their home, met there by an alarmed MOTHER.)*

BRIGID'S MOTHER *(feeling her for any injuries).*

They've not hurt you, my joy, my blessing, Mother's angel.

BRIGID. They stared...they mocked me.

FATHER. You've been told, time and again, not to leave this house. One time is one too many.

MOTHER. It's for your own good, don't you see now?

BRIGID. But they do not know me.

MOTHER. They were frightened by your foot when you were a babe in my arms. For them nothing has changed.

FATHER. Now you know the cruel truth of the world.

MOTHER. You've a life here, inside the four walls. You'll be sweeping the floor, like any other day, and later we'll read a tale from the book.

FATHER *(taking the book)*. Not ever again! It's this book she's learned to read. Filling her mind with fictions, made for false hopes and restlessness. Tales told by liars and lunatics. There is no magic in this world, no fairy fishes and ponies flying over pretty-colored rainbows! *(He tosses the book away.)*

BRIGID. No-o-o-o!!

FATHER. It's for the best, child. You will not leave here again to be hurt again. Nor read another wild tale. You'll be rid of that book. *(He leaves.)*

BRIGID. This foot! *(She throws down the broom.)* This foot! This foot! I hate this foot!

MOTHER. You're our one child; for us every part of you is precious.

BRIGID. This is no longer home to me, 'tis a prison. This foot is the cause of it all.

MOTHER. Those others will never see what's inside.

BRIGID. What's inside is useless if I can't be like everyone else! I want to be free to walk about and go to school!

MOTHER. It's not to be.

*(BRIGID retrieves the book, sits with it held tight in her lap. Her MOTHER holds out her hand to take the book. BRIGID clings to it.)*

BRIGID. You'll not be taking my book from me. There is!—there is!—hope and magic somewhere in the world. *(Opening the book.)* Here's the gentle caring Sea Mither, who might appear to those who ask, and answer wishes. A true story surely.

MOTHER. No, darlin', wishes fly no further than the pages of the book, like dreams in a wake-up world. *(Hands her the broom.)* There's the chores to do. *(She takes a bucket, leaving.)* The book cannot be here when your father returns. You'll see to it.

BRIGID *(now alone, reading)*. "The Sea Mither appears over the Cliffs of Moher, a barren place high above the ocean, where but few dare travel." But not so far from here, only past Liscannor and Doolin.

SEANACHAI/ALL *(alternately in Gaelic)*. Magic is here. Ta' draichot anseo.

BRIGID. Magic is there.

SEANACHAI/ALL. Hope is here. Ta' dochas anseo.

BRIGID. My only hope is there. Fare thee well, Mother, Father... *(steps back from it all)* house o' my birth and

my childhood. 'Til I return the way I ought to be. (*And BRIGID turns and goes.*)

(*As they chant, the SEANACHAI combine movement with small set pieces to indicate BRIGID's travel and her ultimate destination.*)

SEANACHAI/ALL.

There is magic in the depths and in the waves.

There is magic in the wetness of the water, and the coldness.

There is magic in the blueness and the taste and the smell of the sea.

(*She is at the very edge of the Cliffs of Moher overlooking—700 feet below—the vast ocean.*)

BRIGID. Sea Mither! I do stand before you!...high above the sea, on the Cliffs of Moher... Hear me! I was born with this difference, unlike everyone else. I hate this body of mine which is made ugly and weak. I hate this head of mine which is made confused. I hate this heart of mine which feels only anger and despair. Sea Mither! Bring me your magic! Sea Mither! Bring me your hope!

(*The Bard's Rod is being passed from one SEANACHAI member to another, until...*)

SEANACHAI/ALL.

Magic is here. Ta' draichot anseo.

Hope is here. Ta' dochas anseo.