***The Story-Teller at Fault***

 *As told by Mr James Joyce.*

1.

*Aengus, ‘tis the great traveller*

 *You are! No tellin’ what landscapes*

 *You’ve passed through in your antic scrapes,*

*You always seemin’ here and there*

*And nowhere. It’ll be a cold*

 *Day in Hell when the likes of me*

 *Can get away with what you see*

*Your way through, begob, but you’re bold!*

2.

The story-teller’s out of tales—

 That’s where the mischief takes its start:

 The inspiration’s left his art,

And that’s a fault for which one fails.

He gambles with a beggar, loses

 His property, his wife, his proper

 Semblance, in all things comes a cropper *Hump, croupe, a kind*

Until among the herbs he noses, *of printing press.*

Hare-brained in a hare’s body, he is,

 His own hounds set upon him by

 His own wife. Then by wizardry

The goods are gone; who knows where *she* is?

But wife and goods and all are stowed

 With care in an alternative

 Dimension, where we shall them leave

For now, for on the wingèd road

Go story-teller and beggar-man,

 The teller invisible, but seeing all:

 ‘Tis in O’Donnell’s Keep (it being all

Around them dark, where Red sits wan)

They are, beggar and unseen fellow.

 But he is Aengus of the Bluff,

 Of tricks the god has store enough,

And Red has store of coins of yellow

 (*The architecture of ‘literary space’?*)

To pay him to provoke his laughter. It’s

 But a wee thread we’re speaking of

 The beggar spins to heaven above,

But up he sends a hare, and after it’s

A hound he sends, and then a lad,

 O’Donnell’s lad, to stop the hound

 As tries to eat the hare. To ground

He pulls the eaten hare, the bad

Dog and O’Donnell’s boy, asleep.

 He chops his head off for neglect.

 But sure he can him resurrect,

Such spells are in a wizard’s keep,

But that will cost the king more gold,

 Which paid, the lad is in his health

 Restored, the beggar has his wealth,

And, well, there’s more that could be told.

3.

How they continued till ‘twas in

 The King of Leinster’s court they were,

 And many times they hang him there,

The beggar, but he out of thin

Air re-appears alive and hale,

 *Is it me-self you’re looking for?*

 He asks the guard, and to restore

The king’s dead sons he does not fail,

And to the teller he reveals

 Himself as Aengus, he that’s of

 The imaginary land of Bluff;

And wife and goods, like one who heals

A wound in space and time that death

 Has made, the god brings back to life.

 *Bless you, but you can keep the wife!*

As in the abstraction of a breath

The god had hid them in the space

 Of telling, whence he now retrieves all,

 And cheers the teller and relieves all

From the suspense with which he plays.

And so the teller’s family’s

 Restored to him, with his position:

 For the king craves the repetition

Of that one story, for it is

All the other stories, isn’t it?

 This poor Job-out-of-work who lost

 It all, receives more than his cost,

The treasure of the Aengus wit!

He did him a good turn or two

 And so the god of trick and frolic

 Cures the king, sleepless, melancholic,

And so the teller’s dreams come true.

4. *The Sequel*

The teller thus his lot secures

 As *good* in life, though not as *great*.

 (But could one come, at length, to hate

Re-telling the tale that ensures

The goodness, the insipid good

 That is one’s luck in life, and lot

 In the great lottery one has not

Yet won, but thinks that one still could,

If given half a chance, an angle?)

 And so the teller hates the god

 Who saddles him with but one odd

Matryoshka doll, and lets it dangle

From his hand or sit on his shoulder

 And be his hump, his Hugo-esque

 Trope of Romantic-Turned-Grotesque.

Never was butt of laughter older

Than what this god makes of him and

 His hump, his ‘legendary story’.

 *A million of the things, bagorr! he*

*Has, does this Aengus, ain’t he grand?*

*And yet ‘tis but the one he gave*

 *Me, this Lord Aengus: beggarly*

 *Indeed’s his generosity!*

*Is that how a god should behave?*

*So I’m the pony of one trick,*

 *Mavrone! Not half as rich as Craysus,*

 *And but a beast of burden. Jaysus!*

*This Aengus god half-makes me sick.*

4. *His Wife Scolds Him*

*A greedy troll guarding his vault!*

 *So it’s not autographs you’re signing*

 *These days, and on fine lobster dining?*

*Ingratitude’s a serious fault!*

The Story-Teller:

*Why don’t I have it printed, then?*

 *There’s pots of gold in that, no less!*

 *I’ll use old Cropper’s printing press.*—

So the *auteur* takes up his pen

And is a famous literary man

 Who has *amours* and duels in print

 And makes himself another mint,

This little literary dairyman.

5. Epilogue: Haines (from *Ulysses)*

*This fine Hibernian trickster is*

* Quite the old hand. Impressive, very!*

 *True Celtic-twilight* völkisch*-fairy,*

*Eh what? I’m here for stuff like this. Aengus chops off his head.*



♫

NOTE:

The ♫ symbol next to the image of the Bard on the last page indicates the image is linked

to a music clip: *The Night Before Larry Was Stretched*, instrumental version by the Chieftains.