

Brian Friel

**THE
MUNDY
SCHEME**

Edited by Peter Fallon



Gallery Books

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The Mundy Scheme
is first published
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Characters

ROGER NASH, Private Secretary to the Taoiseach
SALLY, Typist/receptionist
F.X. RYAN, Taoiseach
NEIL BOYLE, Minister for Finance
MRS RYAN, Taoiseach's mother
MICK MOLONEY, Minister for External Affairs
DAN MAHON, Minister for Development
CHARLES HOGAN, Minister for Commerce
SEAN O'GRADY, Cameraman
TONY HANLON, Lighting Man
PAT / MISS TOYE, Producer
OWEN, Sound Man
TV ANNOUNCER
VOICE, Speaker of Prologue



Set

Because he is housebound F.X. Ryan has converted his drawing room — a large, spacious, well-proportioned room — into an office. The conversion has been a failure: the room is now a mess, neither comfortable nor efficient.

His immense mahogany desk, stage left, and facing across stage, is cluttered with papers, reports, documents, two phones and an intercom.

Below the desk is a television set facing upstage.

There are two windows on the back wall, both curtained with faded and sagging green velour.

Between them is a large framed map of Ireland.

His Private Secretary's desk is stage right, facing the Taoiseach's. It is smaller and perfectly organized: precise piles of letters, papers, documents, a portable typewriter carefully in its cover, today's newspapers neatly stacked, a phone.

A few occasional chairs, remnants of a dining-room suite.

An occasional table on which sits a vase of limp roses.

A wall safe behind Ryan's desk.

A huge chandelier hangs from the ceiling.

A door, stage right, leads to the Typist's/Reception room.

A door, stage left, leads to the living quarters.

The place is Dublin. The time is the late 1960s.

The Mundy Scheme was first produced in the Olympia Theatre, Dublin, on 9 June 1969 with the following cast:

| | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| ROGER NASH | Pat Laffan |
| SALLY | Olivia Shanley |
| F.X. RYAN | Godfrey Quigley |
| NEIL BOYLE | Cecil Barror |
| MRS RYAN | May Cluskey |
| MICK MOLONEY | Barry Keegan |
| DAN MAHON | Martin Dempsey |
| CHARLES HOGAN | Seamus Healy |
| PAT / MISS TOYE | Ita D'Arcy |
| SEAN O'GRADY | Clive Geraghty |
| TONY HANLON | John Aver |
| OWEN | Maurice Cooney |
| SINGER | Mary Cooney |
| PROLOGUE | Seamus Forde |
| MUSICIAN | Seán Potts |

The Mundy Scheme was presented by Helen Bonfils and Morton Gottlieb at the Royale Theatre, New York, on 11 December 1969 with the following cast:

| | |
|-----------------|------------------|
| ROGER NASH | Patrick Bedford |
| SALLY | Risa McCrary |
| F.X. RYAN | Godfrey Quigley |
| NEIL BOYLE | Leo Leyden |
| MRS RYAN | Dorothy Stickney |
| MICK MOLONEY | Jack Cassidy |
| DAN MAHON | Horace McMahon |
| CHARLES HOGAN | Neil Fitzgerald |
| PAT / MISS TOYE | Ann Sweeny |
| SEAN O'GRADY | Liam Gannon |
| TONY HANLON | William Rooney |
| OWEN | Sean Dillon |

ACT ONE

When the curtain rises ROGER NASH is dictating letters to SALLY (miming until the VOICE has finished the Prelude). NASH is a personable young man in his late twenties: cool, calm, precise, efficient — qualities that in his work compensate for his real obtuseness and adequately conceal his absorbing bitterness. He dictates quickly and mechanically and in a voice that hints at his distaste for the people he is writing to. He speaks official jargon fluently. When he finishes one letter he drops it into the wastepaper basket at his feet and goes on to the next, almost without halting. Everything he does is unrushed and well-oiled. The Prologue is spoken in a cultured accent.

VOICE Ladies and Gentlemen: What happens when a small nation that has been manipulated and abused by a huge colonial power for hundreds of years wrests its freedom by blood and anguish? What happens to an emerging country after it has emerged? Does the transition from dependence to independence induce a fatigue, a mediocrity, an ennui? Or does the clean spirit of idealism that fired the people to freedom augment itself, grow bolder, more revolutionary, more generous? The answer to many of these questions can be found in Ireland. For seven hundred years this little island was occupied and oppressed by the English who treated the natives as serfs and who even tried to supplant the Catholic religion, which was beloved by the natives, by the Protestant faith which — which wasn't really suited to the moist and temperate climate. Many times the people rose up against their overlords but each time they were beaten

down and reduced to even greater serfdom. Eventually, however, in the year 1916, led by a handful of idealists they rose again and this time they overthrew the English. After their rebellion it was a strange experience for these hardy island people to find themselves their own masters; and they were so confused that for a time they squabbled among themselves. But they soon realized that they had better put their little green isle in order if they hoped to create the nation that the idealists of 1916 would have been proud of. So they set to with a new vigour. And the results of their endeavours are something like this . . .

NASH We must however take all these elements into consideration and, in view of the fact that the economy of the country is currently . . . less resilient than one would wish, the Taoiseach asks me to inform you that at the moment he cannot support in principle the channelling of any state monies whatever into any new industry. (*Phone rings*) Sincerely, Roger Nash, Private Secretary to the Taoiseach. I'll take it. Hello, good morning, Mr Boyle . . . No, I'm sorry, he hasn't appeared yet . . . Certainly, I'll tell him . . . Oh, he's feeling much better now, much . . . Thank you, sir. Goodbye. (*Hangs up*) Boyle's back from Zurich. Doesn't sound too happy. Any more official stuff?

SALLY That's the last, Mr Nash.

NASH Let's wade into the rubbish, then.

SALLY Mr Nash, would you mind if I slipped across the street to get a packet of cigarettes? I'd only be a —

NASH Sorry. Miss Evelyn Smyth — with a 'y' — The Old Rectory, Ballymore. Dear Miss Smyth, the Taoiseach values your suggestions for the disposal of nuclear waste and will bear them in mind . . . when the situation arises. (*Phone*) Sincerely, et cetera. Hello . . . No, Archbishop, this is his

Secretary . . . Nothing serious, your Grace, just a recurrence of his old trouble, labyrinthitis. If it weren't for the sudden bouts of dizziness and nausea, he could be out and — very embarrassing, your Grace, that's why we have transferred his office to his home here . . . Indeed I will . . . very kind of you, your Grace; seven-thirty tomorrow morning; very grateful, thank you very much . . . Goodbye. (*Hangs up*) Where was I? Yes, Mr Sean Quin, County Councillor, Kelly's Corner, County Mayo. Quin — he's one of the old brigade. Better make this first person — in the vernacular. Dear Sean, how's the big heart? My God, but it's bloody powerful to hear from you, even though you're complaining as usual, and aul hoor — a-u-l w-h-o-r-e. Of course I'm worried about the high emigration from your area and from the whole West. But I promise you, Sean aul son, that I have the situation under constant survey. Love to my old sweetheart, Flo —

SALLY A-u-l?

NASH What?

SALLY A-u-l sweetheart, Flo?

NASH O-l-d sweetheart, Flo, and to all the kiddies. Affectionately, F.X. Ryan — no, just F.X. Is that the lot?

SALLY Just this anonymous one.

NASH '. . . your whole party is crooked but Moloney, the Minister for External Affairs, and you, Ryan, is the biggest gangsters of them all. Why don't the two of you go and . . . ' Tch-tch-tch.

SALLY There's some signature.

NASH 'Disgusted' . . . Probably the leader of the Opposition. Nothing else?

SALLY The one about the house in County Meath.

NASH Here it is. To Mrs Mary Kerr of —

SALLY I have the address.

NASH Dear Madam, since he became Taoiseach, Mr

F.X. Ryan has not practised as an auctioneer. I suggest, however, that you entrust the sale of your property to his nephew, Mr Declan Ryan, Ballybeg, who is presently conducting the firm's affairs. Sincerely. And that's it. What about his article for the *Industrial Review*?

SALLY On his desk, typed and ready.

Enter FRANCIS XAVIER RYAN, wearing a smoking jacket and slippers. He is fifty, but looks younger. Physically very strong with blunt, regular features and alert eyes. He has never been ill in his life, and is alternately petulant and aggressive at this bout of labyrinthitis, partly because it has confined him to the house, but more because it strikes him as grossly unfair. He is a bachelor. If he were to philosophize about his work he would certainly conclude that politics is a natural extension of the auctioneering business. His mind is quick and enormously cunning. With no effort at all he can assume anger, frustration, delight, simplicity, honesty, fury and a dozen other faces; and, once he has put on a particular face, his emotions invariably and obligingly support it so that he is never conscious of putting on a performance. He has no illusions about other people and only one pardonable illusion about himself: he believes that he is a patriot. He is secretly devoted to his mother.

RYAN Morning, Sally. Morning, Roger.

SALLY Good morning, Mr Ryan.

NASH How do you feel today?

RYAN Rotten. Any word from Moloney?

NASH Nothing, sir.

RYAN My God, he's a bloody hoor, that fella. (*To SALLY, as she exits.*) Sally, get me New York.

NASH I rang them an hour ago.

RYAN Well?

NASH There hasn't been a meeting of the General Assembly for four days and they thought at the embassy that he was back here.

SALLY I rang his home. Mrs Moloney hasn't seen him since last Friday.

RYAN If he's on the bottle I'll personally break his bloody neck. (*To SALLY*) Alright. Try London. And if he's not there, try Paris. And if he's not there . . . go and pull him out of O'Donnell's bar.

SALLY leaves. RYAN sits behind his desk and covers his face with his hands.

Republic on brink of collapse. Minister for External Affairs vanishes. Right, Roger, feed me the good news of the day with your usual discretion.

NASH It's pretty bad, Mr Ryan.

RYAN It can only be bad if you expect something.

NASH Well, sir . . . (*Plunging in*) The strike is twelve weeks old today and, as from next Monday, all petrol and oil reserves will be exhausted and the country'll be at a complete halt.

RYAN Good.

NASH Provisional export figures for the last quarter are just out: lowest in eight years, and the Opposition are seeing the President tomorrow to demand your resignation.

RYAN Fine.

NASH Flour supplies are dwindling rapidly and Curley McMurray says his unions won't allow an airlift.

RYAN Great.

NASH The Minister for Finance is just back from Zurich.

RYAN What's that?

NASH Mr Boyle, he rang, he's coming straight over.

RYAN Well?

NASH He indicated nothing to me, sir.

RYAN How did he sound?