

Ann Kavanagh

An Episode of '98

By

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# Ann Kavanagh

## Characters

Miles Kavanagh

Ann            His wife

Stephen       His brother

Moran	)	
	)	
Redmond	)	of the insurgent army
	)	
Ryan	)	
	)	
Doyle	)	

A fugitive

Scene:            Miles Kavanagh's house in  
Co. Wicklow

A night in '98

Ann Kavanagh

Scene        The living room of Miles Kavanagh's house in County Wexford. At the back is the fireplace, a couple of chairs before it and a coat hanging to dry; to the right of this a door to an inner room. At the left is a stairway, below is a dresser and near the dresser a table laden with the remains of a hasty meal. In the right wall is a window, shuttered and bared, and the outer door. Under the window is a chest. It is night and the room is lit only by candles on the mantelpiece.

Ann Kavanagh is tidying the room; she feels the coat and re-arranges it to dry; she is just putting out the candles when two sharp raps are heard on the door. She waits; there are two more knocks; she crosses quickly and opens the door, speaking under her breath:

Ann        Stephen!

(Stephen Kavanagh comes in eagerly, carrying a lantern. He is a young, rough-haired man. Although Ann signs to him to make no noise he speaks excitedly):

Stephen    Is he back?

Ann        He is, thank God!

Stephen    Where is he?

Ann        Above, asleep.

Stephen    The Captain wants him.

Ann        Stephen, he can't go.

Stephen    Can't go?

Ann (agitated) 'Tis terrible, the state he was in. – he's near dead

Stephen    What ails him? He'll have to go.

Ann        Coming from Wicklow last night, he was hunted – some of the Yeomen in the glen, they were riding him down, shooting – and he ran. He ran till the heart near burst in him, and he hid in the bog. From dawn to dark he was lying – and the way it rained! He came in to me an hour ago, gasping and shivering – I have him warmed

and quieted now and he's sleeping like a child. He'll maybe take no harm.

Stephen      He'll have to come.

Ann            He cannot come. I'm telling you – he would get his death. Can't you tell the Captain he's sick?

Stephen      Miles sick when there's work wanted? I wouldn't be believed.

Ann            Couldn't another do the work for once?

Stephen      No other could do this work, and no other'll satisfy the men.  
They're after asking for Miles to be in command.

Ann            Did they ask that? He'll be well pleased.

Stephen      He'd be well pleased if he heard the way Captain Moran answered it: "He's the one man I know in these parts," he said, "I'd trust as soon as myself." – Now will you call him down?

Ann            'Tis something dangerous, I suppose?

Stephen (hotly) You should be ashamed, Ann, to be grudging him.

Ann            I am not grudging him, but I tell you the man's destroyed, 'tis a week and more since he got a night in his bed.

Stephen      Any other woman'd be proud. There's a name gathering on Miles Kavanagh will be remembered with the best. The day he gets his chance, he'll make a story will be told with the story of the war in Wexford while Ireland lasts. 'Tis not for his wife to be hindering him and holding him from his place.

Ann (quietly) I never held nor hindered him, Stephen, nor I never will.

Stephen      You shouldn't be grudging him to the work! Listen, Ann, your people were against our people always and 'tis likely you'll never

understand, but if you've no care for the country you should think of Miles. You should have some pride in your man. Will you call him down?

Ann           I have pride in my man, Stephen, and he has pride in me. And it is not because you're his brother he'd be pleased at the way you're after speaking to me now. I'll tell him you're hear.

(She goes up and into the room. Stephen cuts and eats a slice of bread. Presently, she comes down and hold the coat to the fire, her back to Stephen)

Ann           He's coming down....(a little constrained) – won't you take a bit of meat?

Stephen (helping himself to cold meat) – I shouldn't have spoken to you that way about your people Ann.....if they're the wrong way of thinking, sure you are not to blame. And I know you're heart and soul with us now.

Miles        You should get married Stephen. A woman that's glad when you come and won't fret when you go – 'tis the best treasure in life.

Ann (bringing him his coat) – 'tis soaking still, you'll be perished...(showing a pocket). There's your map....(laughing) I had to smooth it with the smoothing iron, 'twas so wet and mashed.

Miles (delighted) – well, 'tis as good as new! ..... wouldn't it take a woman now, to think of that? .....(to Stephen) – did they get the men?

Stephen      They got one of them. You'd not guess who it was?

Miles            From the country here?

Stephen        From Warrencourt.

Ann (startled) Warrencourt!

Stephen        Charlie, the youngest son.

Ann            Charlie Fitzwarren! ..... Charlie! .....O what happened him? What?

Miles (anxiously) You.....you knew him, Ann?

Ann            Since he was born: my sister's to marry him in May.....What is it,  
Miles?

Alice, Alice, my darling, they have killed your man!

(She wrenches herself from Miles's arm and hides her face).

Miles        Ann!

Ann            A prisoner! Alone! Helpless! You could have kept him living, and  
you killed him in cold blood.

Miles        But don't you see, Ann, we have to protect our own....he knew  
all...our plans, our passwords – the leaders' names....it would have  
been betraying our own, betraying Ireland to pity him...He got a  
quick death, and a soldiers. 'Twas not so bad...don't you  
see.....Ann!....look at me, Ann dear.

(She is sobbing, but she yields to his touch)

Ann            I can't help it, it's horrible....I can't understand!

Stephen        You'll want to learn, Ann, you'll disgrace us all! A soldier's wife to weep for a spy!

Miles (lovingly) Ann will never disgrace us. She's as brave as any's in the world.

Stephen (muttering) She'll never be the same as our own.

Miles        Didn't she show more love and courage defying her own people and coming to us than a girl was reared with us from a child. I'd trust Ann where I wouldn't trust many a tough man. There now, my girl, let me go to my work! Put the light above in the window for me, 'tis a good guide.

Ann        You're not angry with me, Miles?

Miles        Angry! Because you cried for your sister's man! Does she think I'm a brute out and out? Come on, Stephen! God keep you, darling, I'll not be long.

Stephen        Good-night, Ann!

Ann        Good night.

(The men go, Ann crosses to the fire).

Ann        Keep him safe for me, God! God comfort little Alice. God pity all woman have lovers in a war!.....I was forgetting the light.....

(She goes upstairs with the candle, leaving the room dark.

After a pause, a hand is heard groping at the window, then at the door. The door is pushed open – a young man staggers in and leans against the table).

Fugitive (faintly) Is there – anyone – there?

(He falls along the floor and lies still. Ann appears with the candle, startled, and rushes down. With an exclamation of dread, she looks at the man's face).

Ann Miles!...Thank God....Who is it?...I don't know him at all....another hunted man!

(She springs to the door, listens, hears nothing, bolts it securely, rolls up a shawl and lifts the man's head).

Just your head...lift a little, ...poor lad, are you hurt?...Don't be afraid they're not after you...There's not a sight nor sound of them at all...You are safe at last – quite, quite safe – you are with your own.

Fugitive Water – or I'll die.

(She gets water, gives him a drink and bathes his face, talking soothingly, as if to a child).

Ann Here's water....you are not going to die...you are not wounded at all, only tired....and you're with one who knows well how to care a hunted man.

(She helps him to the chair by the fire).



You're not wounded at all, only tired. 'Tis not an hour since my own man came home to me in the same plight.

(She puts a kettle on the fire).

Tell me, was it the soldiers or the Yeomen were after you? They say the Yeos are the worst...

(He looks at her bewilderedly, but starts in terror, suddenly hearing a sound).

Fugitive      Whist? .... What is it?....They're after me! They're coming.....God!

(He staggers and leans helpless, against the wall).

Let them take me!...I can't run again....my throat is twisted...I can't breathe...they must take me....they'll kill me! O, my God!

Ann            They'll not kill you! They'll not kill you! No!....Up the stairs....quick! – into the room! – I'll hold them...I'll talk like one of their own.....I'll lead them across the bog.....keep quiet – keep dead still and quiet till my man comes! Up the stairs now, quick!

(He stumbles up to the room. In an instant Ann has cleared away all traces of his coming, put out the light and let down her hair.

There are voices and footsteps outside. Then two sharp raps on the door, then two more; with a cry of relief she opens it. There are men with lanterns outside. Hurriedly they come in – Miles, Moran, Stephen, Redmond, Ryan and Doyle).

Ann            Miles, Miles! I thought it was the Yeo's!

Miles          All's well, Ann?

Ann (Joyously) – All's well, Miles.

Miles          Spread out the map – on the table here.

(Miles, Moran and Stephen crowd round the table with their map. There is great urgency and haste).

Redmond      Mrs Kavanagh, could you give me a light?

(She lights his lantern)

Miles          Here we are – here's the house – the forge there.

Stephen       No, that's Keogh's

Miles          There – here – Ann, have you got a pen?

(She brings pen and ink)

Mr, Moran, my wife....

Moran (hastily) – Proud to meet you, Mrs Kavanagh.....Ay, that's the forge.

Redmond     We got his tracks above that again....

Miles        How long are they watching the bridge?

Doyle        Since mid-day. He didn't cross the water.

Miles        This side and this is soft bog...He's between the forge and river, and  
                 he's on the road.

Ryan         Ay, that's where he is.

Moran        Right! Dispose the men Mr. Kavanagh. I'll go back to the Camp now  
                 and leave it with you. (To the others) I'm leaving Mr. Kavanagh in  
                 command, you understand?

Redmond    Right, Mr. Moran

Ryan         Very good!

Ann          Listen, Miles....

Miles        If you'd make a cup of tea for the men, Ann? 'Tis cold outside, quick  
                 as you can. (To the men) Won't you take some food, boys?

                 (She stirs the fire and is busy while they talk, smiling to herself).

Doyle        And when we get our man?

Miles        Ay, if we take him alive, Mr. Moran – will we bring him to you?

Moran (Calling from the doorway) – No, no need, and 'tis small kindness to keep  
                 a man waiting for his end when the end's known.

Miles        That's true. Then we won't delay

                 (He glances at Ann, who has heard)

Whist!.....Mr. Moran!

(He whispers with Moran at the door).

Ann (in distress, aside) – Stephen!....Stephen, what is it? They're not going to kill  
a man – to shoot a man, here?

Stephen        Not on this floor! No listen to me, Ann, 'tis a spy. You know what  
that means, you to start pleading and pitying the like of him, you'd  
disgrace Miles before all. Keep quiet, and don't stand staring with  
your white face! They'll think 'tis some friend of your own.

Ann            A spy!.....a spy!

(The men are eating and talking at the dresser, Ryan calls across to  
Moran).

Ryan           There'd be no chance, Mr, Moran, of a mistake.

Moran          Mr. Kavanah knows him, don't you Miles?

Miles (to Ryan) – a fair man, boyish-looking – I know him well.

Stephen        There'll be no mistake....Come on, Ann, with the tea.

(Ann does not move. He takes the pot from her and crosses to the  
men. They drink hurriedly)

Moran           They are running up from the forge....he's not caught.

Miles            Come on! Stephen – up to the bridge, will you with Ryan and  
Doyle...Come with me Redmond, we'll be at the ditches. He's on the  
road. Good-night, Mr Moran!

Moran           Good luck!

(Moran goes, followed by Stephen, Ryan and Doyle.

Remond waits at the door.

Ann pulls Miles back, clinging to him).

Ann            Miles, listen to me....listen. Think! Think!....Some young boy is in it,  
with a mother wanting him – with a young wife, maybe like  
myself!...You won't let them kill him Miles? Promise, promise me!  
You won't let them kill!

(Voices outside clamour)

Ryan and the rest – Mr. Kavanagh! Look at this! – look here Kavanagh! Are you  
there!

(Redmond goes out)

Miles           For God's sake, Ann, don't hinder me now! A spy has got to be shot,  
it's war.

Ann            Not shot! No, No Miles! Only promise me – anything, anything, but  
not that!....O, Miles if you ever loved me!.....you don't understand.

Stephen (outside) Miles! Come out here, Miles!

Miles            Let me go.

(Moran comes in)

Moran           Miles you are wanted.....what's keeping you, Miles?

Miles (crossing quickly) – It upset her to think of the man....

Moran           Ay, to be sure.....

Ann (quickly) – I'll not keep him, Mr. Moran. I'll say no more Miles. Go on – go  
with them – go!

Miles           I'll not be long gone.

Koran           They found a gap.....

(They go, Ann is alone)

Ann            God, God of pity! Ah....

(The men are back at the door, taling excitedly)

Ryan           Was it that way this morning?

Miles           It was not – Mr. Moran, could you stay?

Doyle           Try the barn – and the hay loft. Could I have a light Mr. Kavanagh

(Ryan and Redmond go)

Stephen (coming in) – He couldn't be in the house?.....A candle, Ann.

(He fixes candle in his lantern and hands it to Doyle who goes out with Stephen).

Miles (coming in) – I was here myself since ten.....I'll open the shutters – 'twill  
give you light.

(He opens the window and throws out the key. Moran comes in).

Moran           Don't distress yourself, Mrs Kavanagh, he's not a dangerous man.

Redmond (outside) – Footmarks here, under the window, Miles.

Miles           There!

Stephen (at the door) – 'Tis all trampled at the door – you couldn't tell.

Ryan (coming in) – He's not in the yard.

Stephen (coming in) – could he be in the house?

Miles           How could he get in?

Moran           The house was not empty? You were here.

Redmond (coming in) – He's not in the yard or the loft, Miles.

Moran           You came out – an hour since?

Miles           Half an hour, and since then my wife – you didn't hear anything?  
Anyone moving, Ann?

(Ann does not answer, but shakes her head. Without waiting, Moran speaks  
impatiently).

Moran           You didn't go up? You were down here in this room?

Ann            I was

Moran        And you heard nothing?

Ann            Nothing at all.

(Doyle rushes in).

Doyle (excitedly) – He is here! He is in the house!

Mioles (serenely) – He is not.

Redmond (positive) – He got into the yard.

Doyle        And into the house.

Miles        You tried the shed?

Ryan        I did.

Doyle        Look here. The gap in the fence – ‘twasn’t a sheep pulled out that  
furze bush, and ‘twasn’t you. Tracks from that to the window – not  
a sign of him in the barn or the yard! If he’s not in the house, where  
is he?

Stephen     Would it be possible, Miles, and you asleep?

Miles        Ann was awake.....weren’t you, Ann?

Ann        Yes!

Moran        You’ll not mind if we look?

Miles        Not a bit in the world, but you’re wasting time.

(Ryan opens the door at the right and goes in with Redmond. Doyle goes to the  
stairs).



Stephen (calling after Ryan) – mind yourself! Have you your gun?

(Ann suddenly cries out almost hysterically).

Ann            I'll not have it! I'll not have them raking the house, Miles! Send  
                  them away!

(Doyle pauses on the stairs. Miles looks at her in amazement).

Miles          Ann! What ails you? Ann!

Ann            Send them away!

(Miles stares at her incredulously).

Miles          Ann! (suddenly shouting at Doyle). Come back! What are you  
                  doing! Come down!

Doyle          I was going to try the room.

Miles (sarcastically) – Thanks! I was going to try the room myself!...and he  
                  wouldn't be up the chimney, I suppose? – or in – the chest? Come  
                  down out of that!

(Ryan and Redmond come back).

Ryan          No sign of him there.

Miles            That's enough, that'll do. No go out of this! ...'tis too much Mr.  
Moran, to have my house searched for a spy!

Moran           You have no call to take offence.

Miles           I do take offence.

Stephen        Sure Miles, you were sleeping! You were out!

Miles           My wife was in.

Doyle           We know nothing about your wife.

Miles (in a fury) – Go out of this! Go out of this house! Out of that door!

Stephen        For God's sake man control yourself, have sense!

Miles (to Doyle) – By God, if you don't get out.....

Moran (sharply) – Mr. Kavanagh! I am sorry, you force me to take command.

Redmond and Doyle – outside, under the window. Ryan and  
Stephen Kavanagh, open that door (pointing upstairs).

Miles           I forbid you, Stephen! I forbid!

Stephen        Are you out of your senses? Let me by! What harm will it do? Come  
up yourself?

(They pass Miles. Ryan goes up, Stephen waits on the stairs).

Moran           Open that door!

Ryan           Come on!

(Stephen joins and they go in, their pistols in their hands. There is a pause).

Moran            I am sorry, Mrs Kavanagh, but for your own sake it's best  
                     but....after your husband's extraordinary....

(Shouts are heard upstairs)

Stephen        Come out of that! Look out! Put up your hands!

Ryan            Give it up! Give it up, I say! Down the stairs, quick march!

(The Fugitive comes out, followed by Stephen and Ryan. Redmond and Doyle  
rush in).

Redmond (after a pause, sorrowfully) – He lied to us. Miles Kavanagh lied.

Doyle           'Tis small wonder he didn't want a search.

Stephen (brokenly) – This house to conceal a spy!

Moran (to Miles, coldly) – This is the man?

Miles           It is.

Moran (to Miles) – Have you anything to say, Miles?

(Miles is silent. Stephen in a rage of misery turns on Ann).

Stephen        God's curse on you, ye lying, treacherous woman! 'tis the end of  
                     all....

(He breaks down, sobbing. Ann cries out)

Ann                Miles! Miles! (to the rest, wildly). He didn't know! I lied to him! He  
                      didn't know.

Miles             It's no use, Ann. Say nothing, 'tis no good.

Redmond (to Moran) – 'tis likely he didn't know.

Doyle (quickly) – he forbade the search.

Stephen (turning round vehemently) – He knew nothing, I tell you! 'Twas the  
                      woman! She lied to him – she tricked him! She is one of them! May  
                      she get a traitor's death!

Miles             Stephen!

(Stephen is silenced)

Ryan             Maybe he didn't know.

Moran (contemptuously) – I'll not shoot him. I'll leave him the benefit of the  
                      doubt.

Miles             Do you want thanks for that?

Moran            I want nothing from you, Miles Kavanagh, from this out. (To his  
                      men) – form a firing party, take out the prisoner to the rock.

Ann (moaning) – Ah!

Fugitive (to Ann) – You did your best.

Moran            Stephen Kavanagh, take command!

Stephen          Miles!

Miles             Good-night!

(He turns away, laying down his map and stripping off his coat slowly).

Srtephen      Turn to the right. March!

(Doyle, Ryan, the Prisoner, Redmond and Stephen file out. Moran is following, he turns back at the door, looking at Miles).

Moran          What a fool you made of me! What a fool!

Ann (frantically) – Can't you see? Don't you know him? Can't you see I'm telling  
the truth? He knew nothing! I lied to him! I lied! He knew nothing  
at all!

Moran          A man should know his wife, Mrs Kavanagh. I'll say no more.

(He goes, shutting the door. Miles has taken off his hat and is standing at the foot of the stairs, his hand on the rail. He stands motionless while Ann crosses to him piteously, weeping).

Ann            He came in to me hunted – frightened – like a little child. I thought  
he was one of our own. I told him he would be safe – I promised –  
and when I knew – I couldn't, I couldn't give him to be killed!

(She sinks down in an abandonment of misery in the corner by the hearth. After a moment Miles turns and comes to the fireplace slowly).

Miles    Yes, Ann – I, I understand.

CURTAIN