

# LACEWING

by  
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INT. KILLNAPRACKEN MANOR - DRAWING ROOM - DAY

Rural Ireland.

The housekeeper at Killnapracken Manor, MAEBH NOONAN (late 50s, stern looking, puritan) tidies a downstairs drawing room when she hears a door bell.

Maebh walks to the door as the bell rings again, briefly stopping to catch sight of herself in a hallway mirror as she goes.

A painting of two young girls and a man on the wall behind Maebh is reflected in the mirror.

Maebh makes eye contact with the painted girls for a moment.

The face of the man has been scratched and the paint is flaking away from the canvas.

Maebh opens the front door to reveal JOHNNY MCCARTHY (early 20s, handsome with a cheeky smile, wears a peaked cap), who is just about to pull the bell chain again.

MAEBH

Yes?

JOHNNY

Morning ma'am.

(pause)

I'm to see a Mrs. Noonan.

MAEBH

That would be me.

A creak from an upstairs floorboard is heard. Maebh ignores this but Johnny leans forward into the doorway.

Maebh takes a step towards him.

MAEBH (CONT'D)

And you are?

JOHNNY

Johnny McCarthy, ma'am. I was sent for the gardens.

MAEBH

I see. I'd asked for someone a little... older.

JOHNNY

I'm well able for the work, ma'am.

MAEBH

(pause)

Right so. Follow me.

EXT. STABLE YARD - DAY

Maebh escorts Johnny around the manor grounds.

The stable yard has old farming machinery and gardening tools, most of which have begun to rust.

There are no horses but an old cart remains in the yard.

Maebh takes Johnny to one of the stables which is now being used as a shed. It is unkempt and has not been used in a while.

MAEBH

This is your lot. There should be everything you need here, somewhere. Probably seems worse than it is. I'll have tea at noon for you.

Maebh leaves Johnny in the stable yard and goes back to the house.

Johnny hesitantly begins to rummage through the dirty old garden tools

INT. KILLNAPRACKEN MANOR - HALLWAY - DAY

Maebh carries a tray of covered food and a small vase containing two roses upstairs and along a hallway.

She places the tray on a sideboard beside a door.

She notices a greenfly on one of the roses and squashes it between her thumb and forefinger.

Maebh removes a bunch of keys from her smock pocket that has become intertwined with her rosary beads.

She unlocks the door.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The only two inhabitants of Killnapracken Manor, ELIZABETH and MARGARET EARLE, stand looking out of their bedroom window.

Elizabeth (28) combs her younger sister Margaret's (26) hair. They both have pale complexions and are wearing identical white nightdresses with a small floral trim.

MAEBH

Afternoon, ma'am.

The sisters are transfixed by something outside of the window and do not acknowledge Maebh.

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Maebh places the tray on a table and stands a few feet behind the sisters, where she has a clear view of the garden.

EXT. GARDEN

Johnny pauses from his work weeding a flower bed that is severely overgrown and looks up to the sisters' window.

He catches sight of the sisters and waves at them.

INT. BEDROOM

Elizabeth and Margaret look at each other and giggle.

Maebh sternly looks on from behind the sisters.

MAEBH

Lunch, ma'am.

The sisters turn towards Maebh, their faces expressionless. They sit at either side of the table.

Maebh follows them over and stands behind Margaret. She places her hand on Margaret's shoulder and then runs her other hand over Margaret's hair.

MAEBH (CONT'D)

Such beautiful hair. Both of you.

Margaret shakes her head away from Maebh's touch.

Elizabeth stands up suddenly but remains at the table.

Maebh's steely gaze keeps her in place and Elizabeth sits back down.

Maebh walks to the door.

Elizabeth makes a dash at her and tries to get the keys of the room out of Maebh's smock pocket.

Maebh grabs Elizabeth's hand and squeezes it until Elizabeth is on her knees in pain, making an almost inaudible whimpering sound.

Margaret remains seated, petrified.

MAEBH (CONT'D)

Whist, mo leanabh.

EXT. STABLE YARD - DAY

Johnny tips a wheelbarrow of debris into a compost heap.

As he lowers the barrow Maebh stands behind him, holding a flask of tea and some food wrapped in paper.

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MAEBH

Good afternoon, Mr. McCarthy.

JOHNNY

Lord! Mrs. Noonan. Ya nearly scared the life out of me.

MAEBH

If you were always so focused on your work, Mr. McCarthy, I wouldn't have the need to be speaking to you.

JOHNNY

Sorry?

MAEBH

When you're in the garden, then garden, Mr. McCarthy. Pay no heed to the goings on of the house.

JOHNNY

Oh! I was only waving, Mrs. Noonan. Friendly like. Sure what harm of it?

MAEBH

'Tis not your job to be waving, Mr. McCarthy. Let this be the end of it. You seem like a decent sort, and God knows we need an extra pair of hands around here. Just stick to what you're hired for.

Maebh hands Johnny the flask and food then turns and begins to walk away.

JOHNNY

Mrs. Noonan?

Maebh stops but doesn't turn around.

MAEBH

Yes, Mr. McCarthy?

JOHNNY

What... what happened here?

MAEBH

Nothing, Mr. McCarthy. Nothing happened here. Nothing ever does.

INT. KILLNAPRACKEN MANOR - STAIRCASE - EVENING

Maebh descends the servants staircase from her attic quarters. She carries a well worn bible with her and has a set of rosary beads wrapped around one hand.

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A door into the staircase opens and Johnny quickly makes his way down the stairs ahead of Maebh.

Maebh stops in her tracks and looks towards the door that Johnny has entered through. She then walks through the door.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Maebh walks to the bedroom door. She tries to open it but it is locked.

There are some fresh marks around the keyhole and some splinters of wood on the floor.

She fumbles through her keys and finds the correct one, then opens the door.

INT. BEDROOM

Margaret has an easel out and paints a picture of Elizabeth reading a book.

There is an angelic female figure standing beside Elizabeth in the painting.

The sisters briefly look towards Maebh before resuming their activity.

Maebh stands there silently.

EXT. GARDEN - THE NEXT DAY

Johnny weeds the flower bed, which is a mixture of flowers and weeds that have intermingled with briars.

A shadow descends over him.

He looks up to see Maebh and smiles his cheeky smile at her.

MAEBH

Mr. McCarthy, your duties are in the garden; make sure that's where you stay.

JOHNNY

I... I haven't been anywhere but the garden, Mrs. Noonan.

The cawing of a crow disturbs them both.

Johnny looks towards the sisters' bedroom window, where the sisters look back at the interaction in the garden.

He nods a salutation to them and they look towards each other and giggle.

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Maebh momentarily turns her head around to catch a glimpse of the sisters before turning back to Johnny.

MAEBH

Those girls are none of your concern Mr. McCarthy.

JOHNNY

Bit old to be called girls, don't you think Mrs. Noonan. They look like women to me.

MAEBH

Mr. McCarthy. Those ladies are poorly creatures and it's my job to mind them since they've no other soul on this earth to do so.

(pause)

You'd do quite well to remember your station in this world. Don't go raising your head above the parapet.

Maebh and Johnny stare at each other, a war of wills between them.

JOHNNY

Why don't they ever come out Mrs. Noonan? Is it prisoners they are?

MAEBH

Your insolence is not appreciated, Mr. McCarthy.

JOHNNY

Maybe some fresh air would do them the world of good.

MAEBH

Will you ever get back to work or 'twill be winter by the time you've this garden right!

Maebh turns walks away.

Johnny looks back up towards the sisters' window and smiles. The sisters simultaneously smile back.

INT. MAEBH'S ROOM - EVENING

Maebh sits in her plainly decorated room reading her bible. She places her bible on a table beside a small vase of flowers and folds her hands in prayer, resting them on her lap.

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CONTINUED:

MAEBH  
(closing her eyes and  
whispering)  
Dear God, give me the strength to  
keep those girls safe.

Maebh hears a noise coming from the floor below her room. She concentrates on to the noise. It sounds like people having sex.

Maebh stands momentarily, then pauses and sits back down with her hands clasped in a prayer-like pose.

She sits for a moment, her eyes closed and her lips moving in silent prayer.

She stops her prayer and slowly unclasps her hands. One of her hands to rubs against her groin as she listens to the sounds in the room below.

She suddenly opens her eyes and looks upwards, re-clasping her hands in prayer.

MAEBH (CONT'D)  
Oh dear God, forgive me.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Maebh serves breakfast to the sisters.

Her footsteps are heavy.

She drops the tray onto the table. There is a paltry breakfast and no flowers.

Maebh rips the curtains open, making a racket.

The sisters lie face to face in their large bed.

Maebh is a silhouette standing against the morning light that streams through the window.

The girls sit up in bed.

Maebh glares at them in silence for a moment

MAEBH  
Up!

The sisters simultaneously sit on each side of the bed, then stand in unison.

The sisters move to the table.

Maebh marches over to the double bed. She pulls down the sheets fully and inspects the bed. The sheets are clean.

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CONTINUED:

Maebh checks them again and runs the palms of her hands across the bed-sheets.

She moves towards the table where the sisters are beginning to eat their breakfast.

MAEBH (CONT'D)

This will stop! There'll not be another minute of it.

(pause)

What would your mother say, God rest her?

The sisters stare sadly at their food.

MAEBH (CONTD) (CONT'D)

Or your poor auld father?

Elizabeth side swipes her food and crockery off the table.

Margaret and Maebh jump at the sound.

Elizabeth stands up and throws the remaining items on the table onto the floor. The table shakes.

Margaret cries silently.

MAEBH (CONT'D)

Stop it! Stop it!

Maebh walks over to Elizabeth and slaps her across the face. The table stops shaking.

Elizabeth attempts to slap Maebh but Maebh blocks her.

MAEBH (CONT'D)

Sit down!

Elizabeth reluctantly sits back at the table.

MAEBH (CONT'D)

You won't work your ways with me, madam. You might have a charm on every man that crosses this threshold but God knows you've no power over me. What is it you want? To be out there?

(points to the widow)

And where would you go? If it wasn't for myself and Fr. Brady you'd both be in the mad-house years ago!

Maebh steps back and becomes softer.

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MAEBH (CONT'D)

There'll be no one out there minding you. No one bringing your breakfast, lunch, and dinner. No one to tend to every need. No one at all. The world is a cruel place, Miss. And we've all got our cross to bear. God knows, I've got two.

Maebh walks towards the door of the room. She opens it fully.

MAEBH (CONT'D)

Go on, so. I'll not be a gaoler any longer.

Elizabeth looks at Margaret, who shakes her head, tears still in her eyes.

MAEBH (CONTD) (CONT'D)

Grand. Now clean up that mess.

Maebh exits the room, locking the door behind her.

EXT. STABLE YARD - DAY

Maebh looks around to make sure that Johnny is not there.

She goes into one of the old stable blocks and looks through a dirty hession tool-bag.

She removes a small file. The file has the same varnish on it as the door to the sisters' room. Maebh runs her finger along the file and then puts it into her smock pocket.

EXT. WOODLAND ON THE GROUNDS OF KILLNAPRACKEN MANOR - DAY

Maebh walks through the woodland carrying a small bunch of flowers.

She comes to a clearing where a crow is resting on the wall of an old well.

As she approaches, the crow takes flight.

Maebh looks over the wall and down into the well. It has been filled in with clay and dirt some time ago but there is still a deep drop from the wall down into the well.

Maebh throws the bunch of flowers into the well and blesses herself in a cross.

Then she removes the file from her smock pocket and throws that into the well.

INT. DRAWING ROOM - DAY

Maebh cleans ornaments with a cloth and hears a creak from the upstairs floorboards.

She looks out the window to the garden where she can see Johnny looking up at the sisters' window.

Maebh throws the cloth onto the floor and briskly leaves the drawing-room.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

Maebh walks hurriedly towards Johnny who stands on the lawn. Johnny looks towards the sisters' room. He appears transfixed, his head tilted backwards.

MAEBH

Mr. McCarthy!

Johnny doesn't respond to Maebh.

MAEBH (CONT'D)

Mr. McCarthy?  
(concerned)  
Johnny!

Maebh places her hands on Johnny's shoulders and shakes him gently.

JOHNNY

(confused)  
Wh-What?

Maebh looks up at the sisters' room. The sisters look blankly outward.

MAEBH

Leave this part of the garden, Mr. McCarthy. We'll get it done another day.

JOHNNY

What do you mean?

MAEBH

Just get to work in the stables, there's plenty there for you to do and it'll keep you out of trouble.

JOHNNY

Yes. Yes, Mrs. Noonan.  
I think you might be right.

MAEBH

Good lad. I'll bring you 'round some tea in a while.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

The sliding grid of a confession box abruptly opens, revealing the face of Maebh. There is a moment of silence as she is unsure of what to say.

FR. BRADY

You may speak...

MAEBH

'Tis not for me Father.

(pause)

It's the house. The girls. There's something wrong. The good Lord has sent me here for your help.

The priest brings his face close to the dividing grid of the confessional. He peers in with beady eyes at Maebh.

FR. BRADY

The girls, Mrs. Noonan? Are they sick?

MAEBH

Not quite sick Father but never well.

FR. BRADY

What is it then, Mrs. Noonan?

MAEBH

It's the new gardener, Father. I fear...

(pause)

it's happening again.

The priest's eyes widen.

FR. BRADY

(blessing himself)

Sacred heart of Jesus. I thought all this was done with.

MAEBH

As did I, father. As did I.

FR. BRADY

Have you spoken to them?

MAEBH

I have, Father, but 'tis of no use.

FR. BRADY

And what of the lad?

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CONTINUED:

MAEBH

I've warned him but I can tell by the look of him it's too late. He'll not rest now until those girls have consumed his very soul. God forgive me for bringing that poor crater to Killnapracken.

FR. BRADY

You weren't to know, Mrs. Noonan. You're okay in that house with them?

MAEBH

Oh yes, Father. I'm grand. They'll do me no harm. Sure, I'm the closet thing to a mother they have.  
(beat)

FR. BRADY

And there's only one way to stop it?

MAEBH

I'm afraid so Father. I can't stop the girls, I can only contain them. Will you see to it?

FR. BRADY

I'll send someone 'round in the morning and may God have mercy on us!

The priest shuts the sliding grid door of the confession box.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

Two men stand at the doorway of Killnapracken.

One pulls the bell chain and they wait for the door to open. Maebh opens the door. She looks from one man to the other.

MAN 1

Father Brady sent us.

MAEBH

And you know what needs to be done?

MAN 1

Yes ma'am.

Maebh nods at the men, then looks out to the garden and scans the grounds.

She steps out through the doorway, closing the door behind her, and begins to walk in the direction of the stable yard.

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The two men hesitate for a moment but then follow her.

The sisters stare out from their bedroom window.

INT. THE SISTERS' ROOM

Elizabeth and Margaret stand at the window. They watch Maebh lead the men through the grounds towards the stable yard. They turn to each other before resuming their gaze out the window and hold each others hand.

The sisters slowly open their mouths and a high pitched sound is heard. This increases in tone until it turns into a guttural inhuman scream. The sisters' faces change from the usual emotionless canvas to something feral and wild, baring their teeth.

A flock of crows fly from the woodlands on the grounds of Killnapracken Manor.

The scream lasts for a moment and then all is quiet again. The sisters remain by the window, hand in hand.

EXT. STABLE YARD

The men and Maebh hear the united scream of the sisters.

Johnny, with his back towards Maebh and the men, stops what he is doing and looks upwards at the crows flying overhead.

Maebh in the direction of Johnny.

Johnny resumes his work.

A crow lands on a half-door in the stable yard.

The men continue towards Johnny as Maebh retreats to the manor house.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

A) The men's shoes walking across the stable yard towards Johnny.

B) Maebh's shoes as she steps back inside the manor house.

C) A man's hand picking up a shovel.

D) Maebh's hand picking up a silver spoon.

E) A man's hand swinging the shovel.

F) Maebh pouring tealeaves from the silver spoon into a teapot.

G) Johnny falling to his knees.

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CONTINUED:

H) Maebh's face.

INT. KILLNAPRACKEN MANOR - STAIRS - DAY

Maebh carries a tea-tray upstairs, complete with bone China, cake, and some flowers.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Maebh places the tray on a sideboard and unlocks the bedroom door.

INT. BEDROOM

Maebh enters the sisters' bedroom.

The sisters are staring blankly out the window, motionless.

Maebh places the tea-tray on a table.

MAEBH

Now ma'am. A nice cup of tea.

The sisters do not acknowledge Maebh's presence but continue to stare out of the window.

Maebh approaches the sisters from behind, picking up a silver and ivory hairbrush on her way.

She stands behind the sisters and combs their hair, moving with each brush stroke from one sister to the other.

The sisters, in unison, shed a tear.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

Maebh tends the flower bed that Johnny had been working on.

The flowers dominate the flowerbed, growing up through and around the briar.

Maebh sees the one remaining dandelion.

She reaches down and plucks it forcefully from the earth.

As she removes the dandelion, Maebh looks up towards the sisters' bedroom window.

Elizabeth and Margaret stare out.

Maebh waves to them and smiles.

FADE OUT.

THE END