

'Why?' I asked crossly.

'Because poor Daddy is tired.'

This seemed to me a very poor reason. 'Oh!' I said lightly. 'Do you know where I want to go with you today, Mummy?'

'No, dear,' she sighed.

'I want to go to the river to catch some fish, and then—'

'Don't-wake-Daddy!' she whispered angrily, holding her hand across my mouth.

But it was too late. He was awake. He reached for his matches, lit one and stared in horror at his watch.

'Like a cup of tea, dear?' asked Mother nervously.

'Tea?' he cried angrily. 'Do you know what the time is?'

'And after that I want to go up the Rathcooney Road,' I said loudly, afraid I'd forget something in all these interruptions.

'Go to sleep at once, Larry!' she said sharply.

I began to cry. Father said nothing, but lit his pipe and smoked it, looking out into the shadows away from Mother and me. It was so unfair. Every time I had explained to her the waste of making two beds when we could both sleep in one, she had told me it was healthier like that. And now here was this man, this stranger, sleeping with her without the least care for her health!

He got up early and made tea, but although he brought Mother a cup, he brought none for me.

'Mummy,' I shouted, 'I want a cup of tea, too.'

'You can drink from my saucer, dear,' she said patiently.

That was the end. Either Father or I would have to leave the house. I didn't want to drink from Mother's saucer; I wanted to be considered an equal in my own home. So I drank it all and left none for her. She took that quietly too.

But that night when she was putting me to bed, she said

gently, 'Larry, I want you to promise me that you won't come in and disturb poor Daddy in the morning. Promise?'

That awful 'poor Daddy' again! 'Why?' I asked.

'Because poor Daddy is worried, and doesn't sleep well.'

'Why doesn't he, Mummy?'

'Well, you know that, while he was at the war, Mummy got our money from the post office? Now, you see, there's no more money for us at the post office, so Daddy must go out and find us some. You know what would happen if he couldn't?'

'No,' I said, 'tell me.'

'Well, I think we might have to go out and beg, like the old woman outside the church. We wouldn't like that, would we?'

'No,' I agreed. 'We wouldn't.'

'So you'll promise not to come in and wake him?'

'Promise.'

I really meant it. I knew money was a serious matter and I didn't want to have to beg, like the old woman. So when I woke the next morning, I stayed in my room, playing with my toys for what seemed like hours. I was bored, and so very, very cold. I kept thinking of the big, deep, warm bed in Mother's room.

At last I could bear it no longer. I went into the next room and got into the bed. Mother woke at once with a start.

'Larry,' she whispered, 'what did you promise?'

'But I was quiet for ever so long!' I said miserably.

'Oh dear, and you're so cold!' she said sadly. 'Now if I let you stay, will you promise not to talk?'

'But I want to talk, Mummy,' I cried.

'That has nothing to do with it,' she said, with a firmness that was new to me. 'Daddy wants to sleep. Do you understand?'

I understood only too well. I wanted to talk, he wanted to sleep — whose house was it, anyway?