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BOLD GIRLS

A Play

by Rona Munro

|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

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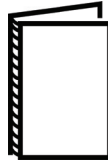


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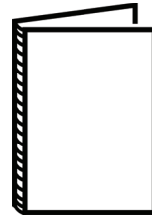
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AUTHOR'S NOTE

My starting point was simply to write a play about women's lives in the North of Ireland. What I eventually wrote was a play about four very particular women in west Belfast and it was the product of a lot of laughs, a lot of whiskey and a score of stories. I'd worked in and visited Belfast on and off over five years. When I visited the areas of town that are really touched by war I stayed with families doing what families do anywhere in the world.

I don't think the battles women fight or the daily struggles they have are different to those in any other area with bad housing or high unemployment except that guns make a difference to everything. But this isn't a story about guns. It's the story of four bold women.

Rona Munro

Bold Girls was joint winner of the Susan Smith Blackburn Award for the best play by a woman in the English-speaking world, 1991. Rona Munro received the Evening Standard's Most Promising Playwright Award 1991 for *Bold Girls*.

BOLD GIRLS

Commissioned by 7:84 Scottish People's Theatre and first performed at Cumbernauld Theatre, Strathclyde, on 27 September, 1990 with the following cast of characters:

DEIRDRE	Andrea Irvine
MARIE	Paula Hamilton
NORA	Joyce McBrinn
CASSIE	Julia Dearden

Directed by Lynne Parker
Designed by Geoff Rose

Subsequently presented in London at Hampstead Theatre on 4 September, 1991, with the following cast:

DEIRDRE	Catherine Cusack
MARIE	Orla Charlton
NORA	Britta Smith
CASSIE	Imelda Staunton

Directed by John Dove
Designed by Robert Jones

Synopsis of scenes

Scene One – Marie’s house. Late afternoon

Scene Two – The Club. That evening.

Scene Three – Outside the Club. Later that evening

Scene Four – Marie’s house. Later that night

The play is set in west Belfast

Time: 1990s

For Pat

Scene One

MARIE's house. Belfast. Late afternoon. 1990s.

It is irons and ironing boards and piles of clothes waiting to be smoothed, socks and pegs and damp sheets waiting for a break in the Belfast drizzle for the line; it's toys in pieces and toys that are just cardboard boxes and toys that are new and gleaming and flashing with lights and have swallowed up the year's savings. It's pots and pans and steam and the kettle always hot for tea; it's furniture that's bald with age and a hearth in front of the coal fire that's gleaming clean.

At the moment it's empty, an unnatural, expectant emptiness that suggests this room is never deserted; it's too stuffed with human bits and pieces, all the clutter of housework and life.

There is a small picture of the Virgin on one wall, a large grainy blow-up photo of a smiling young man on the other. He has a seventies haircut and moustache.

DEIRDRE is not in this room, she's crouching on all fours on her own talking out of darkness in which only her face is visible. She is wary, young.

DEIRDRE (*moving from all fours*) The sun is going down behind the hills, the sky is grey. There's hills at the back there, green. I can't hardly see them because the stones between here and there are grey, the street is grey. Somewhere a bird is singing and falling in the sky. I hear the ice cream van and the traffic and the helicopter overhead.

Blackout; after a few minutes lights come up on MARIE's house.

MARIE *bursts into the room with her arms laden with four packets of crisps, two of Silk Cut and a packet*

of chocolate biscuits. She is cheerful, efficient, young. She drops one of the crisps, tuts in exasperation, and looks at it.

MARIE (*shouting back out the door*) Mickey! Mickey were you wanting smoky bacon? ...Well this is salt and vinegar... Well, why did you not say? Away you and swap this... Catch now. (*She hurls the bag*) No you cannot... No...because you'll not eat your tea if you do! (*At the doorway*) Mickey, pick up those crisps and don't be so bold.

MARIE comes back into the room and starts two jobs simultaneously. First she puts the crisps etc. away, then she fills a pan with water and throws it on the stove. She starts sorting her dry washing into what needs ironing and what doesn't; she sorts a few items then starts peeling potatoes; all her movements have a frenetic efficiency.

NORA enters with a pile of damp sheets. She is down-to-earth, middle-aged.

NORA Is that the last of them, Marie?

MARIE Just the towels... Oh Nora, you didn't need to carry that over, wee Michael was coming to get them.

NORA Och you're all right. These towels is it?

MARIE That's them.

NORA This'll need to be the last. I've a load of my own to get in.

MARIE Oh here Nora, leave them then!

NORA No, no, we're best all getting our wash done while it's dry. We'll wait long enough to see the sun again.

CASSIE sticks her head round the door. She is NORA's daughter, sceptical, sharp-tongued.

CASSIE Can I ask you a personal question, Marie?

NORA Have you left that machine on, Cassie?

CASSIE Do you have a pair of red knickers?

MARIE I think I do, yes.

CASSIE With wee black cats, with wee balloons coming out their mouths saying “Hug me, I’m cuddly”?

MARIE (*stops peeling potatoes briefly; giving CASSIE a severe look*) They were in a pack of three for ninety-nine pence.

NORA You see if you leave it, it just boils over, you know that Cassie.

CASSIE And did you put those knickers in the wash you just gave my mother?

NORA It’s because that powder isn’t really biological, it’s something else altogether.

MARIE What’s happened to them?

NORA I think it’s for dishwashers. But it was in bulk, cheap you know? I got a load of it at the club last month, awful nice young man, do you know that Dooley boy?

CASSIE And did my mummy just drop those bright red knickers with their wee cats, right in the middle of the road, right by the ice cream van, as she was coming across from our house to yours?

NORA Did I what?

MARIE Oh no! (*She increases the pace of her peeling*)

NORA Cassie, will you get back over the road and see to that machine before the foam’s coming down the step to greet us.

MARIE Where are they?

CASSIE At the top of the lamp-post. I didn’t know wee Colm could climb like that, he’s only nine.

NORA Och I’ll do it myself. (*She moves to exit with a heap of towels*)

MARIE Hold on Nora, I’m coming too.

CASSIE I wouldn't. After what's been said about those knickers I'd just leave them alone, pretend you never saw them in your life.

NORA All my lino's curled after the last time. I'll never find a colour like that again.

NORA *exits.*

CASSIE And did you know your wee Michael's just swapped a packet of salt and vinegar crisps for a wee plastic cup full of raspberry ice cream syrup?

MARIE (*erupting towards the door*) MICKEY!

CASSIE I'll get him. (*Calling off*) Mickey, come here... 'Cause I want you.

CASSIE *exits.*

MARIE *finishes the potatoes and dives into the ironing again.*

MARIE He doesn't just drink it, he wears the stuff.

CASSIE (*offstage*) Give me that cup now.

MARIE In his hair and everything.

CASSIE (*offstage*) Because it's poison.

MARIE Then he won't eat his tea and what he does eat comes straight back up again.

CASSIE (*offstage*) I am an expert in poison, a world expert, and I'm telling you that stuff will kill you. I do know. I took a G.C.S.E. in identifying poisons.

MARIE Threw his hamburger clear across the room last time. Frightened the life out of his Auntie Brenda.

CASSIE (*offstage*) It gets your intestines and eats them away till they just shrivel up like worms. It's worse than whiskey.

MARIE I wouldn't mind but he doesn't even like the taste, he just likes being sick.

CASSIE (*offstage*) I'll tell you what happens to all those men that drink whiskey and all those wee boys that drink raspberry ice cream syrup; their intestines get eaten away and their stomachs get eaten away and all the other bits inside just shrivel up and die. Then they've got no insides left at all and all they can do is sit in front of the television all day and cough and shout for cups and cups and cups of tea because that's the only thing that can fill up their awful, empty, shrivelled insides... Yes just like him...and him as well, so will you give me that cup? That's a good boy.

CASSIE *enters the room with a plastic cup of red syrup.*

MARIE Your tea's on the table in half an hour, Michael.

CASSIE (*to Michael*) What? (*To MARIE*) Can he still have his crisps.

MARIE (*wavering*) Och...

CASSIE No. Best let the poison drip its way through your intestines as fast as possible. Crisps would clog it up. (*She moves into the room; takes a swig of the syrup*) Put some vodka in that and it would make a great cocktail.

MARIE Do you want a beer? I've cans in.

CASSIE No, I'll wait a while. Are you still on for the club tonight?

MARIE Oh... Well...

CASSIE Marie!

MARIE I've no one to watch the kids.

CASSIE I thought Brenda was coming in?

MARIE She said she'd try but I think her John's out tonight.

CASSIE When is he not? Well we'll take Mickey and Brendan down to hers before we go.

MARIE Och...

CASSIE What?

MARIE I've nothing to wear.

CASSIE What about your red dress?

MARIE I've nothing to go with it.

CASSIE What about your cuddly kitten knickers? Look, when did you last have a night out?

MARIE I was over at yours watching that video just the night before last.

CASSIE Oh, it'll take you a while to get over the excitement of that, I can see.

MARIE Well it cost me a bit of sleep Cassie, that film.

NORA enters with a fabric sample in her pocket.

NORA Marie I need your mop. What did I tell you, Cassie?

CASSIE Sure it was only a film. Nothing real to it at all was there, Mummy?

MARIE fetches the mop.

NORA Foam right up the walls.

CASSIE You know that video we saw with Marie, "The Accused", remember? Her winning the court case and all, who could believe that?

NORA I came in the kitchen and all the stuff out the bin was floating around on top of it, a packet of fags bobbing out the door—

CASSIE Oh not my fags.

CASSIE grabs the mop and exits.

NORA settles herself down.

NORA She was no good, that girl, if you ask me.

MARIE Who?

NORA Jodie Foster or whatever you call her. I'm not saying she deserved it, mind, but she should've known better, she should've known what'd be coming to her.

MARIE But was that not the thing of it Nora, that no woman deserves—

NORA (*interrupting*) Och she should've learnt better at her age. What do you think of that?

NORA *hands MARIE the fabric sample.*

The colour of it, what do you reckon to the colour? It's unusual isn't it? Unusual. Different. I don't think I've ever seen the like of that.

MARIE It's lovely.

NORA So it is, and it's a good heavy fabric you see, you could do your curtains in that and your loose covers.

MARIE You could.

NORA Well I'm getting the end of a roll of that; fifteen yards of remnant and that'll be my front room just a wee dream again.

MARIE That'll be some price will it not?

NORA Oh I've a deal worked out with your man at the club, it won't be shop prices he'll be charging. Anyway, they won't cut off the electric or the gas this month and we must be due some summer by next month and who knows if I'll live longer than that, so I'll be all right for a while, and I'll have my room the way I want it.

MARIE (*handing it back*) It is a nice bit of cloth.

NORA (*stroking it*) Just feels rich doesn't it? So are you coming out with us tonight, Marie?

CASSIE *sweeps back in, brandishing the mop and a packet of soggy cigarettes.*

CASSIE A wee bit of foam just dripping over the top! I thought I'd need my aqualung the way you were talking.

NORA I hope you didn't let it drip on my good lino!

CASSIE And what I'd like to know is, if everything in the kitchen was bone dry, how was it my fags were sopping wet on top of the machine?

NORA Sure it wasn't me that put them there.

CASSIE Sure it wasn't you puffed that packet down to two and them too damp to light at all now.

NORA Och you're killing yourself with those.

CASSIE And what are *you* doing? Bit of interior decor? Tar-filled lungs: what the best dressed bodies are wearing.

NORA To say nothing of the money you're burning up.

CASSIE Oh they're a terrible price, you're right there, just as well you've mine to puff on. Here Marie, put these under the grill for me will you?

CASSIE hands MARIE the soggy cigarettes. MARIE takes them and then offers both CASSIE and NORA out of her own pack.

NORA Thanks Marie. (*To CASSIE*) Our Martin never grudged me a cigarette.

CASSIE That's because our Martin smoked mine as well.

NORA You! You'd grudge a dry hand to a drowning man.

MARIE Maybe I will come out tonight.

CASSIE There's no maybe about it.

NORA Are you not coming out with us, Marie?

CASSIE Yes she is.

MARIE I just don't know if I can get a sitter.

NORA Sure, put Brendan and wee Michael over with our two. Our Danny's watching all of them.

CASSIE Well our Danny's watching "A Nightmare on Elm Street", but I daresay that'll keep him awake long enough to notice if they try and run away from home.

MARIE Well...

NORA I know how you feel love, but you can't mourn forever.

CASSIE Who's mourning?

NORA Cassie!

CASSIE Michael's been dead three and a half years, Mummy. I should think she could try a wee smile on for size now and then don't you? Sure he was hardly here when he was alive.

NORA God forgive you, Cassie.

CASSIE And who was that came out with us last month drank a pint and a half of vodka and tried to climb into the taxi driver's lap on the way home to show him how to change gear?

MARIE (*laughing*) Well he was in second, the eejit, the whole way.

CASSIE Was that Michael Donnelly's mourning wee widow carrying on like that or was I hallucinating?

NORA God forgive me for bringing a child into this world with a heart of flint and a tongue to match.

NORA *exits.*

CASSIE Heart like a Brillo pad, that's me. That was B.T.'s taxi by the way; it was broke.

MARIE (*sitting down*) Was it? Why did he not say?

CASSIE (*sitting down*) I think he tried but you were too busy trying to remember all the words of "Life in the Fast Lane". Then he couldn't breathe too well by then either, not with you squashing him into the steering wheel like that.

MARIE Cassie! You should've stopped me!

CASSIE There was no stopping you, Marie. B.T.'s never been able to get it past first since.

MARIE I don't remember any of it, you know.

CASSIE Just as well. So why won't you come out?

MARIE Have you fallen out with your mummy?

CASSIE I fell out with my mummy on the delivery room floor. Why won't you come out, Marie?

MARIE Och, I've things to do here.

CASSIE (*looking round*) Looks great to me. Want me to help you dust the lightbulbs?

MARIE I just need a bit of quiet, time on my own.

CASSIE Well you're in the wrong house for that.

MARIE No, sometimes I get a sit to myself, by the fire, when the kids are in bed.

CASSIE And what do you do?

MARIE I just wait.

CASSIE Wait for what?

MARIE (*hesitating*) Cassie – do you believe in ghosts?

CASSIE stares at her for a minute, then casts a quick nervous glance at the photograph on the wall.

CASSIE Has he been back? Have you seen him?

MARIE No, not Michael. It's a wee girl, all in white.

CASSIE A wee girl?

MARIE *nods.*

Well, who is it?

MARIE I don't know.

CASSIE Well, who does it look like?

MARIE She looks like Michael.

CASSIE Sacred Heart!

MARIE You know how me and Michael always wanted a wee girl.

CASSIE I remember.

MARIE Then other times – she looks like me.

CASSIE But – you're not dead.

MARIE Well, you remember that dress I was married in, that wee white minidress?

CASSIE *nods.*

Then when Michael brought me here – I'd never seen it. Even on my wedding day I still thought we were moving into his parents' back room – then he brought me here, asked me how I liked our wee home – and I just stood at the end of the path there and stared...

CASSIE Yes?

MARIE That's where she stands. And stares.

CASSIE Oh Marie!

MARIE (*laughing*) So am I cracking up at last, Cassie?

CASSIE I think you should get out of this house and get a good stiff drink or twelve down you.

MARIE (*laughing*) I think you're maybe right.

There is the sound of a distant explosion. Both stop for a moment. They don't appear unduly alarmed.

CASSIE What side was that from?

MARIE Sounded like it was down the front somewhere.

CASSIE Sounded like it was a good way from here.

MARIE Och, it's time I was getting the kids in anyway.

MARIE *wipes her hand and exits.*

(offstage; calling) Mickey! Brendan! That's your tea ready.

CASSIE *gets up slowly, looking after MARIE. She hesitates a second, then moving fast she goes to the photograph of Michael senior on the wall. She scrabbles down her front and pulls out a wad of money; she conceals it behind the picture. She straightens the picture again, steps back, then turns. She freezes in shock, staring out the window.*

NORA *enters. She now has a towel round her head.*

NORA There's buses burning all the way up the Falls.

CASSIE *(distracted)* What?

NORA *(looking to the window)* What is it?

MARIE *enters.*

MARIE That's the Brits coming up the road. Close that blind, will you Nora?

NORA *moves to do so.*

(talking to her kids off) All right, you can have it in your room, but don't you be dropping chips on those clean downie covers.

NORA *(peering round the edge of the blind as she closes it)*
Ahh! Will you look at what those great boots are doing to my nasturtiums!

MARIE *(to CASSIE)* Brendan got one of those computer games for his birthday, can hardly drag the pair of them out of there now. *(She puts food on plates)*

NORA I've only got two feet of garden, you'd think they could walk round it.

MARIE He had it in here but I couldn't take the noise, so then he shifted it through; he'll sit through there in front of it

even when he can see his breath and he's got to wear gloves to punch the wee buttons. Did you hear that Brenda's got a heater in every room in her house there? I says Brenda, if you switch them all on they'll be bringing you the bill by parcel post. Just steams the damp out anyway; it's like a Turkish baths in her front room. Are you OK, Cassie?

NORA (*turning*) The only flowers in the whole road and they have to go and jump on them... Are you OK, Cassie?

CASSIE Sure, why wouldn't I be OK? So what's happening?

NORA There's buses burning all along the Falls.

MARIE exits with two plates of food.

CASSIE What?

NORA There's one just outside the supermarket there and there's a great lot of smoke further back as you look along the road.

CASSIE Well, what's that for?

NORA Sure it doesn't have to be for anything does it?

CASSIE Well, what's the date?

NORA No there's no anniversaries or nothing. I was just asking your wee woman there, we couldn't think of anything.

MARIE enters.

MARIE They're saying there's shooting on the main road.

CASSIE Who's shooting?

NORA No one seems to have a clue, but there's a road block going up the top of the road there.

CASSIE Well, we thought we heard something going up down the front there didn't we Marie?

MARIE Put the radio on. There'll maybe be something in a minute.

The lights change. Spotlight on DEIRDRE.

DEIRDRE (*speaking from her own space*) It's raining. The sky is grey. There's a helicopter up there, in the sky. I can hear it. It watching. It's raining on the shops. On the smoke, on the kids. It'll come in round the windows, it'll beat in the doors, can't keep it out. I'm wet, I'm cold. I want to get inside. There's burning, making the sky black. The sky's full of rain and the sound of the helicopter. I want to get inside. Can't keep me out.

Fade light on DEIRDRE. Lights up on MARIE.

MARIE It was a terrible wet day when I got married. A wet grey day in nineteen seventy-four and I couldn't get to the church for the road blocks. I was standing out on my step there with my mummy screaming at me to come before I got my good white dress dirty from the rain – only I was wetter from crying than the clouds could make me, because Michael Donnelly was the only boy I'd ever wanted for myself and me just seventeen. He was the only boy I'd wanted at all and it was still a miracle to me he wanted me back – but then since I've always had to work hardest at believing miracles and anyway I knew they only fell in the laps of the pure in heart, now it seemed certain to me that a pile of Brits and a road block would lose me Michael altogether – for why would he wait an hour or more at the church, when he'd that smile on him that made you feel wicked and glad about it and that look to him that caught your eye when he was walking down the street. Just with the way he put his feet down, bold and happy together, and those hands that were so warm and gentle you hardly worried where he was putting them and why would a man like that wait two hours in a cold church for a wee girl in a damp wedding dress? (*Pause*) And my mummy's trying to pull my daddy in 'cause he's shouting at the Brits saying this was the greatest day of his daughter's life and hadn't they just spoiled it altogether? Then this big Saracen's pulled up and they've all jumped out and my mummy's just going to scream when do they not offer us an escort through the road block? So that was my bridal car to the wedding, a big Saracen full of Brits all

grinning and offering us fags and pleased as punch with themselves for the favour they were doing us. I hardly dared look at them. I was certain the big hulk sitting next to me was one of them that had lifted Michael just the year before but oh they were nice as anything. There was wanted men at the wedding and everything. Sure I'd grey hairs before I was ever married. And then I was married and Michael brought me here and the rain stopped; it even looked like the sun had come out and I stared and stared, just standing at the top of the path in my wee white dress that was still half soaked. It felt like we'd won through everything, the weather and the road blocks and the Brits and there were never going to be bad times again – because I was never going to be without him again. Well – I was just seventeen after all.

The lights revert to normal.

NORA “Reports of disturbances in the west of the city”? As if we hadn't noticed. Can I borrow your hair dryer Marie?

MARIE Sure help yourself, it's just by my bed there.

NORA *moves to leave.*

NORA Well, it looks like none of us will be getting out tonight.

CASSIE Why not?

NORA You'll not get a taxi down this street tonight, Cassie.

CASSIE They'll be gone before you've your face on Mummy, with the time you take.

NORA Well I hope you're right. Our Danny won't get home from his work.

NORA *exits.*

MARIE Our Brenda's probably stuck in town as well.

CASSIE Well, what's it all for; that's what I want to know?

MARIE Someone'll know. Here, I'll get you some dinner, Cassie.

CASSIE No, no, you're all right.

MARIE Come on, I've it all ready here.

CASSIE No, no, we've a meal ready for us across the street; we were just waiting on Danny. I gave my crowd theirs before I came out.

MARIE Will they be all right?

CASSIE Eileen's over there, her telly's been lifted.

MARIE They never came to her house?

CASSIE They did, half the street out watching them stagger out the door with it, took her video as well. She said she didn't mind the publicity but she was half way through watching "Home and Away" and they wouldn't even wait till she saw if they caught those two in bed or not... No but I'm on a diet.

MARIE A diet! What for?

CASSIE To lose weight!

MARIE That's what I mean. What for?

CASSIE Have you ever seen me in a bikini, Marie?

MARIE I have not and I shouldn't think anyone else will either unless you were planning on sunbathing on that wee tuft of grass your mummy calls a lawn, or unless you've got some toyboy hidden away just waiting to sweep you off to Spain.

CASSIE Well when I meet him, Marie, I want to have the figure for it. Anyway I've got this calorie chart, so all I can have today is half a grapefruit.

MARIE Half a grapefruit? What kind of diet is that?

CASSIE You have to weigh it up, a little of this or a lot of that. Do you know how many calories there are in a gin and lime? And I'm only allowed one thousand three hundred a day so if I'm wanting a drink tonight that's all I get to eat.

MARIE That can't be healthy, Cassie.

CASSIE Sure it is, you balance it out over the week. Fruit juice and yoghurt all day tomorrow.

MARIE And ten gin and limes and a half a grapefruit today?

CASSIE *Six* gin and limes, I worked it out...mind you, I could always give the grapefruit a miss couldn't I?

MARIE Cassie, that can't be healthy at all—

There is the sound of a few gunshots; they sound close at hand.

MARIE and CASSIE freeze for a second.

MARIE That was at the back of us, wasn't it?

CASSIE *nods.*

MARIE *goes to peek out past the edge of the blind.*

CASSIE Must be something big.

MARIE *looks carefully up and down the street.*

Anything?

MARIE *(shaking her head; still looking out)* So why don't you try that BBC diet? Brenda lost ten pounds with that.

CASSIE I want something quick. You wait, Marie, I'll have a completely new body by the end of the month.

MARIE Whose will you have?

There is a thunderous knocking at the front door.

Both CASSIE and MARIE stare at each other, terrified.

CASSIE Sacred Heart!

MARIE *runs to the door to the hall.*

MARIE *(shouting off)* Mickey, Brendan, you stay in that room!
(She waits there, just looking at CASSIE)

There is more knocking at the front door.

NORA *catapults into the room with her hair half dried.*

NORA (*frightened*) That's someone at your door Marie.

MARIE *moves over to peer round the blind again.*

MARIE I can't see the step from here.

CASSIE Just leave it Marie.

MARIE Sure if it was anybody to worry about they'd've had the door in by now anyway. (*She hesitates looking towards the hall*)

CASSIE Just *leave* it, Marie.

MARIE Maybe it's someone needing to go through to the back.

CASSIE And they wouldn't be knocking either, it'd be excuse me Mrs and straight through your kitchen with the Brits on their heels.

MARIE *starts to move towards the door.*

MARIE I'll keep the chain on the door.

CASSIE *Marie!*

MARIE You stay here.

MARIE *exits.*

NORA (*crossing herself*) Mother of God, did you hear those shots?

CASSIE *nods.*

They wait, watching the door.

DEIRDRE *comes into the room. She looks about fifteen but could be younger or older, she's wearing a white mini-dress, damp and grubby, battered white trainers on her feet. Her legs are bare and scratched, there are more scratches on her arms. She has heavy black make-up*

on, smudged slightly around her eyes as if she's been crying. She stands uncertain in the centre of the room.

MARIE *enters behind her.*

The three older women just stare at DEIRDRE.

DEIRDRE Can I stay here till I'm dry, Mrs? They won't let me up the road.

There is a pause then MARIE finally stirs.

MARIE You better sit down by the fire (*she switches on the TV*)

DEIRDRE *sits by the fire.*

NORA, MARIE and CASSIE *slowly sit as well, watching her.*

NORA I don't know your face.

DEIRDRE *says nothing. She doesn't look up from the fire.*

Well where are you from?

DEIRDRE *jerks her head without turning.*

Where?

DEIRDRE (*sullen, quietly*) Back of the school there.

NORA What's that?

DEIRDRE (*loudly*) Back of the school there.

NORA Those houses next to the off-licence?

DEIRDRE *nods.*

I know where you are. So what happened to you then?

DEIRDRE *shrugs. She looks up and catches CASSIE's eye.*

CASSIE *turns quickly to look at the TV.*

MARIE Will you take a cup of tea, love?

DEIRDRE *nods.*

MARIE *goes to make it.*

NORA *stares at DEIRDRE a while longer, then turns to CASSIE.*

NORA So Cassie, looks like that wee brother of yours will miss his tea altogether.

CASSIE *(with her eyes on the TV)* Looks like he might.

NORA I hope he's the sense to stay in town.

CASSIE Sure he'll phone next door, let us know what's happening.

NORA Aye he's a good boy.

There is a pause while everyone watches the TV in an uncomfortable silence.

MARIE *brings DEIRDRE the tea and some biscuits. DEIRDRE takes it without saying anything, starts to eat and drink furtively and ravenously. CASSIE and MARIE exchange glances over her head.*

MARIE Turn the sound up on that will you, Nora?

NORA *turns the sound up.*

CASSIE Is that "Blind Date"?

NORA You should know, you've been sitting here staring at it.

CASSIE Will you look at what that woman's wearing!

NORA What's wrong with it?

CASSIE She looks like she's ready to go in the oven for Christmas dinner.

NORA I like Cilla Black, she'd a great singing voice.

CASSIE Pity she hasn't the dress sense to match.

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