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REARED

by John Fitzpatrick

|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

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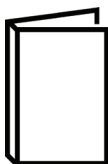
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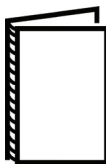


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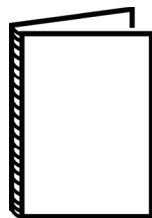
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CAST

EILEEN – Mid- to late forties, originally from Ireland and married to

STUART – also in his mid- to late forties, adoptive son of

NORA – early eighties and also originally from Ireland

CAITLIN – Stuart and Eileen's fifteen-year-old daughter

COLIN – A school friend of Caitlin, sixteen

The play happens in the kitchen of a Victorian-era house in London.

The floor is covered in old tiles which are painted in brown and black. Some of them are cracked and the cracks are filled with dirt. The kitchen cabinets are thick and made of beechwood, which has been stained a light tanned colour. They have brass fittings.

There's an oven, hob and grill unit, probably made in the seventies. The hob is gas and the grill sits above the hob. Beside it is a fairly ordinary fridge-freezer.

There's a large dresser, which is in a similar shade and weight to the wood used for the kitchen cabinets.

The kitchen table is an extendable one. It's surrounded by a mix of salvaged chairs of different styles. In the corner is a large rocking chair built of ash wood and stained a darker colour. It might have faded somewhat from being exposed to the elements. The chair has not been professionally built but neither is it shoddy. It was obviously a project by someone with a medium ability and attention span.

A central lamp with a metal shade descends from the ceiling, as do some cobwebs, old paint and cracking plaster, so that there seems to be stalactites protruding from above.

There are various stacks of objects around the floor of the kitchen. Some are piles of magazines or books. Some are electrical or car engine parts. Others are collections of things which have just ended up there, like old toys, letters or a free sheet from a gallery exhibit.

There are two exits, a door stage left, which leads to the living rooms and the upstairs, and a door stage right, which leads to the garage, a toilet and the garden.

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Scene One

The kitchen light flickers once or twice.

NORA *walks across the stage using a walking stick. There's a piece of toilet paper stuck to her shoe and it trails behind her.*

A flushing sound from offstage.

EILEEN *enters and notices the toilet paper. She walks over and picks it off, without NORA noticing.*

She brings it over to the bin.

Dropping it in, she sees something on it and recoils.

NORA What's that, Eileen?

EILEEN Poo. Your poo.

NORA You'll have to speak up.

EILEEN Nothing.

NORA Was there something on the floor? I could take another nasty fall.

EILEEN Just a bit of rubbish.

NORA You'd want to get a cleaner in here some time.

A moment.

I said, "You'd want to get a cleaner in here some time".

EILEEN Really?

NORA There's so much mess about. I'm surprised I haven't had more falls.

EILEEN Indeed.

NORA I don't mind putting in a few bob for it.

EILEEN Is that right?

NORA If you need some help I...

EILEEN Not up to your high standards, is it?

NORA Ah now, I'm not saying that.

EILEEN No?

NORA I'm just thinking you could have someone to help you out.

EILEEN With what exactly?

NORA With the housekeeping. Sure you don't have time to be dealing with it.

EILEEN No. No, I don't.

NORA Well there you are. We'll get someone in to help you out.

EILEEN What if we got someone to help you out?

NORA What do you mean?

EILEEN Like a carer.

NORA Sure I'm fine. As long as there are no things for me to trip over.

EILEEN We could get someone in. I mean if you wanted to pay for some help, why not? They could help you to get about. Do your bits and bobs. Make sure everything's looked after. You know?

NORA Some stranger, is it? Come in and I'd have no privacy.

EILEEN It'd be a professional. Hopefully.

NORA And what would they do?

EILEEN All the things I do. Your food, getting your messages, prescriptions, helping you wash, doing your hair and all the...you know, all the other things.

Pause.

NORA I won't have a stranger watching me in the bathroom.

EILEEN "Watching you in the bathroom". I'm sure.

NORA And you wouldn't know what they'd do.

EILEEN What are they going to do?

NORA What kind of a person wants to take old ladies to the bathroom? Some kind of pervert.

EILEEN Believe me, nobody wants to do it.

NORA What? (*silence*) I think there's just some things you shouldn't do in front of strangers.

EILEEN They wouldn't be a stranger, they'd be like a nurse. You wouldn't have a problem with a nurse seeing you, would you?

NORA In the hospital?

EILEEN No, they'd visit at home. They could move in.

NORA Sure where would they stay? We're a full house as it is.

Pause.

EILEEN Well, now that *you* mention it. Wasn't it always the plan for you to have the flat at the end of the garden? Maybe we could finish that and you could move in there.

NORA But, but.

EILEEN There'd be plenty of room for a live-in nurse.

NORA But. Now.

EILEEN What's wrong with it?

NORA It...it doesn't even have a roof, Eileen.

EILEEN Oh sure we'd throw an old roof on there for the two of you.

NORA And it'd blow right off again, I'm sure.

EILEEN I'll talk to Stuart about it. I'm sure we could do it up nicely for you.

NORA So it's getting me out of my own house, is it?

EILEEN I'm just thinking you could have a bit more independence. And you wouldn't have to depend on me so much.

NORA So I'm a burden now? Is that it?

EILEEN Ah Nora, don't take it so personally. Lots of people have carers. It's perfectly normal.

NORA And what does Stuart have to say? Does he want to get rid of me too?

EILEEN Nobody wants to get rid of you. There's a lot of us in the house. It'd be nicer for you if you had your own space. And you can't do the stairs on your own. You have to admit it'd be better if you had everything on the same level. You could probably do more for yourself then. And I know you don't like having to depend on me so much.

NORA No, it's true. I do like my independence.

EILEEN So I'll talk to Stuart about the flat?

NORA Ah, but I don't want to bother him. He's a lot on his plate.

EILEEN Does he?

NORA Oh, he's very busy.

EILEEN With what?

NORA He's got the new job now, he's very busy. Sure isn't he always fixing things?

EILEEN I'm not sure how much actual fixing he does.

NORA What?

EILEEN I said...

EILEEN *stops for a moment.*

Are you ready for the stairs?

NORA Have you the soup on? I need it for my pills.

EILEEN The soup is on.

NORA We'll try the stairs so.

EILEEN No bother to you.

They exit.

STUART enters, wearing overalls, the arms of which are tied around his waist. He goes over to the dresser and, checking to see no one is around, he opens the drawer. He takes out a small jewellery box and produces from it a diamond necklace.

CAITLIN walks in and he shoves it back in the drawer and closes it. She's halfway to the fridge before she notices him.

CAITLIN What are you doing?

STUART Nothing.

CAITLIN Dad?

STUART Yes?

Pause.

CAITLIN This house is full of secrets.

STUART So dramatic.

CAITLIN Will you help me find the mayonnaise? Mum keeps hiding it on me.

STUART Is it not in the fridge?

CAITLIN You'd think.

STUART Doesn't it go off?

CAITLIN Interesting.

STUART What?

CAITLIN Have you seen any mayo in the garage?

STUART I don't think so.

CAITLIN Interesting.

CAITLIN exits towards the garage.

STUART goes back to the drawer. He takes the necklace out again and stares at it in the light.

EILEEN walks back in and STUART shoves the necklace back in the drawer.

EILEEN What are you doing?

STUART Have you seen my screwdriver?

EILEEN Why would it be in there?

STUART It's not.

EILEEN Don't you have lots of screwdrivers in the garage?

STUART Yeah. Just my favourite one is missing.

EILEEN What does it look like?

STUART It's fine. I'll find it.

EILEEN You're acting funny.

STUART Am I?

EILEEN You are. There's something going on with you.

STUART No, there isn't.

EILEEN What is it?

STUART Nothing.

EILEEN It's not nothing. Tell me. What are you in your overalls for?

STUART Working in the garage.

Pause.

EILEEN Are we ever going to finish the flat at the end of the garden?

STUART What?

EILEEN I think we should do something about the granny-flat.

STUART Why?

EILEEN I think it's about time it was finished. For your mum.

STUART Really?

EILEEN Yes, really. That was always the plan, wasn't it?

STUART Yeah but.

EILEEN It wouldn't be that difficult to finish, would it?

STUART No. I mean. It's a building. It's not exactly my skillset.

EILEEN But sure you can turn your hand to anything.

STUART I suppose. But I've got all this other work. It doesn't seem realistic.

EILEEN No?

STUART It's just not a priority. I honestly do have a lot of work on.

EILEEN Paid work?

STUART Yes.

EILEEN For who?

STUART Danny.

EILEEN I don't see why he doesn't just give you a full-time job? It's not fair on you.

STUART Don't start.

EILEEN It just seems a bit silly to be doing bits and bobs for change. It'd be more worthwhile finishing that granny-flat and getting your mother out from under our feet.

STUART Where's this come from? Why are you bringing this up now?

EILEEN It makes sense. Your mum could do with not having the stairs to deal with. And having a place of her own. And if I'm totally honest, I could do with not having to look after her all the time.

STUART I see. Well, well, fine, I'll do something about it. I'll do something about the granny-flat.

Pause.

EILEEN Really?

STUART Yes.

EILEEN What will you do?

STUART I'll finish it.

EILEEN Great. When?

STUART Once I'm finished this job. Next week. I have a few days spare, I think. No, actually. I think. I'll have to figure it out. I've a lot on.

EILEEN Okay.

STUART What does that mean?

EILEEN It means I should probably talk to a builder.

STUART I said I'll get to it when I can.

EILEEN Okay.

STUART I'll look at it next week.

EILEEN And what am I supposed to do when next week passes and nothing has happened?

STUART What do you mean?

EILEEN It's been sitting there for years.

STUART I'll start back on it next week.

EILEEN Why don't I believe that?

STUART What is wrong with you?

EILEEN Nothing is wrong with me.

STUART You're upset about something. What is it?

EILEEN I'm not. I just don't like the fact that I have this half-finished yoke at the end of my garden. It's like we're in this constant state of patching things. I'd like something to be finished. I can't bring a baby into a house that's like this.

STUART Is there something? Has Mum said something to upset you?

EILEEN No. I think it's about time we dealt with it. And if you don't do something about it, I will.

STUART Why are you so upset?

EILEEN I'm not upset. I want to get the house ready but I can't with your mother under my feet. So can we either finish

the granny-flat or get rid of it or something? Because right now all I see when I look out the window is a sad pile of bricks that looks like the bombed-out home of some poor war-torn family.

STUART Okay. I'll get back on it. I will. I'll find the time to make it work.

EILEEN Right. But if you don't...

STUART I will.

EILEEN But if you don't – and this is not “an act of aggression” – if you don't, I'm going to call someone to knock it down.

STUART That is an act of aggression. Why would you do that?

EILEEN Because I don't want to look at it anymore.

STUART But I will do it.

EILEEN Okay.

STUART Okay.

EILEEN Okay.

STUART I will do it.

EILEEN But if you don't.

STUART I will.

EILEEN So will I.

STUART We could move Mum in there.

Pause.

EILEEN What a great idea!

STUART And then we could use her room for the baby.

EILEEN Sounds wonderful.

STUART If we get it done in time we could have Mum's room ready for when the baby comes back from the hospital.

EILEEN Ideal.

STUART Great.

EILEEN Good.

STUART Right. Well that's that then.

EILEEN Yes. *(pause)* But if it isn't.

STUART What?

EILEEN If it isn't.

STUART It will be.

EILEEN Okay.

STUART Great.

CAITLIN enters, opening a jar of mayonnaise. She stops, noticing the awkwardness.

EILEEN Your father is going to finish the granny-flat.

CAITLIN Just in time for you. Yay.

EILEEN ...

STUART We were thinking of using Nana's room for the baby.

CAITLIN Does that mean we're telling her?

STUART We were never not telling her.

EILEEN We might as well not.

STUART What?

EILEEN She doesn't really get stuff a lot of the time.

STUART We do have to tell her.

CAITLIN It's not something you can really keep secret, Mum.

EILEEN Do you two actually spend any time with Nana?

STUART Yes.

CAITLIN Yeah.

EILEEN Really? When?

STUART I spoke with her yesterday.

EILEEN Oh? And what did you talk about?

STUART ...

EILEEN And you?

CAITLIN I dunno.

EILEEN I'm the only one who spends time with her.

STUART That's not fair.

EILEEN I know.

STUART That's not what I meant.

EILEEN Your mother is old. Too old to be living at the top of a flight of stairs.

STUART So we'll put her in the granny-flat.

EILEEN She's too old to live on her own. Her mind is not what it used to be.

STUART What do you mean?

EILEEN She gets confused.

STUART What?

EILEEN I'd be worried about her wandering off. Forgetting where she lives.

STUART Don't be daft.

EILEEN You two don't see it. The flat would be great but she needs a full-time carer as well.

STUART But the doctor never said anything?

EILEEN No.

CAITLIN She seems fine to me.

EILEEN Try spending some time with her.

CAITLIN So what do we do?

STUART Would you give us a moment?

CAITLIN No.

STUART ...

EILEEN I think we need to...

STUART Cait?

CAITLIN Why do I have to leave?

STUART What's that you've got there?

CAITLIN You're such a tattletale.

EILEEN What?

STUART Your mother doesn't want you eating mayonnaise.

EILEEN What are you talking about?

CAITLIN *puts the jar of mayonnaise on the table.*

I don't think you get this. I think your mum is no longer capable of making decisions for herself.

STUART Will you put back the mayonnaise please? It's not healthy for someone in your condition.

EILEEN Stuart!

STUART Why are you shouting?

EILEEN Will you listen to what I'm saying?

CAITLIN *goes to leave.*

You don't need to leave.

CAITLIN *exits.*

She might as well hear this. We need to talk about options for your mother.

STUART Okay. I'll have a look at the granny-flat. See what needs to be done.

EILEEN ...

He picks up the jar of mayonnaise.

STUART I'll put this back in the garage, shall I?

EILEEN ...

STUART I'll put it back.

STUART *exits towards the garage.*

EILEEN takes out her phone and dials a number.

EILEEN Hello. Hi. I'm good. Grand. How is everyone? Yes. Yeah. Just starting to show now so no going back, I suppose. Ha? It all seems fine. *(pause)* I...I...I wanted to ask actually. Do you remember we spoke a bit about your father? Yes. I'm just wondering. Things are getting a bit "off" with Stuart's mother. I'm not sure if there are the same signs but there's been a few moments. I was wondering what...well I suppose what steps you take? Do you get an appraisal from someone or something? I've not spoken to her doctor so I wonder should we...well I wondered how you...what the sort of process is. *(pause)* Oh right. And who do I approach down there? *(pause)* Well that's the thing, we've always used her solicitors. *(pause)* If you would, that'd be great. Yes. No, I'd really appreciate that. Let me get a pen.

EILEEN searches through the drawers for a pen and paper. She pulls out the diamond necklace. Holding it up to the light, she stares at it for a while.

Sorry. Won't be a moment.

She puts the necklace back and then looks in the other drawer for a pen. She finds one and prepares to write on a scrap of paper.

Sorry. I've got it now. And what was the other one? Okay. Okay. I can search for it, I suppose. That's great. Thank you. No, I appreciate it. It's not easy. But it's for the best. You never know what sort of scams and schemes go on and...they need the care, you know? Exactly. It's too much strain when we've a baby coming in. Exactly. No, you're right. Indeed. I'll see you then. And listen, thank you. No, I appreciate it. Alright. Take care now. Bye bye.

She hangs up the phone and goes back towards the drawer.

STUART comes back in from the garage.

STUART Who was that?

EILEEN Ah, no one.

STUART It's not that bad, you know? The flat. The foundations are good. We might need to re-do a few bits and pieces before we can put the roof on but the basics are there. The plumbing and electrics are all set up, just need to turn it on. Bit of insulation, some nice fittings.

EILEEN How much will it cost, do you think?

STUART A few grand, I suppose. I'll speak to someone.

EILEEN Can we get her to pay for it?

STUART I don't know. I suppose.

Pause.

EILEEN She does give you money, doesn't she?

*A moment. CAITLIN enters and sits down at the table.
She's upset.*

STUART What's wrong, pal?

EILEEN What's happened to you now?

CAITLIN I've told her.

STUART Who?

CAITLIN Nana.

EILEEN Told her what?

CAITLIN I've told Nana. I've told Nana that I'm pregnant.

EILEEN Ah, Cait.

STUART What did she say to you?

A beat.

CAITLIN She asked me who the father was.

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