

DENOUEMENT

by John Morton

|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

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NOTE

This edition reflects a rehearsal draft of the script and may differ from the final production.

DENOUEMENT has its world premiere at Lyric Theatre Belfast on 21st October 2025. A Lyric Theatre Production presented by Belfast International Arts Festival. The cast and creative team was as follows:

EDEL Anna Healy
LIAM Patrick O’Kane

Voices:

MAIREAD Debra Hill
KEITH Thomas Finnegan
NIAMH Grace Walsh

Writer John Morton
Director Jimmy Fay
Set & Costume Designer Maree Kearns
Lighting Designer Sarah Jane Shiels
Composer & Sound Designer Chris Warner
Dramaturg Rebecca Mairs
Video Designer Douglas O’Connell
Executive Producer Jimmy Fay
Senior Producer Morag Keating
Casting Director Clare Gault
Production Co-ordinator Kerry Fitzsimmons
Head of Production Adrian Mullan
Production Manager Arthur Oliver-Brown
Assistant Production Manager Megan Conlan
Company Stage Manager Aimee Yates
Stage Manager (on Book) Louise Graham
Stage Manager Conor O’Brien
Deputy Stage Manager Caitlín Hunter
Assistant Stage Manager Rick Thomas Paine
Technical & Facilities Manager Patrick Glackin
Senior Production Technician Ian Vennard
Technicians Cori Conlon, Victoria Emerson, Karl Laidler
..... Danny O’Shea, Declan Paxton
Chief Electrician James Haining
LX Programmer Eoin Lennon
Set Construction Lyric Scene Shop

Scenic Construction Manager Aidan Payne
 Scenic Draftsperson & Workshop Co-ordinator. Fergal Lonergan
 Lead Scenic Carpenter Matt Lavery
 Scenic Carpenter Finn Steadman
 Scenic Welder Niamh Muldoon
 Scenic Artist Bev Craig
 CNC Operative Ben Fittis
 Costume Manager Catherine Kodicek
 Costume Supervisor. Mairead McCormack
 Costume Technician Niamh Mockford
 Costume – Work Placement. Merle Liebberger
 Photography & Videography Leighton Milne, Carrie Davenport,
 Thomas McQuillan

DENOUEMENT was part of Listen At The Lyric on 7th September 2020.
 Directed by Traverse's Co-Artistic Director Gareth Nicholls, produced
 by Linda Crooks and Executive Producer at Lyric Theatre Jimmy Fay,
 sound design by Michael John McCarthy, dramaturgy by Rebecca Mairs.
 The Sound Engineer was Ian Vennard.



The Lyric Theatre Belfast is Northern Ireland's premier producing theatre, and a playhouse for all.

We are a creative hub for theatre-making, and a shared civic space for nurturing talent and promoting the critical role of the arts in society. Each year we employ over 350 freelance artists and welcome over 100,000 visitors.

From its beginnings in 1951, this special place has been a springboard for internationally acclaimed playwrights, poets and actors, including our patron Liam Neeson.

We believe theatre can change attitudes and transform lives. Each year we work with over 15,000 young people right across Northern Ireland, and often in the most disadvantaged areas. We care deeply about maintaining a high-quality, diverse and inclusive programme that captures the imaginations of our audiences leaving them changed, charged and empowered.

Great writing is in our bones. Building on the canon of work from previously premiered playwrights like Brian Friel, Christina Reid, Marie Jones and many more, the Lyric continues to nurture creative talent and amplify new voices. We are honoured to have worked with John Morton from the very beginning on this brilliant new play.

CHARACTERS

EDEL – 60's, keeping it together, preparing for the worst, trying to say goodbye.

LIAM – 60's, unshaven, addled, scrambling to finish his memoirs.

Voices:

MAIREAD – 30's, their daughter, a voice.

KEITH – 30's, their son in law, a voice.

NIAMH – 10, their granddaughter, a voice.

VARIOUS – Lost voices heard through transmissions.

SETTING & TIME

The action takes place in the kitchen of a small farmhouse during the end of times. Ireland, 2048.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Jimmy Fay and everyone at the Lyric Theatre for all of their tireless support.

The brilliant actors who have helped shape this play and breathed life into these characters during its development. Des Manahan, Geraldine Plunkett, Anna Healy, Frankie McCafferty, Bríd Brennan, Karl Johnson, Stuart McQuarrie, Lucianne McEvoy, Ian McElhinney, Marie Jones, Sean Kearns and Patrick O'Kane.

Thanks to Frances Arnold, Gareth Nicholls, Traverse Theatre, Druid Theatre, Concord Theatricals, Sarah Baxter, Jeffrey Gormley, Andrew O'Leary, Peter McGann, Ger Cody, Ken McGuire, Niamh Moroney and Kevin Mooney for their help and support over the years that this play has been developing.

And to Rebecca Mairs, for believing in this play in the first place. I cannot thank you enough.

*For my grandparents, Jim, Vera, John and Mollie.
And my parents, Vincent and Breda.*

(The kitchen of a small farmhouse. A blend of old and new, gradually renovated over the years. Modern fittings compliment original ones. Above the sink is a window with a view of the mountain that rises up above just beyond the land. A basket full of dirty clothes lies by a washing machine. There's a lot of dust around, maybe neglect but it could be from something else. Everything has an air of upheaval about it.)

(To the left of the stage there is the back door leading to a farmyard. Next to the door lies an assortment of footwear. Next to this is an umbrella stand with no umbrellas and an upright shotgun. Beside it is a shelf with books, a variety of assorted chargers and untidied bits and bobs lying strewn around. Downstage left is a retractable desk with an old-fashioned typewriter sat on it. Empty, used glasses, discarded papers and books are also piled on the desk along with a stack of papers. To the right is the door into a pantry. In the middle of the floor is the kitchen table with two chairs side-by-side in the middle. Empty liquor bottles and used plates lie about the table. There is a laptop with an old orthopaedic armchair sat in front of it. Music can be heard loudly from a small, portable speaker. It's drowning out whatever noise may be outside.)*

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(Two figures are sat here. It is very early in the morning and they've been up all night.)

(LIAM sits at the typewriter. He is clacking away busily.)

(EDEL sits at the laptop. She is typing away at a measured but consistent pace. She goes back and forth between the laptop and a mobile phone she checks.)

(They are disturbed by the sound of a huge crash from outside. It breaks them both from their work. EDEL hits pause on the music. It stops dead. We hear what sounds like intermittent explosions in the far-off distance. The noise they were drowning out.)

(LIAM gets up and goes to the back door. He slowly and tentatively begins to open it. EDEL slowly gets to her feet as he does so. She gestures for him to slow down but he's not watching. With the door slightly ajar, he peeks out to see what happened outside. Satisfied, he opens it fully. Then he goes over, grabs his raincoat, and hastily throws it on. He picks up the shotgun and heads outdoors. EDEL gets up and goes over to the window. She watches for a few moments. She checks the backdoor to see where LIAM is. Then she goes over to the cabinet and opens it. She begins rooting around, looking for something. She finds an old holy medal on a knotted piece of string. She begins to unknot it before putting it around her neck and hiding it under her cardigan. She clasps her hands together and begins to say a prayer. She seems unsure of herself. Her voice is low, muttering.)

EDEL. (*Muttering.*) Hail Mary... full of grace, the lord is with thee... blessed are...and blessed... (*Stops. Thinks.*) is the fruit of thy womb... now at... the hour of our death... pray for...

(She stops. She can't remember anymore of it. She stares up at the ceiling for a few moments, as if waiting for something to happen. But it doesn't. She goes over to the kitchen table and pours the last dregs of a bottle of red wine. She takes a hard drink until it's gone. LIAM comes back in, coughing hard. He's holding onto some brown parcels. She stares at him expectantly, but he doesn't say anything.)

...what was it?

LIAM. Van crashed straight into the ditch... total write off...

EDEL. I had the fear the reactor was gone.

LIAM. No, no... he didn't get near it.

(LIAM leans into the door to close it shut. As he does this, he accidentally drops the shotgun.)

(The clatter causes them both to jump.)

Ya fucker!

EDEL. Will you mind yourself? That's the last thing we need.

LIAM. Sorry... sorry...

(EDEL walks over and picks up the gun. She checks it's not damaged and puts it back in its place. LIAM moves into the room, weighing up the various parcels in his arms.)

EDEL. Did he crash it, or did it crash itself?

LIAM. I don't know, it could have gone haywire... another car sped past me on the road, no one in the damned thing.

EDEL. Was he alright?

LIAM. It's dangerous enough out there already without having to worry about cars driving themselves around at full speed.

EDEL. The driver... is he alright?

LIAM. He went through the windscreen. Half of him anyway, his head twisted around... blood streaming down the bonnet, so no, he's not alright. Not alright by any means.

EDEL. Yeah, but is he dead... or dying... what is it?

LIAM. Oh yeah, dead. Dead as you like. Syringes all over the dash... all his gear strewn about. Ah, it was just... carnage...

EDEL. He could have killed someone. Driving around off his head like that...

LIAM. He'd be doing well. Not many options left if you wanted to give someone a belt of a car.

EDEL. Yeah... is it still a shit show outside?

LIAM. The shit show to end all shit shows.

(LIAM throws down the parcels on the table.)

I took what he had left.

EDEL. You vulture.

LIAM. And his phone...

(LIAM throws a mobile phone down on the table. EDEL immediately picks it up and checks it.)

EDEL. Might get some juice out of it.

LIAM. It's as dead as himself.

EDEL. Picking the bones clean.

LIAM. Who knows how long more the arse will be dragged out of this?

(LIAM takes off his raincoat and hangs it up. EDEL starts rooting through the collection of chargers to see if anything fits the phone.)

EDEL. We might need to get more supplies in.

LIAM. I'd say he was making a killing.

EDEL. Who?

LIAM. The dealer. The dead lad out on the road.

(LIAM eagerly rifles through the bags of drugs at their disposal. EDEL can't find a charger that fits the phone. She gives up, puts it down. She joins LIAM in examining the drugs.)

EDEL. There's enough cocaine here to kill a small horse.

LIAM. And enough ketamine to knock out several large horses.

EDEL. I've done more drugs the last few weeks than I have in my entire life. I think that itch is well scratched, thanks. Is it not a bit greedy to hold onto all this?

LIAM. Look, it gives us something to barter with.

(EDEL examines a parcel that's been tagged.)

EDEL. Well, better the drugs get used up than just lying out there.

LIAM. Might kill a bit of time if we're waiting around much longer...

EDEL. Is there any heroin?

LIAM. Why, would you do heroin?

EDEL. Yeah, I'd try it now probably. If we had some.

LIAM. No joy here. I'd say it's in high demand.

EDEL. Not a bad auld way to go, I'd say.

LIAM. Better than being cleaned out of it by a fuckin' robot car.

(EDEL checks her phone for a few moments. Then she goes over and checks on the laptop.)

(LIAM begins cutting up lines of cocaine.)

Do you want one?

EDEL. Not yet.

LIAM. Go on...

EDEL. I don't want Mairead seeing me with the coke jitters.

LIAM. I'd say she has bigger things to be worrying about than you coked off your tits.

EDEL. I know... it's just not a good look, is all.

LIAM. I'd say she'd get a kick out of it.

EDEL. It's been a very long time since she's seen me not sober...

LIAM. Any sign of her?

EDEL. Not since last night...

LIAM. It'd be good to say goodbye to her again.

EDEL. And Patrick too.

(LIAM puts a key into a pile of cocaine and sniffs it up. It's strong and he gives a little shake. He wipes dust off his nose. He lets out a roar as it immediately hits him.)

LIAM. That's the ticket!

(He turns the music back on and starts to strut around, energised. Watching him being so animated seems to spur EDEL on. She cuts up another line of cocaine, She sniffs it right up.)*

The right head space... just fly through it... get in the flow... finish strong... we'll finish strong Edel... we will...

(They both move around the kitchen, dancing, stretching, warming themselves up. It's now become a morning ritual, getting ready for the day ahead or the lack thereof.)

(Then after a while they've had enough.)

EDEL. Last night has me spent...

LIAM. Broke up...

(EDEL sits back down in her armchair.)

EDEL. I wish I'd slept more...

LIAM. In general?

EDEL. No, I mean... the last few nights.

LIAM. No sleep now until the eternal sleep.

EDEL. Shouldn't have done that last bump...

LIAM. Well, you definitely won't be sleeping now.

(LIAM weighs up whether he's going to have another line or not. EDEL checks her laptop.)

(LIAM decides to go for it.)

Ah, one more won't kill me.

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(LIAM ploughs a key into a parcel of cocaine. He sniffs it right up. EDEL seems rattled by something she's seen on her screen.)

EDEL. Oh fuck...

LIAM. What is it?

EDEL. America, it's gone.

LIAM. What do you mean it's gone?

EDEL. Wiped.

LIAM. Wiped?

EDEL. Wiped. All contact. Krissy messaged. She's saying nothing's been heard from the States in a few hours.

LIAM. It's coming here so?

(They compose themselves a moment. Then they seperate again and resume their busyness.)

(LIAM rushes back to his desk. He begins enthusiastically typing again. EDEL focuses on her laptop. The sounds of destruction outside get momentarily louder.)

LIAM. I have to get these finished...

(EDEL starts typing quickly on her laptop.)

EDEL. I need to get through to the kids...

(She puts a call through. We can hear a dial tone. But no response. EDEL turns off the music.)

LIAM. Here, would you mind leaving the tunes on?

EDEL. Why?

LIAM. The tunes are a good memory aid for writing.

EDEL. I'm not dying to some maudlin shite we haven't listened to in thirty years.

LIAM. You'd rather listen to the world coming in on us?

EDEL. If it was a banger of a tune maybe I'd listen. Anyway, I don't think playing it loud is going to do anything for us when that shit lands.

(Not dwelling for too long, EDEL begins clicking the touchpad on her laptop impatiently.)

This bloody thing...

LIAM. Did the connection come back?

EDEL. Fits and starts here.

(EDEL goes back to the laptop, trying to get her connection working again. With nothing happening, she decides to check her phone.)

LIAM. Do you still know shorthand?

EDEL. *(Ignoring him.)* Come on Mairead...

LIAM. Didn't you learn shorthand at one stage?

EDEL. What?

LIAM. Shorthand. Did you learn it?

EDEL. What are you on about?

LIAM. Shorthand! The little squiggles and things.

EDEL. Just a bit, I can't really remember it.

LIAM. You'd hardly be able to teach it to me?

EDEL. Now?

LIAM. Well... I don't know how it works.

EDEL. You're asking me now, right now, at this fucking minute, to teach you shorthand?

(He turns to her to explain.)

LIAM. No, I was wondering if there was a quicker way of...

(She's just looking at him pithily. He gets defensive.)

You don't know how long we have left!

EDEL. Yeah and I'm not wasting any of it on the construction of your memoirs Liam. I lived through most of them. Remember?

LIAM. Yes. I do.

EDEL. And that's enough for me. The memories in my head. Just tucked away there now as I get on with the last of my business. Maybe try a few bullet points.

LIAM. No... no... it needs to be a finished work, hard prose, y'know?

EDEL. Hard prose. Fuck my life. Well, I hope you hit your deadline.

LIAM. Stream of consciousness so.

(LIAM wipes sweat from his brow and then resumes typing at a quick measured pace.)

(Suddenly, there's an explosion outside, louder than any before. They both stop what they're doing and listen. They wait for a follow-up explosion, anticipating something closer. EDEL gets up to her feet. LIAM motions for her to stay still. They look at each other, helplessly. A dull churning mechanical sound in the distance, briefly. They hold themselves still, braced. Then the noise dies down. A silence permeates again.)

EDEL. It could be any second Liam.

LIAM. Yeah, yeah... I know.