Acting Edition

FAIR DEAL

by Una McKevitt

SAMUEL FRENCH

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NOTE

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

FAIR DEAL was originally commissioned and produced by the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, and was first performed there on 11 February 2026. The cast, creative team and company were as follows:

KIERA THORNTON ..... Caroline Menton
RIO ..... Jack Weise
DARAGH THORNTON ..... Garrett Lombard
SANDRA THORNTON ..... Aislín McGuckin

Playwright ..... Una McKevitt
Director ..... Conall Morrison
Set Designer ..... Liam Doona
Costume Designer ..... Joan O'Clery
Lighting Designer ..... Eoin Winning
Composer and Sound Designer ..... Denis Clohessy
Dramaturg ..... Ruth McGowan
Voice Director ..... Andrea Ainsworth
Fight Director ..... Niamh Hogan
Intimacy Coordinator ..... Ruth Lehane
Hair and Make Up ..... Tee Elliott
Casting Director ..... Barry Coyle

Producer ..... Cally Shine
Production Manager ..... Anthony Hanley
Production Coordinator ..... Justin Murphy
Company Manager ..... Danny Erskine
Company Stage Manager ..... Bronagh Doherty
Deputy Stage Manager ..... Roxzan Bowes
Assistant Stage Manager ..... Emily Rose Champion
Head of Costume and Costume Hire ..... Donna Geraghty
Costume Supervisor ..... Eimear Farrell
Costume Cutter and Maker ..... Tara Mulvihill
Costume Breakdown Artist ..... Sandra Gibney
Head of Costume Maintenance ..... Vicky Miller
Prop Master ..... Eimer Murphy
Prop Supervisor ..... Adam O'Connell
Head of Lighting and Sound ..... Kevin McFadden
Chief LX ..... Adrian Moylan
Lighting Programmer ..... Gavin Kennedy

Lighting Technicians ..... Simon Burke, Laura Honan, SJ Williams, Sean Treacy

Sound Supervisor ..... Derek Conaghy

Sound Operators ..... Jack Deasy, Leon Henry

Stage Technicians ..... Pat Dillon, John Finnegan, Jill Jeffrey, Martin Reid, Pat Russell

Set Construction ..... Theatre Production Services

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The Abbey Theatre Amharclann na Mainistreach

As Ireland's national theatre, the Abbey Theatre's ambition is to enrich the cultural lives of everyone with a curiosity for and interest in Irish theatre, stories, artists and culture. Courage and imagination are at the heart of our storytelling, while inclusivity, diversity and equality are at the core of our thinking. Led by Co-Directors Caitríona McLaughlin (Artistic Director) and Mark O'Brien (Executive Director), the Abbey Theatre celebrates both the rich canon of Irish dramatic writing and the potential of future generations of Irish theatre artists.

Ireland has a rich history of theatre and playwriting and extraordinary actors, designers and directors. Artists are at the heart of our organisation, with Marina Carr and Conor McPherson as Senior Associate Playwrights and Caroline Byrne as Associate Director.

Our stories teach us what it is to belong, what it is to be excluded and to exclude. Artistically our programme is built on twin impulses, and around two questions: "who we were, and who are we now?" We interrogate our classical canon with an urgency about what makes it speak to this moment. On our stages we find and champion new voices and new ways of seeing, our purpose – to identify combinations of characters we are yet to meet, having conversations we are yet to hear.

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UNA McKEVITT | Playwright

Una McKevitt is an Irish writer and director whose career spans theatre, screen, comedy, live podcasts and publishing.

Recent theatre work includes *One Good Turn*, which was commissioned by the Abbey Theatre and premiered on its main stage in June 2021. The play was praised by *The Guardian* for its "ordinariness artfully shaped into 80 minutes," and by *The Sunday Business Post* as "a thrilling return to live theatre for the Abbey." In 2016 Una won the Stewart Parker New Writing Award for her play *Alien Documentary*.

Previous to her work as a playwright Una worked as a Theatre Maker creating shows around lived experiences such as *Victor & Gord* and *Singlehood*. Collaborations with comedians have been a defining feature of Una's career. She has worked extensively with PJ Gallagher, creating the acclaimed production *Madhouse* (2018) and has collaborated with Joanne McNally on several projects, including her one-woman theatre show *Bite Me* and the stand-up tour *The Prosecco Express*. As a live podcast director, Una toured with the arena stage show of the podcast *My Therapist Ghosted Me* (Global), starring Vogue Williams and Joanne McNally.

Una began her publishing career as an editor with PJ Gallagher's memoir *Madhouse*, published by Penguin Random House in 2023. She went on to edit *Big Mouth* by presenter and podcaster Vogue Williams, published by HarperCollins UK in May 2025.

Una lives in Dundalk, Co. Louth.

CHARACTERS

KIERA THORNTON – twenty-eight.
RIO – twenty-eight.
DARAGH THORNTON – forty-nine.
SANDRA THORNTON – fifty-one.

and upstairs (offstage):
TERRY THORNTON – fifty-nine.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

When I began writing *Fair Deal*, I wanted to explore the quiet, often invisible forces that shape our lives – the obligations we inherit, the ways we care for one another, and the unspoken hierarchies that emerge inside families. I'm interested in how both power and responsibility can become identity, and how love and duty, when intertwined, can both sustain and constrain us.

Besides family, some other very Irish preoccupations appear in the play. Conversations about care and housing are everywhere – in homes, in politics, in our collective imagination. I wanted to reflect that reality without turning the play into commentary. It's not a lesson or a manifesto; it's an observation, an attempt to reflect patterns we all recognise, even if we don't always name them aloud.

The impulse behind *Fair Deal* came from noticing the small, often unspoken ways people give themselves away for others – and the ways that society, in its structures and expectations, quietly rewards endurance over attention, appearances over intimacy. It's also about power, who has it and who wields it. What they demand and the damage they do. How we hurt each other in ways that can be both terrible and funny, theatrical and human.

Throughout the development and production of *Fair Deal* I was very lucky to have had the guidance and support of Ruth McGowan and the Abbey Theatre Literary Department. They have brought the play to the stage and the page and it's been a wonderful experience working with them.

My hope is that audiences will leave with a sense of recognition for the characters and for how family obligation and the pursuit of freedom are more entangled than we sometimes realise. I hope it says something about the complexities and contradictions of being born into family structures and hierarchies that shape and in turn structure us. For better or worse.

For A.H and E.J. With love and thanks.

(Mid evening. Suburban house, kitchen/ living room. Upstage left a stairs leads to an upstairs hall and a door to Terry's bedroom. Downstage right is the front door. Upstage right a door leads to a bathroom and utility room. Upstage centre a phone hangs on the kitchen wall.)

(The entire space is dominated by a large portrait of Brigit Thornton (80s) now deceased. She is swinging a golf club, wearing a tracksuit and visor and smiling broadly. Beneath the portrait is her caddy bag with a selection of clubs.)

(This is very much her house, a mix of good and bad taste, nothing in between. The kitchen counters are full of a lifetime of stuff: a microwave, cup trees, knife stands etc… The kitchen cupboards are the type that things fall out of when you open them.)

(The sofa bed is a jumble of blankets and clothes. **KIERA** *(twenty-eight) is rooting around it, mostly dressed and looking for something.* **RIO** *(twenty-eight) is lounging on it in his boxer shorts.)*

*(***KIERA** *finds her blouse and starts tying up the buttons.* **RIO** *hooks his hand onto* **KIERA***'s waistband and tugs her gently back onto the bed.)*

RIO. You want to hang out? Go to Nando's?

KIERA. Can't. Have a thing.

RIO. A thing?

KIERA. There's some people coming over.

RIO. Cancel them?

KIERA. Can't.

RIO. Wait. I'm confused. Don't you find me unbelievably attractive?

KIERA. You're okay.

*(***KIERA** *leans into* **RIO** *and they kiss and fall back on the sofa bed.* **RIO** *bounces them gently making it squeak.* **KIERA** *moves to get up –)*

RIO. One more minute. Let's luxuriate in the endorphins produced by our furious copulation.

KIERA. You're very strange.

RIO. I know. It's my superpower.

(They kiss a bit more then **KIERA** *moves to get up again –)*

Wait. Tell me something, anything about yourself.

KIERA. I have to get dressed?

RIO. No. Like...what do you do?

KIERA. I'm not talking about my job!

RIO. It's called making conversation.

KIERA. My job kills conversations.

RIO. Ah go on.

KIERA. Fine. I work in cloud product operations, doing cross-functional workflow optimisation.

RIO. You could have just said Google.

(Beat.)

Guess what I do? You'll never guess.

KIERA. You're very good at delaying things so I'm going to say 'solicitor'.

RIO. Not even close. I wanted to be a PE teacher but I wasn't sure how to go about it which is just as well because I'd never have any money, would I?

KIERA. Teachers earn good money.

RIO. They don't. Why d'you think they're always marrying each other? To supplement their income.

KIERA. Wow.

(Beat.)

So what glamorous occupation do you have?

RIO. Diamonds. I sell lab-grown diamonds.

KIERA. Lab grown? How do you grow diamonds?

RIO. Dunno. Me and two other fellas run the overall business. They grow them, I sell them.

(Beat.)

We're always looking for investors, if you're interested.

KIERA. I'll talk to my accountant.

RIO. Do. But seriously, if you don't like your job you should pack it in and pivot.

KIERA. I don't pivot. I'm more of an anguished planner.

(Beat.)

Can I tell you something that's a small bit insulting but I mean as a compliment?

RIO. Sure.

KIERA. I didn't think you'd be this interesting in real life.

RIO. Oh. I see. You're in love with me now.

KIERA. No.

RIO. Look. It happens.

KIERA. Don't be insane. You just seemed…a bit…thick in your messages.

RIO. For your information I'm actually very, very averagely intelligent.

(Beat.)

I thought you'd be a bit different too.

KIERA. How?

RIO. More…desperate?

KIERA. What?

RIO. I'm joking!!!

KIERA. Because I was available for sex after work?

RIO. Yeah! But it was a joke!

KIERA. If I'm desperate then you're desperate. Why would you call yourself desperate?

RIO. Because I'm thick, remember? Look it was a really bad attempt at humour. I'm sorry. I didn't mean it.

KIERA. You've said it now and I heard it which has kind of killed the mood.

RIO. I'm such an asshole sometimes but I don't want to be.

(He kisses her neck.)

Please? Forgive me?

KIERA. No.

RIO. Please? I don't know any better. I went to an all-boys school.

*(**KIERA** is amused.)*

There were priests and everything.

KIERA. Fuck it.

*(They kiss. **KIERA**'s watch beeps. **KIERA** untangles herself and stands up.)*

Come on. It's time to go.

RIO. Because of the thing.

KIERA. Because of the thing.

*(**RIO** gets up and retrieves his jeans in the middle of the room.)*

RIO. Can I've a shower?

KIERA. No time. Sorry. *(Gestures at kitchen.)* But if you want some water or anything, help yourself, I'm gonna brush my teeth.

*(**KIERA** exits through the door upstage right. **RIO** puts on his jeans, shoes and socks then walks over and looks in the door that **KIERA** went through for a second or two before walking over to the fridge.)*

*(**KIERA** re-enters from upstage right.)*

I'd have left while you were in the loo if this was the other way around. Just so you know.

*(**KIERA** begins to tidy up and fold away the sofa bed.)*

RIO. D'you've a bedroom? Or do you live in this room?

KIERA. This was my granny's house.

RIO. Is that why you're selling it? 'Cause it smells like old people?

KIERA. How d'you know it's for sale?

RIO. Saw the sign in the garden.

KIERA. Oh yeah.

(Beat.)

You don't miss much do you?

*(**RIO** opens the fridge door.)*

RIO. *(Looks in fridge.)* Whoa. It's like a pharmacy in here.

*(**RIO** picks up a bottle and reads the label.)*

Terry Thornton?

(Beat.)

Who's that?

KIERA. My uncle. He's upstairs.

RIO. Upstairs? He's been here the whole time? You could have mentioned there was someone else in the house before we…

KIERA. Why? Are you shy?

RIO. I'm not shy. At all. But a head's up would have been nice.

KIERA. Don't worry. He's not conscious.

RIO. Not conscious? What the fuck does that mean?

KIERA. He's very sick.

RIO. Who looks after him?

KIERA. I do. But he has nurses. I just manage the situation.

RIO. He's no family? No kids?

KIERA. No.

RIO. Never married?

KIERA. No.

RIO. Was he gay?

KIERA. Gay people marry and have kids.

RIO. I know, I meant –

KIERA. And he's still alive. So technically it's 'is he gay' not 'was he gay'.

RIO. Yeah, of course.

*(***RIO** *walks around the room stopping to look at different features of it as* **KIERA** *finishes turning the sofa bed back into a sofa.)*

Can I ask you something?

KIERA. I don't think you've made a statement since you've arrived.

RIO. What?

KIERA. You ask a lot of questions.

RIO. I do?

KIERA. Yeah.

*(***RIO** *pauses in front of Brigit's golfing portrait.)*

RIO. This?

KIERA. What about it?

RIO. It's…very…

KIERA. Idiosyncratic?

RIO. Yeah. This whole place has a weird vibe.

KIERA. There's a lot of stuff. The buyers don't want any of it.

RIO. Bet they don't.

(The landline rings, **KIERA** *goes over picks up the receiver and puts it down. Just as she's about to sit down it rings again and* **RIO** *runs to answer it.)*

RIO. Hello?

*(***KIERA** *pulls the cord out of the phone.)*

KIERA. You have some serious boundary issues, d'you know that?

*(***KIERA** *hunts for a screwdriver then takes the landline off the wall. It's been on the wall so long it's left an imprint.)*

RIO. Why don't you answer it?

KIERA. It's my mother.

RIO. How do you know?

KIERA. She's the only one who uses it.

RIO. You don't want to talk to her?

KIERA. I do my best to avoid it.

*(***KIERA** *puts the phone into one of the presses.)*

RIO. My mum died last year. I'd do anything to talk to her.

KIERA. That's sweet.

*(***RIO** *looks at her.)*

RIO. Everyone loves their mum.

KIERA. Actually a lot of it is social conditioning. According to my therapist.

RIO. No, it isn't. Your mum is your mum!

KIERA. And mine's very difficult. Sorry Rio. Not everyone loves their mum.

RIO. Well, they should.

KIERA. Says every Irish lad I've ever met.

RIO. What makes you think I'm Irish?

*(**KIERA** is visibly taken aback.)*

Course I'm Irish! Jesus! Have you seen the size of my fucking head?

KIERA. Sorry.

RIO. So am I. Wish I had a more interesting back story than my parents met at a Boyzone concert.

(Beat.)

This thing you have later. Is it something to do with –

*(**RIO** indicates upstairs.)*

KIERA. Yeah.

RIO. Okay then.

(Beat.)

Mind if I have a look?

*(**RIO** runs upstairs.)*

KIERA. What the –

*(**KIERA** runs up after him.)*

Rio!

RIO. *(Offstage, upstairs.)* Oh, Jesus.

*(**RIO** re-appears at the top of the stairs.)*

KIERA. What the fuck? Get down!

*(**KIERA** pushes past him and up into Terry's room.)*

RIO. Oh God.

(Beat.)

Christ.

*(**RIO** makes his way back down the stairs. **KIERA** reappears on the stairs and walks down after him.)*

KIERA. What the hell was that?

RIO. I'm sorry.

KIERA. You're sorry? That was a CRAZY thing to do.

RIO. I know.

KIERA. He's not a fucking exhibit. He has a right to some privacy.

(Beat.)

Did you touch him?

RIO. Touch him? No! Why would I touch him! Look, I'm sorry. I'm really sorry. I'm a little bit impulsive sometimes.

(Beat.)

Fuck, Kiera, he's in a bad way.

KIERA. I wouldn't make something like that up.

RIO. I'm sorry.

KIERA. Can you please just finish getting dressed?

RIO. Of course. Good idea.

*(**RIO** picks up his shirt and puts it on.)*

I've fucked things up.

KIERA. There's nothing to fuck up. This is what it is.