Acting Edition

The Kerryman

by Eve O'Connor

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SAMUEL FRENCH

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ISBN 978-0-573-00128-4

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NOTE

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

THE KERRYMAN was first produced by Glass Mask Theatre, Dublin on 26th May. The cast and creative teams were as follows:

CÁIT . . . . . Lauren Larkin
EOIN . . . . . Séan Fox

Director . . . . . Rex Ryan
Set Designer . . . . . Andrew Clancy
Costume Designer . . . . . Migle Ryan
Lighting Designer . . . . . Isabel Greene
PR Manager . . . . . Kate Glynn
Production Stage Manager . . . . . Isabel Greene
Producers . . . . . Rex Ryan and Migle Ryan
Dramaturgy . . . . . Hildegard Ryan



Glass Mask Theatre are Ireland's foremost producer of new plays. Directed by Rex Ryan and managed by Migle Ryan, GMT stage daring new premiere plays from their immersive home on Dawson Street in Dublin City.

CHARACTERS

CÁIT - Late 20s, from Blanchardstown, Dublin. A broke artist, loves the sesh, freshly arrived back in Dublin from travelling.

EOIN - Late 20s. From South Kerry. Lives in Dublin and works in insurance, but would rather be farming.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The Kerryman is inspired by a poem I wrote a few years ago, by the same name. It's about falling in love with an Irish lad who was infinitely kind, but a bit too obsessed with his home county (Kerry!) and hence couldn't commit. What a joy to see it come to life on the Glass Mask stage with the brilliant, electric Séan Fox and Lauren Larkin.

I am fascinated by the idea of meeting the right person at the wrong time. By the idea of falling for someone we are convinced is deeply unsuitable, and yet has an irresistible, magnetic pull. How far should we go for love? When should we fight tooth and nail, and when should we turn and walk?

This play, for me, is a snapshot of love. It's about two people, Eoin and Cáit, desperate to make it work, to find a way home to each other and to themselves.

It takes a village to raise a play. I am so grateful to Hildegard, my right-hand woman and dramaturg on this piece, my wonderful agent Frances at Rochelle Stevens, the grannies, Angie and Nicky, for their unwavering support and childcare, my friends who make my life so joyful even when I feel like I'm one deadline away from complete chaos, and to my cheerleaders Daniel and Daithí, who make me laugh every single day. I love you all.

Scene One
The Big Romance

CÁIT. I'm perched at the bar at the Big Romance, neckin' a pint to ease the nerves. It's decent like. The pint. But it's not life changing. When I was living abroad I used to salivate at the thought of an Irish pint. I'd be practically weepin'. Honestly living away, the green tinted glasses, the paddy-whackery of it all seeps into your bones and makes you sick in the head.

I'm living at home with my ma in Blach, for my sins. Age thirty, back in my childhood single bed, quietly wanking the nights away. So dignified.

I'm performing tonight, in the bar. A cabaret thing starting any minute now and I'm doing a slot. Heart going like the clappers in my chest at the thought of it. I like to call it 'provocative performance art'. Essentially my schtick is I squeeze into my old Irish dancing dress (doesn't even zip up at the back anymore), and dance across the stage, dead serious. Audience think they're getting a bad rendition of Riverdance and just when they're losing interest I get my fanny out for the lads. It's the kind of attention seeking art – yes it is art – that if my mother knew about, she'd probably evict me from the boxroom. But you have to get your kicks somewhere. No pun intended.

So I'm there in my dress, killing time, desperate for a piss even though I went two seconds ago. There's a distinctly average looking lad at the bar eyeing me up. He's wearing a navy suit and pointy brown shoes, give me strength. He looks like a fish miles out of his usual body of water. I glance over and he's staring me down

with these striking blue eyes. The shoes are giving me the full ick, but he does have objectively very beautiful eyes.

EOIN. A girl from work told me the Big Romance was worth a look. So here I am. It's all dim lighting and neon signs. A bit trendy for my liking but I'm trying to expand the horizons. Went to a film in the IFI the other night. A snowboarding documentary. Absolutely class. But I'll tell you something, my heart was hammering in my chest, buying the ticket off the girl at the desk. *Just the one please.* A thirty-year-old man, facing the fear of his own company. Not all heroes wear capes. It's all part of my resolution. To actually fucking live in Dublin, instead of spending twenty hours a day in the office.

I down my first pint, about to order my second when I spot a young one sitting at the bar on her own in full Irish dancing get up. It's a luminous pink yoke with green and gold stripes down the middle. So gaudy it would give you a headache. Now she's no fake tan or ringlets or anything. Just a pair of runners, which is confusing. I'm thinking is this fashion now?

Can't shake the feeling that I know her from somewhere. Have I seen her on the telly? She has the air of someone who might be a bit famous. Red hair, green eyes, she's gorgeous like. She's staring ahead of her, no phone. Who drinks solo without a phone as a crutch? In this economy? I'm thinking either she's a total nut job or she's up for the chats. Hopefully it's the latter.

CÁIT. I'm trying to get in the zone, but I can feel your man's eyes on me. I savour it for a second, the feeling of being watched. He'd definitely fuck me, but honestly, I think I'd prefer an early night. I had my fair share of one night stands back in the day. I want to say I was empowered, that I prioritised pleasure and had endless mind-altering orgasms. Mostly though I was just

shitfaced and mad for the approval of any man who crossed my path.

Then I started getting crippling period pain. I'm talking vision blurred, doubled over, plastered to the bathroom floor kind of pain. Monthly pilgrimage to the nearest hospital to be told to *take a Panadol and calm down you hysterical woman*.

Last year when I was living in Berlin they finally diagnosed me. *(In a german accent.)* "An undiagnosed sexually transmitted disease has caused serious harm to your reproductive organs". Trust the Germans to tell it to you straight. Wasn't exactly music to my ears. But it was a relief to know what the hell was going on. Twisted fallopian tubes caused by chlamydia back in the day.

The chlamydia was well gone, but the damage was done. My fallopian tubes were mangled. Needless to say I fully shame spiralled.

I was living with my pal Mairéad at that time, in a squat in Berlin. Mairéad's a visual artist. Makes video art about different kinds of fungus. Mouldy Mairéad we call her. It was her who suggested I go home. *Do you really wanna die celibate in a Neukölln squat, hating yourself and all men who ever lived? Go home to Dublin and sort your head out.*

I half hoped being home might cure me. The iron in the Guinness might fortify my insides, iron out my twisted tubes. Thought maybe I'd pass a demure Blessed Virgin Mary on some random roadside who'd give me a little nod and a wink and a miracle. So far no joy.

EOIN. I've been up in Dublin a couple of months now. I was prepared to hate the place. Determined even. The only time I was ever up was for the All-Ireland finals. We'd get the train to Heuston then straight out to Croke Park. Might neck a few pints with Dad on the

kerb of some pub en route but you wouldn't be getting comfy. Not in Dublin you wouldn't.

But d'you know what, it's alright. There's life in its veins. Fairly fuckin' electric compared to South Kerry needless to say. But so much more manageable than London where I was before. Honest to god, if I ever have to walk through the dystopian kip that is Canary Wharf again I will hang myself by the shoelaces. Sorry. I shouldn't joke.

I'm weighing up whether I should go over and admire your one's Irish dancing dress, when my phone pings. A WhatsApp from Séana. A girl from down home. We were in school together and we've had a thing for years. On again off again. Like a bad habit you can't shake. That sounds bad, you know what I mean. I never thought her heart was in it but suddenly she was all gung-ho for the house, the ring, the kids. Anyway, I was trying to…taper it shall we say but sure didn't I only go and sleep with her last time I was home. I know, fuckin' brilliant idea, says you.

CÁIT. Ah shite he's coming over. I've got the full resting bitch face on which I hoped might deter him but nope, he's beelining for me. He's strangely familiar. Then it dawns on me. Ah shite. He's one of the suits from my building in Grand Canal Dock. I'm working as a barista in the IFSC, serving flat whites to insufferable insurance bros for minimum wage. And he's one of them. That explains the shoes. Am I really gonna get my kit off for him?

EOIN. She's my bloody barista! Coffee station in the foyer of the office. She does lovely little designs in my flat white in the morning. Sure now I have to say hello. Would be rude not to.

(to **CÁIT***)* Well?

CÁIT. Hiya.

EOIN. Couldn't help noticing, your eh…your lovely outfit.

CÁIT. Thanks.

EOIN. Michael Flatley eat your heart out.

CÁIT *laughs half-heartedly, hoping he'll go away.*

So what's the occasion. Did you just fancy wearing something a bit special?

CÁIT. I'm performing tonight.

EOIN. What, Riverdance?

CÁIT. Not exactly. It's eh…all will be revealed.

EOIN. You make coffee, when you're not Irish dancing?

CÁIT. I do.

EOIN. Not just a pretty face!

CÁIT. I prefer a *polymath*, but I'll take it.

EOIN. I work on the top floor. Above in insurance.

CÁIT. Sounds fascinating.

EOIN. Said no one ever.

Awkward beat.

D'you know I never drank coffee until a few months ago. Like rocket fuel so it is. The other day I had one too many and the heart palpitations. Christ I thought I was having a heart attack. Might have to switch to the decaf. Sorry. I never even introduced myself. I'm Eoin.

CÁIT. Cáit.

EOIN. I'm from Kerry.

CÁIT. The kingdom county.

EOIN. She's good! And tell me this Cáit can I –

CÁIT. Sorry, now, eh…

EOIN. Eoin –

CÁIT. Eoin. Sorry to cut across you but I actually need to get my head in the game for this performance.

EOIN. Of course. Sorry. I'm only annoying you. I'll leave you to it.

CÁIT. See ya now.

EOIN. Break a leg. I look forward to the lovely latte art in the morning. Never know if it will be a heart or a shamrock or a flower.

CÁIT. Always keep them guessing.

EOIN. I like that. Sláinte!

Back to audience.

Seconds later she's up on the stage, leppin' around, gaudy dress glinting under the lights. Initially it's just the *haon do tri, dó do trí*, but then she lifts the skirts and starts flashing the whole place. Let's just say I've never seen anything like it…

The audience love it. They're absolutely mad for it, the music, the moves, the reveal of the unshaven area, the whole thing. Impressive like when you get past the shock factor. Certainly counts as broadening my horizons. Was half hoping to chat to her again but after that, I'm not sure I could string a sentence together. Already worrying what I'll say to her over coffee. How I'll look her in the eye without feeling like a pervert. So I up and leave.

CÁIT. Land back on earth. High on the applause. The audible gasps. The gaping jaws. I hang around, giddy now and fierce thirsty. They'll have me back they say, the organisers. Let us know what else you have up your sleeve – up your dress. Haha.

For a second I feel on the inside of Dublin again. Ever since I moved back I've been floundering a bit. Feel like everyone I used to hang out with has tied the knot, bought a house in Stoneybatter and become an expert in natural wine. Creative scene feels like a closed shop full of creatives who have more inherited wealth than actual talent. There's times I wonder why I moved home at all. But I am, for this fleeting moment, part of a scene. Fuckin' impenetrable Dublin I am in you!

Post-performance, I'm hungry for the sesh. Itching for it. Once I get the goo I find it very hard to go home. I'm always the one begging for the address of the party, following some coked up twenty-year-old lads to a rave at a postcode that doesn't exist. I'm always the one tumbling into the nearest K-hole just to see if I can climb back out of it unscathed.

But it's Dublin, it's Tuesday, it's four minutes until the last bus and a taxi to Blanch would bankrupt me. So I tear myself away.

EOIN. I'm outside now. Still reeling from Riverdance 2.0. Can't believe I'm after seeing my barista fully naked of a Tuesday night. There's a group of young lads to my left, laughing and vaping. They've mullets and vintage Celtic football jerseys, you know the type. They're chatting away, having what looks like a real conversation. Is that unique to Dublin, or is it countrywide? How come me and the lads from home never managed that? Could never really communicate unless it was about a free kick or a wildly inappropriate joke. Then I catch myself. Jealous of a bunch of teenagers puffing on some Lost Marys. Sad state of affairs.

I decide I'll hang around and congratulate her on the performance. Don't want her spitting into my coffee at seven a.m. now do I? Another text from Séana: *you free for a chat*? And I could be. I could head home, have the

chats, have a cuppa, have a wank, and then off to bed. But I'm busy waiting.

CÁIT. I bump into him, physically, on the way out. He's flustered, can't quite meet my eye.

CÁIT *and* **EOIN** *collide.*

EOIN. *(to* **CÁIT***)* Sorry, god. I feel like a fan waiting for an autograph.

CÁIT. Eoin…hi.

EOIN. I just wanted to say I enjoyed your eh…performance.

CÁIT. Really?

EOIN. Well *enjoyed* is maybe not the right word.

CÁIT. Go on…

EOIN. I'm changed. How about that? I'll never be the same again.

CÁIT. Right…

EOIN. What?

CÁIT. You're *changed*?

EOIN. Isn't that the point of art, to change people?

CÁIT. Is it?

EOIN. Ah I don't have a fuckin' clue to be honest.

CÁIT. I personally think art exists primarily to entertain. People take art too seriously. *Like, my work has the power to make climate breakdown cease and desist*. Like no babe, that's just a bad poem about a beached whale, no one cares.

EOIN. That's a bit cynical is it not?

CÁIT. Maybe. I'm a bit dead inside.

EOIN. Sure aren't we all. Look I don't know the first thing about art, or whale poems or Irish dancing but you're

good onstage. That's for fuckin' sure. You should keep at it.

CÁIT. Should I now. Keep at it? Keep taking my clothes off in public for the craic. Keep making men so uncomfortable, they almost combust before bolting out of the venue. Only to wait outside for me and tell me to *keep at it.*

EOIN. I'm trying to pay you a compliment. But failing clearly.

CÁIT. Sorry. Thank you. Just out of curiosity, why did you leave? I won't be offended.

EOIN. Past my bedtime.

CÁIT. Ah now. Was it the Hairy Maclary down below?

EOIN. *(To the audience.)* Just when I'm wondering how on earth I'm gonna answer that one, a lad on a bike – couldn't be more then fourteen – cycles by and nicks her phone, straight out of her hand.

A teenager on a bike yanks Cáit's phone clean out of her hand. **CÁIT** *lunges for him.* **EOIN** *grabs her, holds her back from chasing him.*

CÁIT. *(To the lad on the bike.)* Fuck you, you PRICK!!! FUCKKKKKK!!

EOIN. Woah, take it easy…

CÁIT. At least give me my sim card you PRICK!

EOIN. Dublin, a cess pit of crime. Not safe.

CÁIT. Fuuuuuck!

EOIN. Would never happen in Kerry I'll tell you that much for nothing.

CÁIT. Good to know.

EOIN. Look, we'll sort you a new phone. Not worth risking life and limb for. Let me get you a taxi home.

CÁIT. I don't want a taxi home I want my phone back. It's literally the most valuable thing I own.

EOIN. That's a sad state of affairs.

CÁIT. Ah fuck off.

EOIN. I've a spare iPhone at home that you can have. It's sitting in a drawer, you're welcome to it.

CÁIT. What am I, a charity case?

EOIN. Steady on. I wasn't the one who nicked your phone.

CÁIT. Sorry. It just sometimes feels like the universe is kicking me in the teeth. Like it has pinned me to the ground and is pissing on me, like a stream of forceful piss, into my mouth. Do you ever feel like that?

EOIN. Eh…

CÁIT. I moved home to Ireland thinking that things would just *click* into place and instead…

EOIN. You've just been mugged by a fourteen-year-old chancer doing wheelies. Tough to take.

CÁIT. I reckon I would have caught him you know.

EOIN. You would in your hole.

CÁIT. And now I've missed the last bus. Typical.

CÁIT *looks defeated suddenly.*

EOIN. Come back with me*?*

CÁIT. Sorry?

EOIN. Come back to mine and you can take or leave the spare iPhone, and you can decompress from all this craic.

CÁIT *shoots him a look.* **EOIN** *does a dramatic stamp and flare of the hand towards her. Cáit takes in his weird gesture.*

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