

FIGHTING WORDS AND
THE GATE THEATRE PRESENT



The Next Chapter

About the Project

The Next Chapter is a collaboration between Fighting Words and the Gate Theatre. Through a series of playwriting workshops, participants had the opportunity to develop their storytelling skills, culminating in a showcase in the Gate Theatre in September 2025 where professional actors performed the participants' work, building their confidence in creative expression.

Project Coordinators: Colm Quearney and John Taite

Director: Alan King

Actors: Janet Moran, Lloyd Cooney, Eric O'Brien, and Roxanna Nic Liam

Acknowledgements

Fighting Words and the Gate Theatre would like to thank the following staff, facilitators and volunteers:

Eva Creely, Betty Duffy, Rosalie de Groot, Hilary Fannin, Mary Jennings, Paula Kavanagh, Joshua Ihke Ocampo Loresca, Cormac Mac Gearailt, Caitriona McChesney, Emma Wargin, Adult Literacy for Life, Solas Learning Networks and Irish Gov/EU for supporting this project.

Contents

CRAZY CARRIAGE.....	4
THE FIRST STEP.....	11
SECOND CHANCES.....	17
TOMO'S LAST CHANCE.....	25
THE WHITE KNIGHT.....	32
DETECTION.....	38
FULL CIRCLE.....	45
LONELY MAN'S ROAD.....	50
STEWING IN THE JUICE.....	57

Nine plays by participants from:

- SAOL community project
- the WAS group at Barnardos, Ballyogan
- Coolmine House, Amiens Street, Dublin
- the Daughters of Charity Writing Group
- Exchange House Ireland
- the Foundations Project
- the Shaping Futures project at the Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed (INOUE)
- RADE support group, Dublin 8
- Jane's Place, Merchants Quay Ireland

CRAZY CARRIAGE

By
SAOL Project

PLAYWRIGHTS:

Crazy Carriage was written by the following women attending SAOL, a community project focused on improving the lives of women affected by addiction and poverty: Mary, Jessica, Christine, Shirley, Deborah, Claire, Áine, Janine, Jess, Celine, Celine, Jesso, Gillian, Jackie, Cathy, Caitlin, Charlene, Jacqui.

CHARACTERS:

DANIELLE (50) is from Raheny. She has six kids from two different fathers. Her husband died recently.

LUCIE (50) is from Dorset Street. She has OCD and loves order and structure. She has three kids and is married to a really rich guy (Damo), but all is not as it seems to be.

KELLY ANNA (30) is from Westmeath. She has one kid who is in care. She's homeless. She's an animal hoarder.

BELLA (20) is from Summerhill. She shoplifts to make money to support her habit and to get through the day. She has no children.

SETTING:

A Dart carriage.

Scene One

Danielle is the only passenger in a Dart carriage. The Dart is heading to Bray. **Lucie** gets on the Dart at Connolly Station and heads straight to **Danielle**.

Lucie: Good morning. What's your name?

Danielle: I'm Danielle.

Lucie: I'm Lucie. I don't mean to sound bad, but I usually sit in that seat.

Danielle: I'm really sorry, your name's not on it. There's loads of seats to sit in. Would you take my grave as quick?

Lucie: I have OCD (shows her bracelet) and I need a routine. When you have OCD and you pick a chair, it's your chair. I have to sit there.

Danielle: Well, look, my partner's just passed away and I have six kids. I'm physically drained. I'm worn out.

Lucie: I'm not meaning to be horrible or anything like that. When you have OCD, everything needs to be in order.

Danielle: No, you're not getting the chair. Sit beside me, or whatever. I'm after having a bad day today. I'm not moving. I've enough buttons pushed. I'm sick of doing everything for everyone else.

Lucie: Well then, I'll sit on your lap.

Danielle: You're after making me laugh! If your chair makes you that fucking happy, you can take it.

*They swap seats. The Dart arrives at Pearse Street. **Kelly Anna** and **Bella** get on separately. **Kelly Anna** sits down opposite **Danielle** and **Lucie**. **Bella** walks up and down with a trolley.*

Bella: Do youse want to buy any fresh meat? Steaks? Roasts? Washing powder? Toilet cleaner? Make-up? Jewellery? Clothes? Deodorant? Watches? Underwear sets? Tops for kids? Pyjamas? Baby formula? Nappies? A paddling pool?

Danielle: Jaysus, what's your name?

Bella: I'm Bella.

Danielle: If it was a Wednesday, I would've took the meat and the clothes off ya. Can I get your number?

Kelly Anna: Can I get some deodorant, watches and underwear sets please?

Lucie: What do you need out of that bag, Danielle? It's your lucky day. Anything you want out of the bag is yours. Money is no issue.

Danielle: Why would you be so kind to me?

Lucie: I've money to throw away (*shows **Danielle** her money*).

Kelly Anna: Well, I'm homeless and I need a hostel to stay in.

Bella: Ring the freephone, they'll get ya a bed. Or a tent.

Danielle (*to **Lucie***): You're loaded!

Kelly Anna: Where are you getting all this cash from?

Lucie: It's none of your business where I get my funds from.

Danielle: How come you have all this money, Lucie?

Kelly Anna: If there's money to throw away, why can't I get some?

Lucie: You're very cheeky. What's your name?

Kelly Anna: I'm Kelly Anna. If you have enough to give to her, you might have enough to give to me.

Lucie: I'll give it to whoever I want to give it to. I'll give it to whoever I think deserves it. And you're too forward.

Lucie *drops her phone, bends to pick it up. Her arm is heavily bruised.*

Bella: Oh god jaysus, what happened to your arm?

Lucie *(in a serious tone):* Mind your own business.

Danielle: Look, Lucy, if you want to talk, we're here.

Lucie *(beginning to break down):* I can't cope anymore.

Danielle: Look, Lucie, there's support here.

Lucie: I'm sick of hiding.

Danielle: Take my number down.

Lucie: I need to talk to someone before I go off me head, and I don't have anybody.

Danielle: I'll help you.

Lucie: I have nobody close to me that I can talk to. I really need some support.

Danielle: There's loads of women's support groups.

Lucie: I'd love to meet you for a coffee, but I'm in fear of my husband. It's like he has a tracker on me. He knows my location 24/7.

Kelly Anna: Could you not just go somewhere now?

Lucie: I'm living on my nerves.

Bella: Here, I have a burner phone in my pocket. I was gonna give it to me brother, but I'm gonna give it to you instead.

Lucie: I can give you a score for it, no bother.

Bella: I'm gonna give it to you for nothing.

Bella *takes Lucie's wrist and takes the tracker/watch off her arm. She fucks it on the ground and stomps on it.*

Kelly Anna: Where did you get all the money, Lucie?

Lucie: Me husband is a top man in the drug business. He has a job to launder money and he was after leaving this money in the house.

Bella: And you took it?

Lucie: You wanna see my body? It's putrefied with bruises.

Danielle: How did you get away?

Lucie: He did what he always does. Goes to the gym, goes to work. This morning he never put the code on the safe. I thought, enough is enough. Time for me to leave.

Danielle: Listen, I went through this. Have you ever left him before?

Lucie: No, I've never had the chance. I've never had the courage.

Kelly Anna (to *Danielle*): Have you been through this before?

Danielle: Yes.

Bella: How did it stop?

Danielle: I reached out and talked to someone. That's how it stopped. If I hadda stayed there, one of us would have ended up hurt.

Kelly Anna: Well done, you done the right thing.

Lucie: How did you go about it?

Danielle: I actually heard off a friend. She told me about D.A.V.I.N.A.

Bella: What's D.A.V.I.N.A.?

Danielle: It's a programme on domestic abuse. It means Domestic Abuse and Violence Is Never Acceptable. It's an educational programme in the inner city. It helps you with knowing what you can do and where you can go in your situation. They also work with addiction and domestic abuse, all as one.

Kelly Anna: What do you mean?

Danielle: Well, I tried to get help before and they turned me away 'cause I had an addiction. They didn't deal with addiction and trauma, it was just domestic abuse they dealt with.

Lucie: Can you give me the number?

Danielle: Yeah, course. They have hubs for women and children in secure locations. It's all about confidentiality. No one would know where you are. Safety is key. There's no phones, and if you need to go out for money or medication, staff do it for you.

Lucie: Jaysus, that's great. Thank you very much. That's just what I need.

Danielle *puts the number into **Lucie's** burner phone.*

Bella: Oh Jesus, girls, here's the ticket inspector. Shit, I've no ticket. I'll try and offer him something from the trolley. Batteries, razors, electric toothbrush, jocks, cacks, underwear, or maybe he'd like some sexy pyjamas for the missus. Jaysus, I have a lovely mankini in the bottom of the

trolley. It'll match his eyes – it's lovely, the colour of it.

Bella *hops out of the carriage, hops back on again through another door.*

Kelly Anna: Girls, I'm very nervous. I'm going down to the prison. I don't even know where I'm going.

Danielle: Well, where are you going?

Kelly Anna: Mountjoy. I'm going to see my secret admirer.

Bella *(back again with her trolley):* You're on the wrong train. You should be going to Connolly.

Danielle: Where are you from?

Kelly Anna: Westmeath. I'm hoping to move up to Dublin to be closer to my admirer, my friend without benefits, soon to be with benefits, I hope!

Bella: Have you ever met him?

Kelly Anna: No, but I've spoke to him online.

Lucie: What's he in for?

Kelly Anna: He released a load of horses in Smithfield. He pissed a lot of people off.

Bella: What do you mean?

Kelly Anna: I grew up on a farm. We had a patch to grow our own food. I've always loved animals. I feel very strongly for their rights.

Bella: I've an XL bully called Pablo.

Kelly Anna: Since I was small, I've had rabbits, chickens, ducks, fish, pigs, guinea pigs, cats, dogs and ferrets. I always take them everywhere with me.

Danielle: Are you having a laugh?

Kelly Anna *(taking out her phone and showing photos):* The guinea pigs have just had babies, piglets. Here, have a look.

Danielle: Where were you keeping all them?

Kelly Anna: I had them in the flat in Portlaoise. Me landlord got sick of the smell. My neighbours were giving out about the noise.

Bella: I'm not surprised you're homeless.

Danielle: Do you really think it's wise to visit a guy in prison that you don't know?

Lucie: I've loads of experience dealing with a man in prison, and they never change. Sure, look at me.

Bella: Girls, why don't we just have a girls' day? I've everything we need in this trolley: a bucket and spade, swimming togs, and your man didn't take that tankini! Why don't we all head to Bray and just have a buzz?

Bella pulls a singing fish out of the trolley.

If we had the dosh, we could even have fish and chips for dinner!

Lucie pulls out wads of money from her bra and waves it. She pulls more, and more money comes out. The women are really happy.

Danielle: God knows, we all need a break!

Kelly Anna: What about collecting your kids, Lucie?

Lucie (*dejected*): Well, I can't go then.

Bella: Come on, we'll all go and get them, girls!

Kelly Anna: And we'll all go to the beach with them and worry about all our problems tomorrow.

The women celebrate.

Danielle: Hey Lucie, do you still want my seat?

They laugh and hug.

The First Step

By
WAS Group

PLAYWRIGHTS:

This brilliant and inspiring play was written by women who are part of the W.A.S. group at Barnardos, Ballyogan, Dublin. It was written during five creative writing workshops over the summer and autumn of 2024.

- Please note that this play contains scenes of domestic violence. If you are someone who needs support with any of the issues raised, you can contact Sonas Domestic Violence Service on 1800-222223.

CHARACTERS:

EMMA (29) is Irish, has four kids and is proud, kind and caring. She likes to dress well and have her kids dressed well. Motherhood is all-consuming but was all she ever wanted. Her family hasn't turned out as she expected.

PAUL (31) is a charmer, funny, extrovert, and people like him. He gets on with everyone, but has anger bubbling under the surface. He works hard, sometimes. Building work.

DARA (36) is supportive, present, gentle but firm, challenging. She has been through it herself and is now a professional key worker.

CONCERNED STRANGER, KIDS, COURT CLERK, JUDGE, SOLICITOR, NARRATOR, etc.

SETTING:

Dublin, 2024.

Scene One

Dublin Zoo. Family day out.

Paul: Will you get your kids?

Emma: Will you watch him for a minute, and I'll sort the others?

Paul: I'm trying to have a smoke and work out what we're doing.

Emma: Get your priorities straight! We're at the playground.

Paul: No, we're not here for the fucking playground. We're here for the zoo, what you wanted to do.

Emma: You had your time last night.

Paul: I was only out with the lads.

Emma: And we're late because you wouldn't get out of bed.

Paul: You're always so fucking resentful.

Emma (*under her breath*): Arsehole.

Paul: Don't start with me. Do you want to cause a scene here?

Emma: No, I don't. We're here for the kids, not for me and you.

Paul: You better shut the fuck up or we're leaving.

Paul *grabs Emma's arm.*

Emma: Get your hands off me.

Coffee spills over Emma's dress.

Look what you're after doing to me. I'm a mess. I have to go to the bathroom.

Scene Two

Bathroom up the hill at the zoo.

Emma *is at the mirror, cleaning herself up. We hear her heartbeat getting faster.*

Emma (*soliloquy*): Where are the kids?

I better hurry up!

I can't keep doing this...

I've nowhere to go...

He's not always that bad...

He's the kids' father...

How can I make him happy?...

Maybe I could make him a nice dinner later...

It's just me – I'm exhausted, I'm a mess...

Maybe if we had sex more...

Is it my fault he's like that?

Another woman enters the bathroom.

Give your head a wobble...

Get yourself out of there.

Concerned stranger: Are you okay?

Emma (*coming back to senses and taking a deep breath*): I'll be fine.

Concerned stranger: You know that's not okay?

Emma *is shocked, but she just feigns a smile and walks out.*

Scene Three

Back home. Emma puts the kids down to sleep and changes into something nice.

Emma *(trying to resolve things)*: Dinner is ready in five.

Paul: I don't want your fucking dinner!

Emma: I just thought it would be nice...

Paul: There's nothing nice about you... and after the stunt you pulled today, you think I'm over it. Making a show of me.

A baby starts to cry in the background.

Emma: I just wanted to have a nice day.

Paul: Get the fucking baby!

Emma comes back with the baby. Paul throws his dinner towards them.

Emma *(shrieks)*: AAAHHHHH!!!!

Paul: Oh, don't be so fucking dramatic. You're acting as if I hit you in the face.

Emma *(mimicking the concerned stranger)*: You know that's not okay?

Paul: What are you going to do?
I'm out of here!

He takes her phone from the table and walks out the door, slamming it behind him. He drives away. Emma is left with no money and no phone.

Emma *(to her eldest)*: We're leaving.

Emma gets the kids and leaves. She walks down the street.

Scene Four

At the refuge, in a shared area. Emma and the kids are eating a meal.

Dara: Are you okay? How are you settling in?

Emma: I'm alright. One of the kid's left their blanket.

Dara: We have teddies and blankets here.

Emma: Okay... The kids just want to go home.

Dara: Do you want to talk about your options?

Emma: I'm just overwhelmed.

Dara: Don't be so hard on yourself. It's a marathon, not a race. These things take time.

Emma: How much time?

Dara: Well, that depends. If you get a barring order, your partner will be removed from the house, and yourself and the kids can return to the house. Or you could get a safety order and he is allowed to remain in the house. The first step is to write a statement. I'm here to help you.

Emma picks up a pen and says in her head, 'How did I get here?'

Scene Five

Courtroom.

Court Clerk: All rise for the judge.

Judge: What do we have before the court today?

Emma's solicitor: Judge, we have a barring order before you today. The applicant is here, and the respondent is representing himself.

Emma gets sworn in. Total silence. It's all action from Paul, the judge and the solicitor talking quietly. Actors acting out what happens in court.

Judge: I hereby grant Emma Smith a three-year barring order.

Scene Six

Emma is back in her home. Dara comes to visit the house and brings flowers.

Dara: I'm so proud of you.

Emma: Yeah, I can't believe he's gone.

Dara: The kids look so happy playing outside. How are they?

Emma: They've asked where is their Dad and I don't know what to tell them.

Dara: You will just need to be honest with them.

Emma: What happens now? Will I ever have to see him again?

Dara: That depends. If Paul wants to have access, he can look for that through the courts. Let's wait and see, and go from there.

Emma: Where will I go from here?

Dara: There's a group of other women that are in a similar situation. You could join them?

Emma: Okay, I'll think about it.

Dara: I'm still here to support you. You are not alone.

Narrator: A survivor's journey is never over. Closure is often never found. Resolution is not found in the court system alone. Women find strength and resolve within themselves to keep on going, sometimes day by day or even second by second.

SECOND CHANCES

By
Coolmine House

PLAYWRIGHTS:

This play was written by participants from Coolmine House, Amiens Street, Dublin 1.

CHARACTERS:

ERIC (25) is from Coolock, Dublin. He has OCD. He has just finished an electrician apprenticeship and is looking for a job. He lives at home with his mother and his partner, Lucy, and their child.

DEIRDRE (DEE) (35) Her eight-month-old baby is in the pram and she has two more kids at home. She works in HR in the company Eric is interviewing for. She's stressed because she's going through a divorce.

LUCY is Eric's partner and lives in Eric's mother's house with him, their child and Eric's mother.

BUS DRIVER, RECEPTIONIST, ERIC'S MAM, BABIES, DEE'S EX-HUSBAND JOHN, JOHN'S MISTRESS KATIE.

SETTING:

Dublin.

Scene One

On the number 27 bus to Tallaght. Dublin, Present day. It's raining outside. Dee sits alone downstairs. The bus stops and Eric gets on, walks over to Dee.

Eric: You're in my seat.

Dee: Who told you this was your seat?

Eric: I get this bus every day and sit in that exact seat.

Dee: This isn't your seat.

Eric: I've been taking this bus for 15 years.

Dee: It's not your seat today, pal.

Eric: May I please have that seat?

Dee: No. You may not.

Eric: Don't tell me I can't have that seat. You're not the boss of me!

Dee: I'm not giving you this seat. Do you not hear what I'm saying? Is there something wrong with you?

Bus stops. Driver comes in.

Driver: Eric, what's going on here?

Eric: She's in my seat.

Driver: Eric, we've had this problem before. Can you please find another seat? Just for today.

Dee: Please get this guy away from me.

Driver: Eric, you're going to have to sit somewhere else or get off the bus.

Eric gets thrown off the bus.

Scene Two

Eir company HQ in Tallaght. Reception area and Dee's Office. Eric enters, soaking wet, umbrella inside out.

Receptionist: Welcome. How can I help you?

Eric: I have an interview for Eir. I'm an electrician.

Receptionist: No worries. Dee is waiting for you. You're very late. Down the hall. Room on the left.

Eric: OK. Thank you.

Eric walks down the hall, knocks on Dee's door.

Dee: Yes. Come in.

Eric: How's it going? Sorry I'm late. Ah shit. Not you.

Dee: What do you want?

Eric: I'm here for the interview.

Dee: Take a seat. Not this one!

Eric: I'm sorry for earlier. But that was my seat.

Dee: Of all the seats on the bus, why did you want my seat?

Eric: I needed that seat. I'm used to sitting there. I have OCD.

Dee: Every single person on the planet has OCD these days. Give me a good reason why I should even let you do this interview.

Eric: I've got bills to pay. I really need this job. I'm after having a baby.

Dee: If I let you interview, are your manners going to be as bad as they were on the bus?

Eric: No, of course not. I can be professional.

Dee: OK. Let's see what you've got.

Lights down.

Scene Three

Eric's mother's house, where Eric lives with his partner Lucy, their child, his mother and his older brother. Space is cramped. The baby is crying and Lucy is trying to soothe it. Eric's mother watches. Eric enters.

Lucy: Where have you been all day?

Eric: Told you I had an interview. Before you ask, I definitely didn't get it. And I got kicked off the bus again. And look at the state of this place!

Lucy: The absolute NECKKKKK of you. I've been slaving over this house all day long and you come back here jobless. What have you got to say for yourself?

Eric's Ma: Don't you talk to my son like that!

Eric: I'm going to my room.

Lucy: I'm sick to death of this, Eric. You're not going anywhere.

Ma: Talk to my son like that again, I'll burst the head off ya.

Eric: What are you sick of?

Lucy: You haven't had a job in six months. You're constantly going on about the state of the house. That's the sixth time you've been kicked off the bus.
(turns to Ma) I'll deal with you later.

Eric: Okay! So why don't you go get a job? I'll look after the baby and the house. And I'll do a better job of it.

Lucy picks up a pot of pasta and throws it at him, narrowly missing his head.

Scene Four

Dee's apartment/house. Dee's car has broken down. Her ex-husband, John, is there, wearing a fishnet vest, drinking a can, when she walks in with the baby.

John: Well, well, the kids are starving. Your turn for dinner.

Dee: You're here all day. You could have cooked them something!

John: Don't be bringing home your work stress. We have an agreement.

Dee: What have you been doing? Sitting on your arse all day!

John: Been trying to fix that car you can't drive.

Dee: Can't drive something that's not fixed.

John: You're always blaming others. I'm not listening to this.

Dee: You're just a waste of space.

John: I've been working on that car for hours. You never give anyone a chance.

Dee: I've given you enough chances. You've been sitting there drinking beer, wasting time. Where are the kids anyway?

John: Upstairs. Doing their homework. They were helping me with your car.

Dee: Have you signed those divorce papers yet?

John: No way. And I won't. Not on those terms. This is my house too. And you're not taking the kids.

Dee: Nobody says I was taking them. The court will decide that. Let's see how this goes in court. They don't look kindly on alcoholics.

John storms out.

Scene Five

John and his mistress, Katie, are in Katie's apartment.

John: Me and her just had words again. I'm sick of this.

Katie: You said you were going to leave her. You should have left by now.

John: It's too hard with the kids. It's messy. I'm not leaving her with the house.

Katie: I'm not playing second fiddle to her and the kids. So sign the papers and leave her go. Don't you love me?

John: Of course I do. But I love the house too.

Katie: So what's the plan?

John: I don't know. What do you think?

Katie: You know what I think. I've said it all before. Plug something into that dodgy socket in her room. Poof! Electrical fire. Then report her for being an unfit mother.

John: What if the kids get hurt?

Katie: Do it when they're in school, and I'll be your alibi.

John: That could work!

They kiss.

Scene Six

Eric and John standing on stage. Eric's phone rings.

Eric: Hello. Who's this?

John: I got your number off a mate.

Eric: What mate?

John: Jimmy. Jimmy Jones. The bus driver. I heard you were looking for work.

Eric: I'm always looking for work. What do you need done?

John: Can you come out and look at a job for me?

Eric: Sure. Send me the address. When suits you?

John: Can you come over this afternoon?

Eric: Not this afternoon. I have an interview. Tomorrow?

Scene Seven

Eric and Dee, interview number two. Eric arrives at the office. Dee is on the phone.

Receptionist: Fancy seeing you here again!

Eric: I'm surprised to see myself here again.

Receptionist: At least you're on time! Dee's waiting for you in there.

Eric knocks.

Dee *(into phone)*: Sign the papers. I just want you out of my house and out of my life.
(to Eric) Come in.

Eric: Where should I sit?

Dee: Any seat but mine!

Rapport is good.

Eric: Thanks for having me back.

Dee: Anyone can have a bad day. You sparked something in me! Everyone deserves a second chance.

Eric: You've no idea what this means to me. I've got a lot going on at home.

Dee (*emotional*): I can identify with that.

Eric: Are you alright?

Dee: Sorry, that's not very professional of me. I see you have a year-and-half gap on your resumé. What happened?

Eric: I was a young apprentice, first year on the job. I suffer from OCD, as I said in the first interview. My boss left me unsupervised. I was trying to clean up messy cables. Didn't know they were still live. I got the shock of my life. Literally. Fast-forward: two months in a coma and ended up with third-degree burns. And this is my first interview since.

As Eric speaks, we see the action taking place as if it's present day.

Dee: The bus thing. I get it now. You're doing well. You're doing really well.

Scene Eight

John's house. Eric arrives. Introductions are made.

Eric: You weren't clear on the phone what the job was.

John: I heard you were looking for easy money. Would you do a nixer for me?

Eric: Lead the way.

Eric follows John upstairs.

John: There it is. It's that socket on the back wall.

Eric: There's nothing wrong with it.

John: That's the problem.

John winks and leaves the room. Eric sees a large, framed photo of Dee and John together. He has a flashback of being shocked. Eric storms down the stairs to confront John.

Eric: I'm having no part of this.

Scene Nine

Dee's office.

Receptionist: You're making a habit of this! But I think it could be good news.

Eric: I know. I got a call to be here this morning.

Dee: Hey, Eric. Come on in.

Eric: Hi, Dee. Thanks for having me back. I appreciate it.

Dee: I'm looking at your test scores. You may have no social skills, but it appears you're an electrical genius. The job is yours.

Eric is overcome with emotion – joy, then apprehension.

Eric: But c'm'ere. Before I accept, wait till I tell you this...

TOMO'S LAST CHANCE

By
Daughters of Charity
Writing Group

PLAYWRIGHTS:

This play is by the Daughters of Charity Writing Group and was written over three weeks in May 2025.

CHARACTERS:

DANIEL (26), from the inner city, is a council worker. Medium height, slim, wiry, quiet, he feels like he's above everybody else.

TINA (24) is small, stocky, and not backwards about coming forwards. She's in a relationship with Daniel and volunteers in a youth centre. Her mother died when Tina was quite young.

YVONNE (30) is Tina's sister. She has been with Tomo for about 15 years on and off and has two teenage sons.

TOMO (30s) is in and out of prison (currently in), has been with Yvonne for many years and is the father of her two sons.

THREE MEN OUTSIDE CHIPPER.

SETTING:

Dublin, northeast inner city, summer 1982.

Scene One

Mountjoy Prison, visitors' area. Tomo is sitting waiting. Yvonne enters and sits across from him. They are kept separate.

Yvonne: How are you doing?

Tomo: Just hanging on in here. I have to get out.

Yvonne: Ah, you're only here five weeks.

Tomo: Did you get the bail?

Yvonne: I haven't asked yet.

Tomo: Please, Yvonne, I need the money.

Yvonne: Ah, you always say that, Tomo.

Tomo: Please. I swear this time it's different.

Yvonne: Ah, if I had a punt for every time you said that. And what are you like, using me to ask Daniel for you? I'm sick of coming here and doing your dirty work... How many times have you

said this?

Tomo: I swear that this is the last time! I swear on the kids' lives! I have a programme lined up for Coolmine to get off these drugs.

Yvonne: Ah, okay, I'll go ask her. Please, don't let us down this time, Tomo, or it will be the end of us.

Scene Two

A flat in Dublin, northeast inner city. Tina and Daniel sitting next to each other.

Tina: As a matter of interest, how are ya fixed for money?

Daniel: I've a few bob in the bank. I don't like talking about it really.

Tina: You know Tomo? He's in prison. He needs someone to go bail to get him out of Mountjoy, but Yvonne doesn't have the money. I don't have it. Can you put it up, please?

Daniel: What is he in for? What has he done?

Tina: I think he burgled a house.

Daniel: Oh Christ! I'll have to think about this now.

Tina: I'll have to let my sister know soon so that he can get out for the weekend.

Daniel: Listen, I'm not paying it.

Tina: But you know him a long time. There's more to this than meets the eye.

Daniel: I've been working to save for a car for us. If I put up the money up for Tomo, we won't get the car because he won't turn up.

Tina: Oh, Jesus. What am I going to tell Yvonne?

Scene Three

A café in the city centre. Tina enters and sits next to Yvonne.

Yvonne: There ya are now. How are ya?

Tina: Howiya.

Yvonne: Any news?

Tina: Very bad news.

Yvonne: Bad news? Don't keep me in suspense.

Tina: Daniel won't give me the money.

Yvonne: What? For the bail for Tomo?

Tina: Yeah.

Yvonne: Bastard. How many times did ye ask him?

Tina: Asked him a few times.

Yvonne: You'll have to go back and ask him again.

Tina: I'll try, but you can't blame Daniel.

Yvonne: Please. You are our only hope. He will swear on the children's lives that he will turn up in court.

Tina: Look, Daniel's already made his mind up.

Yvonne: Well, I looked after you all when Ma died. Our kids are getting older and Tomo swore this is the last time. He wants to be around for them, like our Da wasn't.

Tina: Sorry, Yvonne, I can't help you. You'll have to go and ask him yourself.

Scene Four

Daniel and Tina's flat. Daniel is sitting on his own.

Daniel: To bail or not to bail, that is the question.

Tina and Yvonne enter.

Daniel: Right. Hello, you two!

Yvonne: Ah, there you are. Here's a box of chocolates for you.

Daniel: I'm actually a Milk Tray man.

Yvonne: The cheek of you – take what you get!

Daniel: What about this bail money? Have we got any more info on it? Do I have to sacrifice the car for that eejit?

Yvonne: Any chance of a cup of tea before we start?

Tina: Two sugars in mine.

Daniel: Sorry, I want to know what's going on. Do we need to get this guy out before he tops himself? Or will we just leave him?

Tina: Why do you have it in for Tomo? Why don't you want to help him?

Daniel: Well, you know what happened the last time I went bail for him. Don't be pulling that sad face on me, it won't work.

Tina: Ah come on, Daniel, we have to support him. He wants to turn things around.

Daniel: I know that, I know. But he owes me a life-changing favour from before.

Tina: What are you going on about, Daniel?

Daniel: I kept him out of jail the last time! And no one knows about it! Years ago, he made me keep a stash of drugs for him. He pressurised me and I took the rap for it! I nearly got convicted and I just about got off. I would have lost my job!

Tina: What! Why the fuck are you only telling us this now?

Yvonne: Ah, Daniel, that was so long ago. Please just let this go. He's lined up for counselling and he said he's ready to change, really he is. The boys need him home.

Tina: Ah, please, Daniel.

Daniel: Ah... This is a nightmare, but I'll do it for you... I just hope he doesn't do a runner.

Scene Five

Mountjoy Prison. Tomo is sitting waiting. Daniel enters.

Daniel: Tomo.

Tomo: Howiya, Daniel. Any news?

Daniel: No, not really. I'm just under pressure, everyone's pressurising me.

Tomo: I won't let you down, Daniel. I have to get out of here.

Daniel: You dumped me before by putting that stuff on me and stashing it. I nearly lost my life, my job, everything.

Tomo: I'm really sorry about that, Daniel.

Daniel: A few words mean nothing, Tomo. I could've lost my chance of marriage and a good life because of that.

Tomo: I promise, Daniel, I won't let you down. I've changed. Things have to get better.

Daniel: All those promises ring hollow to me.

Tomo: No, please, I appreciate it. I'm sorry I put you in the shit. It won't happen again. I'm finished with this hell. I want to get back to a decent kind of life.

Daniel: You know, I went to church before I came here. I needed some kind of guidance, so I lit a candle. I'm under such pressure /

Tomo: / And what did God tell you?

Daniel: I'm willing to do a final favour for you, but I will never want to see and hear from you again if you don't turn up.

Tomo: I will turn up, I promise. I'm forever grateful. I'm changing. For everyone.

Daniel: I'm counting on it, against my better judgment. I will sort the bail, but please don't let us down.

Tomo: That's great. Thanks so much, Daniel.

Scene Six

Outside a chipper in the NEIC, after Tomo's hearing. Tomo and Yvonne enter.

Tomo: Oh, thank God that's over! I'm so excited to be out. Would you believe the judge let me off?

Yvonne: Come on and we'll go for a drink to celebrate.

Tomo: All the times I was in the court... I can't believe he let me off. He thinks I'm going to Coolmine. I'm going straight to the next house!

Yvonne (*giving Tomo a gentle slap*): Ah, stop your messing. And you are going to Coolmine. You'll get a proper slap if you don't!

Tomo: Ah, I was only joking. I'll go, love.

Yvonne: Come on in here. We'll get fish and chips.

Tomo: You go on there. I'll have a smoke.

Yvonne: Alright. What do you want?

Tomo: Just get me the usual.

Yvonne exits the stage. Three men enter. One of them talks to Tomo.

Man: Are you Tomo?

Tomo: Who wants to know?

Man: Are you the fella that robbed my mate's house about two months ago?!

Tomo: What are you talking about?

Man: You know rightly it is you. I'm going to batter the shit out of you!

The three men attack Tomo, knocking him to the ground. Yvonne comes out of the chipper.

Yvonne: Leave him alone!

The three men run off. Tomo is on the floor, badly beaten up. Yvonne checks him.

Yvonne: Someone call an ambulance! Call the police! Please!

THE WHITE KNIGHT

by
Exchange House Ireland

PLAYWRIGHTS:

This play was written by Cathy Nevin O'Brien, with the help of Nora, Mary and Elizabeth.

CHARACTERS:

MARGARET (40), kind, nosy, a news carrier. She had to leave another halting site because she caused trouble.

ANN MARIE (35), easygoing, a chatterbox, a pushover, loves her kids. She had a miscarriage a few months ago.

JOHN (40), quiet, controlling, went to school with Margaret. His father died a few months ago.

MARY (30), a good listener but shies from gossip. She's a lover, not a fighter.

MOMMY (51), Ann Marie's mother.

COMMUNITY GROUP PARTICIPANTS AND STAFF MEMBER.

SETTING

Halting site in Dún Laoghaire, summer 2005, and community centre, 2010.

Scene One

Mobile home. Living area.

Margaret: How are you?

Ann Marie: I'm good. I've all my kids fed and washed for the day.

Margaret: Good for you. Where's John?

Ann Marie: I think he went for a chat with one of his mates.

Margaret: What time will he be back at?

Ann Marie: He should be back any minute.

John walks in the door of the mobile.

Ann Marie: It was a lovely day.

John: Hey, how are you?

Margaret: How are you, John?

John: Grand. I'm going to go and wash my hands.

Margaret: Your fean is in bad humour today.

Ann Marie: He's usually always in a bad mood.

John: Any chance of me getting any to ate tonight?

He slams a door in the kitchen.

Margaret: I better go out and give John a chance to get a bit of grub.

Margaret leaves.

Scene Two

Margaret goes over to see Mary.

Margaret: You should see the carry-on out of John over there!

Mary ignores her and keeps cleaning.

Did you ever see him corub her next door?

Mary starts to wring out her shammy. Takes a deep breath.

Mary: Let's go in and have a cup of tae and we'll have a chat.

Mary sends a text to Ann Marie: 'Do you want to come over for a cup of tae?' **Ann Marie** sends a text back: 'Just give me a minute, I'm cleaning up after the dinner. I don't want him goin' mad!'

Mary: Well, how's life going?

Margaret: Life's going good, but there's all this drama going on.

Mary: You know me, I'm a quiet person. I like me peace and quiet.

Margaret: Who doesn't? But there's none of that next door.

Mary: Yeah, I know. I get it, but I have my kids and my family to look out for.

Margaret: I know you have your gawlyas to look out for, but we have to do something.

Mary: Leave it with me, we'll see what we can do.

Scene Three

Ann Marie's mother's trailer.

Mommy: What's wrong, sweetheart? Why are you home?

Ann Marie *(crying)*: I'm after finding out that John's carrying on behind my back. I can't cope with it any longer. It's been happening for years. The corubing, the disrespect, the verbal abuse in front me gawlyas. To make it worse, Mammy, it's Mary.

Mommy: I always knew that there was something wrong with her. It's always the quiet ones. I knew she was always a wrong one.

Ann Marie: Ma, would you mind minding the gawlyas? I need to get out and get some fresh air.

Ann Marie goes for a walk. John arrives at the Mommy's trailer.

John: Where's Ann Marie and the gawlyas at?

Mommy: There not here. I have the gawlyas at my sister's house. John, I know what's goin' on.

John: What d'ya mean, lackeen?

Mommy: I know about everything that's going on and I'm warning you to stay away from my Ann Marie. I don't want to get anyone else involved. Just do the right thing!

John: We just had a slight argument I wasn't over the top.

Mommy: John, we know each other a long time. You know I had respect for you, but you lost that when you put your hands on my daughter, and for that I can never forgive you. You promised to look after her.

John: I am sorry, but you know the way my temper gets.

Mommy: Do you really think that's a good enough excuse for putting a hand on my gawlyas?

John: I know, but can you not just give me another chance? I love your daughter.

Mommy: John, absolutely no. The kids are even traumatised over it. Do you not think that they see what's going on?

John: Alright, I see there's no way of speaking to you, bitch.

Mommy: See, I knew you didn't change, and that's proof of it there. If you're not going to respect your mother-in-law, you're definitely not going to respect my gawlyas or your gawlyas.

John: You are obviously not listening to me, you fuckin' tramp. Go fuck yourself.

John storms out of the mobile.

Mommy: You're not going to get your gawlyas or your beoir, speaking to me like that.

John slams the door.

Scene Four

Meanwhile, Ann Marie and Margaret are at a restaurant. Both are drinking bottles of Blue WKD with their meal.

Ann Marie: I've heard about what you were saying about me and John.

Margaret: Yes, I was, but my intention was to help.

Ann Marie: I'm pissed of with ya, if I'm honest.

Margaret: Where is John?

Ann Marie: I'm not sure. I'm staying with me ma.

Margaret: That's good. At least I know you're safe.

Ann Marie: I feel the trust has been broken between us, if I'm honest.

Margaret: I was worried and didn't feel like I had any other option.

Ann Marie: You could have come back to me and spoke about it.

Margaret: You wouldn't have listened. You were under his spell.

Ann Marie: Yeah, you're right. I'm starting to see that now.

Margaret: I wasn't trying to be bad.

Beat.

Ann Marie: Will you help me to leave John? Safely?

Margaret: Of course I will. That's what I've been trying to do for ages.

Scene Five

2010. Ann Marie, who now lives on a council housing estate in Dún Laoghaire, is in the local community centre.

Ann Marie: Hi, my name is Ann Marie. I'm nervous, but I'm happy to be here. I'm here to give back because I'm the survivor of domestic abuse and, with a lot of help, support and counselling, I am now an advocate for survivors. I was brave to get a divorce. My ex-husband is now in prison. My kids are safe, I'm safe – we're happy now. Step one is admitting that you need help, step two is believing in yourself, step three is to tell someone, step four is starting to make a safety plan. I would like to thank you all for coming out and listening, and for being brave in coming out. I want to give you all a safety number that you can call. We also want to create a safety app that will help you get help if you're in an emergency situation. If anybody has any questions, I'd be happy to answer them, or if you're not comfortable I can answer them later.

Participant one: How do you feel now after everything?

Ann Marie: I feel pretty good about it now but, looking back, I wish I had've left earlier for my gawlyas' sake. I'm very grateful to be here today and giving back to my community. We need more things like this in the community and maybe not as many people will suffer.

Participant two: How are you seen in your community now?

Ann Marie: I have a good support system in place. I have been shunned by some of my family and community, but they are very old-fashioned. They don't believe in divorce, they are very traditional and set in their ways.

Participant three: What about men going through domestic violence?

Ann Marie: I myself have experienced that in the community. I have witnessed it myself –sometimes women can be just as vicious as men. It's just as important for men to get the support. I have sons and I would like to make sure that there is support groups for them if they ever need it.

Community staff member: Okay, thanks for coming, everybody. There's tea and sandwiches for anyone who wants to stay and chat.

We hear a round of applause from the participants.

DETECTION

By
Foundations Project

PLAYWRIGHTS:

This thrilling play was written in March 2025 by Denis, Albright, William and Kaseem, who attend the Foundations Project.

CHARACTERS:

ANDREA (28) is sly, mysterious, friendly. Her and Nick need to figure out a secret plan.

NICK/ANGEL (45) has been in prison for seven years, is transgender, honest, trying to do the right thing; a good moral compass.

JAMES (41) is careful, sneaky.

SETTING:

England and Russia, 2015, 2008 and 2019.

Scene One

London. Outside Earl's Court High Security Detention House (secret prison), 2015.

Nick has just finished a seven-year sentence at the High Security Detention House. **Andrea** comes to meet him on his first day of freedom.

Andrea: So you're finally here.

Nick: Yeah, it's been a long time.

Andrea: I expected more from you. To not fail so obviously.

Nick: Ahh... I tried my best.

Andrea: Failure is not okay in our organisation.

Nick: What was I supposed to do?

Andrea: Don't blame me. I forgive you, but they will not.

Nick: What is the consequence?

Andrea: I don't know, but you will have to make your case to them.

Nick: I know I failed, but actually I have not failed really. They don't know how to do it, but we know and we should act.

Scene Two

2015. Andrea drives Nick through a forest outside London.

Nick: Well, what's been going on?

Long pause.

Andrea: It's a long story, but I'll start from the middle.

Nick: Well, is the old crew still there?

Andrea: I'll put it like this: James has been meddling in things he shouldn't have.

Nick: That's not new for James.

Andrea: You're right. It's unsurprising, but he's gone into a new situation. This time it's got to do with the core thesis at Hallogen.

Nick: Well, get to it, tell me the story.

Andrea: He finally got cancer from that damn radiation at the Russian nuclear plant.

Nick: Well, it's about time.

Andrea: James was working in Russia in a nuclear power plant for Hallogen.

Nick: Well, we don't know if he was working alone.

Andrea: I'm pretty sure he wasn't. You know James, he will never tell people what is really going on.

Nick: I heard something in prison about 'Naissur'. Now it makes sense.

Andrea: What is 'Naissur'?

Nick: It is a secret name for a Russian mission.

Andrea: Naissur? Isn't that just 'Russian' backwards?

Nick: Yes, exactly. Now things start to make sense.

Andrea: James has been involved in Russian nuclear secrets. That's how he caught that radiation sickness.

Scene Three

2008, Hallogen Innovations Inc, London.

James: Has Hallogen conscripted you to go on the secret mission to Russia?

Nick: Yes, and it would be better if two people went.

James: If two of us go, do you realise that we will be in two different parts of the nuclear plant?

Nick: It will be a covert operation and we will be undercover.

James: Do you realise there will be consequences if we fail the mission?

Nick: Yes, I do. It's just a matter of time.

James: What do you mean, Nick, it's just a matter of time?

Nick: The agency can give us a hard time if the mission fails. There could be serious consequences. People just disappear suddenly.

James: I understand. Nick, remember what happened to Adam?

Nick: Yes, Adam just disappeared.

James: I know, Nick, but it's Hallogen we're speaking about here, and you know what happens to people who don't do their missions?

Nick: We are just numbers!

James: Okay, we'll have to do it, but we'll watch out for each other.

Nick: Hallogen will try to stop us communicating with each other.

James: But remember we are friends behind the scenes and we need to keep our friendship secret and covert.

Scene Four

Russia. Nuclear plant, canteen, 2008.

James: I think we need to find a way to escape from here.

Nick: Yeah, definitely, because we are afraid here. We have no interest in the job that we need to do for Hallogen.

James: But it's nearly impossible to escape from here. What will we do?

Nick: Obviously if we proceed, it's going to be dangerous and we might end up in prison back in London.

James: I think it's worth taking the chance because I will end up getting cancer if I stay working here in the radiation plant.

Nick: We could try going over the wall, but we'd have to jump or use a ladder.

James: I know where there's a ladder. It's kept in the storeroom.

Nick: We could do this at night when everybody is sleeping.

James: And where will we go when we get outside the nuclear station?

Nick: We can walk.

James: But it's over a thousand miles to the nearest town, and there are rivers and mountains.

Nick: We can stay close to the pathways and stay at guesthouses along the way.

James: But we have no money.

Nick: I have a little money that'll help us on our journey.

James: How will we survive the cold, the wind and the snow?

Nick: Yes, there is a lot of snow, and people can die from the freezing cold.

James: We can wait until the weather changes, give money to local people to help keep us warm and safe.

Scene Five

Russia, 2008. Nick and James have broken out and are on their way.

Nick: Which way do we go?

James: We need to cross this river!

Nick: I can swim, but it's too cold.

James: It's the only way.

Nick: Let's wait for the boat.

James: We don't have time to wait for the boat.

Nick: Let's find a house and wait.

James: No, we have to leave now. Let's get in the water.

Nick: Okay, you go first and I will follow.

James: Do you promise to follow me?

Nick: Yes. I will.

They both cross the river together.

James: How will we dry our clothes?

Nick: Just take off your clothes.

James: But how will we stay warm?

Nick: Let's find a house and light a fire.

James: Okay, let's go, quick.

They hear a loud siren.

Nick: Quick, let's find a house.

They run for cover. They find a house and light a fire.

Scene Six

2019, Soho, London. James, Nick and Andrea are in a coffee shop.

Andrea: We need you, Nick!

James: We need someone who doesn't work here anymore, someone that they won't recognise.

Nick: Is it because I have transitioned back to a woman that you need me?

Andrea: I can cover you as I'm working there in the office.

James: I can give the coordinates to execute the plan, but I can't be seen there.

Nick: What are you talking about?

Andrea: We can introduce you to the corporation again with a new ID.

James: You are the best person for this job!

Nick: There's no way I'm in on this if you don't tell me exactly what it is I have to do.

Andrea: You need to trust us.

James: We know the pathway... We need to explode the organisation from the inside out.

Andrea: You don't have any other options, Nick, and you know the consequences.

Nick thinks for a moment.

Nick: I'm going to do what needs to be done.

Scene Seven

2019, Hallogen Corporation, London.

Andrea: This is special agent Angel. She's here for our secret mission. James, could we show Angel her new office and room.

James: Yes, of course. Could you follow me, Angel?

Angel: Yes, let's go.

Andrea *(whispering to James):* You know what you need to do.

James hands Angel a computer chip.

James: This is the key, and you know where you need to go.

Angel: Yes, I know. Today will be the big day.

Angel goes to Andrea's room instead, to spy and collect information. Andrea comes and finds Angel in the office.

Andrea: Why am I not surprised to see you here?

Angel: You knew since the beginning that I was spying on you and still you allowed me to go forward for you.

Andrea: It's simple, my dear, you were part of my plan.

Angel: No I'm not. I know everything that you did and now I will finish it...

Angel puts the opposite chip into the computer.

Angel: You think that you are going to succeed, but you will fail. The right chip with the true secret of Hallogen is being revealed. At this exact moment, James is giving it to the authorities. This is the end for you.

FULL CIRCLE

By
Shaping Futures

PLAYWRIGHTS:

This play was written by participants attending the Shaping Futures project at the Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed (INOUE) in June 2025.

CHARACTERS:

ANTO (28) is from Finglas, Dublin. He wears a Nike tracksuit and has a black eye. He's drinking something out of a coffee cup. His child has passed away.

MICHAEL (38) is an educated, high-profile politician, a Senator of the Green Party. He wears a suit, looks worried and concerned. He is a victim of assault.

ANNA, Michael's secretary.

TWO GANG MEMBERS.

T-BAG O'DRISCOLL is a gangster, dressed in a tracksuit and balaclava.

GUARDS.

SETTING:

Dublin, present day.

Scene One

On the Luas in Dublin City, 9pm.

Anto: Hey fella, you're in my seat!

Michael: Excuse me, are you talking to me?

Anto: I always sit in this seat.

Michael: This is your seat? Is your name on this seat?

Anto: Is there anybody else whose seat this is?

Michael: Are you drunk or something? What are you drinking?

Anto: None of your business.

Michael notices Anto's black eye.

Michael: Are you okay? Did someone assault you?

Anto: Stop being nosy. That's not your business. Give me my seat.

Michael hesitates for a moment, before moving to the opposite side. He places a business card on the seat next to Anto and then gets up and leaves.

Scene Two

The next day. Michael's office in Blackrock. Anna, his secretary, is sitting at her desk. Michael is behind in a separate room. Anto barges in.

Anto: Where's that baldy fella of yours?

Anna: What time is your appointment today?

Anto: I don't need an appointment. He told me to come in. He gave me his card on the Luas.

Anna: I'll check to see if you have an /

Anto: MICHAEL! Michael... I know you are here!

Anna: Please don't yell in the office. If you don't have an appointment, please leave.

Anto: If you won't help me, I will get him myself.

Anto barges past Anna.

Michael: What are you doing here?

Anto: You said you would help me... I need your help.

Anna: Do you want me to ring the police?

Michael: It's okay, I know him.

Anna leaves.

Michael (*surprised*): Why did you come here? What help do you need?

Anto: I came walking all the way from town, for money. I need a loan of money.

Michael: So what do you need the money for?

Scene Three

*Flashback to before **Anto** got on the Luas.*

***Two gang members** from town, dressed in tracksuits and balaclavas, and **one boss**, wearing a fancier tracksuit and a mask, begin to beat up **Anto**. They stop to hold him up.*

T-Bag O'Driscoll: We want our money!

Anto: I don't have it. I'll get it next week.

T-Bag: Give us our money or we'll kill you!

Anto: I told you, I can't!

T-Bag: Give us the money or we'll take your house!

Anto: I'll do anything, please. I don't have it.

T-Bag: If you want to pay your dues, you'll have to do what we say.

Anto: Yeah, yeah, I'll do anything!

T-Bag: Okay, there's a Luas coming in 10 minutes. There's a posh-looking fella, a Senator from the Green Party, on it. Try and get his contact information, a business card or something. Anything you can and try to get into his office. Make him remember your face. We got a tip that this man has quite a lot of money he's not supposed to have in his office. Get your hands on it and we'll call it quits.

Anto: Yes, of course. I'll do it.

The gang members push him away.

Scene Four

Back in Michael's office.

Michael: So what do you need the money for?

Anto: I have a lot of troubles. I want to get them fixed. These guys, I owe them money. If I don't pay them, something really bad is going to happen. They might take me and bury me somewhere. They already took my son.

Michael: This is ridiculous, I'm going to call the guards.

Michael goes to pick up the phone.

Anto: No. Don't. Look, they know you've got quite a bit of money that you're not supposed to have. You wouldn't want that to get out, would you?

Michael freezes and puts the phone down.

Michael: Who are they? Who knows this?

Anto: You're being too nosy again. Don't ask questions. Show me where the money is!

Michael: I can't. I don't have the money you're asking for. I stole some money to help my brother who was in debt. He was like you. He owed money to some gang members. So I embezzled some funds for him to pay them off. But then he took the money and spent it all on drugs. He died

of an overdose a few months ago.

Anto: Was that Carl? He was my mate. We used to deal together. T-Bag O'Driscoll put me up to this. Maybe they wanted me to get the money he owes.

Michael: It was Carl. It's my fault he's dead. I couldn't save him. When you came onto the Luas, you reminded me of him.

Anto (*frustrated*): The O'Driscolls won't care about that. And you know why I'm here. Just give me the money and this could be very easy.

Michael: No, I don't have the money.

Anto gets angry and begins shuffling things around in the office, looking at the walls, frantically looking for money. Michael tries to stop him and they end up having a scrap. Anna hears the shuffling and runs in.

Anna: Stop! I'm calling the guards.

Anna calls the guards and Anto runs away. Michael is on the floor, visibly upset when the guards enter.

LONELY MAN'S ROAD

By
RADE Support Group

PLAYWRIGHTS:

This play was written over three weeks in January 2025 and a further four weeks in June/July 2025 by the following members of the RADE group from Dublin 8: Natalie, Conor, Joe, Sheldon, David, Aidan, Margaret, Will, Xav, Pamela and Sedonya. The RADE mission seeks to engage drug-users with the arts and therapeutic supports and provide a platform for their artistic expression.

CHARACTERS:

MICHAEL (41) has spent 12 months in a rehab facility. He is intensely quiet, withdrawn, has been through a lot and undergone a transformation.

ANDY (37), Michael's cousin and a former dealer, is empathetic but angry with Michael.

JACKIE (38) is Michael's ex-partner and the mother of their two children. She's a sociable person and likes to go out. She's a functioning alcoholic, just about hanging on to the kids.

LISA (37) is actively using. Michael met her in rehab.

JUDGE and **BARRISTER (MS SMITH)**.

SETTINGS:

2024/2025 – Family Court, Dublin; Jackie's home; outside a rehab centre in Co Kildare; in a car on the way to Dublin; Michael's flat in Dublin; and outside the Family Court.

Prologue

Dolphin House Family Court, Dublin, 2024.

Judge: Order! Order! Case number 234, Mr and Mrs Brady. Good morning, Ms Smith. Ms Smith, would you like to speak?

Ms Smith: Today, Judge, we have a family that have been through separation. Mr Brady would like to share his parental rights with Mrs Brady. Mr Brady has completed some higher education programmes, including a Parent Under Pressure course. My client is not perfect. He has been in and out of recovery for six years now. He has had a number of slips, but he deserves equal access to his children. He has completed a course in construction. He has spare rooms for the children to live. My client has witnessed his children out in the street, late at night. He believes he should have shared custody.

Jackie jumps up from her chair.

Jackie: You're lying! You've had loads more slips over those six years!

Michael: What are you talking about? Loads? You're the one drinking every night of the week.

Jackie: That's rich, coming from fucking you! You're the one on the fucking pipe every night.

The court laughs out loud.

Judge: Order! Order in my court! Mrs Brady, I will hold you in contempt for the use of bad language!

The Judge pauses for a moment.

Judge: Mr Brady, is this true?

Michael does not respond.

Judge: This is all new information to me. Based on what I am hearing, I am inclined to lean towards shared custody at this point. You are both as bad as each other! I recommend that you both seek mediation in order to learn conflict resolution. And Mr Brady, you need to do a year's rehabilitation before you have access to your children.

Michael: I am in the process of doing that. I'm going to rehab tomorrow, Your Honour.

Scene One

*Jackie's house. **Michael** comes to see his kids the day before he goes into rehab. **Jackie** is on edge. There are noises of children in the background. The place is very messy. **Michael** looks around.*

Jackie: I've got this! I've got this!

Michael: It doesn't fucking look like it to me! The state of the place!

Jackie: What are you even doing here then?

Michael: I told you, I'm here to see the kids before I go to rehab. One of us has to be normal, for the kids' sake.

Jackie: Normal? Normal?? I'm doing the best that I can.

Michael: Just get it together! You don't want to lose the kids while I'm away.

Jackie: You have never cared before.

Michael: What? And you have?

Jackie (*clearing up bottles etc from the night before*): If you care so much about your two kids upstairs, there'd better not be people coming here knocking for money while you're gone.

Michael (*picking up a half-empty bottle of wine and starting to pour it down the sink*): I'll look after my end. You do something about this! This is what you call normal? Is it?

Jackie runs towards him, grabs the bottle.

Jackie: Get the fuck out!

Michael shakes his head, goes upstairs to say goodbye to the kids. **Jackie**, upset, finishes the bottle on her own.

Scene Two

Twelve months later, 2025. Outside St John's Rehab Centre, Co Kildare. **Andy** waits by his car outside the facility, looking around every time the door opens.

Andy (agitated, on the phone): I'm just outside. No, no, no, I haven't seen him yet. I should be back in an hour.

Michael comes out the main door.

Michael: Andy! Jaysus, I wasn't expecting anyone to be here.

Andy: I wasn't expecting to come.

Michael: I wasn't expecting to get out so soon.

Andy: We've been worried about you. I'm glad to see you looking well. Come on, I'll get you home.

Michael: Okay. Thanks.

Scene Three

Driving towards Dublin. **Andy** stops the car and takes out a pack of cigarettes, offers one to Michael.

Andy: Let's pull over for a second and have a chat. How're you getting on?

Michael: Eh? How am I getting on? Very well, thanks very much. How are you?

Andy: Twelve months is a long time, isn't it?

Michael: Shudda been longer really. Why are we stopped? Something upsetting you? Someone?

Andy: Something upsetting me? It's upsetting me that I had to look after your family and pay your bills!

Michael: OK, take it easy! I'm better now. Fresh, clean slate.

Andy: If it wasn't for your clean slate, you'd be on a slate.

Michael: Ah, don't be like that, bud.

Andy: Who do you think has been paying your bills? Taking care of your kids? Who kept the fucking wolf from your door?

Michael: I'm your fucking cousin! That's what families are for, aren't they? Yeah?

Andy *looks away.*

What's this all about, Andy?

Andy *slaps the dashboard.*

Andy: Twenty grand, that's what you cost me, to pay your debts! Do you know what I had to do to get that? Put my life and my ma's life – your auntie – in jeopardy.

Michael: Look... I just wanna fix things... Just give me a fucking chance and...

Andy: It's unfixable. What's happened is unfixable.

Michael: Please, Andy. I can fix this, man.

Andy *(snaps):* She's bloody pregnant! Jackie's pregnant!

Michael: What? Are you fucking joking me or what? My missus? Who's the father? Who? Who's the Da?

Andy *hesitates, says nothing.*

It's you, isn't it, you prick? How could you?

Andy: It's not that simple. We were thrown together when you went away. It just happened.

Michael: How could you? How the fuck could the two of you do this to me?

Andy: If you hadda been there for your family, none of this wudda happened. Michael. You've never been able to own up to your responsibilities, the crazy situation you left us in.

Michael: I didn't ask for this, but I chose to get my life together, for Jackie and our kids. And now look what's after happening. You've taken all that from me now.

Andy: We didn't plan this, but we love each other. The heart wants what the heart wants.

Michael: Do you want me back on the gear, strung out and out of your lives? What the fuck am I supposed to do now?

Andy: I'm sorry, cuz, for doing that to you. We are still family. We weren't expecting you out this early.

Michael: Thanks for picking me up and for everything that you have done for me. From here on in, I'm on my own.

Michael *gets out of the car.*

Scene Four

*Eight months later. **Lisa**, a friend from rehab, has arrived at Michael's flat.*

Lisa: I was really delighted when you called the ward the first night you got out.

Michael: I was glad to hear your voice. I thought it was going to be the last time.

Lisa: Yeah, me too, the way I'm going...

Michael: When I got out, my life was fucked around totally. In a nutshell, my bird was pregnant by my cousin.

Lisa: I don't believe you!

Michael: I know, right. The baby is six months old now.

There is an awkward silence between them.

Lisa: So... you still have your contacts on the outside?

Michael: I knew you were up to fucking something!

Lisa: I need graft. Any runs?

Michael: I don't have anyone doing runs, Lisa. I'm not selling or buying right now. Is that the only reason you're here?

Lisa *reacts to the truth.*

I don't do that shit anymore. I shouldn't have bothered with you again. You should go.

Lisa *(panicking):* Keep talking to me, please! I don't feel good. I need you!

Michael: I have to focus on myself and on getting my kids back.

Lisa: Ah, please, Michael, don't be like that. It's not my fault that I'm still fucked up.
(putting her hand on his chest) You know I like you!

He slowly removes her hand and pushes her back.

Michael: What are you up to?

Lisa: I thought you felt the same!

Michael: My feelings don't matter. I just can't be with someone using. I've gotta look out for myself. That shit brought me to my knees. You know where it's going?

Lisa: Sorry... I'm sorry! I'm really sorry!

Beat.

Michael.

Michael turns away. **Lisa** leaves, shoulders slumped. She is in tears.

Scene Five

Michael and **Jackie**, outside the Family Court.

Michael: I'll drop the kids back on Sunday night.

Jackie (handing Michael the kids' bags): Seven o' clock. Not a minute later.

Michael touches her on the shoulder. **Jackie** looks away.

Michael: Don't worry about it. They'll be fine. Are you sure they have everything they need?

Jackie (subdued): The inhalers are in the bag. What do you think I am, stupid?

Michael: Jackie, I never thought you were stupid. I know things are hard at the moment.

Jackie: It's late. Have you got food for them for tonight? Do you want money to bring them to Mackie D's.

Michael: I'm OK. I have money for the weekend. I'm sorted, but thanks for the offer.

*Long pause. There is a moment of understanding between **Jackie** and **Michael**.*

Michael: Listen, Jackie, I...

Michael looks up and sees **Andy** walking towards them with the baby. The two men acknowledge each other without speaking.

Andy: The car's around the corner. Are you right?

Jackie: See you Sunday.

Michael watches them leave. He may shed a tear...

STEWING IN THE JUICE

By
Jane's Place

PLAYWRIGHTS

This play was written by women from Jane's Place, Merchant's Quay Ireland, an all-female service that offers one-to-one and group support to women dealing with homelessness and addiction issues.

CHARACTERS:

Anastasia (mid-30s) is strong, fun, skillful at managing people, fearless. She's had the strength to bring herself up and she has coping mechanisms, can hold her corner.

Paula (early 40s) is solid but can be a drama queen. Wasn't seen or loved in her childhood.

Linda (30s) is from Essex but was originally Irish. She has Identity Dissociation Disorder and is convinced she is '70s porn star Linda Lovelace. She's alcoholic and on the game.

Rachel (30s) is heading to Howth after seeing her probation officer in Dún Laoghaire. She's on probation. Her mother, an environmentalist, was involved in a campaign group in Australia and was killed there by the police.

SETTINGS:

A Dart carriage and the Four Courts, Dublin.

Scene One

*The Dart carriage is empty bar **Anastasia**, who is sitting looking out the window. The train stops in Dún Laoghaire and **Paula** gets on, goes straight to Anastasia.*

Paula: Here, you're sitting on my chair!

Anastasia: I don't see your name on it.

Paula: No, but my arse was on it a minute ago.

Anastasia: Oh, is that why it's warm?

Paula: Yeah, and do you think I kept it warm for you?

Anastasia: Well, I was hoping you did.

Paula: Get the boat and float.

Anastasia: I don't have my passport.

Paula's phone rings, but she doesn't answer.

Paula: Off me chair now!

Paula's phone rings again, but she still doesn't answer.

Men! Fucking men!

Anastasia: Tell me about it! Sure, have a seat, but not the one I'm on!

Paula's phone rings again. She answers.

Paula (to caller): Stop fucking ringing me. Leave me alone. Do not go to the house!

Anastasia: Is everything OK?

Paula: I've had enough, I'm fed up with it all.

Anastasia: Turn the phone off. Let him stew in the juice he boiled in.

Paula: Once he doesn't go near the house.

Anastasia: Where do you live?

Paula: North Circular Road. Me kids are there. If he calls, they'll get scared. I'm going to ring me sister to go and sit with them. Shit, sorry, I've no credit. Can I use your phone?

Anastasia: Of course you can use the phone. What age are your kids?

Paula: Two boys, sixteen and twelve.

Anastasia: Mine are the same age. Would the older one be able to look after the younger one, no? I leave mine minding each other, but they're girls.

Paula: They usually would be OK, but the ex is around. Am I alright to use your phone?

Anastasia gives phone to **Paula**. The train pulls in at Dún Laoghaire, and **Linda** and **Rachel** get on. **Paula** continues loud phone conversation.

Paula: Pam, are you busy tonight? I'm after getting the chance to go to Ed Sheeran tonight! Ed Sheeran, Pam! You know how much I love him! So, you're OK to sit with the lads, are ya? Thanks, Pam! Love you!

Paula continues talking loudly about Ed Sheeran, 'I love him' etc...

Linda: I wouldn't bother spending money on going to see him. Would you?

Rachel: No, I'd rather jump the security gates and sneak in for free.

Linda: I'm off to see my fella now. He's a musician too, much better than Ed Sheeran. He's playing at the Des Kelly Museum of Modern Art with the Meryl Streek Band.

Rachel: Oh my god, fancy that! I was just with my probation officer because I'm up on trespass charges for occupying the Des Kelly State Shebeen.

Anastasia: What is the Des Kelly Museum of Modern Art and the Des Kelly State Shebeen, for fuck's sake?

Rachel: They're on a whole street of empty buildings, empty for twenty years, that we're using for housing and community kitchens. One's called 'the bitches' cauldron'.

Linda: Des Kelly State Shebeen! Used to be a car wash. Car wash my arse. They were washing money, not cars.

Rachel: You're right.

Linda: My fella is playing there next Tuesday, but if you see him, don't tell him I've just come from my client on the beach in Dalkey. He's a good payer, gave me fifty quid, he did.

Rachel: Dalkey? Funny that. One of the slumlords whose warehouse we're looking at occupying next has registered his pets to a house in Dalkey to hide his assets.

Linda: He's not called Bernard, is he?

Rachel: They go by different names, these guys. Bernard...?

Linda: Must be the same bloke! I used to pay my rent to him by giving him sex. That's how I got to know him, as a client.

Paula: My landlord's called Bernie. He owns at least five houses on the North Circular Road. He told me his 'dog minder' lives in Dalkey. He asked me for sex an' all, or I'd be evicted. D'you think it's the same guy?

Linda: He didn't say, 'Fifty quid, that's a tenner for every time we won the Maguire Cup', did he?

Paula: Yeah. He only wears the rebel colours an' all.

Linda: With the white jocks to hide the stains?

Paula: Yeah! And the red and white socks.

Linda (*emotional*): Fucking bastard. Fucking bastard.

Rachel: We encounter slumlords like that all the time in our occupation group. And he's married. Half his assets in his daughter's name, his girlfriends' name, his pets' names and his wife's name.

Linda: Oh, is he married?
(*sincerely*) I don't do married blokes.

Anastasia: Yeah, I'd go nuts if my fella did that. Especially now that he's lost his job. He got laid off as a construction supervisor by a gobshite 'cause he refused to bulldoze a protected house in the middle of the night. I think his name was Benny.

Paula: Bernard. Bernie. Benny...

Linda: Whatever name he's going as, this guy's got to be stopped. Maybe I should give him an

STD, but that wouldn't be very nice to the wife.

Anastasia: That poor wife doesn't know half of what's going on. She owned a dental practice that my fella was told to bulldoze because it's where Bernard was storing all his lidocaine.

Linda: Lidocaine? He gave me that instead of cocaine. My whole mouth went numb, so I couldn't even give him a fucking BJ.

Rachel: Jesus, my mother will haunt me from her grave in the logged Tasmanian forests if we don't stop this guy.

Paula: What's your mam doing in the Tasmanian forests?

Rachel: She was involved in the Glen of the Downs protest. She fell in love with one the possums, the guys who live up the trees, went with him to the Tasmania forestry protests and ended up getting shot by the loggers.

Linda: Fuck me, that's fucking awful.

Rachel: My mother really believed in justice. I'm called Rachel after Rachel Carson, the environmentalist.

Linda: That's funny, I was called after Linda Lovelace, the '70s porn star.

Anastasia: I was named after the daughter of the last Russian Tsar, Anastasia, who ran into the forest. She was strong enough to fight the Bolsheviks, so I can fight Bernard.

Paula: I was named after me granny, Paula.

Beat.

Linda: Alright, so what exactly are we gonna do about this geezer?

Scene Two

Linda, Rachel, Paula and Anastasia are outside the Four Courts. They're really happy.

Linda: We did good girls, didn't we?

Paula: It was a great idea telling Bernard's wife about his whoring, his fraud, using her business for his lidocaine dealing, and asking women to pay their rent by giving him sex.

Rachel: In his stupid little red and white socks.

Anastasia: CAB went in and took the lot!

Linda: Talk about seizing his assets. They sure had his bollocks in a vice. White jocks an' all.

Rachel: And the best thing is, as we expected, the guards who were on Bernard's payroll were exposed, and me trespass charges have been dropped.

Anastasia: And my husband's got his job back! And the wife's got control of his buildings → she's going to need him to fix them up. They're protected buildings. She's going to use them for vulnerable women fleeing domestic violence.

Linda: And the Meryl Streets are on tonight at the Des Kelly State Shebeen to celebrate!

Exit all women to the shebeen, singing loudly.

SOLAS
learning works



**Adult
Literacy
for Life**



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



Arna chomhchistiú ag
an Aontas Eorpach

Co-Funded by the
European Union



**FIGHTING
WORDS**

The write to right.

GATE
THEATRE