

SHATTERED PEACE

(A 40 minute stage play)

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CHARACTERS

Cathleen Maguire: A northern Irish Catholic woman aged 19 (later 27 years' old)
Liam Maguire: Her 21 year old husband.
Gerry O'Hare: Cathleen's older brother. A 25 year old Provo. (later 33 year's old)

SET

One simple set is required. Lighting and prop changes should adequately convey different locations. Scene One takes place in the bedroom of a small seaside guest house. Scene Two during a riot in an open space. Scene Three, in a hospital room.

SCENE ONE

A bedroom in a small guest house. There is a single bed stage right with a bedside closet and cheap lamp beside it. A door leads into the room at the back of the set. A suitcase and weekend bag have been placed to one side of the closed door. A picture of the Virgin Mary is hanging on the wall, stage left. Beneath the picture is a chair and larger closet on which stand a tray with tea cups and a kettle.

We hear a man and woman laughing through the closed door. The door is pushed open to reveal Liam, in his Sunday best, carrying Cathy who is in full wedding regalia, including tulle veil and full-length white dress.

Cathy Liam. Liam! You're going to rupture yourself, so you are!

Liam Where's the frigging threshold? I can't see the floor for your dress.

Cathy (gathering up her dress) Don't trip, will you? It's bad luck.

Liam I know it's bad luck. I'm lifting my feet like billy-oh. (he steps into the room with great care) There. That's it. We're in.

Cathy (whoops with pleasure) Rah!

Liam (still carrying her, he whirls round on the spot) We're in. We're in. We're in.

Cathy (both laughing like children, they come to a halt. Cathy notices the bed) Single beds?

Liam (following her gaze) Jesus, Mary and Joseph! If this is Gerry's idea of a joke. . . (Cathy giggles) I'll kill him, and swing for it too.

Cathy Aren't you going to put me down?

Liam No. I'm going to hold you up here for the rest of my life. (they laugh. He moves across to the bed) This one can be yours. (he puts her down on the bed) And mine too.

Cathy (laughs languidly and happily) Sure. There won't be much sleep to be had, though.

Liam Who's complaining? (they kiss)

Cathy (pause) You were wonderful.

Liam You mean I didn't get blitzed at the reception?

Cathy You gave the best speech of your life.

Liam I gave the only speech of my life.

Cathy (she laughs, rubs his hair playfully and they look at each other) If I looked at you 'til doomsday, I still wouldn't get bored. (they kiss)

Liam (rises and takes a look around) It's a fine, wee hotel this. We could never have managed it without Gerry. He's a fine generous man, that brother of yours.

Cathy He has his connections. (noticing the tea tray) Hey. We've got our own kettle. We can make tea.

Liam (moves upstage and looks out towards the audience as if looking through a window) There's a view, too. Come and look. (Cathy joins him at the window)

Cathy The sea. Like a big lake. All misty.

Liam It's beautiful.

Cathy There's a wee boat out there.

Liam (holds her) I'd like to row you away. Away from everything.

Cathy You are, Liam. It's our Noah's ark, this is.

Liam Yes. But for how long? Three days, then it's back to the Lower Falls. I don't call that sailing.

Cathy Gerry couldn't afford more than three days. (seeing his hurt expression) Oh, it's lovely here, Liam. It's paradise.

Liam I want more for you, Cathy. I want it to be like this every day of our lives.

Cathy It will be. (they kiss. She looks out to sea again) It's disappeared. The wee boat. I wonder where it's gone?

Liam (watching her) Cathy?

Cathy Yes.

Liam Do you feel different?

Cathy (pause) Yes, I do.

Liam How different?

Cathy I feel bigger, stronger. Like I've got both feet solid on the ground. I'm somebody now.

Liam Sure, you're somebody, Mrs Maguire. You're Mrs Maguire, Mrs Maguire.

Cathy (they laugh) Aye, that I am.

Liam My wife. (gazes unbelievably) Are you really my wife, Cathy?

Cathy There'll be trouble if I'm not. (seductively) Of course, there's still one wee thing left to do before the marriage is accepted in the eyes of the Church.

Liam And what may that be, Mrs Maguire?

Cathy You surprise me, Mr Maguire. We've been practising long enough.

Liam (mock alarm) Ssh ! Father O'Brien'll kill me if he finds out.

Cathy He already knows. I spared him nothing in confession. But it's alright. I told him we were chalking it up on the tally. Putting it on credit 'til we got wed.

Liam (laughs) You're a canny wee thing, you are.

Cathy Where's the harm. I said? It'll make up for all the years we can't stand the sight of each other.

Liam (laughs then grabs her) Don't move. I want to look at you. (a moment of admiration) It's going to be a wonderful life, Cathy. I swear to God I'm going to find a job. If I have to crawl on my hands and knees, I'll find one.

Cathy No husband of mine's going to crawl on his hands and knees.

Liam I've got to get a job, Cathy. We can't live off the broo for ever. I'm going to get us a home. A decent home. I'm a married man, now. I've got my responsibilities.

Cathy We're on the wrong side of the fence, remember?

Liam Cathy, it's our wedding night. We're supposed to be happy.

Cathy (thoughtful) Yes. Happy.

Liam Hey, listen. (starts singing) "I had a wee dog and his name was Jack. He piddled all over the Union Jack." (he waits for a response) Come on. Smile, won't you? (he grabs her and swings her round in ballroom hold) "I had a wee dog and his name was Jack. He piddled all over the Union Jack. Woof. Woof."

Cathy (bursts out laughing) You're not the full shilling, you aren't. You're my big idiot, aren't you?

Liam Get me a cup of tea, Ma. I'm dying of thirst.

Cathy (fussing like a seasoned housewife) I'll put the kettle on. You've had a hard day's work. (she kisses him quickly) Take your shoes off. Make yourself at home.

Liam (he does so) That's more like it. I was beginning to think I'd have to trade you in.

Cathy (false threat) The cheek of the fellah!

Liam Do you need a hand or anything?

Cathy What sort of wife do you think I am, to go letting my husband spoil the tea? You sit there and mind the children.

Liam What children?

Cathy The one's we're going to have, you and me.

Liam I can't see any children.

Cathy Then you must be blind. (she mysteriously lifts up a tea bag to read their fortune) I can see into the future. (she listens to the tea bag) I can hear wee wains crying.

Liam Are they girls or boys?

Cathy Five. Of each.

Liam Jesus! You'd better put three sugars in my tea. I'm going to need the energy.

Cathy (checks for sugar) They haven't got any.

Liam You're fooling. I'll be dead tomorrow morning.

Cathy If you die on me, I'll kill you!

Liam Come here.

Cathy (joins him on the bed) This is our home tonight, Liam. Ours. We don't have to share it with anybody. Ssh. I'm going to weave my spell. (singing a child's rhyme) Abracadabra, may these walls, protect us from the Lower Falls. May the bullets fizzle and die. May we live, and live, and live, you and I.

Liam Och, Cathy. You're no good at poetry when you're sober. (pause) I fancy a shower. I'm all sweaty.

Cathy We could have one together.

Liam Someone would hear us, surely? What would they think?

Cathy They know we're on honeymoon. They've probably put cotton wool in their ears.

Liam (pause) It's like Christmas, this. I can't wait to unwrap the parcel.

Cathy (giggles) Don't you want your tea?

Liam No. Do you want yours?

Cathy No.

Liam (pause. He starts to unzip her dress) I've never seen you naked before.

Cathy Yes you have.

Liam Not in a wedding dress, I haven't.

Cathy (laughs) You big idiot! Mind the hooks.

Liam I know what I'm doing.

Cathy Let me. (she climbs out of the dress. Underneath she wears a satin slip)

Liam (feeling the slip) That's beautiful.

Cathy It was Marie's. (pause) She was going to wear it on her wedding night. (saddening) It's too pretty to waste.

Liam (stroking her face comfortingly) Don't think about Marie.

Cathy I can't help it. She was my big sister.

Liam I know. (pause) We'll just have to be happy for her.

Cathy Why couldn't she have been happy for herself?

Liam (takes her in his arms and rocks her) Ssh.

Cathy I hate them.

Liam We've got to be happy, Cathy. It's the best bit of fight we've got.

Cathy I can still feel her, clear as anything, clinging on. Holding on to me . . .

Liam Hey, listen. (pause) Can you hear anything?

Cathy No.

Liam Nothing?

Cathy Nothing.

Liam Just peace.

Cathy Peace.

Liam (pause) Hey, your mascara's run.

Cathy Och, Jesus. I must look like Dracula's daughter. (pulls out a hand mirror from her weekend bag and checks her face)

Liam It's very punk. Suits you.

Cathy (indicating mirror) Will you hold that for a second?

Liam Sure. (He does so. She tackles her eye. Liam puts his face close up to hers so that they're both visible in the mirror) Look. There's you and there's me. Don't we look fine together stuck behind the glass?

Cathy You're a joker, you are.

Liam It's the best place to be, behind the glass. Like Alice in Wonderland. You can be Alice. I'll be the caterpillar. (imitating a caterpillar's body movement) Do I make a good caterpillar?

Cathy (laughs) You great idiot! Give me a big, sluggy kiss, then. (they kiss) I'm ready for my shower now.

Liam Sure. I've got the towels and everything. (he grabs the necessary items) I'll go and make sure no-one snooping.

Cathy We are married, Liam.

Liam Aye. But I don't know if married people have showers together.

Cathy Your Ma and Da do.

Liam Sure. But that's to save bath water. They don't enjoy it.

Cathy How do you know? You've never asked them.

Liam (stunned, then chuckles) The dirty dogs. (he goes to the door, opens it ajar and checks no-one is outside) All clear. (He tosses her a towel. Cathy giggles) I'll go and get the water running hot. You can't miss me. I'll be the one with the rubber duck. (exit)

(Cathy laughs to herself, then lays back slowly on the bed, sighing with pleasure)

SCENE TWO

Out of the darkness comes the sound of rioting crowds. A search light plays across the auditorium. Gerry, wearing a Parker coat and brogues, runs semi-crouched across stage and finds a 'safe' position facing the audience. Liam runs across and joins him. He is carrying a large, cellophane-wrapped bouquet of flowers.

Loudhail. (A middle class English soldier's voice through a loud hailer) Disperse and go home. We have the area cordoned off. Disperse and go home.

Liam Gerry. Let's get out of here.

Gerry (fascinated by what's going on) You weirdo, you. The fun's just starting. (looks upwards. Sound of helicopter) Hey, smile. We're on telly. (he rapidly turns away)

Liam (he tries to hide his face) Jesus! Bloody police. That's just what I need. I've got a job interview tomorrow.

Gerry (he lifts his collar up to hide his face) A job interview?

Liam Aye. At Shorts'.

Gerry Shorts' ? Does Cathy know about this?

Liam Not yet.

Gerry You're a Taig, Liam. Like the rest of us. They don't take Taigs at Shorts'.

Liam Well they're going to take me.

Gerry Sure. And I've got a Union Jack tattooed on my arse.

Liam (a burst of automatic gunfire. They both duck) Where's it coming from?

Gerry Christ knows. Too much echo round this estate. If it's Paddy Crumlin's boys . . . fuck him! This is my patch. He's getting too big for his boots, that gobshite.

Liam You love all this, don't you? You're sick.

Gerry And you live in cloud cuckoo land. (grabs the flowers off Liam)

Liam Hey, don't.

Gerry What's my sister married to, for God's sake? The Lower Falls is on fire! And all you can think of is your frigging wedding anniversary? My Ma's got more politics than you.

Liam (angry) I've got politics. You know I've got politics.

Gerry (laughs scornfully) Aye. You want to take the Queen's head off the postage stamps - with a pair of tweezers. (pulls out a small automatic weapon from inside his coat and loads it)

Liam You bastard. You've been carrying that around all this time? (A round of automatic gun fire, they both duck) I could get twelve years for aiding and abetting.

Gerry You've not been to Castlereagh, have you? That's your trouble. The R.U.C. haven't pinned you up against the wall with a hood on your head. (pause) They made me lick up my own piss.

Liam I'm getting out of here.

Gerry (grabs Liam) I was licking. Licking like an animal, with a boot pressed down on my neck. And I said to myself . . . someone's going to die for this. Someone's going to die.

Liam (a crack of gunfire. A child screams) Jesus. (looks out to the audience) The poor wee kid.

Gerry She'll not be walking on that leg again.

Liam No-one's moving. Surely to God they're not going to leave her out there?

Gerry Too much cross fire.

Liam She'll bleed to death. (he shouts out into audience) There's a kid down there!

Gerry (pulls him back) For Christ's sake, you're giving away our position.

Liam She's terrified!

Gerry (to Liam) Get the hell out of it. Go on. Go home. You're no frigging use at all. (takes up firing position)

Liam I'm going to get her.

Gerry Don't be an idiot.

Liam I'm going to get her. (starts to run off)

Gerry Jesus Christ, Liam. (rattle of bullets) (pause. Gerry looks with horror)
Liam?

(The lights fade down)

SCENE THREE

The lights rise on Cathy, downstage with her back to the audience.

Cath (shouts in misery) No!

(The lights slowly rise on Cathy who stands alone, with her back to the audience. She holds a man's shoe in both hands which rest at her sides. For a moment there is only stillness, then very slowly she turns round. She is heavily pregnant)

(she lifts the shoes slowly up to her face and brushes her cheek against them) What is it about a shoe that has so much love in it? They're worn. Tired looking. I can cry for his shoes. I can feel their loss. So why can't I cry for him? (pause) Everyone's weeping and cursing . . . but I'm dead. Like I'm made of leather and laces. I can't feel anymore. (she calls out) Gerry. (no response. She starts hitting her arm) I want to feel something. Anything.

(she places the shoes on the floor and kneels beside them and addresses a picture of the Virgin Mary) Please, let his feet be in these shoes again. It's so little to ask. They were there yesterday. He was wearing them. I can smell his sweat still. Just for one minute to see him standing in his own

shoes. So I can say goodbye. Is that too much to ask ? (she waits expectantly for the miracle. Nothing happens. Gerry appears at the door with a plate of food)

Gerry

Cathy. Get up off the floor. It's bad for the baby.

CONTINUED

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