**Cathy’s War**

(a 20 minute drama by Claire Booker)

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**Characters**

Cathleen: a young woman.

Gerry: her brother and a member of the provisional IRA

**Props and Set**

The action takes place in a hospital private room. There is a small closet, and a chair. Upstage left hangs a picture of the Virgin Mary. No window is visible. It is evening, and the electric light is on. Props include a hand mirror, a make-up bag, and make-up.

*(The lights rise on Cathleen in a white nightdress seated by the closet. She applies foundation to cover up her disfigured face. She stops and addresses the picture)*

Cath Don't look at me like that. So, I'm painting my face. You'd paint yours, if you were in my shoes.

(s*he looks at herself in the mirror with disgust. Her skin is covered in dark, ungainly patches*) Holy Mother! What's he going to think of me? I'm a bloody zebra, that's what I am - a leopard. I'm not human anymore. (*pause*) What if he calls me names? What if he calls me a harlot? A whore? (*pause*) No. No, that's not true. (*addresses the picture*) Is it? You know it's not true. Oh, stop smirking, and listen, will you? You've got nothing else to do but hang there. *(pulling her nightdress off her shoulders she reveals more blemishes*) These are war wounds. Go on. Have a good look. I'll not have you think anything but the truth.

(s*he is startled by a knock at the door*) Don't come in yet! I'm not ready. (*she tries to make herself look presentable)* He mustn’t see me like this. *(to the Virgin Mary*) Smug bitch. All satin and carnations. One day you're going to lose your son. They're going to crucify him. That'll wipe the smile off your face. (*to the visitor*) You can come in now. (*pause*) I'm ready. (*still nothing*) Gerry? I'm ready. (*she moves towards the door*) For the love of Jesus, you can come in. I'm not going to bite you. (*she clasps her stomach, winces and sits down*) It hurts.

(*Gerry enters, holding a carrier bag and dressed in a suit and tie. He carries an overcoat over his arm*) I thought you’d changed your mind.

Gerry Cathleen.

Cath (*she holds out her hand to him*) Help me up.

Gerry You should be in bed. They told me you'd be in bed.

Cath Well I'm not. I've escaped. The black widow’s on the loose. (*once more extending her arm*) Give me your hand, Gerry.

Gerry Hey, I've brought you some flowers. (*he pulls a bouquet from the bag*) Do you like them?

Cath You're just like all the others. Sure, and I hoped you be different.

Gerry Where are the vases? Don't they have any frigging vases in here?

Cath It hurts. It hurts to be treated like this.

Gerry I've come all the way from New York to see you, and there are no vases. (*he hurls the flowers to the ground*) I bought you tulips. I thought you liked tulips. You've always liked tulips before.

Cath (*slowly she picks up the flowers*) It doesn’t matter, Gerry. They'll die anyhow.

Gerry Sure. But at least they could die in a frigging vase. (*pause*) Oh Cathy, Cathy. I hate to see you so sick.

Cath I was pretty once, wasn't I, Gerry? Real pretty. I had lovely skin, not shit coloured like it is now.

Gerry You're still pretty.

Cath Don't laugh at me. I need you, Gerry. The others don't care anymore.

Gerry They do care.

Cath They care, but they don't come.

Gerry It's not easy.

Cath What are they waiting for? My funeral?

Gerry Cut the funeral talk. It's unlucky.

Cath Luck? This is Belfast, Gerry. There’s only one kind of luck here. Where was Liam's luck? Where was Marie's?

Gerry At least they died normal.

Cath Ah, the magic word. Normal. I'm not normal, am I? You'd be happier if I had a few bullets in my spine. Then you could be proud of me.

Gerry I'm not ashamed.

Cath You are, you liar! You're ashamed of my blood. You're ashamed of what people must be saying. And, God knows, you were ashamed to be seen standing outside my room. Weren’t you?

Gerry You're very bitter, Cathleen.

Cath You think I'm happy looking like this? You think I want to die? (*pause*) It's the price I've had to pay. It's no worse than Liam. Once you're gone, you're gone.

Gerry We paid them back for Liam. And for Marie. You know that.

Cath There's no end to paying back, Gerry. Not in my books.

Gerry What do you think I'm doing in New York? Sitting around on my arse? Don't talk about what you don't know. I'm your big brother, remember.

Cath It's nice and safe playing ambassadors with NORAID, isn't it? A bit of fundraising, a bit of chit chat. Here's where you should be Gerry. You should be here, and you should be killing.

Gerry Keep your voice down, for Christ's sake.

Cath Don't wet yourself. The nurses are all Catholic.

Gerry You can't trust Catholics, these days. The priests have all gone soft. Half of them are best mates with the RUC.

Cath Frightened of priests now, are we?

Gerry You think it's so easy, don't you? Killing. Well, it's not. It's messy, it's dangerous. And it fucks up your nerves.

Cath I used to worship you, Gerry. I literally worshipped you. You and Sean were my big brothers and you were going to get the Brits out single handed.

Gerry It takes time. And it takes money. Money buys hardware. Without hardware, we've got nothing. Nothing but our bare flesh. That sure as hell won't get you far against one of their Saracens.

Cath (*she takes a box of chocolates from the bedside table and selects a handful of chocolates*) Hardware isn't everything, Gerry. It's what you've got inside that counts. There's Fenians with 'Ireland' written through their bodies like a stick of rock. And there's those with it scratched on the surface. Which are you? (*she offers him a handful*) Have a chocolate.

Gerry (*nervous laugher*) That’s your secret cache of weapons, is it? You want me to bombard the bastards with Cadbury's Milk Tray?

Cath Go on. Have one. They're soft centres. (*he hesitates*) You still like soft centres, don't you?

Gerry Sure I do.

Cath You'd better hurry up. They're melting.

Gerry (*he picks one up gingerly*) Thanks.

Cath Well, go on then. Eat it. (*she watches him squirm*) Eat it. Eat it, or I'll spit in your eye!

Gerry (*he hurls the chocolate to the ground*) That's not my sister talking.

Cath And you're not my brother any more. Call yourself a provo? You're scared of me, aren't you? You're scared you'll catch it from my sweat. What sort of a soldier are you?

Gerry Fighting talk's easy from the side lines. You always were a talker, Cathy. You had the pluck of the devil when it came to talk.

Cath If I'd been a boy, I'd have shown you. I wanted to be like you and Sean. I wanted to fight. But my body was the wrong shape, the wrong size, the wrong sex. I hated it. Every time I passed a foot patrol, I hated it. Every time I heard those bloody Orange drums beating I hated it. You have to be a woman to know how that feels. (*pause*) Now I'm all body. And I hate it still. It's not male, it's not female. It's sick. I'm living inside a corpse, Gerry. And it's lonely.

Gerry (*he puts his overcoat protectively around her shoulders*) You'll catch cold.

Cath *(resting against him*) Ah, that's nice. That's like old times, that is. Sure, we had happy times together, didn't we? It hasn't all been a dream.

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