

THE OFFICIAL ADVENTURES OF KIERON & JADE

by Kieron Barry

Scene 1

A tennis ball bounces across the stage.

Madam Metaphor This is a play about Addiction and Delusion.

Mister Metaphor Every recovering heroin addict will tell you the same thing: 'Heroin is dangerous, it's expensive, it'll destroy your health, your looks and your career – now where can I get some?'

Madam Metaphor In London in 2004 an ambulance crew was called to a building site where a man had driven a six-inch nail through his foot. No matter how much morphine they gave him, he kept screaming. When they cut away his boot they saw the nail had passed between his toes, missing him completely.

Mister Metaphor This is a play about Addiction and Delusion.

They both throw a glorious cloud of glitter into the air. Everything is briefly magical and we hear the first three seconds of Randy Crawford's 'Street Life'. Then immediately:

Scene 2

The director, Danielle, is intense and academic. She might wear glasses.

Kieron Because we had an agreement.

Danielle The agreement was that I would / direct your next play.

Kieron / direct my next play. Yes.

Danielle You said you were writing a play about Bill Evans.

Kieron I was.

Danielle So what's this?

Kieron It's a play about me and Jade.

Danielle Where's the Bill Evans thing?

Kieron I want to do *this* now.

Danielle Don't get me wrong, what happened with you and Jade, it –

Kieron Beggars belief?

Danielle It –

Kieron Puzzles the will? Makes calamity of so long life?

Danielle It sucks.

Kieron What a wordsmith. *You* should be the one writing this.

Danielle I don't think *anyone* should be writing it, Kieron.

Kieron I don't know what else to do. I'm desperate. Since she left me I've lost three pounds every week.

Danielle So write a diet book, but don't do this. It's unfair.

Kieron I'm just trying to understand what happened. I'm not going to say anything negative.

Danielle You've had your heart broken. I'm really sorry. Just have a year of red wine, froyo and Netflix like everyone else. Don't write about it.

Kieron I can't *stop* writing.

Danielle Neither could Jeffrey Dahmer, apparently, but that doesn't mean it's worth reading. Write about something else.

Kieron There *is* no something else.

Danielle And you're not going to change the names?

Kieron Why should I? Did Joan Didion in *The Year Of Magical Thinking*?

Danielle No.

Kieron Did C. S. Lewis in *A Grief Observed*?

Danielle Yes.

Kieron That one's a bad example.

Danielle Just lightly fictionalise it. Like *Betrayal* by Harold Pinter.

Kieron But what difference does it make? Everyone knows *Betrayal* is about Harold Pinter and / Joan Bakewell.

Danielle / Joan Bakewell.

Kieron Right. So he may as well have used the real names.

Danielle I don't think you should put Jade in a play.

Kieron First rule of theatre: if you don't want to appear in any plays, don't hang out with any playwrights.

Danielle I thought the first rule of theatre was always leave them wanting more.

Kieron Well she did that too.

Danielle If you really love her, you won't write it. It's just your side of the story.

Kieron She's written songs about me.

Danielle They all say nice things.

Kieron There's a similar deal in North Korea. Total freedom of speech, just don't say anything nasty. This is an important principle.

Danielle It's not Wikileaks. It's a 26-year-old who changed her mind.

Kieron She's actually 27.

Danielle It seems I owe you an apology.

Kieron This is important to me.

Danielle To *you*, yes. But look at this. (*she brandishes the draft*) It's just a rant. There's nothing less attractive than a middle-aged man complaining that a younger woman no longer wants to have sex with him. If you want this to be a play it has to have a structure, a narrative thrust, it needs light and shade.

Kieron It has all of that. Look at the very first scene. We see the Kieron character breaking the news to his best friend Emma. It sets the comic tone of the play and establishes the Emma character who becomes important later.

Danielle I'm sorry, Kieron, but I don't want to direct it.

Kieron Is there *anything* you like about the script?

Danielle This is the first play of yours that doesn't mention the Nazis, so that's a plus.

Kieron Can I show you the first scene?

Danielle You can do what you like, but I'm not directing your play.

Kieron So that's a no.

Danielle That's a no.

Kieron I hate to get nasty, Danielle, but might I remind you that under the terms of our contract you're legally obliged to direct whatever script I hand in to your theatre.

Danielle You're really going to force me?

Kieron I'm really going to force you.

Danielle Wow! Why would *anyone* ever split up with *you*?

Kieron Just take a look at the first scene.

Scene 3

Emma is no-nonsense. She might chew gum, for example.

Emma What do you mean, split up?

Kieron She left me.

Emma When?

Kieron About an hour ago.

Emma What did you do?

Kieron Nothing.

Emma That doesn't sound like you, Bobo. What did she say?

Kieron She didn't say anything.

Emma So how do you know she left you?

Kieron Because that's what she said.

Emma *What* did she say?

Kieron She said she was leaving me.

Emma But why?

Kieron I don't know.

Emma What; she just left?

Kieron She just left.

The following sequence is very fast, like that name-guessing riff in the film 'Ted'.

Emma 'Cos you couldn't get it up?

Kieron No.

Emma You needed Viagra?

Kieron No.

Emma You were impotent?

Kieron These are all the same thing. No.

Emma You were sleeping around?

Kieron No.

Emma You had sex with her sister?

Kieron I just said no.

Emma Her mother?

Kieron No.

Emma *Your* mother.

Kieron No.

Emma I give up. Who did you have sex with?

Kieron I didn't have sex with anyone.

And back to normal speed (albeit our faster-than-normal normal speed)...

Emma You're right. It's a mystery. Wait a second: who was *she* having sex with?

Kieron No one.

And back to high speed:

Emma Her bass player.

Kieron No.

Emma Drummer.

Kieron No.

Emma Guitarist.

Kieron No.

Emma Lead singer.

Kieron She *is* the lead singer.

Emma What else is there?

Kieron Mandolin player.

Emma Mandolin player.

Kieron No.

Emma Head of record company.

Kieron No.

Emma Senior vice-president of A&R.

Kieron No.

Emma Vice-president of distribution.

Kieron We're not going through the whole organisation, are we?

Emma Paul McCartney.

Kieron People split up for reasons other than sex, Emma.

Emma (*as one might fondly address the mentally ill*) That's right, Bobo...

Kieron We're so *good* together. People come up to us all the time –

Emma I know.

Kieron – and say –

Emma Yes, we know.

Kieron They say / 'You guys look wonderful together' –

Emma / 'You guys look wonderful together,' yes.

Kieron And we always say our children will have / curly hair and little round glasses.

Emma / Curly hair and little round glasses.
Because it combines your visual trademark with hers, yes.

One of the miscellaneous props is a toy pistol. During the above Emma picks it up and mimes shooting herself in the head in frustration.

Kieron Yes, I may have mentioned that before. I apologise for boring my best friend with minor details from my life such as joy and love.

Emma You're right, I'm sorry; I'm not the only victim here.

Kieron Not really a victim at *all*, are you.

Emma First things first. How are *you* feeling?

Kieron And that took... two minutes and eleven seconds.

Emma *(she's suddenly got it!)* She left because you're racist!

Kieron I'm not *racist*.

Emma Just a little bit, I mean. *(she gestures)*

Kieron *(ignoring her)* What happens now? I mean: is she coming back? What about all our stuff? *(it suddenly strikes him)* Who's going to tell the *dog*? And *how*?

Emma She really didn't say anything?

Kieron No.

Emma What timing, Bobo! Just when you were at your most self-congratulatory.

Kieron All I know is –

Emma That's hubris, I guess.

Kieron – it was love at first sight, we were inseparable for three years, then this morning she said she didn't want to see me again.

In comes 'Adventures of Flash on the Wheels of Steel' by Grandmaster Flash. ('Yes, but what happened in between..?' etc.)

Simultaneously, we see a series of projected photos of Kieron and Jade. Christmas, Disneyland, England, Ireland, LA, gigs, larks and japes, kissing selfies etc.

Briefly, Munch's 'The Scream'. And again. With a cardiac-monitor 'beep' amid the music.

And then The Scream is all there is, and the beep flatlines.

Scene 4

The intimidating sounds of prison life.

Jailer The prisoner to state his name.

Kieron Are you talking to me?

Jailer (*offended*) Say that again?

Kieron Sorry, that *did* sound rude. *Taxi Driver* has killed that phrase for well-intentioned confused people. How can I help?

Jailer You can help by giving me your goddam name.

Kieron Absolutely. Kieron Barry.

Jailer How long you in for?

Kieron No idea.

Jailer (*peeved*) How long was the relationship?

Kieron So far, three years.

Jailer Three years means you in for eighteen months. (*she's writing all this down*)

Kieron Eighteen *months*?!

Jailer Don't like it? Tell the judge.

Kieron There *was* no judge. I've just been instantly transported here by the magic of theatre.

Jailer What do you want *me* to do about it?

Kieron This is a mistake. She'll be back.

Jailer Heard it all before.

Kieron We adore each other.

Jailer If the governor phones I'll be sure to let you know.

Kieron Is there like a parole system?

Jailer Nope.

Kieron Time off for good behaviour? Eligible for early release under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement?

Jailer Turn out your pockets. That's it. Now empty your subconscious.

Kieron My *what*?!

Jailer On the bench, let's go.

Kieron How am I supposed to empty my subconscious?

Jailer What am I; Buddha? Just put 'em in the envelope as I call 'em off. Hopes. Dreams. Honeymoon destinations. Baby names.

Now: sexual fantasies.

Kieron Uh!

Jailer Come on; hand 'em over.

Kieron reluctantly complies.

Jailer (cont'd) (*reading them as she receives them*) What do we have here?! A fierce, animalistic coupling when she's still sweaty from beating you at tennis. Taking her from behind on a deserted beach at sunset as her knees sink into the wet sand. What's this one?

Kieron Do I have to?

Jailer You better tell me, boy.

Kieron (*sighs, humiliated*) She's wearing a thick cable-knit Aran sweater and her fond nestling gradually turns to aggressive smothering.

Jailer What is she saying as you climax?

Kieron Do I have to tell you?

Jailer Let's hear it.

Kieron 'Shush, shush, my baby. Don't cry, don't cry.' God this is humiliating.

Jailer Don't be embarrassed. No judgement here.

Kieron Thank God!

Jailer Just kidding. What a whack-job. Get used to the single life, Buffalo Bill.

Kieron Welcome to heartbreak.

Jailer Why are *you* welcoming *me*?

Kieron No; it's a kiss-line to the scene. I survey my surroundings, and say 'Welcome to heartbreak.' Then you segue to the Kanye West song. It's quick, it's neat, it's appropriate.

Jailer Appropriate? What; cos you're in prison –

Kieron Yeah.

Jailer – and he's black?

Kieron God no! Where's all this racism stuff coming from?! Play whatever music you like. Honestly. White. Black. Gamelan...

Jailer What's Gamelan?

Kieron It's like a Javanese percussion orchestra. I love other cultures. In fact I'm sort of an immigrant when you think about it.

Jailer Get in there, Captain Cashmere.

Kieron A lot of writers did their best work in prison.

Jailer Welcome to heartbreak.