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THE GIRL WHO FORGOT TO SING BADLY

by Finegan Kruckemeyer

EXTRACT ONLY

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Original Production

The first performance of *The Girl Who Forgot To Sing Badly* took place at The Ark – A Cultural Centre for Children, Dublin, in January 2010 in a production by The Ark in association with Theatre Lovett. The cast was as follows:

MAN Louis Lovett

The play was directed by Lynne Parker and produced by Muireann Ahern, with set design by Paul O'Mahony, costume design by Joan O'Clery, lighting design by Sinéad Wallace and sound & music design by Carl Kennedy. All artists were involved in a second draft creative development.

Productions since

2010	Irish national tour
2010	Dublin Theatre Festival (Re:Viewed programme), Ireland
2011	Imaginate Festival, Scotland

Prologue

MAN: In a town that I know, children, there has stood forever and always a statue. And the statue was of a man. And on the man's shoulder, there sat a small mouse.

'Oh the man must have been a great one', we whisper to each other. 'I wonder what he did'. ...And so you may children – but the story is not about him.

'Ah it's the mouse then', we say. 'Obviously some magical mouse, that gave advice and saved the day long ago'. But I must ask you to calm yourselves children, for indeed you are sounding like idiots. Mice do not talk, as well you know – and this is a good thing too, for they are frightfully boring, concerned only with eating and meeting other mice for general kissing purposes.

No, dear tiny, small, little people sitting there all tiny and little and small – the story I know is about another type of hero altogether, who I will now tell you about for the next 46 minutes. And the story shall have ingredients! My story will involve a man and a mouse and a dress. It will train its sights on a blizzard and a dance and a new type of cake that the Germans would like. It will be about a pair of binoculars and a sinking ship and a wish that came true, and another that didn't. There will be blood in it!

Oh! The blood bit will be fantastic.
Great waves of bloody blood-soaked bloodness,
Making everything bloody and blood-drenched and...

Apologies. There will be a sadness, children. Someone we care about will die...

But there will be a goat as well! And they are very reassuring animals – some of my greatest sadnesses have been alleviated by goats. Finally there will be a last sentence, and a fading out of music, and after that many minutes of applause while you throw flowers at my feet and beg me to perform for you more. It is embarrassing, I know, but we will deal with it when the time arises.

And so – a man and a mouse, and...

Ah yes! A hero! But this hero is not a man!
He is something far... He is a she. She... is a Peggy.
Peggy O'Hegarty and her parents were packers.

Scene One – the good bit, where we enjoy meeting some new people.

MAN: That was their job. They packed one type of thing into another type of thing.

Fruit into tins – that was them. Furniture into trucks – they were good at that. Lots of small things into one big thing – too easy. Even very big stuff into a very small space – a doddle.

Their proudest moment had come when Peggy was seven, and she and her family had fit a grand piano into a container usually set aside for jellied sweets. The same year, they had fit a bowling ball through a badminton racket, a bike into a brown paper bag, and the longest word in the dictionary: ‘Pneumonoultramicroscopicsilicovolcanoconiosis’... into a single breath.

They worked hard – packing a lot into every day – and they holidayed rarely – though they did enjoy packing the car.

The three of them, for Peggy was an only child, lived together in one very small flat, in the middle of a very big city. Each morning the family would wake, say hello, and compliment each other in some way, as this is a very nice way to start a day – on Peggy’s well-brushed teeth perhaps, or Mr O’Hegarty’s neatly combed moustache. Or an amusing thing one family member had done in another family member’s dream the night before....

I should note that in my last night’s dreaming,
you sir, turned into a gorilla and attacked a small chair
I once had as a child. But I do not hold it against you.
...Although if it does happen again, I will find where you live.

Once greeted and complimented, the three O’Hegartys would eat together – an egg, an egg and an egg – and then they would wait for the phone to ring.

Mrs O’Hegarty would read the paper and laugh out loud at the comics, like so.
Mr O’Hegarty would take his binoculars and watch things from the window/

A pair of binoculars – that’s a listy thing!
We are on the right path, my friends, the right path indeed!
Where was I? Ah yes...

The mother reads. The father... binocs. And Peggy! Peggy would practice a song or two, as her voice was that of an angel...

[Sings, awfully] We are Packers three... *[Miscorrects pitch]* Packer you, Packer me, Packer Peggy.

...A grossly unfortunate angel, who sang very badly. But one parent was deaf, and the other was patient, and so both were fine with this.

At about ten every morning... *[The phone rings]*

Mrs O’Hegarty would talk with the caller and shout out the details of the job:

‘...So twenty foxes ...into the back of a van ...Will the van be moving or parked at the ti/? .../A parked van ...And what type of fo/ .../Just regular foxes – got it’.

Mr O’Hegarty would write this down:

‘Foxes ...times 20 ...regular ones ...Van ...in state of im-mo... bility. Got it’.

And Peggy O’Hegarty would get the tools ready.

The tools!

A squelcher – for compressing large things.

A saw – for... Glue – for... Notepad – for... A net – for...

And an invoice book – for sorting payment at the end.

This is no charity sir!

This is a free market economy
and every job is a job!

...Sorry. Once all collected, Peggy would put all the tools, and her parents, into their van. And then one of the elders would drive...

There is an awful law that says small children
can’t drive big vans at fast speeds on streets filled with humans.
If I had my way, this would be fine. But for now, Peggy got the back seat.

And then a lovely afternoon would be spent packing foxes into boxes, and the boxes onto stands, and the stands... into vans. Or something similar.

This was the life of the packer, and it must be said that as packers go, the O’Hegartys were three of the best. One day they even got an award!

...The End.

The man stops and bows. Silence – a drawn out break in proceedings. He senses the audience’s unease and checks his list.

MAN: ‘Bits of story to tell miniature humans’... better just check.

[Reads] ...A man and a mouse’ – oh I did forget those. Oh well, next time. ‘A dress... and a dance...’ No – neither of those either. ‘A cake the Germans would!’ Did we get to a cake? A pastry then? Was a swiss roll discussed?

Oh well this is too much – I do apologise. It seems we have not started this story at all. Well yes, we heard the set-up, we heard about that time when the

O'Hegartys were happy, sure. But it's almost as though I stopped the story before Peggy's life fell apart – before the tragedy! *[Laughs]* Crazy.

...I did tell you about the tragedy didn't I? The moment when her world turned upside down? ...I didn't?

This is frightful! This is dastardly! You Sir who was a gorilla, I fully understand if you wish to throw something at me. You do not? You are too kind, I'm sure.

Well, there is nothing for it – back to the story!

Scene Two – the awful bit, which makes the good bit feel less good.

MAN: Everything was going good in the life of Mr, Mrs and Peggy O'Hegarty. They had their house, their packing, each other. Perfect. Until one Wednesday...

...

MAN: What? Exactly – nothing!

One Wednesday nothing happened. And that nothing, was the phone... not ringing..... Finally five o'clock came, and Peggy stopped singing her songs, and they closed the blinds, and sat in silence, eating dinner.

'A random day', said one.

'Means twice as much packing tomorrow', said another.

And they all laughed: 'ha ha ha'. But quietly, as they were worried: 'ha ha ha'

The next morning, which was a Thursday, the family rose and said hello – but they forgot to compliment each other, because they were watching the phone.

They ate an egg, an egg and an egg – but they forgot to cut soldiers for dipping.

Mrs O'Hegarty opened her paper – but forgot to read it.

Mr O'Hegarty took his binoculars – but forgot to open the curtains.

And Peggy sang a song... *[Sings]* 'We are packers 3, packer you, packer me'

But forgot the ending.

And together all of them sat in the darkness, and listened for the phone.

But it didn't ring – and the Friday neither. The next day was Saturday and even though it never rang on a Saturday, still they listened out:

'Maybe everyone has forgotten which way weekends go', they thought.

But no one called.