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Sex in the City: Dublin Edited by Maxim Jakubowski

Please note that this extract contains scenes of an adult nature.

Dublin' by Gerard Brennan

I was out of my comfort zone, out of my depth and out of my mind. She snaked an arm around my shoulder and the side of her breast squished against my upper arm. Her breath, a mix of Juicy Fruit and Coors Light, warmed my face. She wore black lace underwear and a see-through negligee-type thing. Her skin, and Jesus, there was so much of it on show, smelt of a cheap musky perfume that stuck in my throat and yet tickled the skin of my ball sac.

‘Dance for you, love?’

She’d an English accent. Brash. Nasal. I guessed she was from Manchester.

‘That’s right, sweetheart. I’m a *mad for it* Mancunian. You having a good night? You Irish guys love to party, don’t you? What’s your name?’

I thought about giving her an alias. Couldn't come up with one. I tried to speak. Rapped. Spoke again.

'My name's Jimmy.'

'I'm Kylie.'

Kylie, my arse. I thought about the diminutive Australian pop queen for a second. The Kylie with her arm around my shoulder, sipping from a bottle of Coors, had the blonde hair and cheeky smile, but there was nothing petite about her. She was buxom, ridiculously tanned and her eyes were heavy with porn star makeup. I wanted to fuck her brains out.

She looked at me, looking at her, and ran her tongue from the base of her beer bottle, up the neck and did a quick little circle around the lip.

My face burned. I swept a hand across my brow, as if to blame the heat of the club.

'Hot in here, isn't it?'

'They have to keep us girls warm,' she said. 'Otherwise we'd all show up in cardigans.'

'Can't have that.'

Kylie took her arm from round my shoulder. I almost keened as the heat of her breast moved away from me. She wasn't going anywhere, though. Her hand traced my spine and came to rest at the waistband of my jeans. She hooked her thumb into the elastic of my boxers. A little jolt shot through my body. Curled my toes.

What the hell was I doing?

I looked to the bar. Benny had just been served. He'd a face on him like a slapped arse as he turned away from the barmaid, but it soon brightened when he clocked me and Kylie. I winked, attempting nonchalance. Probably closer to sleaze.

Benny scuttled over, quick-smart. Handed me my drink.

‘What is it?’ I asked.

‘Dear as fuck,’ Benny said. ‘Close to thirty euros for a couple of vodka and Red Bulls? You may make it last.’

I sipped on the sticky liquid. Barely tasted the vodka. Extortionate prices and watered down too. I was suddenly conscious of my cash-light wallet.

‘You don’t come to a place like this to drink,’ Kylie said. ‘You come for a dance.’

A skinny brunette swept out of a dark corner and claimed Benny.

‘Hiya, Danni,’ Kylie said. ‘Should we treat these two boys to a show?’

‘If they’re up for it,’ Danni said. Her accent was pure Dublin. A local girl, then.

Kylie nodded at Benny’s crotch. ‘Looks like your one is.’

Benny laughed it off. Not a hint of embarrassment on his pretty-boy face.

‘What kind of show, and how much is it?’

I kept my mouth shut, enjoyed the smell of Kylie. If Benny wanted to do the dealing, fair play to him. I’d developed a severe case of lapsed Catholic guilt. Well, maybe not *that* severe. I was still standing in a gentleman’s club in Dublin city centre. It wasn’t just the drink keeping me rooted in place.

‘It’s the kind of show you’ll never forget,’ Danni said. ‘We get naked and intimate. Kissing, fingering and licking. Toys too. Fifty euros each.’

Benny glanced at me and I shook my head. I didn’t have fifty euros.

‘Fifty’s a bit steep,’ Benny said. ‘Who carries that sort of cash around with them these days?’

Kylie picked it up, smooth as you like. ‘Well, boys, as a special recessionary offer, you can get a private dance for just fifteen euros each. That’s cheaper than a round of drinks, Jimmy.’

What could I say? It was my round.

‘Benny, lend us thirty euros, will you?’

The music throbbed. Red light from the overhead spots cast Kylie in a cinematic and unreal hue. I sat straight-backed in a padded chair, legs spread as instructed. My arms hung straight at my sides. I probed the underside of the chair. Discovered punctures in the lining big enough to slip my fingertips into. I wondered how many customers it took before it gave way under an excited grip. Probably not many. Watching Kylie dance and remove each skimpy item of lingerie, I imagined she’d blown many a gasket.

I moved my head so that her swaying body blocked the line of sight from the small video camera in the far corner of the room. The ‘no touching’ rule had been explained on the way in. One swift grope could end in a broken arm. Fair enough, I wouldn’t touch, then. I tried to push away the thought of some lantern-jawed bouncer judging me from the monitoring room. Concentrated on Kylie’s now bare breasts. They jiggled just inches from my face in time to a hip hop beat. I caught another strong whiff of her musky perfume.

She took a step away from me. Half-turned to show me her back. My eyes traced the complex black ink maze that was a tribal tattoo on her lower back. A tramp stamp, shaped to draw attention to a beautifully round arse. Her thong disappeared between her cheeks. Then she bent at the waist and rolled her hips. I caught a glimpse

of the thin black gusset and gulped. This could only get better if she stepped out of her panties and rewound that roll.

She stepped out of her panties.

My hard-on propped the crotch of my jeans. Threatened to bust the zipper. I wished for tracky bottoms. Almost cried for them when Kylie lowered her soft arse onto my groin. She ground down hard. I was two thin layers of fabric away from penetration. My breath caught in my throat. Escaped with a little moan. Kylie laid back on me like I was the comfiest armchair in the world. She laid her head back on my shoulder. Gave me a birds-eye view of her huge boobs. Her dark nipples protruded like bullets. I ached for the taste of them. Salivated. Hyperventilated. Damn near ejaculated.

Kylie slid off me and onto the floor. Turned and lowered her head to my incarcerated dick. For a fleeting moment I thought I was in for a blowjob. Was willing to overlook the camera in the corner for it, in fact. But she gave the flap of fabric over my zipper a little tug with her teeth then slid backwards on her arse. Her legs parted to give me one last peek of her shaved vagina. Then the music faded and she was on her feet. She tugged her underwear back on in jig time.

My balls ached, the tip of my dick niggled and my head throbbed.

I wanted another go.

Kylie led me back to the bar and disappeared into one of the shadowed booths. Benny waited for me at a fruit machine. It didn't look like he'd hit the jackpot.

'Well, how goes it?' I asked.

'I lost another fiver in this fucking machine. They'll have the administrators after me before the end of the night.'

‘Been waiting long for me?’

‘A few minutes. Mine cut it short after I whipped my lad out.’ He pumped his fist to illustrate.

I gave him a smirk. ‘You’re a fucking eejit.’

‘Wish I *was* fucking. No, I’m just an eejit tonight.’ He nodded to the bar.

‘Fancy another drink, bud?’

‘Have you a hole in your head? The price of it in here. Jesus, no. Come on and we’ll hit a club.’

‘Fireworks?’

Fireworks on Tara Street. We were just about young enough to get into that place. Both of us were pushing thirty, but Benny had that young boy-band look about him. A bit like the little fellah out of Boyzone. Only straight. And alive. I was a little rougher round the edges, but I’d get away with a few more nights on the tiles yet.

‘Yeah, we’ll do Fireworks, then,’ I said.

Slam. The whiskey hit my gut and the thick-bottomed tumbler thudded onto the bar top. Colour rose in my cheeks. I hated the taste. It left my throat sandpaper raw. But I was older than the Aftershock and Apple Sourz squad that jostled me for position at the bar. The amber firewater lent me an air of sophistication the young pups couldn’t match. Even if it did churn my already sloshing stomach.

‘Jesus Christ, Jimmy,’ Benny said. ‘Take it easy with the Jameson, all right? I’m not picking you up off the floor when you land on your ear.’

‘Drink you under the table any day, son.’

Benny sipped at his Southern Comfort and lime. ‘You’ll be singing a different tune in the morning, bud. Yvonne won’t let you lie on all day, you know.’

I feigned indifference but was all too aware of the clammy sweat that popped up on my brow. Benny was right. Yvonne would send the nipper in to bounce on the bed as soon as he got his breakfast into him. I checked my watch. After midnight. If I was lucky I'd be left undisturbed until eight in the morning.

'May as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb, Benny.'

'It's *hanged*, bud.'

'Fuck off and buy us a drink, *bud*.'

Benny ordered up a pitcher of beer and we grabbed a table that freed up. I could have done with another whiskey, but Benny was buying so I wasn't complaining. He filled the pint glasses – one part beer to one part foam – and raised his in a toast.

'Fuck the recession, we're on a session.'

I grinned and slurped from my pint glass. 'Good man, Benny. Good man.'

The construction trade had gone to shite and I was feeling the pinch. Benny the banker assuaged his guilt at being part of the economic problem – one of the many recipients of yearly bonuses and other benefits that killed our Celtic Tiger – by buying more than his fair share of drinks on a night out. I was happy to accept his charity when it was offered. He meant well, like.

A hip hop tune rumbled. Blood started running to my dick. It fattened. I crossed my legs.

'That's the song from earlier,' I said.

Benny poured another couple of beers. Squinted at me.

'At the other place.' The beat brought with it visions of Kylie's jiggling breasts.

It clicked with Benny. ‘Oh, yeah. You might be right. All that new shite sounds the same to me, though.’

I half-listened to him and nodded. Most of my attention had drifted off to relive the memory of Kylie working her heavy hips. A coven of short-skirted clubbers drifted past our table. They left a lazy wave of musk in their wake. My dick twitched.

‘I could really do with a handjob,’ I said.

Benny edged away from me.

‘Not from you, you buck-eejit.’

He looked to the floor packed with drunken damsels. ‘Plenty of potential out there ... you’re married, though.’

‘Yeah, I know. But sure, I’m only saying.’

‘Well, fucking don’t, all right?’

Benny looked like he was ready to square up to me. I thought it prudent not to remind him that he was the divorced one, not me.

‘Mary’s a nice girl,’ he said. ‘You should have treated her with more respect.’

Treated?

Benny shook his head and dug into his hip pocket.

‘What about a whiskey this time?’ he asked.

Treated?

Maybe I’d imagined it. Benny waved a note under my nose.

I snatched it off him. ‘I’ll go to the bar, then, will I?’

I faked unconsciousness for as long as I could but I had to give it up when I felt tiny fingers prod my eyelids. That freaks me out and Liam, our toddler, knows it only too

well. I peered at him through crusty lashes. He gave me his cheeky grin and the urge to shout at him passed. It wasn't his fault I was hungover.

'All right, son?'

Liam giggled at my croaks. He tugged at the duvet. 'Mam-mam-mam.'

'Is your daddy up, son?'

My wife's usually soft voice crackled with an edge. The floorboards at the top of the stairs creaked and I'd a few seconds of mad panic and guilt. Had I said anything to her about Kylie? I didn't remember getting home so anything could have happened before I crashed onto the bed. She could have questioned a lipstick smear on my cheek, musky perfume on my clothes or a smug look on my face like a cat that got the cream. Shite, shite, shite. She'd come at me like a banshee.

I sat bolt upright, ready to defend myself.

'Jesus, you actually *are* up, then?' she said. 'I could smell the whiskey off you last night. Thought you'd be unmovable until noon at least.'

'Ah, Mary. I think I'm dying.'

She gave me a smile. A real one. Looked like I was safe.

'You've only yourself to blame, Jimmy.'

Usually I'd tell her to leave me alone, but for some reason I just took it and forced myself out of bed. I went for my dressing gown which hung off a handle on the wardrobe.

'Get away with that,' Mary said. 'You're not lying about all day feeling sorry for yourself. Get in the shower and sort yourself out. We've things to be doing today.'

I sounded a little grunt then hobbled towards the *en suite*.

'Thanks, love,' Mary said.

'For what?'

‘Listening to me for a change.’

I was about to ask her what the fuck that was meant to mean, but little Liam grabbed her by the finger and asked for a drink. She rolled her eyes at me and let him lead her down the stairs. I flicked on the shower. The jets of water hissed. As I undressed, images of Kylie crowded my mind. I hummed the bass track to the tune she’d danced to. Got hard.

Locked the door.

Sweat rolled down my back. I pushed harder. Grunted. Cursed. Thought about Kylie and her shaved bits. Just to get me through the gardening, like.

I caught sight of Mary. She stood at the back door with a cold tin of Carlsberg in her hand. I shut off the mower, dropped the handle and trod across the freshly cut lawn.

‘Go on, you good thing,’ Mary said. ‘You’re putting your back into that.’

‘Working through the hangover.’

‘This’ll help too, won’t it?’ She tapped the side of the tin with a short, practical fingernail.

I shoved my gardening gloves into my back pocket and reached for the tin. Cracked it and swallowed quarter in one gulp. God.

‘You’re a star, Mary.’

‘No worries, love. Thanks for getting stuck in.’

I shrugged, worried that if I said anything I’d sound guilty. She must have taken it for modesty or something. Gave me a fond look. The sun popped out from a cloud and narrowed her eyes. Its rays picked out the auburn in her dark hair. She

raised a hand to her head to shield her vision. It looked like a mischievous salute and went with her hipshot stance perfectly. A pretty picture.

‘I love you,’ she said.

‘Love you too.’

And I meant it.

But if I loved my wife so much, why the hell was I angling for another night out? I came up behind her when she was elbow deep in soapy water. Wrapped my arms around her waist and kissed her neck. She stiffened slightly, which wasn’t exactly what I was going for.

‘Some of the lads are heading out tonight.’

‘Oh?’

‘Yeah ... Em ...?’

‘I never got a lie in last weekend.’

‘I know, I know. You can get the next two Sundays.’

‘That’s big of you, Jimmy.’

I took the snarking. Savoured the memory of musky perfume. Relived the feel of a soft body, confident in its nudity, pushed against mine. The thought of another lap dance made my heart go whup-whup-whup.

‘I’ll bath Liam before I go. You get yourself a cuppa, right?’

Thawed her a bit.

‘You owe me.’

I was cool with that. All I needed was this one night to set myself straight with my little obsession. Then I could get my head back into family life. I’d already tapped Benny for a wad of euros. No interest. With any joy, it’d buy me a happy ending.

Without a murky insulation of booze, the gentleman's club didn't seem so welcoming. The doorman jutted his jaw and sniffed in response to my friendly smile. He took my tenner and unhooked a frayed velvet rope to allow me access to the bar area. The clientele seemed subdued. Drunker than the night before. I hated the music. Big bass dance played through speakers too tinny to give it any balls.

But big deal, right? I didn't intend to stay too long. Just wanted to do the business with Kylie and leave. After that, I'd maybe call Benny and a few of the other lads. Ask if they wanted to meet me at Fireworks. See if we couldn't bang back a few shots and just end up where the night took us.

A small hand squeezed my arse. I looked over my shoulder. Danni. Benny's skinny brunette from the night before. I glanced over her head, into the shadowed booths. She prodded my chest.

'I'm down here, mister.'

God, her Dub' *gurrier* twang didn't do much for me at all. With her hair scraped back into a high ponytail, she looked worse than I remembered. And I wasn't that impressed by the memory.

Still, a little charm never hurt.

'How're ya, Danni? You look powerful. I was after a word with Kylie, though. She here tonight?'

Danni gave me a slow blink. Tried to place me. 'Oh, yeah. I remember you. Your friend tried to get a free wank off me last night.'

Free? That was the worst of Benny's behaviour, then. He didn't negotiate terms before whipping his lad out. Maybe a couple of euros *could* buy me what I was after.

I asked about Kylie again.

'She's out the back right now. Sure why don't you buy me a drink while you're waiting for her?'

I looked around at the sad sacks with girls clung to them as they sipped on over-priced, piss-poor quality booze. Turned my nose up at them. But the wad in my pocket weighed heavy. What was the harm, eh? I nodded to an empty booth. Danni waved at the barmaid and held up two fingers.

'Send us over two bottles of Corona, Sammy.'

'I don't really like Corona,' I said.

'Trust me, mister. It's the best we have here. You definitely don't want anything from the taps.'

I sat with Danni and forced a few gulps of warm beer into me. She whispered a spiel into my ear while her bony hand traced my chest, my stomach and stopped short of my belt buckle. I kept my eye out for Kylie.

Then I saw her. She led a young lad with L-plates hung around his neck back to his mates at the bar. They cheered for him when she planted a little peck on his cheek. I told myself that it wasn't jealousy clenching my jaw shut. It was impatience. I just wanted to get what I'd come for and leave. And the more I inwardly repeated that little nonsense to myself, the less I believed it.

I nudged Danni. 'There's herself now.'

Danni sighed a little then patted my crotch. 'You know what you want anyway, mister.'

My balls throbbed. I got greedy. ‘Yeah, I do. Why don’t you call Kylie over, but stay with us for a drink at least, right?’

‘I just don’t do it, Jimmy,’ Kylie said. ‘Dancing and lesbian shows only. I’m not a whore.’

‘Name your price,’ I said.

She tilted her head. ‘How many ways do I need to say it? I’m not going to suck your dick for money.’ Her Manchester accent thickened as she raised her voice.

I sagged. Well, most of me did. The pressure in my boxers was not abating. And Danni’s straying hands didn’t help. She gave me a sharp squeeze.

‘I’ll suck it.’

‘Thanks, Danni. But ...’ I looked pointedly at Kylie.

‘What’s the difference?’ Danni said.

I shrugged.

Kylie fiddled with a beer mat, tore it in half and sighed. ‘So you don’t want a dance or a show and you don’t want Danni to get you off. You’ve only eyes for me and my big gob, is that it?’

I shifted in my lumpy seat. ‘Yeah.’

Kylie tutted and shook her head. ‘Look, in the time me and Danni have been chatting to you, we could have done a couple of dances each. You’re actually costing *us* money now.’

‘Give me what I want and I’ll pay you enough that you’ll be able to knock off early for the night.’

Kylie’s eyes pinged about in their heavily made-up frames. Her trout-pout twitched. I had her on the hook.

‘Maybe we can work *something* out, Jimmy.’

It wasn't exactly what I wanted. Danni on her knees in front of me, with her mouth full. Kylie behind her, dancing to the same hip hop beat from the night before and blocking the camera's line of sight. Me holding on for dear life.

Kylie looked me in the eye. Smirked as she traced a fake nail around her nipple. ‘Go on, love. Give it up.’

I grunted.

‘Your cock's so *big*,’ Kylie said.

Danni mumbled something that might have been positive affirmation.

Whatever she said, the sound waves made my dick thrum. I roared. Let rip. Kylie giggled and clapped her hands. The movement of her arms slapped her breasts together. I heaved again. Danni slurped and swallowed then slid back on her arse. Gave me a little flash before she covered her designer vagina with a delicate hand. A thin line of my semen dribbled down her chin.

I felt good and bad at the same time. Or maybe it was relieved and pathetic. Kylie didn't give me much time to analyse.

‘Hurry up and put it away, for fuck's sake. I'm not going to stand here all night.’

I looked down at myself. Saw the state of my toppled erection and fumbled it back into my boxers. My jerky awkwardness drew a couple of snorts.

‘Don't worry,’ Danni said. ‘It's not the smallest I've ever seen.’

Which, of course, implied that it wasn't anywhere near the biggest she'd ever seen either. The dirty bitch.

I watched them both get dressed with robotic efficiency. They went from naked to half-naked in mere seconds. The sudden change in the red-lit room's atmosphere did little to abate my self-loathing. I was a fool. A loser. Simply ridiculous. And I'd paid through the nose to feel that way.

'Let's go,' Kylie said.

'Can you leave me here for a minute or two, girls? Just need a little quiet time before I hit the street.'

'Sorry, love. No can do. House rules.'

Kylie folded her arms, cocked a hip and waited for me to get up. I looked her up and down, noted the streaks in her fake tan and the patches of cellulite on her upper thighs. There was a certain sadomasochistic pleasure in deconstructing my object of lust. It diminished her for the sake of my pride, but it also needled me for thinking she was worth the desire. I figured the confused thought process was a sign that I was over her.

I slipped off the chair and made for the exit. Kylie led the way and let the door swing back on me and Danni. Rude as fuck, like. I shoved against the spring-loaded hinges and held it open for Danni. She brushed past me, stopped and turned on her heel. She produced a scrap of paper from God-knows-where and slipped it into my hip pocket, taking care to brush against my tender bits before she drew her hand back.

'Call me next time you need a little bit of relief, mister. I reckon you could do with something a bit more regular. You near blew a hole in the back of me head earlier.'

I woke early on the Sunday. Felt pretty good, too. I'd skipped the nightclub and spent a few hours walking around Dublin after my time with Kylie and Danni. Cleared my

head out. When I got home, I'd slipped quietly into bed without waking Mary. No awkward questions or unconvincing lies. Just a decent night's sleep.

I figured Mary had gotten up before me and was laid out in front of the TV with little Liam. The sheets on her side, though rumpled, were cool. I rolled into her spot and smelt her shampoo off her pillow. Breathed deep. I didn't lie for long, though. Needed to empty the bladder.

After a quick slash I padded down the stairs, thinking I could get the kettle on before the nipper rushed me.

I almost stepped over the suitcases before I registered them.

Then I noticed the silence. Like, *really* noticed it.

I barged into the living room. Clocked the TV. Not even a glimmer of standby light. I scratched my head. Got the feeling. *Dread*. Tried to shake it off as paranoia.

I remembered the suitcases at the foot of the stairs.

It wasn't paranoia.

I went back to the hallway. Nudged one of the cases onto its side with an outstretched toe. It flopped onto the floor tiles with a hollow thud. I hunkered down and opened it. Empty. Except for a white window envelope.

The top of the envelope was ragged. Split open by a forefinger, most likely. There was no paper inside. I looked at the back of it. Mary's familiar scrawl in blue biro. It looked angry. Jagged and non-uniform. Big letters, small ones. Upper and lowercase. Hard to read. Except for the last two words: *Dirty bastard*.

Perfectly printed.

No *xox*.

I crumpled it and threw it at the front door. The little white lump fell short, so I picked up the empty case and launched it. I missed my target again, but took out a

row of family pictures on the hallway wall. Glass skittered across the tiles. I could hear myself breathing like a phone pervert. Thought about Mary's note and grabbed the hall table from under the stairs. Sent it after the suitcase. This time I hit the door. Gashed the fuck out of the wood.

I pounded up the stairs and snatched my jeans off the bedroom floor. Upended them and shook them from the cuffs. My mobile and wallet slid out of the back pockets. I scooped up the phone. Tried to call Mary. She didn't answer.

After my third attempt to get through to her, a text message popped up on the display.

Pack ur shite n get 2 fuck!!!

'Ah, Jesus.'

I phoned Benny next.

'What do you want, Jimmy?'

'Was it you?'

'Me what?'

'Mary's gone.'

'I know. She's here.'

'Did you tell her ...?' I replayed what he'd just said. 'Here where? At *your* place?'

'You're a stupid fucker, *bud*.'

Benny cut the line. I stared at the 'call disconnected' message. It faded to black.

I'm a little slow, but I figured that Benny had told Mary about my little adventure at the gentleman's club. My first one, at least. As if the cheeky bastard wasn't there with me. And he was using it as an angle to get into Mary's knickers?

Not that I could tell her that Benny was with me. Had *led* me there, in fact. Sure I'd only be talking myself into a deeper hole. For fuck's sake. The stupid bitch.

I wanted to get angry all over again. Knew I had no right.

I dropped my mobile onto the bed. It landed beside my wallet. I picked it up and flipped it open. The little scrap of paper with Danni's number on it was tucked into a corner of the note compartment. I hooked it out and unfolded it.

OK, I'd been no angel. But my best friend and my wife? Did shite like that really happen? Maybe I should have accepted it as karmic retribution, but my immediate thoughts were far from noble. I had the remainder of Benny's cash, which he'd never see again, and a contact to help me reach new lows.

I tapped Danni's number into my mobile. Wondered if she could get in touch with Kylie on a Sunday.