

**DIRTY LINEN**

written by

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A milkshake take-away cup is splashed out on the floor.

Cora looks up to KEV (mid 20s), tall and charming, elegant in his white shirt and black pants. He is unscathed, she is covered in pink liquid.

Kev is double-checking his suit, scared to find a stain... None. He smiles, relieved, until he encounters Cora's eyes, throwing spears at him.

KEV

Wow, I'm sorry, really...Not  
*totally* my fault, but...

Her clothes are dripping vanilla and strawberry shake. With a quick hand gesture, Kev links the laundromat to Cora's flowered bag.

KEV

Hey if you look at the bright  
side, you were going to do  
laundry anyway, right?

He winks, she grunts. With no further concern, Kev squats down to pick up from the floor the milkshake cup -- with her foot, Cora steps on it firmly. *Splash-sh*.

Kev slowly stands up, his face and shirt covered in the same colored dairy fluid. Cora wears now her most vengeful grin.

CORA

Oops...Not *totally* my fault...  
But, hey look at the bright side!

Grimacing again, she pushes the Launderette door, enters. From inside, she hears Kev's loud « FUCK ».

#### **INT. LAUNDERETTE - CONTINUOUS**

On-wall digital clock displays: 04:56 p.m. Laundromat is empty and silent.

Cora puts both her laundry bag and her leather purse down. In one of the washer's reflection she contemplates the damages: shirt is ruined, but under it, corset is untouched. She briefly relaxes.

Launderette door opens on Kev, a fiercely hypocritical smile on his face when he encounters Cora's gaze. He is on the phone. Cora turns, hiding her corsage. Kev walks towards a washer, unbuttoning his stained white shirt.

KEV (CONT'D)

(On the phone)  
Yeah, like I said, I got...*shaken*  
up a little.

Kev is the one throwing spears with his eyes at Cora now. She is loading her machine, playing indifferent. He takes off his shirt, throws it in a washer.

KEV (CONT'D)

(On the phone)

Man, I need the cash I told you so yeah I'll fix this and I'll be there at 6 p.m. like agreed. Text me the deets.

Hangs up. Shirtless, trying to keep his calm, Kev breathes in and out, before turning to Cora.

KEV

So, that was quite some unnecessary revenge out there.

Cora ignores him. He walks closer until she can't dismiss him, not unlike a kid seeking attention.

KEV

Nothing? Not even a courtesy apology?

CORA

I apologize.

KEV

Dunno if I accept it. See, I'm supposed to be serving posh peeps their bubbles in a few hours and I can't do that shirtless, can I?

CORA

I'm sure you can find another Primark on your way there. It's not like it was a T.M. Lewin anyways...

KEV

Wow.

Kev is about to walk away, then changes his mind.

KEV

You know what? No. I'm...here, why should I bother buying another shirt! Plus, you clearly wanted some company.

CORA

I don't.

KEV

Well, I didn't want milkshake on my shirt. Shit happens. Got yourself a laundry buddy, happy?

Cora closes the washer machine door, sighs, annoyed. Kev knocks on the washer's window.

KEV

Can you at least let me borrow a t-shirt until my machine is done?

CORA

It's all dirty clothes...

Kev doesn't move, still waiting. She takes her hand off and makes a go-for-it gesture.

CORA

Be my guest.

KEV

Thank you.

Kev dives his hand inside, gets out a purple large t-shirt, sniffs it, then puts it on. Cora looks at him, with mixed feelings, mostly including contempt and disgust but a little amusement as well.

Kev is now wearing a girly t-shirt displaying: «SEND HELP. OR SHORTBREAD. JUST SEND SHORTBREAD.»

KEV

Uhm. I feel that's a little off-character for you, am I right?

Cora rolls her eyes, unwillingly entertained.

CORA

It's my daughter's.

KEV

Gotcha.

Kev points at the stained shirt she is still wearing.

KEV

You should follow me lead.

With his girly shirt he nonchalantly goes for the backroom --

CORA

Hey!

Kev steps back, not expecting her interpellation.

CORA

Maybe your laundry will go faster if you press « START »?

He chuckles, winks again, presses START and disappears into the other side. Countdown on machine: 00:30.

**INT. LAUNDERETTE, BACK OF THE ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Three uncomfortable chairs await. Kev sits on the left. He adjusts the t-shirt, tries to get comfortable, closes his eyes. Changes his mind, takes out his phone.

**INT. LAUNDERETTE - CONTINUOUS**

Cora faces the washer and hesitates. She starts picking a *dirty* shirt from the washer, grimacing again. Settles for a similar bluet collar shirt.

She steps back a second to check if she has privacy. Her head thrown back, she sees Kev: sitting, texting. Stepping forward again, Cora unbuttons her shirt. She is in her spicy corsage in the middle of the laundromat.

*Tin-tin.* Rushing to her bag, searching her phone --

**INT. LAUNDERETTE, BACK OF THE ROOM**

Kev checks his last received text.

MUM

*I need to pay rent tomorrow, tell  
me you didn't forget to deposit  
the 200 quids I gave you  
yesterday??*

Kev inhales, uncharacteristically stressed. Types in:

*Will do tonight, mum. Promise. Loveya.*

He puts his phone in his pocket, looks at the void in front of him. After a second, he composes himself and stands up, steps inside the main room --

**INT. LAUNDERETTE, MAIN ROOM**

Cora is biting her lips, excited. On her lock-screen:

PAUL

*See you there at 6:00 ;)*

Distracted, looking at the text with sparkling eyes, Cora doesn't realize she didn't button her shirt, leaving her sexy underwear very visible...

**INT. LAUNDERETTE, BACK OF THE ROOM/MAIN ROOM**

From the backroom, Kev steps inside the main one and sees Cora in her corset, looking at her phone. Realizing she didn't see him, he steps back automatically, embarrassed to be a involuntary voyeur --

*Squeaksss...* His milkshakey shoe turning on the floor signals his presence to Cora, who looks back at him. Prudish, she hides herself.

KEV

Sorry, sorry, just wanted to go out for a fag. Not looking, I promise...*Madame*.

Kev turns towards the door, rushing outside. Once he is out, Cora checks at her reflection in the washer round window.

CORA

« Madam »...

She presses down a couple of buttons, then START. Loud and deafening roaring sound invades the small space, mixing up with the other roaring washer. Countdown: 00:20.

**INT. LAUNDERETTE, BACK OF THE ROOM**

Cora sits on the right hand side chair. Puts her bag in the middle. Takes out a woman's magazine. Her right leg nervously wobbles. She opens the magazine on an article, smiles proudly. The glazed paper display in red letters:

**Fifty & Fabulous: How To Be Single and Sexy In Your City**  
*By Cora Berthier*

Cora runs her index on the paper, glancing at the small bubbled picture of her, printed on top of the article. She looks at it a moment, then, puts the magazine on the side, and stands up.

**EXT. LAUNDERETTE - A FEW SECONDS LATER**

Kev is smoking his rollie, leaned on the glass window. Cora takes out her pack of Vogue cigarettes, changes her mind --

CORA

Hey, can I bum you a rollie?

KEV

Sure...you want me to roll it?

Cora chuckles. With maximum expertise, in less than 17 seconds, she rolls and lights her rolled-up cigarette. She is satisfied, Kev is impressed. He puts his hand forward --

KEV  
Hi, I'm Kev.

CORA  
Cora. Nice shirt, Kev.

KEV  
Quite my color, right?

Cora smirks. A beat.

CORA  
About the milkshake tragedy...I'm  
sorry. I didn't...It was a bad  
move, I shouldn't have.

KEV  
Yeah you kinda shouldn't have  
but...It's cool. It's cool.

CORA  
It was quite rude of me.

KEV  
I mean, you're French. It's a  
tradition, right?

Cora raises an eyebrow, finishes her cigarette.

KEV  
It was obviously a joke, I'm -

CORA  
Maybe you should stick to  
scripted jokes on girls' PJs.

Kev can't retain a laughter. Unexpectedly, Cora joins him.  
After a moment, they get back inside as it starts raining.

**INT. LAUNDERETTE, BACK OF THE ROOM**

Kev takes up Cora's magazine, recognizing her in the picture.

KEV  
You're a writer! Wicked.

CORA  
Indeed. What about you?

KEV  
I'm a...compulsive multi-job  
doer.

CORA  
Wow. That sounds...exhilarating.

KEV

It's not. I've done all possible jobs, and never one I loved.

CORA

Well you're...reasonably young.

Kev twists a corner of his mouth into a poor smile.

CORA

What would be the dream?

He opens his mouth to answer, doesn't articulate fast enough. *Beep-tup-beep*. Washers are done washing.

Reminded of their commitments, both Cora and Kev stand up, heading towards their laundries.

### INT. LAUNDERETTE - A FEW MOMENTS LATER

Holding her soaking wet laundry, Cora walks to the other side of the room, to the dryers section. On-wall clock: 05:28. She makes the face of someone who would hate to be late.

KEV (O.S.)

But this is still fucking wet!

CORA

...*That* was a washer. *This* is dryer.

KEV

Bollocks.

Kev takes his white wet shirt and walks across the room where Cora is opening some dryers, closing them again seeing that they are not working.

CORA

*Et merde.*

KEV

Fuck.

Cora and Kev stand in front of each other, beaten. Somewhere in the dryer's section... *Tam-Tam-Pft*. End of drying load. She jumps on the functioning dryer first, starts unloading it, putting her laundry in...Kev adds his shirt.

CORA

What are you doing?

KEV

It's the only working dryer. Can't we share it?

CORA

I have all colors, your shirt is white, it's gonna blend!

KEV

You don't know that from a fact.

Cora puts her hand on her hip, motherly.

CORA

You have never done laundry in your life, haven't you?

KEV

I have...*not*. However, I'm sure it's all bullshit, just to make you spend more money doing different loads!

CORA

Of course it is. Please, take your chance.

Kev seems a little less confident now. Hesitation.

KEV

Or you could just maybe, leave me the dryer for my shirt and then do yours...since I'm on a tight schedule.

CORA

Urgh see, I can't do that. There's somewhere I need to be too. Soon.

KEV

Yeah but, I mean, is it *really* important?

Irritated and in a hurry, Cora wants to close the dryer door but Kev holds it open quite strongly.

CORA

Back off !

KEV

Listen, I'm sorry I'm not gonna be gallant here -

CORA

No you listen, *I* found the dryer, *I* dry. End of conversation.

KEV

Right. So we're facing a situation and - Man, you're stronger than you look!

CORA

Pilates.

KEV  
 (imitating her in a high-  
 pitched voice)  
*Pilates.*  
 (serious again)  
 Please, I got to be at this job  
 tonight.

CORA  
 And I got to be at a...I have an  
 important meeting.

Kev takes a moment to read her embarrassment and realizes.

KEV  
 A date with some chap is not as  
 important as a job.

Cora is embarrassed.

KEV  
 Even if you're quite the Carrie  
 Bradshaw in *col claudine* you  
 can't possibly be wearing what I  
 saw you wearing for yourself.  
 Meaning...You got a hot date.  
 (Pause)  
 I'm quite the observer.

CORA  
 You're quite the voyeur more than  
 anything.

Offended, Kev wants to --

CORA  
 I am not going to let you  
 diminish my rendez-vous so you  
 could happily go to your stupid  
 job!

KEV  
 Stupid? I got to pay the rent  
 tomorrow and I need those 200  
 quid, okay?

CORA  
 That's unfortunate but that's  
 also absolutely not my problem.  
 Start thinking about rent earlier  
 next month.

KEV  
 Oh gosh, you're so...Argh!

CORA  
 Right back at ya.

Kev and Cora stare at each other, holding their positions.  
 Struggle is showing on both faces. *Tin-tin.*

KEV

You should check that. Maybe it's your hot-date asking for a rain-check...

CORA

Well tried. He's only in London for a day.

KEV

Oh so that's *really* just about sex, it's not even a romantic thing! Unbelievable!

CORA

Paul was my first love!

KEV

Exactly how *fucking* your ex is the beginning of a new romance?

CORA

Why am I even talking to you? Back off, I said!

KEV

No. I didn't want to have to do this but...

With his one other hand, Kev starts picking up laundry items from the dryer and starts throwing them in the laundromat everywhere.

CORA

You little fucker!

Cora fights back by seizing with her other arm, Kev's shirt. She releases her grip from the dryer door and sticks it into her mouth, threatening to rip it off with her teeth.

KEV

Nnno - You wouldn't.

Cora doesn't look away, she bites --

KEV

Stop, stop, stop! Okay.

Cora slowly puts her teeth back into her mouth, still holds the shirt tight.

KEV

How about we play it? It's only fair.

CORA

How would it be fair? I'm not leaving this to the toss of a coin...

KEV  
 Uh-uh. Not chance. *Skills.*

**INT. LAUNDERETTE, BACK OF THE ROOM - A FEW MOMENTS  
 LATER**

Kev holds his pack of rollies and puts the individual items on the middle chair, not far from the magazine: paper, filter, tobacco. Aligned.

Kev sits on his knees facing Cora, on her knees as well. The chair with the rolling items is in between them.

KEV  
 Are you ready for this?

CORA  
 Are you ready to lose?

Kev is focused but takes the time to let a smile escape. Cora puts her phone in the middle, a timer set on 10 seconds.

KEV  
 Just repeating the rules one more time for crystal clarity: ten seconds, the one with the finished or more presentable rollie gets the dryer.

Cora nods. The two of them look each other in the eyes.

KEV  
 May the best one win.

Cora activates the timer on her clock. It all goes very fast from there. They take up filter, paper, tobacco. Start spreading the tobacco on the paper --

**INT. LAUNDERETTE, MAIN ROOM**

Outside, the storm is raging. All laundry items lie on the laundromat's floor. *Tee-tee-t-t.* The door tinkles...

**INT. LAUNDERETTE, BACK OF THE ROOM**

Both Cora and Kev are too focused on their work to pay attention. Timer displays 00:06, 00:04...

A KID's (9) silhouette and the sound of a scooter in the main room.

Cora is on the finishing part, licks the paper, finishes...00:03, 00:02...Kev is not far after her, licks, rolls...*Teet-t-t.Teet-t-t.Teet-t-t.*

CORA  
Done! I won!

KEV  
DONE BABY DONE!

Cora and Kev present their rolled-up ciggies to each other, proud, slightly panting, heart beating, excited.

Another sound, beeping sound of machine inside the main room.

Cora and Kev's faces expression change fast. They both stand up, rush to the main room --

**INT. LAUNDERETTE, DRYER SIDE**

The KID, the same as earlier, is sitting down the dryer, soaking wet. In his underpants, unconcerned, he is toying with scooter from there, whistling a child melody.

Kev puts his hand in his hair, defeated. Cora drops her cigarette on the floor.

The kid stops whistling for a second, looks at them, then shrugs his shoulder.

KID  
Sorry?

Kev and Cora look at each other, speechless. The drying machine is roaring. On-wall clock displays: 05:42. It's too late. *Tin-tin*, in the backroom.

**INT. LAUNDERETTE, BACK OF THE ROOM**

Kev is sitting on the right chair, Cora joins him after putting the last washed-but-not-dried item into her bag. She sits on the left, the magazine and the cigarette material laying on the middle one.

KEV  
I'm fucked.

CORA  
Well, I'm not going to fuck.

Kev laughs, it makes Cora smile too. They check their phones.

On Cora's:

JULIETTE  
*The agency said they can't send  
someone from repairs until next  
week...*

On Kev's phone, a voice message:

MUM (CONT'D)

« You spent them to participate to a *writing contest*?? Kevin Kostner, don't you dare come home without the money or I'll... »

Pause. Kev takes his head into his hands, elbows on his knees. Doesn't know what to do. A beat.

CORA

Kevin Costner?

KEV

With a K...

Cora laughs. *Tin-tin*. On her phone:

JULIETTE

*Good luck with your meeting! I'll be home chilling...eating shortbread!! :)*

Cora has an idea. She turns towards Kev, beaten still.

CORA

As a multi...practitioner...Did you ever fix a washer machine?

Kev looks up, resigned anyways.

KEV

Yeah, once.

CORA

How about 200£ if you fix mine tonight. Cash.

His face enlightens.

CORA

I can't possibly do my laundry here ever again.

Kev puts his hand forward to her. The shake. *Deal*.

KEV

What about your date with Pierre?

CORA

*Paul*. But maybe you were right, recycling love isn't a good idea. I'm sure I can do better.

Cora smiles, proud of herself, empowered.

KEV (CONT'D)

Oh, I'm flattered, I know the effect I have on the ladies but -

CORA  
 Argh! Are you serious? My  
 daughter's your age!

Kev is relieved, he smirks.

KEV  
 She cute?

Cora hits him gently-not-too-gently with her magazine. He  
 puts his hands up, not guilty. Cora stands up --

CORA  
 Come on, let's get out of here,  
*laundry buddy.*

**EXT. LAUNDERETTE - AFTERNOON, 05:52**

It stopped raining. Cora and Kev walk side by side, each  
 smoking their perfectly rolled-up cigarettes. They share an  
 accomplice smile.

KEV  
 I want to be a writer.

Cora nods, not expecting it. As they walk --

CORA  
 Two strangers... a little bit of  
 stereotyping, a series of  
 laundromat crisis... and an  
 unexpected turnout. Seems to me  
 you got yourself a story.

Kev displays his most genuine happy face.

CORA  
 Written by...Kevin Kostner.  
 (Pause)  
 Convenient, your name is already  
 a pseudonym!

Kev looks pensive a second.

KEV  
 I think I even got a title.

TITLE DISPLAYS ON SCREEN: « DIRTY LINEN ».

The two of them keep on walking, talking, until they  
 disappear into another street.

THE END