

Having Relations

By Sarah Quick

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Born in a small town in rural Ontario Declan O’Doyle is obsessed with *having relations*. He dreams about it, talks about little else and now he’s turned to the internet to assist his search...

A heartwarming comedy about love, sex and all things Irish!

Characters

Declan O’Doyle.....Small town Ontario boy - late thirties
Victoria MacCarthy.....Irish Girl – mid thirties
Cheryl O’Doyle.....Declan’s mum - Sixties

The three actors also play various other characters and the actress playing Cheryl also plays Vicki’s mum, Moira.

Setting

Cobyfield. A small town in Northern Ontario

And

Ballyvireen. Co. Cork.

Act 1 Scene 1

Lights up on Declan. At the computer in T-shirt, socks and boxer shorts.

DECLAN *(notices the audience)* Hi. The name's O'Doyle, Er, Declan...O'Doyle.
Only, I didn't mean to sound like James Bond there. Not that I did. But...I
didn't mean to sound like I was *trying* to sound like James Bond there.
Because I'm not...at all....James Bond like...at all.

Declan starts to put on his jeans, look for his belt and put a shirt on over his T-shirt.

Although, I have to say, I've been feeling a lot more like ol' double 0 recently, eh. Since I discovered the wonderful wide-world web on my little computer box. One new-fangled adapter, a modem thingy and 15 tiny swear words later I had a whole new world to indulge in! I felt like Mr Bond must have felt when Q presented him with his souped up Aston Martin in Goldfinger. Except that not even revolving licence plates could compare to the whole new world that lay waiting for me. It all started about two years ago...I felt really...alone and I knew I had to do something about it...not easy when you live with my mother. I didn't get nearly enough time for it, just stolen moments which made the whole thing very frustrating...and then I discovered this! *(indicates computer)*
No more relying on stacks of magazines or the odd snippet from a newspaper. No more phone calls that would last twenty, maybe thirty, minutes...costing a fortune. Here was everything I had been looking for, at my fingertips!
That's why I said O'Doyle. My name's O'Doyle. Because that's what it is on there. My screen-name. You're not supposed to use your real name. Well, it's not a rule, necessarily, just not the norm. People tend to go with more random aliases. LollipopStar, GaelicSiren ...TractorTrailer58. Not a particularly sexy name but certainly conjures up an image to work with.
But I go with O'Doyle. Anonymity somewhat negates the process I feel. Undermines the reason for being there...the *connection*.

Now for most people such a pastime has no overtones of shame, no reason to be embarrassed...but not with my mother in the house. She'd kill me...or at least she'd be right upset.

But I have to do it! It's in my blood. And this lovely contraption makes it so simple, so easy...it's quite addictive!

(Getting carried away) A few clicks and it's right there before your eyes. Stripped bare. Glorious. I can feel my heart racing and I'm aware of every breath. It makes you feel alive. Tingly. And then you think about the other people who have clicked on that very link, seen the same things you have, with the same passion and-

CHERYL (shouts) Declan!

Cheryl knocks on the door

DECLAN Shit.

CHERYL I'm coming in. Are you decent?

DECLAN Yes.

CHERYL Are you sure?

DECLAN (confused) Yeeees.

Cheryl enters.

CHERYL Right I've had enough of you skulking in your room all day. It's not normal to spend every waking hour hunched over a computer-

DECLAN -I'm not hunched-

CHERYL -chatting to floosies and indulging in computer generated gratification.

DECLAN What!

CHERYL I know it's natural, your father's explained, but I don't know why you can't make do with a copy of National Geographic like he does.

DECLAN Oh God-

CHERYL You've access to too much nonsense with this thing and you'll end up communicating with perverts and fetish-itiations and alltypes.

DECLAN Mom! I'm not surfing anything of the sort. You think I'm looking at dirty pictures?

CHERYL And the rest!

DECLAN Noooooo! Mom!

CHERYL You're not then?

DECLAN Nothing like it! Jesus!

Pause

DECLAN How could you think-

CHERYL - I just thought-

DECLAN No – honest to God...

CHERYL (thinks) Well, why so secret then? What are you doing if you're not titillating yourself with technology

DECLAN I'm....

CHERYL (pause) What?

DECLAN You're not going to like it.

CHERYL It can't be any worse than you cavorting with a computer...diddling yourself digitally...

DECLAN Yes, alright. I'm...(breath) I'm tracing my, *our*, ancestors.

Pause

It's awesome. Mom, I can find out stuff on here in a few minutes rather than pouring over stacks of magazines. And I don't have to call overseas to the General Registry Office and be put on hold for twenty to thirty minutes, I can contact them online. You get a real connection...people looking at the same page of information...people that are far off relations, people with the same flesh and blood connecting. And the more people I chat to the more people see the name O'Doyle and that's how things start to happen

CHERYL Huh!

DECLAN I didn't tell you because I knew you'd say it was a waste of time.

CHERYL I would.

DECLAN I know.

CHERYL Because it is.

DECLAN And a waste of money.

CHERYL It costs money!

DECLAN Not a lot. Just subscribing to the various sites. Peoplespast.com,
Genealogy.org-

CHERYL I saw that one on there the other day while I was getting your laundry –
I thought it sounded filthy!

DECLAN HavingRelations.com

CHERYL Well! You can see why I might be confused. I can tell you here and now, and you
can ask your father too, I have no interest at all nor ever have had in ‘Having
Relations’

DECLAN (aside) You must have done at least twice!

CHERYL Well once then. I wish I’d had some information about my great grandmother...so
that I could find out if varicose veins run in the family. Oprah blames hormones -
but she blames a disproportionate lot on her thyroid - and I’m convinced they’re
in my genes.

DECLAN There you are then; there are a million and one reasons why finding out about our
past can be beneficial.

CHERYL Or a load of trouble that we don’t need.

DECLAN Why do say that? What is it that could be so terrible that we wouldn't want to know? (pause) Mom?

CHERYL Nothing, I mean, there's probably nothing I just don't see any use for it. Why! Why do you need to know about a bunch of people that are long gone.

DECLAN Coz I'm Irish. I've Irish blood in me...and with it a longing to know more about my people, my roots-

CHERYL Have you been sniffing the ink cartridges? You are Canadian. And you should be proud of that!

(to audience) He's always been the same. Obsessed with being Irish! And now, tucked away in his room all day, the glow of the computer sneaking its way under the door. I was worried he was playing that World of Wargames, I thought he was probably... (*Can't say masturbating*) you know...but not this! It's a dangerous game, bound to end in tears.

DECLAN I am proud to be Irish. I'm proud to be Canadian too but I want to know about my family. Where I came from. It's in my blood. I can't dance but my legs have an urge to flail about the minute I hear a fiddle, I can drink with the best of them, I love potatoes – not just fries, mashed, roasted, boiled, sautéed...all of them, without exception. *And*, I support Manchester United. (*explains*) I realize Manchester is not in Ireland, of course, but everyone there supports them.

CHERYL Computers worry me. That annoying 'dunk'...'dink'...'dunk' noise they make – for no apparent reason! I mean, there must be a reason...but it's so random. Maybe it means it's getting full, eh? 'The World Wide Web has just received more information...attention needed, overload imminent.' What would they do then eh? When it was full? Who would be the one to decide what information was garbage to be gotten rid of and what should be kept?

DECLAN It was St Patrick's Day 2007 that nearly sent me over the edge. I'm used to the parades being on any day other than the 17th...I've accepted that, I have. But as I walked into the pub, well, *bar*, that night I felt like I'd been stabbed in the heart. The sign said The Irish Bar – all lit up in green with a generic Gaelic font and a flashing shamrock for good measure. The woman behind the bar looked at me strangely when I asked for an Irish whiskey 'oh no, we've never carried that eh' *and* they'd run out of Guinness at three o'clock coz they hadn't realize how popular it would be! Pissy *green* beer. You'd never catch a real Irish man tampering with his pint like that...it'd be sacrilege. And the only entertainment apart from the god-awful Karaoke was a town councillor, dressed as a leprechaun, dribbling on himself in a corner.

CHERYL Or, maybe when it 'dunks', it's someone out there taking information from you, eh? Watching what you're doing, taking notes. I mean, I don't know who that would be exactly...but it would be an interesting job don't you think? Knowing what everyone's surfing for when they think there's nobody watching. Actually, our curling team would be excellent candidates for the position...nosey, like you wouldn't believe!

DECLAN I vowed then and there that I was going to make it over the pond; that I was going to find my relations – past and present – and I was going to do it soon. As Fionn McCool forged his path from the tip of the North so shall I forge my way onwards and upwards to the green, green grass of home. (Beat) Of course I've never been out of the country so I don't have a passport...but a journey of 1,000 miles begins with the inevitable 5 hour line up at the Scarborough passport office. I wonder if it's located in Scarborough to make people realize 5 hours is worth it in order to be able to leave the country.

CHERYL It's not a good idea to go raking up the past. People can get hurt.

I sometimes asked my mum about Ireland. That's where they thought her grandmother was raised, maybe. But she didn't want to know. Any mention of the place sent her into distress. Dad would answer some questions if she wasn't in earshot – he'd spent some time there during the war – but he was careful not to 'upset mother's nerves' and we were generally sent to count the frogs in the pond, in case any were missing, as a distraction.

Better to look to the future, I say...*that* you can do something about.

DECLAN Our past makes us what we are today-

CHERYL (to Declan) You don't even look Irish! You've got grey hair without even a hint of red.

DECLAN I've got ash blond hair actually...with maybe a hint of grey.

CHERYL You could be Swedish for all we know.

DECLAN I'm Irish.

CHERYL Huh! Learn that from you're computer did you?

DECLAN Yes actually.

CHERYL Maybe Swedish Irish, or German Irish? You do have Germanic features. Maybe you have Nordic ancestors who happened to visit Cork one day, on a break from Yodelling, to have a bit of hanky panky with a local colleen and-

DECLAN -I'm Irish!

CHERYL (laughing) Alright, alright. (she exits and returns immediately) Oh, Taylor called and wanted to know if you were on for a drink tonight.

DECLAN (sulking) No.

CHERYL (*As she exits*) I thought you said you were Irish.

Lights fade out.

Act 1 Scene 2

Lights up on Vicki. At the computer in cut off Jeans and a music t-shirt.

VICKI July 27th 1986 was the best day of my life. I was 15 years old and John Denver played the best concert of his life at the Páirc Uí Chaoimh in Cork. Actually I don't know if it was the best concert of his life but it certainly was of mine. I'd saved up for the best part of a year to buy my ticket, then my rucksack got lifted with everything in it before I even got to the bus station so I ended up hitchhiking there and sneaking in under the fence. There was an area that security avoided patrolling...down wind of the portaloos...and it was there I met a long-haired fella called Harley Davidson who let me spend most of the concert on his shoulders. It was a long time ago and I was barely seven stone soaking wet. I was 15, thin and drunk with the excitement. Away from Ballyvireen, thousands of people going mental and Johnny, like a God, right there before me. As he sang Country Road I wanted so much to go where I belonged too, West Virginia, Colorado, anywhere that wasn't Cork. Instead I had to hitch my way home with a farmer from Ballymacrown who stank worse than the portaloos and who dropped me off at the Rosscarbery roller rink so as I had to walk the last three miles in the pissing rain.

I think I got my passion for country music from my Grandma. I remember hearing it at her house for the first time. My Grandpa would go off to 'walk the dog' - which meant a few jars at Mackie's - and Granny would take down an old hat box from on top of her wardrobe - pillar box red it was with white piping and curly letters that you could feel wit your hand - inside were records and together we'd play them as loud as they'd go. She'd make us both a cup of coffee, we'd share a stick of chewing gum and she'd tell me about them that were singing and about the United States of America. About the Grand ole Oprey; and cowboys, and deserts. She'd never been there but she must have read a lot about it coz she knew an awful lot, like. I loved the twang of their voices - it reminded me of the

movies...and I wanted so much to be a part of it. I remember singing along at the top of my wee voice to Dolly and to Hank, and to Johnny Cash and Conway Twitty. She had really old ones too, 'right when it all began' she said. The Carter Sisters, Gene Autry all of them! When we'd listened to all but one of them she'd tell me it was bedtime and I'd ride my horse off into the sunset and up the stairs to my bed. Only then, when she thought I was asleep, I'd sneak out onto the landing and I'd kneel beside a wee gap in the banisters and I'd watch her...take out the last record and place it on her knees for a moment before lifting it onto the record player and playing it very softly. It was only after a few times I did this that I realized she had tears rolling down her cheeks. I wanted to run downstairs and throw my arms around her – but I knew, even then when I was seven or eight, that this wasn't something she'd want anyone to see.

Still, didn't curiosity get the better of me? I remember waiting until Granny was elbow deep in scone batter one half-term and I snuck up to her wardrobe. I balanced on top of the dressing table to reach that red hat box with the fancy white letters and I scattered the records across the bed until I found the one I was looking for. It was old, you could tell that, but in pristine condition – and there was some writing on it from someone called Monti. I didn't get to read the words Monti had written because at that moment Granny came flying into the room and started proper screaming at me. I'd never seen her angry before and certainly not at me – and I felt horrible. Her eyes were shiny and there were two red blotches high up on her cheeks, right there.

We never talked about that day...but a few years later she stopped sending me to bed before that final record and we both sat and listened to it play, softly. (sings) You are my sunshine..my only sunshine...you make me happy...

Then when Granda died - sat with the latter half of a pint at Mackie's, which by the law of averages was not a total surprise - Grandma's red hat box took pride of place in the living room and the records played night and day. She dyed her hair white blonde, took to smoking those extra long cigarettes and most of the town started to call her crazy. I'd hear snippets of conversations that would stop when I entered the room. "Typical, I'd say...you feel sorry for Mickey, God rest his

soul.” “There’s not smoke without fire” “Disrespectful it is...and you wonder why she’d do it after all this time...” Still, I thought she was brilliant! But, my mother didn’t agree – talked about how Granny was after filling my head with nonsense and she wasn’t fine right in the head.

My mother listens to godawful music. She always has - but it got worse at around the time of Granny’s ‘breakdown’. Suddenly Daniel O’Donnell became the patron saint of pop music and she fell upon records made by any eejits with a panpipe and a direct line to Jesus wittering on about ‘seeking the way’.

We couldn’t be more different. Well, I’m adopted so that could have something to do with it! But, her whole life is here, Ballyvireen. She gets homesick in County Kerry.

I’d go mad if I had to stay here all my life...I won’t. I just need to find a way to get out. Escape to North America. No more small towns with everyone knowing your business.

Everything that Granny described to me I want to see for real. I don’t know how, I’ve about 65 Euro to my name, but I’ve just got a new job and “what’s for you won’t go past ye” as Granny said.

North America’s for me, for sure. It’s huge so it is, not like this poxy island. It’s so vast that it’d probably take you a whole day and night just to drive across it – solid driving like!

I’ve to learn more about it for my new job. I’m working for St Andrew’s, part of their ‘help a fallen woman’ outreach program no doubt but, sure I’m just glad of the work. Anyway, they’ve set up this history website about all of the people that left Ireland during the famine and since. 2 and ½ million left from Cobh you see and well they’re collaborating with Cork County Council and the various diocese to give people more information...about their ancestors and the like. That’s where I come in – I have to correspond with those people from abroad that want to discover their Gaelic roots. Every once in a while I have to go and look through piles and piles of ancient papers in the churches or the museums but most of the info’s on the computer now so I think it’s going to be a good job. I think they

thought I was joking at the interview when I called the people that left Ireland ‘lucky bastards’ ... apparently they didn’t necessarily want to leave but it was the only way they could survive. 6 million left Ireland in two years from 1858 – 1860...I’ve been learning things like. Unfortunately, as I found out on my second day in the job, my ancestors were heavily involved in the Catholic Church and were recruited by wealthy English landowners to look after their estates by remaining in Ireland. So, I inherited Catholic guilt instead of a life of hamburgers, pick-up trucks and a hunk of a husband called Randy... or Chester. A hunk for sure – they make them big over there. I could have grown up as a woman in a world of real men and chivalry; dating, then ‘going steady’ instead of hoping to get lucky during the erection section of DJ Danger’s set every Friday night at the Junction or holding out on the locals to get a ride with a Donegal day-tripper. Of course most of the people that use the site are at least 60 and the majority of them are women, so it’s not exactly unveiling a world of romance to me but you never know ‘stranger things have happened’. Julie Fitzpatrick used the internet to place a food order from the Superquinn in Skibbereen and ended up marrying the delivery driver! She asked him if he wouldn’t mind giving her a hand with her perishables and sure he never left...

Act 1 Scene 3

Irish Fiddle music plays as Declan relaxes in his bedroom and tucks into a pint of Guinness and a large bowl of mashed potato.

CHERYL (shouts from off stage) Declan? Will you been joining us at the club?

DECLAN Wha?

CHERYL We're off the ice by 9.30 will you join us for a drink after eh? (enters)

DECLAN Wha?

CHERYL I said (realizes) Oh for God's sake...(Irish accent, exaggerated) Oh, to be sure, will you be joining us in the pub tonight?

DECLAN I will, aye. I'll be finishing my Guinness and my mashed potatoes and watching the footy, sure...and then I'll join you for a wee dram.

CHERYL Declan?

DECLAN Aye?

CHERYL You're Canadian.

DECLAN I am not you bollox. Oye am Oirish and proud.

CHERYL Declan?

DECLAN Aye?

CHERYL Not only are you Canadian, but that's the worst Irish accent I ever heard – including that Tom Cruise in Far and Away.

DECLAN Eejit.

CHERYL When are you going to stop all this nonsense. It's getting out of hand. You should have posters on the walls, of cars, or, or supermodels...not this garbage. Potatoes with every meal...even when we're having tacos? And that awful music – it makes me feel like I'm stuck in an elevator with the Lucky Charms guy!

DECLAN You can't stop me living like my forefathers, it's racist and prejudicial. I'm pretty sure there are laws about that now.

CHERYL You're right. No, you are, you're right. There are laws in place for people that make Canada their new home. To make it easier for them to continue their traditions and abide by their customs.

DECLAN Exactly.

CHERYL Only er, Declan...YOU were born down the road! Literally...down the road. You were born in Cobyfield; your father and I were born in Cobyfield and both of our parents were born here too!

DECLAN My great-great-great Grandfather travelled from Ireland to Canada without the shirt on his back.

CHERYL Without the shirt on his back?

DECLAN He came in the summer – it would have been stinkin' hot.

1849 was the year.

VICKI Michael Mary O'Doyle was 20 years old.

DECLAN His wife Nimah

VICKI (corrects his mispronunciation) Nimah.

DECLAN Nimah was 17.

VICKI Their first child

DECLAN a son

VICKI was born on the crossing. He died before his first birthday but they went on to have 13

DECLAN Thirteen!?

VICKI Thirteen more children, nine of whom survived.

DECLAN Six boys and three girls.

VICKI The youngest of them was Padraig.

DECLAN Padraig O'Doyle.

VICKI I've not found out too much about his wife yet or how many children he had but I know that in 1880 he had a son called William.

DECLAN William O'Doyle, my great-grandfather.

VICKI He married his first cousin

DECLAN First cousin?!

VICKI First cousin Caroline O'Doyle.

DECLAN I was a little taken aback about that at first but the girl who runs the website assured me that that was

VICKI definitely not unusual in those days.

DECLAN She's awesome...I mean...the site, the site is awesome – you can find out so much! Turns out

VICKI both sets of your mother's great-grandparents

DECLAN were cousins too! – all from Ireland.

VICKI On her dad's side his granddad came over first in 1888,

DECLAN established a home and some land and then sent for his wife-to-be, or cousin-that-was.

VICKI By the time she came over he was 33

DECLAN and she was 18

VICKI he hadn't seen her since she was six but it was deemed a suitable match.

DECLAN I figured that was all a bit crazy-

VICKI No, no. Perfectly normal – sure it happened all the time.

DECLAN I'm still not convinced about the 'marrying the cousin' school of thought...but it does make the family tree easier to draw.

It baffles me that Mom can have no interest at all in this. But she feels it's terribly disloyal. Like the life of a 36 year old in rural Ontario should be like a Canadian beer commercial. She wants me to be a puck-chasing, snow-shovelling, beaver-hunting Canadian male. A stereotype, certainly...but a fitting description of my brother, Anthony....

CHERYL I wish he could be more like his brother.

DECLAN It's all I've ever heard, growing up. You wait, any second now –

DECLAN/CHERYL - Why can't you be more like your brother?

CHERYL he's proud to be where he's from.

DECLAN Just because you bypass Starbucks for Tim Hortons does not make you a candidate for Premier.

CHERYL It shows some loyalty to your country. He said he went to Starbucks once, in the city, and it was horrible...they laughed at him!

DECLAN He ordered a Late-y!

CHERYL *He* drinks Canadian beer.

DECLAN Labatts?

CHERYL Exactly.

DECLAN Owned by a Belgian company.

CHERYL Wash your mouth out.

DECLAN It's true.

CHERYL Your brother is proud of this country. He...he plays hockey, he loves to Skidoo and...and him and Randy have never missed the first day of duck hunting! He's Canadian.

DECLAN Yeah, well maybe he should go hog wild and marry Randy – that's Canadian!

CHERYL Ooh there's no talking to you when you're in this mood. Fine! See if we care...you spend your life convincing yourself that the Irish grass is greener, you'll see. (exits)

DECLAN I'm not worried about the stupid grass. But I'll bet my life the Guinness tastes better there...and I plan to find out.

Act 1 Scene 4

VICKI I'm destined for the Americas – a gypsy told me! I had my palm read at Duggan's, about five months ago now, everyone was getting it done – some just to take the Mick and others treating it like it was the gospel. I was sceptical, I'll admit. She was dressed the part of a gyppo with the shawl 'n' all but there was no crossing the palm with silver. Instead you placed a 20 Euro note on top of a steadily growing pile. I'm pretty sure I saw a manual credit card machine pokin' out of her satchel. She was pretty much stone deaf too, like, so you had to shout your details to her and everyone else in the bar. But she had me right, sure. Said I'd had a difficult beginning in life but my future was golden! Said I'd travel far! She couldn't be more specific about where exactly...coz my decisions would determine the destination. The bit that got me though was she was after asking me about what music I was into – was it anything unusual, out of the ordinary, considering my background. Well! At first when I told her 'country and western' she thought I was being derogatory about a performer from Wexford and it almost sent her off on a tangent but when I said 'no, country and western' her eyes lit up and she smiled really wide, I remember thinking she had a very nice set of teeth, for a gypsy. Apparently, it turns out; I was a cowgirl in a previous life! Best 20 Euro I ever spent...

DECLAN You may be wondering why it is that I live at home. Being as though my mom is one chicken leg short of a bucket. Well, for a start, I'm single. (pause) You don't look overly surprised, I have to say. And, secondly, I'm a plumber. Which isn't a bad thing in itself, don't get me wrong, I love my job...but it's not an asset to finding a woman. Oh, it facilitates excellent chat up lines about needing to clear the pipes but you don't get to meet many women on the job. I mean, there are women who need plumbers but they're all married. A single girl can get a job done surprisingly easily and with little recompense...a married woman needs a plumber.

VICKI I am loving my job! I get to talk to loads of people. All of them different like...and from all over. They all talk to each other about where they live and where they're from. Dead interesting like. Well everything's interesting compared to this hole. Everywhere sounds so glamorous and it's like they use a different language. 'Have you any Irish in you?' becomes an acceptable question and not some sleazy chat up line the lads use on American tourists in the summer.

DECLAN You see, dating has come full circle. It went from meeting people through friends or at work, to singles nights, to speed dating in bars... if you couldn't spare a whole night; to internet dating...in case you couldn't spare the time to leave home; and all the way back to meeting people through friends or at work because you're fed up of talking to internet weirdies. But it's rather tricky if you can't use friends or work. Oh, I have friends...but none that know any women. Doug, from work, is married but his wife wouldn't really recommend us to her friends. We're not allowed in her house...or within 200 yards of it if the restraining order goes through.

VICKI There's this one lad on the site all the time. Declan. Declan O'Doyle. He's really funny and dead nice too like. Just really interested in everything I can find out. I can't remember the last time anyone actually listened to me...let alone found me interesting. He tells me all about America...well he's from Canada actually but sure it's practically the same thing. He knows loads - Apparently it would take way more than a day to drive across the country - more like 6! I had no idea...We talk online for hours every night about everything and anything. Films, family...football - I actually know bollox about football but with the power of Google I was able to wax lyrical about Eric Cantona and talk about the 28th May 1999 being the best day of my life...when United won the treble cup or something! I can imagine him talking as I'm reading his e-mails. "Hey Vicki, How you doin'?" Gee thanks for the info re: clergy in Clonakilty, that was totally

awesome. You have yourself a good day now!” Like...Like the Jack Bower of Genealogy. And I can tell...just from his e-mails...he sounds big.

DECLAN I don't have a lot of time for dating anyway these days anyway – the search takes up most of my evenings. But it's definitely worth it. And the site's run by this woman called Vicki who seems really nice. We've been e-mailing loads. Just a bit at first like, I didn't want her to think I had no life, but recently it's every afternoon when I'm through work...I suppose that's all it'll be though, e-mailing. Unless I go over...I've been thinking more about it, for sure. I could wind my way over to Ireland, add some more info to the search and ask her out on a date at the same time – kill two birds with one stone...which is an awful expression, but you know what I mean.

Her e-mails are hilarious - I look forward to reading them. She reckons she'd love it out here with 'all the cactus things and the sand'? I've told her I live in Ontario not Arizona but she thinks the whole place

VICKI 'sounds fecking brilliant'. I'll be over there someday, right enough.

DECLAN I'll be over to Ireland first. Exploring the land; enjoying a Guinness with the locals, watching the dancing on the village green.

VICKI You'll be travelling back in time then too?!

DECLAN (laughs) Am I not right...I'm sad now.

VICKI Oh no don't be sad – I'll jiggle away for you

DECLAN You'll jiggle?!

VICKI I meant jig! My Michael Flatley days are over but I've been known to dance on a few tables.

DECLAN I can't wait to see-
Argh, I hate e-mailing. My fingers won't work quick enough. I want to hear her voice... 'I want to hear your-'. (deletes) I can't write that... can I? Oh for god's sake, what have I got to loose. Pride, self-respect, the only person I enjoy talking to these days...(deep breath) Allright. "I wish I could hear your voice." And raising the stakes to an uncomfortably high level for this relationship acrophobic "I wish I could see you smile...not just bracket, semi colon, LOL." (send) Oh my God.

VICKI Yes! (dances around – types)

DECLAN There's a new one! (deep breath - reads) 'I've got Skype'.
What? Sounds painful. Must be Irish for something gross, not the answer I was hoping for...er what do I write to that - I hope it's not contagious. Er, (writes)

VICKI 'Sorry to hear that' What? Oh he hasn't a notion. 'No, you eejit.

DECLAN Google it' (writes) 'Will there be nasty pictures'

VICKI Oh my (as she writes) what are you like. You numpty...There you go.

DECLAN 'Skype is a way of talking overseas for free through your computer' no way!

VICKI Oh! (types another quickly)

DECLAN 'If you've a webcam we can see each other too' (puts webcam in drawer) (writes)
'Sorry, no web cam I'm afraid'

VICKI 'Sign up now – here's the link'

DECLAN It's an amazing thing technology. You just go to the Skype website, download the application, press run and follow the set-up wizard; set up an account with a password and sign in. it opens up a whole new world, it takes communication to another level...it allows you to have hideously stilted conversations with anyone in the world thanks to a split-second delay.
Hello.

VICKI Hello!

VICKI/DECLAN How are you/ I can't believe-

DECLAN Sorry...

VICKI/DECLAN Don't worry/ I'm good.

DECLAN There's a lot of delay.

VICKI Yeah (pause) It's better than e-mail.

VICKI/DECLAN Don't you think/ I'm not sure

VICKI (pause) It's a shame you've no webcam.

DECLAN Yeah.

VICKI So tell me what you look like.

DECLAN (pause) What I look like?

VICKI/DECLAN (pause) Go on/Weeelll

VICKI/DECLAN I love tall men/I'm tall

VICKI/DECLAN Excellent/Well that's good.

VICKI/DECLAN Who would/ I'm

VICKI Sorry

DECLAN No

VICKI/DECLAN Go on/Go on

VICKI Who would play you in a movie?

DECLAN Ah, George Clooney

VICKI/DECLAN Wow/No, no, I'm joking

VICKI Oh

DECLAN He'd be too old!

VICKI/DECLAN (laughs)/What about

(pause)

DECLAN Does this feel weird?

VICKI/DECLAN Does what/ talking like this

VICKI The delay is weird, it's probably my internet – we've only just wi-fied in Ballyvireen.

VICKI/DECLAN But I want to talk to you! / I

DECLAN Really?

VICKI Of course really.

DECLAN Oh, bugger this (aside) I've got a phone card somewhere...(to Vicki) I'm going to call you.

VICKI/DECLAN (Pause) Ok!/Vicki?

VICKI/DECLAN Yes/Right

VICKI/DECLAN I'll hang up/I'm hanging up

DECLAN Argh! Right. Some years ago now, Polish kid, hockey exchange, he took notes on what I wore each day, took my car for a joyride and wanted me to find him some steroids...but...left me...ah ha! One phone carte Internationale. Here we go, here we go. So, 'dial local number for your area'.... (looks at back of card, reads numbers again) 'If your area is not listed call the Canadian 800 number'. 1.800.897.1764. (listen to instruction and press) One. 'Dial your phone card PIN number'. Don't get annoyed about it saying PIN number instead of just PIN. Where the? Ah. (takes coin and scratches PIN). OK. 7856 (input) 7349 (input) 6821 (input + 1 extra) Argh – nooooo, my finger slipped...wait! Erm (reads card) nothing. 'If your fingers slip...start the whole frickin' process over!' 1.800.897.1764 (press one) 7856 (input) 7349 (input) 6821 (input) Steady now, nearly home 5643. Enter phone number. Damn! Phone number (thinks) on the

website! (reads) To call Michael, to call Ger, to call whatever the hell that says, ah ha! To call Vicki ++ 353 what's plus plus? What's plus plus? Argh – Oh, Plus plus is your country code. Australia, (phone speaks) Yes yes I'm trying, don't make me start again, Belgium, China, Canada 011 (input) 353 (input) 23 (input) 33 (input) 980 phew.
Busy! How, How is it busy!!! (into pillow) Aaarrggghhh.

CHERYL Declan?

DECLAN Yeah, I'm fine mom.
I'm going to cry...I'm actually going to cry (looks at phone card) Oh thank you god 'to make another call simply press star star'. I can do that (presses it and dials number again) It's ringing. Ok, be cool, be really cool...

VICKI Hello!

DECLAN Vicky?

VICKI (screams) Arghhhhhhhh!

DECLAN (laughing) How are you doing?

VICKI Yay – that's much better. I can't believe you're calling... All the way from America-

DECLAN Canada.

VICKI I can't believe it! Oh my God...your voice sounds much better on the real phone...really sexy and American!

DECLAN Can-

VICKI What time is it there?

DECLAN It's a quarter to seven.

VICKI Oh wow! It's 11.45 here. At night! What's the weather like?

DECLAN Nice day, sunny and warm...cooling down to 3 degrees tonight though.

VICKI Wow that's so...precise. It's foggy here, I wish I was in the sun.

DECLAN Ah yes - The mozzies are starting up though.

VICKI Sounds ominous. What are mozzies?

DECLAN Oh, mosquitos. Flies, I guess but they bite.

VICKI Oh right, I thought it sounded like a biker gang or something..."the mozzies are starting up again, Doris, time to move on outta here". They sound way harder than our flies. We have bluebottles, and erm, the house fly and of course the odd midge – which doesn't really sound like it would handle itself in a fight...midge. I'm a midge. (Pause) I am waffling I'm sorry, chuntering on about weather and flies-

DECLAN -it's OK.

VICKI -no, I'm an idiot-

DECLAN -You're not an idiot. You're fascinating...I mean, crazy for sure...but fascinating. So, er, I told you what I looked like...now it's your turn?

VICKI Guess.

DECLAN Let's see - 5ft 8 with an hourglass figure and auburn hair in curls to your waist.

VICKI (snorts) Like in an Irish shampoo commercial!

DECLAN (laughing) probably

VICKI Well...you were close but I'm only 5ft 7.

DECLAN Ahh. (smiles) Your accent is awesome.

VICKI Really.

DECLAN Sure...I love the Irish accent - it sounds really, sexy.

VICKI Ah, go 'way wit yer. Yer messin, sure it's just my voice.

DECLAN I'd love to have an accent.

VICKI You do you great eejit – you've a big ole' American accent.

DECLAN Canadian.

VICKI Is that different?

DECLAN I suppose it is, yeah.

VICKI Like what.

DECLAN I don't know-

VICKI Go on, I want to learn.

DECLAN Well, we say, *apparently* we say about instead of about.

VICKI You say about

DECLAN I don't think so, really. Yeah, I suppose, I don't know...About, about...house, hoose anything with an au sound is different.

VICKI Go on-

DECLAN And, er, 'Sorry'.

VICKI Sorry.

DECLAN Yeah, we say Sorry.

VICKI Sawrey.

DECLAN Yeah...Sawrey.

VICKI And how do the American's say it?

DECLAN Nobody knows.

VICKI (beat) What?

DECLAN Nobody knows. It's a joke...American's don't say sorry. That was lame. Sorry, sawrey. It's just a friendly rivalry.

VICKI Hey I don't mind jokes about other countries...takes the pressure off the Irish. So, do you drive a stationwagon?

DECLAN No I don't!

VICKI Ah, they sound cool.

DECLAN (laughing) You think a stationwagon sounds cool?

VICKI Yeah. Or, or a pick up truck-

DECLAN -I have a pick-up truck.

VICKI No way! That's even cooler.

DECLAN It's an old jalopy though.

VICKI Who makes those?

DECLAN No, no-one makes them...it's a name, for erm, any type of run-down beat-up vehicle that can, maybe with a little persuasion, get you from A-B.

VICKI An old banger.

DECLAN A sausage?

VICKI No, an ol' banger is what we call a shite car.

DECLAN Ah, right.

VICKI Sausages bang when they explode and bangers bang when they backfire, I guess. And Banger is also the name of my sausage dog.

DECLAN Your what?

VICKI My sausage dog – only he's not a real dog, he's a draught excluder. And he does a fantastic job of keeping the chills out of my crevices.

DECLAN Have you been drinking?

VICKI No, more's the pity. I've to go into the museum tomorrow at some ungodly hour.

DECLAN How's the work going? I mean, I know the site is fantastic but are you still enjoying it?

VICKI I really am. We found so many people with relations still over here and finding links between families that nobody had any idea about. It's been a shock to some like.

DECLAN I was a little shocked to find out about my family's penchant for marrying their relatives.

VICKI Ah yes, the kissing cousins-

DECLAN It's not the kissing I'm having trouble with.

VICKI Och, it's not that unusual, even today. There was a fella from Cork who joined the site, one of our first members; he made contact with his first cousin from Wisconsin and they're set to marry over there in a couple of months. It's perfectly legal there,

DECLAN - and in Canada too-

VICKI It's not here, but it is in England.

DECLAN Look at the Royal Family... You know no two people are more distantly related than 50th cousins.

VICKI What?!

DECLAN And if you went back 10 generations you would have 1,024 ancestors in that generation.

VICKI And your ma thinks you're wasting time on the computer!

DECLAN I'm sorry – you probably find all that dull, you're not at work now-

VICKI - No! God no, It makes a nice change from listening to Sean and Ryan discussing why pork scratchings make them fart more than smokey bacon crisps!

DECLAN I have no idea what you're talking about but it sounds less than pleasant.

VICKI I am actually finding the work really interesting. They found dozens of diaries and hundreds of letters at this one farmhouse there the other day. Dated back to 1786!

DECLAN I bet there are a few stories there!

VICKI It unearthed a few interesting romantic entanglements between the ancestors of people in town now that hate each other's guts! Sure the feuding probably started generations back because they were related.

DECLAN It's crazy – you could be related to someone you live next door to and not even notice it!

VICKI Aye. I bet if we looked hard enough we could be related.

(Both take this in – it is not a good proposition)

DECLAN That would be ... great.

VICKI Right. Of course. Grand.

DECLAN Distant relations.

VICKI Well you're certainly far away.

DECLAN Right well, I'd...I'd best be going.

VICKI Aye.

DECLAN If you're getting up early tomorrow...

VICKI Right (pause) Goodnight then?

DECLAN Night. You idiot! "Oh yeah, being related, that'd be awesome". Argh, I knew it, everything was going far too well – we had a nice conversation, sounded reasonably intelligent, even made her laugh and then Bam! I screw it all up, just like that. Now she thinks I'm an ancestor-researching fanatic, from *America*...who would love to be her brother! Awesome. Deaglan, just, just awesome. Damn!
Ok – don't panic...What would Bond do in this situation?

Act 1 Scene 5

VICKI Story of my life – I meet someone who’s fantastic and he’s not interested in the slightest. Well, if nothing else, it would make a good country song - ‘How to start a romance when he’d rather be related.’

I really thought he felt the same way I did, but obviously not. I wish my granny was here to talk too, she’d know what to do. I miss her, every day.

When she died we all had to go to her house and divide up her belongings. It was what she said she wanted, in her will, nothing more specific. ‘Everyone getting first pick at what they want like the ultimate car boot sale’. It wasn’t what she’d have wanted at all. Fighting like you wouldn’t believe. Verbal at first like, but then it got physical when Cousin Cathy got her mitts on a salt and pepper set that our Sean’s Katrina had had her heart set on. “I think you’ll find that’s mine Cathy” “I don’t see yer name on it” “All the same, I was after taking that set home wit us today” “Oh, well it’s a shame for yer that I got there first sure” “Grannie Geraldine promised it to myself and Sean on our wedding day” “And how the hell would you remember – you spent the day locked wit yer hands down Seamus Calligan’s Trousers” “I did not” “You did so” “Well, at least I’ve had a wedding and I’ve not just shagged every fella this side of Dublin, you whore!” all over a salt and pepper shaker! Cathy doesn’t even cook – all her meals come pre-salted from the chip shop. Granny would have been beside herself – she wasn’t one for confrontation, I never once heard her raise her voice to Grandpa - and there were times I knew he deserved it - and she had no time at all for those that maintained life wasn’t fair. ‘Sure, you choose your own life so you do – Tain’t nobody else in life can choose it for you.’ She’d not have approved of the things that went on that

day...and it made me feel sick that a home that held so many happy memories for me was steadily turning into a battleground. I just walked straight to the red hat box, with the curly white writing, and walked straight out. Oh, I took the record player as well like, I'm not stupid – nobody else batted an eyelid...I guess they wouldn't have fetched much on e-bay.

I don't think she'd want me to give up on Mr Deaglan quite so soon. Perseverance was a big thing with Granny – “Better to try and fail sure than fail to try”. Or, ‘If at first you don't succeed...pique his interest by discovering fascinating tidbits about his ancestors...’

VICKI/DECLAN I've found some info on your Ma's side of the family. The O'Donnells.

VICKI They first came to Canada 4 generations ago.

DECLAN Mary O'Donnell

VICKI was the first to book the crossing.

DECLAN It was 1898 and she was one of 15,175 women who left Ireland that year.

VICKI Far more women than men were leaving.

DECLAN Many of them well educated

VICKI Most of them not

DECLAN Mary was. Bright and articulate by all accounts.

VICKI But still a young woman, travelling alone

DECLAN to an uncertain future.

VICKI Which didn't sit well with a certain young man.

DECLAN Four years her junior

VICKI A suitor

DECLAN Protector.

VICKI George Mary O'Donnell.

DECLAN A cousin

VICKI Yes.

DECLAN First cousin?

VICKI/DECLAN Of course.

DECLAN He bought a fare for the very same crossing and they fell in love over the hellish journey.

VICKI Over the sickness

DECLAN The overcrowding

VICKI The hunger

DECLAN The ship's biscuits complete with maggots, the water and oats that made a gruel, the raw meat that they were forced to eat when fires could not be lit.

VICKI The hunger

DECLAN Over appalling weather

VICKI Open sewage

DECLAN Typhoid

VICKI And Cholera

VICKI/DECLAN They fell in love.

VICKI It's so romantic. Don't you think?

DECLAN Of course.

VICKI Having somebody love you so much that they give up their life to travel across
the world and protect you...

DECLAN (he's not there)

VICKI Deaglan?

DECLAN I'm going to Ireland!

Mom! I'm going to Ireland. (sings) Oh Danny Boy, the pipes, the pipes are
calling.

Cheryl enters

CHERYL You're going to Iceland?

DECLAN No...Ireland. (Beat) Why the hell would I be going to Iceland.

CHERYL Search me...you've been acting very strangely recently.

DECLAN I'm going to Ireland. I've got a friend there now and-

CHERYL A friend?

DECLAN Yes, a friend and she's going to show me the country.

CHERYL She eh?

DECLAN Yes.

CHERYL What, and she's got you doing all the running? Your just going to up and leave on the say so of some Irish floozie.

DECLAN She has no idea I'm coming.

CHERYL She'll eat you alive.

DECLAN It'll be a surprise.

CHERYL That's if it is a she. Who knows who you've been 'communicating' with eh? Could be a burly builder by the name of Brian. He may have a secret family...and a penchant for satin...(really mocking...Gasp) He may not even be Irish!

DECLAN She's a she, She is called Vicki. I've spoken to her on the phone and I've been skypeing her this afternoon.

CHERYL Declan! There are some things a mother shouldn't hear!

DECLAN Skyping...Talking live over the internet.

CHERYL Ohhh. Still, it's a heck of a journey just for some girl.

DECLAN Yes, well I can find out even more while I'm over there. See where our ancestors were born, where they grew up, where the ship sailed from that brought them here!

Vicki found out more about your side of the family too so it's not just O'Doyles I'm looking out for I can trace the O'Donnells too.

CHERYL I'm sure that'll be a piece of cake. Like looking for a needle in a haystack...if every piece of hay had the name O'Donnell.

DECLAN I'm flying to Manchester, then onto Shannon. There's a coach as far as Tipperary-

CHERYL It's a long way to go

DECLAN -Then I can get the train to Cork and I don't think she's too far from there. I'll get a cab. I've got some Euros with me...

CHERYL Euros! Look at my son – the jetsetter. eh! Er, do you have a passport?

DECLAN I got one last week!

CHERYL I wondered why you were going to Scarborough.

DECLAN I'm all set.

CHERYL Tickets?

DECLAN Check.

CHERYL Travel insurance?

DECLAN Yep

CHERYL Pyjamas?

DECLAN Mom...yes thank you I have pyjamas.

CHERYL Don't lie to me if you haven't. I'm not having you wandering around in your holy boxer shorts.

DECLAN I have pyjamas.

CHERYL It may be what they do over there but you're representing your country and I want them to have a pleasant view of my son...not the other view...which is not so pleasant...

DECLAN Mom! I have pyjamas...I have new pyjamas! I won't be showing you up.

CHERYL Good.

DECLAN Good.

CHERYL (beat) I should put a couple of stitches in the flap.

DECLAN The what?

CHERYL The flap. I'll sew it up a little bit so it doesn't go gaping and exposing your...thing.

DECLAN My thing.

CHERYL We don't want your pee pee protruding.

DECLAN Mom!...my pee pee?

CHERYL Well what do you want me to say – I'm hardly going to say cock now am I?

DECLAN Mickey.

CHERYL What?

DECLAN That's what they call it over there. In Ireland it's called a Mickey.

CHERYL Oh! Well...better than calling it a Minnie I suppose! (Pause) I'd better sew it up anyway.

DECLAN It's got buttons.

CHERYL Pah! They never worked for your father...they do nothing but lull you into a false sense of security. Give them here before you go.

DECLAN Arggh. I've about half an hour and then I need to leave. (gives her the pyjamas)
You can't hold them hostage. I will leave without my pyjamas.

CHERYL See she's corrupting you already! (exits)

DECLAN Not quite but I'm hoping that's the highlight of the trip! (sings) Oh, her eyes they
shone like the diamonds, you'd think she was queen of the land...

SFX

Intermission