

LAUNDRY SADS

by Beatrice Onions

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CHARACTERS

KIWIFRUIT- From New Zealand. New to the city. It shows

STRANGER 1 - Born and raised in NYC

STRANGER 2 - Born and raised in NYC

KEIRA KNIGHTLEY – But even more British

KIT HARINGTON – But even more Jon Snow

Lights up. KIWIFRUIT and TWO STRANGERS in a laundromat in New York City. KIWIFRUIT sits on her haunches, transferring her dirty washing out of a laundry basket, into a huge washing machine. She stops to look at her favorite knitted sweater.

KIWIFRUIT

My first visitor from home. She is beautiful.

KIWIFRUIT talks to the audience.

I haven't seen this since winter. It was in a suitcase under my bed. During the summer, my winter layers are folded and arranged like fruit in a fruit bowl, sweetening together. My flower sweater is top of the pile. Pressed with the perfume from the last hug with my mum.

KIWIFRUIT contemplates the sweater very closely...

The neckline smiles, a toothless grin of woolen loops. A speck of blueberry juice from last summer's smoothie hides in the tightly crocheted braids.

...and then continues the transfer of clothes

Froths of trimmed coats, trinket-y buttons on machine-loved cardigans. Jeans with torn belt loops from one too many hoists, a scarf, my hat, the cloying scents of home.

But smell fades. And my winter layers that traversed land and sea to be with me can only carry home for so long. Until they too, will be baptized in a New York City Laundromat.

KIWIFRUIT bundles her flower sweater into the washing machine, closes the door, and then contemplates the myriad of buttons.

THE STRANGERS talk to the audience:

STRANGER 1

That girl, she collects the socks people leave in the dryer

STRANGER 2

She watches me, ya know. Just wanders around, watching like I have something to teach her. Like I have something to give. Ha! It makes me think I do!

STRANGER 1

I can't afford an apartment with a washer dryer

STRANGER 2

My therapist says I need to start returning to normal. So here I am! *(gestures to the laundromat)*

STRANGER 1

I've been coming here for 25 years. Seen the headlines change from this bench. Seen the world change from this bench. Still the same bench (*pats the bench*)

KIWIFRUIT

Google will know....

KIWIFRUIT reads from her phone as she begins the load.

STRANGER 1 (*commentating*)

Laundry is dumped into the chrome vessel. Liquid on top. Note is presented to the coin machine, (Hamilton side up.) It accepts, greedily snatching the sacrificial fruit and spitting out coins like cherry stones in the silvery tray beneath. The stone is mightier than the cherry. Remember this.

STRANGER 2

The best place to see the snow is on the corner of Fourth and West 12th. Remember this.

STRANGER 1 and 2

New York is dangerous. Remember this.

KIWIFRUIT sits down on one of the vacant benches. While she waits, she writes. And then....

She reads it aloud.

KIWIFRUIT

"Dear Michael.

Enclosed are the following.

One Spectrum Bill dated for the month of August, One Wedding Invitation, and a box of what appears to be Brownies? It says 'Please refrigerate'

Sincerely, Kiwifruit"

KIWIFRUIT seals the letter in an envelope, licks the stamp, etc.

STRANGER 1 pats down pockets, curses, turns to KIWIFRUIT and STRANGER 2

STRANGER 1

You got a quarter?

STRANGER 2

I got you

STRANGER 1 graciously takes the quarter, begins their cycle.

KIWIFRUIT starts writing again.

STRANGER 1

Everyone thinks New Yorkers are mean. It's not true. You've just gotta ask. You know that rule about three. You're three degrees of separation from anyone. Your friend knows someone who knows Chris Martin, or your favourite author or your friend from high school. In New York, it's more like two, maybe even one degree of separation. Some things don't need to make sense, they just do. Like keeping the mail addressed to the previous tenant in your apartment.

KIWIFRUIT reads aloud what she has written.

KIWIFRUIT

"Dear Michael.

Please find attached:

Spectrum Bill, Please Refrigerate Brownies, Wedding Invitation.

Also, you left your ice-cube tray in the freezer. Do you... need it back? My winter coat is shrugged into one of the hangers you left hanging. And you left your anti-depressants on the window. The label has your name on it, your address. Your old address. My address....

Sincerely, Kiwifruit"

KIWIFRUIT turns to her friends in the laundromat

KIWIFRUIT

When did you know that this was home?

STRANGER 2

Hmm. I guess- I was home when I was walking down 10th street with a window AC unit tucked under one wing. Oh man, I was dripping sweat, it was the hottest day of the year and I was tearing up the avenue like a bat outta hell. The unit was slipping and I was cursing and I passed a couple holding hands, "Now that's a New Yorker," the guy said. Me- A New Yorker! And god-damn, did I hoist that unit a little higher, cause I was a New Yorker by someone else's standards, and that's the best ceremony you can get.

KIWIFRUIT

I've stopped smiling...

STRANGER 2

That's okay

KIWIFRUIT

There are no public restrooms. And all I do is find new ways to achieve more things in less time. I'm in a yoga class but in my head, I'm doing laundry. And then I'm doing laundry while I'm doing homework. And then I'm waiting for laundry while doing homework while brushing my teeth and cooking breakfast with a podcast playing- "Siri what's the weather? No, not in New Zealand, in New York. I live here now. Siri re-set home. NOT IN FARENHEIT."

STRANGER 1

Enjoy it, these are the best years of your life. What's New Zealand?

KIWIFRUIT

Do you think they'll still recognize me, people at home?

STRANGER 2

People look at you and see what they wanna see. The ones that don't recognize you- that's their own gig. They look at you and how you've changed and all they see is how they haven't. Humans. Selfish creatures. You're selfish. I'm selfish. That guy over there- selfish. Just find a few minutes in the day where you put someone else first. And then notice the ones that are doing that for you. They're fanning your flames. Everyone else- pissin' on em!

KIWIFRUIT (*to herself*)

I don't read anymore...

STRANGER 2

That's my rule for life. No peeing, just fanning. That- and always have someone owe you a favor.

KIWIFRUIT

Favor. F. A. V. O. R. No u. Celsius NOT Fahrenheit. Tom-AY-to. Oregano. Cilantro. Ohh...

STRANGER 1

Never play your ace, West 4th and West 12th, New York is dangerous, the stone is mightier than the cherry.

KIWIFRUIT

Pepper Spray. Everything Bagel. Recognize, colour, favour, wriggly red lines under everything I write. Z's instead of C's. Banana, Strawberry, Muesli- they love that one. Aluminium. Say that again. My accent is a party trick! I need to find a party. I need to be the party. PARTY AT MINE

STRANGER 2

Avoid blue food colouring, care less, sleep more, write letters, learn a language, meal prep, don't get pregnant, take the stairs, thread don't pluck, wash on cold, separate your colours. That's O. R. S- and-

KIWIFRUIT

-FAN MY FLAMES BITCHES! Every conversation is a potential interview, make friends but don't steal them, Fahrenheit not Celsius, don't work on your visa, don't get kicked out of the country you want to call home, don't talk to strangers

STRANGER 1

Yea don't do that...

KIWIFRUIT

There's this guy who holds open the door to East Village Organic's on Second Ave and sometimes, I buy him an orange juice but then I'm scared that one day he'll just follow me home. How sad.

STRANGER 1

What do you want to do kiddo?

KIWIFRUIT

As in job, as in life?

KIWIFRUIT's washing beeps.

She pulls it out of the washer and transfers it to the dryer.

STRANGER 1

She looks like she's gonna cry- don't push her

STRANGER 2

I'm not pushing/

STRANGER 1

She's young/

KIWIFRUIT

I want to go home

KIWIFRUIT turns, faces them

STRANGER 1 & 2

.....

KIWIFRUIT

I want to feel at home

STRANGER 1

You are

STRANGER 2

No, you're in New York City. It's a city. It doesn't love you back.

KIWIFRUIT

I know

STRANGER 1

Where do you feel home

KIWIFRUIT

New Zealand

STRANGER 2

Where's that

KIWIFRUIT

Exactly

STRANGER 1

What is home there

KIWIFRUIT

It's where I rest

STRANGER 1

You can't rest here?

KIWIFRUIT

You **can**?

STRANGER 1

I can rest when I'm dead

KIWIFRUIT

That's not healthy

STRANGER 2

So go back to New Zealand

KIWIFRUIT

No

STRANGER 1

Why not?

KIWIFRUIT

Just- no.

STRANGER 2

Then move somewhere else

KIWIFRUIT

I thought about London

STRANGER 1

What are you looking for?

KIWIFRUIT
I want- oh god.

STRANGER 1
What?

KIWIFRUIT
Do you really wanna know?

STRANGER 1
Yes

KIWIFRUIT
I think all that I want. Is to be in love.

STRANGER 1 + 2
...

KIWIFRUIT
Isn't that sad

STRANGER 1
That's beautiful

KIWIFRUIT
I think that I am walking around on this planet- trying to find someone to love me as much as I know I will love them. And that feeling- will be home.

STRANGER 2
So... London?

KIWIFRUIT
That's not the point.

STRANGER 1
Keira Knightley's from London

STRANGER 2
Kit Harrington- he's hot, he's from London

KIWIFRUIT
That's- guys. Don't you see how sad that is! I need advice. I need a breakthrough. A one-eighty turnaround. Help!

STRANGER 1

You're fine. You're young

STRANGER 2

You're looking for love?

STRANGER 1

No, you're *waiting* for love

STRANGER 2

Whatever- if you're looking for it, you'll probably miss other things. And if you're waiting for it- you're wasting your time. So my advice, is... paint the town red!

STRANGER 1

That's terrible advice

STRANGER 2

You want to be a writer?

KIWIFRUIT

Um...

STRANGER 2

You're writing- for fun. You want to be a writer?

KIWIFRUIT

Oh, this is just- I'm writing letters to the old tenant, the person who lived in my apartment before me. I'm getting all of his mail. Wedding invites and stuff. I think it's important he knows that they're coming.

STRANGER 1

You're in New York and you're a writer. You're front-row center, watching the craziest performance in the world. Write about it. Like a critic, for people to read.

KIWIFRUIT

...

STRANGER 2

Yea, that's good. I'd read it!

KIWIFRUIT

Write about what?

STRANGER 1

That thing about love, walking round looking to find home

KIWIFRUIT

You like that?

STRANGER 1

I like it

STRANGER 2

I like it too

KIWIFRUIT

You do?

STRANGER 1

Let go of that though- who cares if we like it

STRANGER 2

And don't make it pretty

STRANGER 1

Make it ugly and real and nasty and bitter and funny and naughty and brilliant

STRANGER 2

And crazy and raucous and inimitable and brazen and righteous

STRANGER 1

And cast Kit Harington and Naomi Scott

KIWIFRUIT

Yes!

STRANGER 2

And they can travel the world looking for home! And they fall in love! In New Zealand!

STRANGER 1

Wherever that is!

KIWIFRUIT

It's next to Australia

STRANGER 1 + 2

Oh!

KIWIFRUIT

I'm gonna write

STRANGER 1

Great

KIWIFRUIT

I'm gonna write something.

STRANGER 2

Good

KIWIFRUIT

I'm gonna write all of the things I would never let anyone know about me. I'm gonna write whatever scares me the most to see on the page. I'm gonna see it on the page and I'm gonna say-YEA. I SEE YOU.

STRANGER 1

And then I can read it?

KIWIFRUIT

No

STRANGER 2

But I can read it?

KIWIFRUIT

No

STRANGER 1

Why not?

KIWIFRUIT

I shouldn't talk to strangers. This has been good. But weird.

STRANGER 2

Yea. Okay.

KIWIFRUIT reads her final letter aloud

"Dear Michael

My mailbox is jammed with the mail addressed to the five previous tenants of my apartment. I used to worry, that you would miss your mail. But now I think you are happy to leave bits of you behind.

I understand

Love, Kiwifruit"

KIWIFRUIT leaves

STRANGER 1

She left her clothes here

STRANGER 2

Yea

*STRANGER 1 gets up to check on the washing.
STRANGER 1 is now KEIRA KNIGHTLEY and
STRANGER 2 is now KIT HARRINGTON.*

STRANGER 1

I think I have found something.

STRANGER 2

What darling, what is it!

STRANGER 1

When I was little, I had this deep sense of longing to be almost anywhere else

STRANGER 2

Yes...

STRANGER 1

When I thought of happiness, it was precisely one centimetre outside of my reach. I would not let myself have it.

STRANGER 2

Darling, that's awful

STRANGER 1

But then I- I, found you and felt so happy

STRANGER 2

That's lovely

STRANGER 1

And then I realised that I thought you would make it better

STRANGER 2

Yes darling

STRANGER 1

But no

STRANGER 2

No?

STRANGER 1

No!

STRANGER 2

What do you mean sweetie pie pumpkin

STRANGER 1

I mean that I was born alone, and I will die alone. And in the middle is whatever I want it to be.
And I want it to be good

STRANGER 2

Good?

STRANGER 1

I want it to be really good.

STRANGER 2

So....

STRANGER 1

So, yes, I suppose...

STRANGER 2

WHAT!

STRANGER 1

Have this

STRANGER 1 pulls off their hoodie, hands it to STRANGER 2

STRANGER 1

When you feel sad and alone, look at this, smell it, wear it, think of me and know that I am sad and alone too. And I can't change that for you and you can't change that for me. Sad and alone is better than sad and with company. But nothing is more triumphant than happy and alone.

STRANGER 2

I'm happy with you

STRANGER 1

I know

STRANGER 2

What- where do, where are you going

STRANGER 1

I'm going home

STRANGER 1 exits through the audience

THE END