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Kate's Chat

WEEKLY HULLO FROM IRISH AUTHOR



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Hullo to the most important people in the country

Hi! I am Kate Kerrigan, an author, columnist and RTE Sunday Miscellany contributor and I hope you don't mind me reaching out to you like this.

Only, yesterday, I was in my kitchen, where I have been stuck for a couple of weeks now (immune compromised Chrons Disease - thank you for asking) scrolling through my wretched smartphone and thinking about all of those of you sensible people who are NOT on social media – but would still like a bit of chit-chat. So, here I am – and I plan I to chat away and bring a few of my writer friends to join in.

Today, I am counting my blessings - my family are all safe, I live in a corner of the world where the sea is still outside my window, the air is fresh, the birds singing - there is quiet and in nature, always, hope.

And you are at the heart of that hope. Our over 70s have never been more precious to us. My mother is 82 and cocooned in her own home. She may be physically vulnerable but otherwise, she is tough as old boots! Like so many of you, Moira is the boss – the family centres around her wellbeing. She is our inspiration, our cornerstone and she is going NOWHERE! Your generation are, running this show right now and have never been more special, more valued. So – enjoy the attention, have yourself a second-helping of pudding. In the meantime – here's one of my Sunday Miscellany pieces which – I hope will make you smile!

A slice of cheese – laughing is obligatory!

What did Cinderella say when her photos didn't arrive on time?
One day my prints will come.

Stay in touch

Please do get in touch by email (or better again get somebody else to do it for you) and send a hullo to family and friends, here. I am trying to get this newsletter to as many of the cocooned in the country as I can so spread the word with your carers and ask them to email me a picture and message through the website address above. I can't print all of them (kids to feed, vegetable to grow, books to write!) but will do my best to keep you connected. I'll send you some podcasts and plan online video chats while all this isolation is going on – so I hope to reach some of you that way but if not – it's good old fashioned paper. Sorry trees!

In the meantime – I'm going nowhere either folks! So stick around. We'll ride this out, together.

Kate x



Rhett Does the Drains by Kate Kerrigan

'Where is Dad?' I asked the teen.

'Outside,' he said, then quickly ran upstairs.

Still in my pyjamas, I was engrossed in the last chapter of *Gone With The Wind*, still reeling from the gorgeousness of that penultimate scene where Rhett Butler pours his heart out to Scarlett telling her how much he has always loved her, but, of course, now the love is gone because she used it all up by being vile to him. I've always been in love with the dashing-rogue of Clark Gable's Rhett in the movie, watching it over and over again as a child. The last time I read the book was as a teenager, skipping through the scenery in the war waiting to get to the bits about Rhett and Scarlet. I came back to it recently because my editor kept on talking about it, and boy am I glad I did. Hands down, the best book I have ever read. Certainly the best story ever told. This time around, I even enjoyed the scenery and the war.

I wandered over to the back door, Kindle in hand, and looked out. My husband was standing by the back wall, smoking, glowering at the open sewage drain.

I stepped back before he could see me. No wonder the teen made a run for it. We live in an old house which occasionally needs a kettle and a bottle of bleach run through the drains. I am saying that as if I actually know. I have never gone anywhere near them myself. My husband is CEO *and* hands-on caretaker in the Drainage Department.

I went back to my book and, pretending to work as a writer, considered just what was it that made Rhett Butler so perfect? Of course, he was a classic pin-up - swarthy good looks, piercing eyes and perfect charm, even when he was being cutting and cruel he was simmering with barely concealed sex appeal. In the only sex scene (demurely ended as he carried her up the stairs - resumed the following morning in allusion only. This is no 50-Shades - Thank God!) it is finally affirmed to us eager-readers that he is an absolute knockout in the sack. He also, at the eleventh hour, went off to war. Proving he wasn't a complete blaggard after all. However, this time around I noticed he had some qualities that were unusual in a man. The truly unique thing about Rhett, the thing that set him aside from other,

lesser heroes, was his understanding of women. He knew more than would have been considered respectable, even now, about the latest ladies fashions and he also talked, quite endlessly towards the end of the book, about his feelings. Reaching the final chapter, I was feeling quite sad that it was all about to end, that I would be plunged back into 'real life' again. I rarely get lost in fiction like this. As a writer I instinctively draw a firm line between what is real life and what is fantasy. A lot of women from my mother's generation, forward to our generation, allowed a lot of nonsense from the powerful Hollywood depictions of romantic heroes to create unrealistic assumptions about love. Many women still have expectations of being swept off their feet, dismissing perfectly nice partners because they don't feel 'in love' with them any more. Romantic fiction doesn't cause marriages to break up any more than fashion magazines cause anorexia. However, this book is so compelling that, even I was harbouring a secret niggles, wishing my husband had a bit more Rhett in him. Maybe it was time for him to grow a moustache?

I got dressed and went back downstairs. Niall was at the kitchen sink, washing his hands. We had a brief conversation, the details of which I cannot repeat, except to say it covered the subjects of toilet-tissue sheetage and the level of fibre in our family diet. Throughout this, my husband's face had the set, ashen look of a man who has just witnessed some untold horror. Suddenly, he brought to mind Mitchell's civil war heroes returning from battle, shell-shocked and bloody. I started to feel a bit emotional. My husband, with his bleach and his kettle and his mysterious long drain brushes, had just driven our family through the burning streets Atlanta.

'I cannot *believe* you did that,' I said, 'you are my absolute hero!'

He looked at me hopefully.

'I could murder a bacon sandwich,' he said.

'Sorry,' I said, flouncing off, 'I've simply *got* to finish this book before lunchtime.'

If he is Rhett, then I am most definitely Scarlett.