

Caught in the Spotlight

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Characters

TIM: Late 20s / early 30s.

BRIAN: Late 20s / early 30s. Good friend of Tim

DERMOT: Late 20s / early 30s. Mutual friend of Tim and Brian.
Somewhat annoying.

Three friends from Ireland are living away from home and meet up to watch a match on TV. Brian is not happy that Dermot will be there and makes his feelings very clear. Dermot has memories from the past which when shared with the others, changes their attitude towards him.

Tim's apartment. Only essential furniture is a small couch centre stage which could be represented by chairs or wooden cubes. Only exit is stage left into a hallway which leads to front door, bedroom, bathroom etc. Play opens to the muted sound of a sports match. This may continue throughout the play but should never interfere with the dialog. We find Tim sitting on a couch looking at a TV which is not seen but lies in the general direction of the audience. After a few seconds, the front door bell rings. Tim checks his watch and exits to answer the door. Sound of door opening. The first few lines are offstage.

TIM: Ah Brian, good man. You're welcome.

BRIAN: How's it going Tim?

TIM: Not a bother. Go on in.

Enter Brian followed by Tim

BRIAN: Sorry I'm late. The tram was delayed. The match has started?

TIM: It's been on a while but you haven't missed much, nil all.

BRIAN: The lads are later than me!

Pause. Tim looks embarrassed.

TIM: They're not coming.

BRIAN: What?

TIM: They're watching it in the Lucky Shamrock.

BRIAN: When was this decided? I could have gone straight there.

TIM: I only heard a while ago.

BRIAN: But they were mad keen to come here.

TIM: *(Shrugs)* Well

BRIAN: Come on so. We'll get there before half time.

Brian moves towards exit.

TIM: I can't really go.

BRIAN: Come on!

TIM: Well, I'm kind of expecting someone else.

BRIAN: Oh! Have you got a secret woman stashed away somewhere?

TIM: If only!

BRIAN: So, who is it?

TIM: *(Hesitantly)* Dermot.

BRIAN: Dermot Barry?

TIM: Yeah.

BRIAN: Aw Jesus. Why didn't you tell me?

Tim shrugs

BRIAN: That's why the lads are in the Shamrock. Isn't it? I'm not hanging around.

TIM: Please, stay.

BRIAN: Why didn't you tell me?

TIM: Because I knew you wouldn't come.

BRIAN: Damn right I wouldn't. I'm going.

Brian moves towards exit

TIM: Don't go

BRIAN: I'm not staying here.

TIM: Look, I feel sorry for him.

BRIAN: I can't stand the guy.

TIM: I know he's hard going.

BRIAN: Hard going? He does my head in.

TIM: I grew up with him. Our mothers are best friends. His mother made me promise that I'd look out for him when we left. The only reason he came out here was because of me.

BRIAN: You're stuck with him. We shouldn't have to be. I'm off.

TIM: Please. The reason I didn't tell you was because I didn't want to be left on my own with him. He found out that we were all meeting up to watch the match and more or less invited himself. I couldn't refuse. When the lads heard well and at least, you knew him from school. I just thought that with you here, it might dilute him a bit.

BRIAN: Thanks a bunch.

TIM: The lads would kill me if I brought him along to the pub

BRIAN: And I won't?

TIM: He's harmless really. He just doesn't know when to stop.

BRIAN: That's putting it mildly.

TIM: Just hang on for a while

BRIAN: When do you expect him?

TIM: He should have been here 30 minutes ago.

BRIAN: The match is ruined now.

TIM: Please. I'll owe you big time.

BRIAN: I'll not stay long. Of all people! I'm allergic to the guy.

TIM: Good man. *(pause)* We may as well catch some of the match while we're waiting

Brian shrugs. They sit.

TIM: What do you reckon anyway?

BRIAN: What?

TIM: The match.

BRIAN: I don't know. I've lost interest.

TIM: I'd say they have a good chance. They've played well so far. *(Doorbell rings)* That's him.

BRIAN: Maybe just ignore it.

TIM: I can't.

BRIAN: I'm telling you. I'm only staying five minutes

Tim exits. Sound of door opening.

DERMOT: *(Off in put on Spanish accent)* Hello, my name is Inigo Montoya. You killed my father. Prepare to die!

TIM: *(Off)* Howya Dermot. Come in

Enter Tim followed by Dermot who is carrying a rucksack. He points at Tim as if holding a sword.

DERMOT: *(Louder)* Hello, my name is Inigo Montoya. You killed my father. Prepare to die!

TIM: Very good Dermot. The Princes Bride.

DERMOT: *(Robert di Niro voice)* You talkin to me. I don't see no one else here. You talkin to me?

Dermot lunges at Tim and grabs him in a playful wrestling grip.

DERMOT: You talking to me, ya big bollix.

TIM: Go easy Dermot.

DERMOT: Good to see you man. Thanks for the invite.

TIM: No bother.

DERMOT: And Brian! How's the big man? (*singing, crossing to Brian*) I'm coming out so you better get this party started!

BRIAN: You're coming out Dermot?

DERMOT: What?

BRIAN: You're coming out. I would never have guessed.

DERMOT: Ah you're only messin. No, I'm coming out for the party. Not ... you know ... the other way.

BRIAN: I just thought you had big news for us.

DERMOT: Go on out of that! Anyway good to see you buddy. It's been a long time.

BRIAN: Not long enough Dermot.

DERMOT: What?

TIM: Don't mind him. He's only jokin.

DERMOT: Lads! Speaking of jokes, I heard a great one the other day. Did you hear about the slug who was mugged by three snails?

BRIAN: Yep. Heard that one.

DERMOT: You did? Well say nothing. Don't spoil it. Anyway, one day this slug was on his way home when suddenly he was attacked and mugged by these three snails. So he went to report it to the police and they were asking him for all the details, you know? They asked him to describe the snails but he couldn't. Then they asked him if he'd recognise them if he saw them again and he said – and this is great – “well” he said, “it all happened so fast “

Dermot bursts into laughter. The others stand looking at him

DERMOT: You know, slugs, snails? Happened so fast.

TIM: Ah yeah. Very good. (*pretend laugh*)

BRIAN: You heard that the other day?

DERMOT: Yeah

BRIAN: You told me that joke the last time we met six months ago.

DERMOT: (*Oblivious*) Well, you know what they say – the old ones are always the best. So anyway, where's the rest of the lads?

TIM: Slight change of plan. They decided to watch the match in the Shamrock.

DERMOT: In the Shamrock. What are we doing here? Come on. Let's go.

TIM: I'm not in the mood. Sure we're here now and it's nearly half time. Hardly worth the bother.

DERMOT: That's a pity. I was looking forward to seeing them. It must be ages since we all met up.

BRIAN: I can't hang around too long either.

DERMOT: Ah no Brian. Come on. What's your hurry? We have to catch up.

TIM: He might hang on. Won't you Brian?

BRIAN: I'm not sure.

DERMOT: We might head down to the Shamrock after the match?

TIM: I think the lads said they were going to head off after.

DERMOT: My God, you're all getting very sensible. It must be old age! There's more for us so.

Dermot gets his rucksack and opens it.

TIM: What?

DERMOT: I have a surprise. My sister sent me on a load of stuff from home including some .. ta da ... (*he produces a bumper pack of crisps*) Tayto crisps. I've been saving them up for months for a special occasion and it doesn't get more special than this, what?

BRIAN: Taytos?

DERMOT: Yeah, brilliant. A taste of home!

BRIAN: You can get Taytos over here.

DERMOT: What?

BRIAN: My local supermarket has them all the time. They have a small Irish section. It has loads of stuff from home.

DERMOT: I didn't know that.

BRIAN: So they're not that special really.

DERMOT: Did you know that Tim?

TIM: I think I've seen them around alright.

DERMOT: We'll have them with a few beers anyway.

BRIAN: I don't feel like having any.

TIM: We'll have them later Brian OK?

Pause.

DERMOT: Right so. Well, what's the story with the match? Ah no, it's nearly half time it's nil all so we probably haven't missed much.

Dermot sits facing TV, Tim joins him. Brian remains standing.

DERMOT: I fancy their chances.

BRIAN: Not a hope ... as usual.

TIM: I don't know. They might do it.

BRIAN: No way.

DERMOT: Are you not sitting down Brian?

BRIAN: No.

DERMOT: Come on.

BRIAN: No, I'm fine. I told you I can't stay long. I'll have to go soon.

TIM: You've just got here Brian.

BRIAN: Yeah, well something just came up.

DERMOT: Just for a few minutes Brian. Come on. I haven't seen you in six months.

Reluctantly Brian sits on the edge of the couch leaving a distance between him and Dermot.

DERMOT: Good man.

They sit quietly for a few beats watching the TV.

DERMOT: Lads! I must tell ye my big plan.

BRIAN: Didn't know you were able to plan Dermot.

DERMOT: Will you give over. This fella is an awful messer!

TIM: The match Dermot!

DERMOT: We can keep watching. All you have to do is listen to me. I'm thinking of setting up a tribute act.

BRIAN: What?

DERMOT: A tribute act. You know .. singing. Actually, I was in the Shamrock yesterday talking to Tommy, the bar manager about it. He was very keen on the idea.

BRIAN: I'm sure he was.

DERMOT: There's money to be made lads. I'd be targeting the Irish diaspora you know gas word that isn't it? Diaspora! Was it Mary McAleese said that?

TIM: Mary Robinson.

DERMOT: Are you sure? When she first used it, everyone was

nodding away agreeing with her but secretly reaching for their dictionaries to find out what the hell she was talking about!

TIM: You're not wrong there.

DERMOT: Anyway, a tribute act to a well known Irish singer. First I was thinking of Phil Lynott.

BRIAN: What? Think you might be the wrong colour!

DERMOT: He wasn't that dark. Could black up a bit, a curly wig. Bingo!

TIM: I don't think that's acceptable these days.

DERMOT: Why not?

TIM: It's not very PC.

DERMOT: Well, I moved away from the Philo idea. Then I had it – Joe Dolan.

BRIAN: Joe Dolan?

DERMOT: Comb the hair. Bit of fake tan. White suit (*jumps up. Starts to sing*) Oh me oh my, you make me sigh, you're such a good looking woman.

TIM: But who's your audience? He is a bit old fashioned. He might appeal to an older age group but not the crowd in the Shamrock.

DERMOT: Ah no. Joe was cool in his later years. It'll remind them all of the old sod. I want someone who's dead. There's no point in doing a tribute act to someone who's still alive.

TIM: You'll need a band.

DERMOT: I'll use backing tracks, won't have to pay a band.

BRIAN: More importantly though. You can't sing!

DERMOT: Ah no. I can hold a tune. I sang in the choir at home for a while. You could say I was trained. If I sing the right songs, they'll all be joining in anyway. Once they have a few jars in them, they won't notice.

BRIAN: I'd probably need a general anaesthetic!

DERMOT: It's only for a bit of fun. Might make a few bob on it.

BRIAN: And make a bigger gobshite of yourself than you already are?

TIM: Ah now Brian

BRIAN: Tim, do you honestly think anyone would pay money to see him.

DERMOT: (*Oblivious*) What did I say? An awful messer!

BRIAN: I think you've surpassed yourself with this one Dermot.

DERMOT: It'll work.

BRIAN: Are you really that ? Okay, so tell me exactly how you're going to get this to work?

DERMOT: Well, I haven't thought the whole thing

BRIAN: Just tell me.

TIM: I thought you had to go Brian?

BRIAN: No. I'm beginning to enjoy this. I just want to know what makes this different to all the other hair brained schemes he's come up with over the years. So tell me Dermot.

TIM: I think you should go Brian.

BRIAN: I'll go when I'm ready.

TIM: You've been here with a face on you since you arrived.

BRIAN: You're the one who begged me to stay.

TIM: If I knew you were going to be such a bastard, I wouldn't have bothered.

BRIAN: And do you know why he begged me to stay Dermot?

TIM: Please! Just leave.

DERMOT: Come on lads. What's going on? We're all friends here. No need for this.

TIM: Surely you can see Dermot? Brian here is taking the piss out of you.

DERMOT: It's only a bit of slagging. We don't see each other that often. Brian is a good friend.

TIM: Do you think he'd say the same about you?

BRIAN: I think I will go now. (*Moves towards exit*)

DERMOT: Ah lads, come on! Tim, you and me are like brothers. We grew up together but I won't hear a bad word said about this fella here.

TIM: You need to open your eyes Dermot.

Dermot pauses and looks at the other two. Drops his guard.

DERMOT: I know what people think about me? You lads have it easy. Me? I need to try harder. (*pause*) I don't forget things easily. Brian here is a friend. He helped me when I needed it most.

Both Tim and Brian are puzzled.

TIM: What are you talking about?

DERMOT: Remember in 4th class Brian?

BRIAN: What about it?

DERMOT: You were new in the class. Your family had just moved to the area.

BRIAN: Yeah. My father changed jobs and we had to move. I went in toI thought it was 3rd class

DERMOT: No, definitely 4th. I was held back a year. You moved on Tim. I was never the brightest and as for sums or maths or whatever, it was like a different language but I remember you helped me out a few times with homework.

BRIAN: I don't remember.

DERMOT: I do. You helped me when no one else would. They all thought I was thick. I suppose I was but I couldn't believe

someone would bother to help me. And then in 6th class, I used to get an awful time from Bonzo Brady?

BRIAN: Bonzo Brady? You mean Barry Brady?

DERMOT: Yes, but remember, we called him Bonzo.

BRIAN: Ah yeah. I think I do.

DERMOT: Do you remember him Tim?

TIM: Not sure.

DERMOT: He was bigger than most of us. A right bastard. He kept picking on me. Nothing too much. Just slugging and pushing. I'd nearly wet meself every time I'd see him. Ye do remember him.

TIM: Maybe.

DERMOT: Anyway, one day on the way home from school ... it was the end of the year of 6th class, there was Bonzo and of course he started in on me, the usual, and you, Brian came along and said – and I'll always remember this, you said “Leave my friend alone”, my friend! You stepped in between him and me. Bonzo swung his fist at you but you managed to duck and landed a punch into his stomach. He was bent double holding himself just looking up at you. I don't think he could believe it. He looked small; I never thought he could look so small. I moved in to give him a clatter to pay back for all the aggro he'd given me but you stopped me. We stood there for what seemed like ages. His eyes never left yours and you stood perfectly still just looking at him. After a while, he turned and just shuffled away. You asked me if I was alright and then you went on your own way. It probably all happened in the space of a minute but I can still see it as if it was only yesterday. Bonzo never bothered me again. We never spoke about it, I suppose we were never great friends anyway and then we went to different secondary schools and lost touch. I used to see you around alright. It's only when we all moved out here that we ... *(pause)* I never told that story to anyone, so Tim I won't

have a bad word said about Brian here. (*Back to himself*)
Anyway, lads I have to go to the jax. Stay right where ye are. I don't want to miss anything.

Exit Dermot. Pause.

TIM: Did that happen?

BRIAN: I'm not sure. I remember Bonzo. Don't know what happened to him. The family moved away or he was sent to boarding school. He never bothered me but I do remember having a big fight with him one day, can't remember what it was about though.

TIM: He seems pretty sure.

BRIAN: Yeah.

TIM: And what about the homework?

BRIAN: Maybe. I remember helping a lot of the lads in the class. Who'd have thought, what?

TIM: Listen, I'm sorry about earlier.

BRIAN: You're alright. I was being a bit of a bastard. Poor old Dermot. Maybe he's not as bad as we think.

TIM: I don't know if I'd go that far.

Both laugh. Dermot enters.

DERMOT: Share the joke lads.

TIM: It's nothing

DERMOT: So, are we going to watch this match or what?

BRIAN: Well, if you can keep that shut, we might get a chance.

DERMOT: My lips are sealed. Let's have a beer.

BRIAN: Maybe some of those Taytos as well.

DERMOT: Right you be. Are you not rushing off Brian?

BRIAN: No. Change of plan.

Dermot gets some cans / bottles of beer and crisps

from rucksack.

DERMOT: There you go. Tim. Brian. (*looks at TV*) Oh, It's the half time analysis. We don't want to listen to the lads shitin' on about how badly they played in the first half ... do we? We could always go down to the Shamrock and join the rest of the lads?

BRIAN: Ah we're alright for now. Maybe next time. Eh Tim?

TIM: Maybe.

BRIAN: We haven't had the whole gang together in ages.

TIM: We'll sort something out.

DERMOT: You know lads. I was just thinking in the jax. You're right about Joe Dolan. He is a bit old hat. I think Phil Lynnott might be the way to go.

BRIAN: But...

DERMOT: No, no I have a way round it. It wouldn't be a tribute to Philo himself but a tribute to his music. Then it doesn't matter what I look like.

BRIAN: (*Laughing*) That might work.

TIM: Second half is starting!

DERMOT: We could all do it. Form a group the skinny Lizzies or the fat Lizzies.

TIM: The second half!

DERMOT: I can see it now. The boys are back in town.

BRIAN: None of us can play instruments.

DERMOT: Lads, what did I say, backing tracks, Karaoke. We'd have some crack wouldn't we?

Starts to sing.

DERMOT: When I passed you in the doorway, You took me with a glance / I should have took that last bus home But I asked you for

a dance

Calls on others to join in.

DERMOT: But I'm dancing in the moonlight (*Brian joins in*) It's caught me in its spotlight. It's alright, Dancing in the moonlight
On the long hot summer night

Dermot and Brian clink their bottles, laughing.

DERMOT: Good man Brian. Shove over on the couch.

Brian makes space for Dermot who sits beside him.

DERMOT: Lads, this is going to be great. (*He looks at the TV*)
Come on ye boys in Ah ref, come on! That was never offside

*Tim and Brian exchange looks and shrug. They all resume
looking at the TV as the music fades up - opening bars of
"Dancing in the Moonlight" while lights fade out.*

END OF PLAY