

Bullseye

A short play

By Lisa M. Konoplisky

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Characters

BRIAN - 28, white, transgender man. MIKE's son.

MIKE - 53, white, cis-gender man. BRIAN's father.

BARTENDER (non-speaking) - white, cis-gender man

Setting

A bar in a working-class town in the Pennsylvania. Mostly likely Scranton. Could be Erie. Or Lewisburg. It's a weeknight so the crowd is pretty sparse. There is a dartboard against one wall with a handful of blue and red darts stabbed into it. No one's played in a while. The bartender serves drinks with little or no conversation. He either knows what the regulars have or he waits for the customer to tell him and he delivers the drink without ceremony.

*At rise **BRIAN** is sitting at the bar, nursing a bottle of Rolling Rock, staring straight ahead. Silent and stoic. After a short pause **MIKE** enters, looks around, sees **BRIAN**, pauses for a moment, then head over to him, an angry reluctance in his step.*

***MIKE** sits next to **BRIAN** but leaves a stool between them. **BRIAN** does not look at **MIKE** or acknowledge him. The **BARTENDER** puts a bottle of Rolling Rock in front of **MIKE**. **MIKE** raps his knuckles on the bar as a gesture of thanks and recognition to the **BARTENDER**'s service. Gets out his wallet to pay, then--*

BRIAN

'S on me.

***MIKE** shrugs. Takes a pull from his beer. Sits and stares straight ahead. **BRIAN** looks down at the stool between them.*

BRIAN

Nope.

MIKE

What?

BRIAN

This is only gonna work if—

(Pats his hand on the stool between them)

Only way. Them's the rules.

***MIKE** stares at **BRIAN**, angry. **BRIAN** remains staring straight ahead, refusing to take the bait. A beat, then **MIKE** moves to the stool next to **BRIAN** and slides his beer over. **MIKE** and **BRIAN** are now side by side.*

MIKE

Really eating this up, aren't ya?

BRIAN

Naw. No worries. Just sharin' a beer with your son is all.

MIKE

You're not my son.

BRIAN

K.

MIKE

And you can't make me say you are.

BRIAN

(Beat)

How 'bout a little wager?

MIKE

(?)

...

BRIAN

I bet by night's end you'll call me son.

MIKE

Fuck that shit.

BRIAN

I'll take that as a yes.

MIKE

I'm not interested in any of your faggy bullshit or whatever the fuck this is.

BRIAN

Well.

(beat)

I don't know what "all my faggy bullshit" means, so I'm just gonna ignore that.

MIKE

You do that.

BRIAN

(Continuing uninterrupted)

Fact is, I don't really care. I don't need to hear much of anything you have to say. About me. Or Erica. Or the baby.

MIKE

You mean the science experiment you two cooked up in a test tube? I keep meaning to ask, are you two straight now, or you both still dykes? Like, I can't figure it out cuz you keep changing it up.

BRIAN

Like I said, just wanna share a beer. Maybe a game o' darts.

MIKE

(Giving BRIAN some serious side eye)

S'all you want?

BRAIN

All I want.

MIKE

Really?

BRIAN

Unless you want more of course.

MIKE

Like what?

BRIAN

Like what we discussed. Like Mom and the girls finding out about that little piece you've been keeping on the side for what, is it five years now? Mom proooooobably suspects, right? She already doesn't really like you much. But you already know that. And ya' can't blame her. If we're being honest.

MIKE

(Silently steaming)

...

BRIAN

There's a difference between suspecting and knowing though. And Meg, and Katie, and Bette? All your little girls. That just would feel....wrong. For them to know. Shit just flows downhill from there, don't it? Neighbors, everyone at St. Francis. Messy.

MIKE

OK.

BRIAN
OK?

MIKE
(*Beat*)

Yeah, OK
(*Beat*)

So what *do* you want?
It can't be money cuz you know I ain't got none.
I ain't gonna sit with you on fuckin' parade float wavin' a flag.
And I'm not gonna sit around in a circle in folding chairs in some church basement and pretend that—what?—that this is *normal*?

(*Beat*)
Like I said, fuck that shit.

BRIAN
I'm itching for darts. How 'bout you?

MIKE
Whatever. It's your nickel.

BRIAN
Actually there was one thing...

MIKE
(*Gotcha*)
See? I knew it. This freaky fag shit of yours.

BRIAN
I don't know why you keep calling it "freaky fag shit." A fag's a fag. I'm not a fag. You do *know* that don't you?

MIKE
Whatever.

BRIAN
I'm a heterosexual man. In love with a woman. One who's about to have our first child.
Your first grandchild.

MIKE
(*Sneering*)
Right.

BRIAN
First born of the first born. It's--it's kinda biblical.

MIKE

Nothing biblical about you...

BRIAN

“Nothing biblical about you, *Brian*.” You almost said it.

MIKE

Nope.

BRIAN

I could hear it. In that pause. You almost said my name.

MIKE

Your name’s not Brian.

BRIAN

You can’t help it. I’m your kid. Even *you* feel that pull. Wantin’ to call things by their true name. That’s what kids do, right? Cuz they haven’t learned to lie yet.

BRIAN get up, taking his beer and goes over to the dartboard. The following dialogue happens while he’s practicing some shots.

BRIAN

I learned. To lie, I mean. You taught me that.

MIKE

I’m not strolling down memory lane with you.

BRIAN

Good. Cuz I don’t want to talk about the past. I wanted to tell you about the future.

MIKE

Oh, you got a crystal ball to go with that fake dick.

BRIAN

Ah. The dick! Of course! I’m always amazed--stunned really--by how much people want to know if I’ve got a dick or not!

MIKE

Jesus.

BRIAN

It’s not curiosity. Most people have no curiosity. None. You know that cuz you’ve never been curious. Imagination’s never been your thing.

(MIKE sneers, takes another pull from his beer)

It's more a compulsion. Everyone wants a window into my dick or the lack thereof. No interest what I do, what I know or feel, who I am. They just want to check the label to see if I'm real or a knock-off.

MIKE

Stop talking about your dick. Christ.

BRIAN

Oh, I'm not talking about my *actual* dick. Which, we've established, may or may not exist. Cuz it's no one's business but mine whether or not I have one. Ask me about my dick and you can just fuck off. I'm talking about the *dick of the imagination*. Their dick, your dick. Not mine. You're talking about the *hypothetical* dick, the mutated one, the sci-fi one. The one that's gonna come to gobble up folks' children. My Godzilla dick.

MIKE

And you wonder why I don't want anything to do with you. Listen to this shit will ya?

BRIAN

Godzilla dick. I actually kinda like that. Just hearing that makes me feel like I've got quite a package. I can almost smell the testosterone. It's like a mixture of wood shavings and motor oil with some casual misogyny thrown in, just for flavor. Honestly, Pop, Any interest I EVER had in crafting has been completely replaced by this awe-inspiring awareness of my Godzilla dick. Soon as I leave here and I'm gonna go home and put all my scrapbooking gear right in the dumpster.

MIKE

That supposed to be funny?

BRIAN

No, it's supposed to be is an invitation. Darts, remember? Don't just sit there on your ass. Get up and play darts and drink your beer.

MIKE

You're a sick fuck.

BRIAN

A sick fuck with no darts buddy. Like I said, you know the rules.

MIKE reluctantly gets up, beer in hand and goes over to the dark board. He keeps an arm's length away from BRIAN. BRIAN hands him the red darts and keeps the blue. They are randomly taking turns throwing darts.

***BRIAN** is more enthusiastic than **MIKE**.
Following dialogue happens over this not
particularly exciting dart game.*

MIKE

How long we gotta do this before I can get outta here?

BRIAN

Just till I tell you, remember? ‘Bout the future.

MIKE

What about it?

BRIAN

We found out the other day.

MIKE

What?

BRIAN

We’re having a biological boy.

MIKE

A “*biological*” boy. Poor kid.

***BRIAN** goes to dartboard, gathers up all of the
darts, both red and blue. He punctuates the
following lines by throwing the darts and
increasing intensity. **MIKE** is slightly confused
but says nothing.*

BRIAN

That’s what it is. Just like I was born a girl. But knew all the while I was really a boy.

MIKE

Far as I’m concerned I still got four girls. The plumbing is the plumbing. End o’ story.

BRIAN

Our baby will be born a boy. If that’s who he is, that’s what he’ll stay. If he decides he’s someone else, then that’s who he’ll be. It’s not rocket science.

MIKE

So this is all about *you* being such a good Dad and *me* being such a shit, right? She ain’t even squeezed the kid out yet and already you know you’re a better Dad than me.

BRIAN

This isn't about what kind of father I'll be.

MIKE

Then what?

BRIAN

It's about the man I *am*. Right now. What I'll *do*. The decisions I'll make. You might be born a boy--or a girl--but you *make* yourself a man. The man I am, the man I'm gonna be--I'll be making that myself, a little every day. That's what'll show me how to be a father. It hasn't happened yet. But that's what I'm gonna do.

BRIAN has thrown all the darts, blue and red. He goes back to the dartboard, gathers them up and begin throwing them with each line, almost in a fury.

MIKE

(Dismissive)

That's how you're gonna do it.

BRIAN

(Throws a dart)

Yeah.

MIKE

(Taunting)

Cuz you know so much about being "a man".

BRIAN

(Throws a dart)

Yeah.

MIKE

(Laughing)

You can see the future?

BRIAN

(Throws a dart. He has one dart left)

See it? I *am* it.

MIKE
So what's that make me?

BRIAN
That makes you/

***BRIAN** suddenly pulls back his arm, as if to throw the last dart but instead he lands a direct blow to **MIKE**'s gut, right in the solar plexus. As **MIKE** is doubles over, **BRIAN** grabs one of **MIKE**'s hands, presses it up against the wall, and then, with merciless force, plunges the dart into **MIKE**'s hand.*

BRIAN (CONT'D)
An echo from the past.

MIKE
(Crying out in pain)
You son of a/

BRIAN
Yeah. Son. That's right. Your fuckin' son.
(Beat)
Told ya you'd say it.

***BRIAN** finishes his beer, drops the remaining darts and exits, not looking back at **MIKE** who struggles to remove the dart, crying with pain.*

BLACKOUT