

Winners

A 1-act play

Written by Dave Buchanan

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CAST (in order of appearance)

Michael Dunbar, 23, a student activist
Patrick Dunbar, 56, a politician, Michael's father
Caroline, 21, Michael's girl-friend
McTurk, 40, police sergeant (plainclothes)
Connelly, 20s, police constable

Setting - Michael's flat

Time - the near future

The scene is a cheap flat with a door R leading to the outside. There is a TV and hi-fi R with an armchair in front of it. UC is a table with a PC and a couple of chairs. The table is strewn with computer paraphernalia, leaflets and other stationery. On the back wall are two large posters of Che Guevara and Marilyn Monroe, and other smaller posters of various protest movements, such as CND etc. L is a door or exit leading to a kitchen and bedroom. DC is a large settee, and L is another armchair. In front of the settee is a small coffee table, and to R and L of it two small beanbags. On the table is a chess board with the chess pieces set for a game

On curtain the lights are half down

There is a knock on the door, then another, then another

Eventually Michael Dunbar emerges sleepily from the exit L. He is wearing a sloppy T-shirt which covers his underpants, and nothing else. His head is shaven and he has two earrings

Michael Okay okay, I'm coming.

He switches on the lights

Lights to full

He opens the door to reveal Patrick Dunbar, his father, dressed in well-cut trousers and a black leather jacket

For a moment they stare at each other

Michael Hi Dad.

Patrick Hello Mike.

Michael You found me then.

Patrick Yes. Took a long time. You covered your tracks pretty well.

Michael It's not hard to do. If you really want anonymity. And I wanted it pretty badly.

There is another pause

Patrick Can I come in?

Michael Sure. Why not? Now that you're here. Come in and sit down. While I go and get dressed. Be with you in a jiffy.

Michael exits L while Patrick strolls around the flat

(Off) Do you want a coffee?

Patrick Aye. It's milk and -

Michael Two sugars. Coming right up. I'll put the kettle on.

Patrick continues to stroll as Michael returns wearing jeans and Jesus sandals

Patrick Just admiring your artwork. I see you still play chess.

Michael Occasionally.

They both sit on the settee

So how did you find me?

Patrick Hired a private eye.

Michael Good God! They don't come cheap.

Patrick Five K. Took them a month. Their task wasn't made easier by the fact that you've changed your name. More than once, according to the report.

Michael Well it's your democratic right, isn't it?

Patrick It's got nothing to do with democracy. You can change your name whether you're an Afghan or an Abo. Or a citizen of the People's Republic. Criminals do it all the time.

Michael I'll just get the coffee. *(He exits)*

Patrick strolls around looking at the posters

Eventually Michael reappears with two mugs of coffee

Patrick Interesting combination.

Michael *(handing him the mug and sitting)* What?

Patrick Marilyn and Che Guevara.

Michael Che?

Patrick *(smiling)* Fawlty Towers?

Michael Not my era. I'm an eighties child, remember?

Patrick More *The Two Ronnies* than *Morecambe and Wise*?

Michael No. Ben Elton was more my scene.

Patrick Aha. The arch basher of the establishment. You realise of course that he's become part of the establishment now.

Michael Meaning?

Patrick That we all go through this phase. Call it reaction. Kicking against the traces. You're going through it. You'll come out of it. Once you get the taste of filthy lucre. The attractions of a regular job and an agreeable lifestyle will far outweigh this. . . squalor. I mean look at it. Look at you. How do you live? Pay your bills? Let me guess. You work the system. The welfare system. You've got it all worked out. Make the state pay for your lifestyle and all your activities. Because they owe you. So you've got it made.

You destroy the fabric of the state and its institutions for six days of the week, and collect your welfare cheque on Thursday. It's beautiful in its sheer simplicity. A perfect way of screwing the state.

Michael rises and walks downstage

Michael That was quite a speech. But you're wrong. I'm a paid secretary of a large organisation.

Patrick Eco Warriors Inc.? How much do they pay you?

Michael Enough. Probably a tenth of what you earn. But it's honestly earned.

Patrick Meaning?

Michael Nothing. So. You reckon you've got me sussed out then? From your detective's report. You must even know my new identity.

Patrick You call yourself Michael X. What was wrong with Michael Dunbar?

Michael Michael DeVere Dunbar. What do you need a middle name for? Especially a pretentious one like DeVere?

Patrick It was one of our family names. It was no big deal.

Michael Precisely. The same goes for the surname. What's the point?

Patrick It's an indication of your roots. Something to be proud of. Most people are.

Michael You may be, Dad. - why am I calling you Dad? I think I'll maybe start calling you Patrick. Or maybe just Dunbar.

Patrick *(irritated)* Call me what you damn well please! In most families "Dad" is a term of affection and respect.

Michael Clear grounds for not using it then, eh Patrick?

Patrick *(rising)* Look what is it with you, Mike? If you want to deny your family, your education, your whole cultural background - go right ahead!

Michael You got it on one, Patrick. I prefer the word "abjure".

Patrick Abjure?

Michael To renounce on oath or solemnly: to recant: to repudiate. I looked it up.

Patrick You sad little bastard!

Michael Aha, the truth emerges! So you never did marry my mother after all.

They are interrupted by the musical tones of a mobile phone

Excuse me.

He goes to the table and picks up the phone while Patrick slumps in the armchair DL

Hi honey. . . Yes, fine, how are you. . . I've got a visitor. My father. . . Yeh, he finally caught up with us. . . Oh we're just swapping pleasantries. . . Well you can meet him if you want to. . . I've no idea. . . Okay, you decide. . . When, about half an hour? Okay, see you then. . . Love you. Bye.

He switches off and sits on the settee. There is a pause

That was Caroline.

Patrick Your partner?

Michael She's the woman I live with. She's bringing back a curry. There'll be enough for three. If you wish to partake.

Patrick That's an invitation I can't refuse. How long have you -

Michael Been living with her? Over a year now. Met her at a Monopoly demo.

Patrick Monopoly? Oh of course. City locations renamed according to the board. Princes Street's Piccadilly and Waverley's Euston Station.

Michael Well anyway it was in Glasgow and we were demoing outside a conglomerate.

Patrick Conglomerate, eh? The convenient name for your perceived enemies. Which one was it? McDonald's? Burger King? Toys R Us? No, it would be McDonald's, wouldn't it? The biggest and handiest target.

Michael If you say so. We all sat down together and handcuffed each other.

Patrick And you were handcuffed to Caroline?

Michael Exactly. We were handcuffed, arrested and put in the same cell overnight.

Patrick Very romantic.

Michael It was rather. We were released next day, we had a coffee and before you could say Jack Robinson, Bob's your uncle!

Patrick You've been an item ever since. Is she your chess partner?

Michael Yes. She's picking it up quick. Do you still play?

Patrick Not really. (*Gesturing to the chess board*) Fancy a game?

Michael Why not?

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Plot Resumé

This is a political thriller about an estranged father and son, Patrick and Michael, one a successful politician and the other a student activist. After an apparently chance meeting Patrick attempts a reconciliation with Michael, but there is a hidden agenda - for both of them. Father and son engage in a running battle of verbal pyrotechnics and mind games. Who will come out on top?

Duration: approx. 45 minutes

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