

BLACK IRISH

Written by

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SETTING

Two chairs, one Stage Left, the other Stage Right.

Lighting suggests two separate locations.

TIME

The present.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

D-VON JAMES: Black, early 30s.

PETER BUTANE: White, early 30s.

BARTENDER.

Setting:

Two chairs. Each chair has a jacket slung over the back.

At rise:

(Lights up.

D-VON enters, Stage Left. He crosses to the chair, sits, puts on a telephone headset.

PETER enters, Stage Right, smartphone out, crosses to the chair, sits.)

PETER BUTANE

Hello...? Is there... anyone there? Anyone? Helloooo? I've been waiting for -

D-VON JAMES

Sorry for the delay, sir. This call is being recorded for quality assurance. My name is D-von. How can I assist you?

PETER BUTANE

Oh. Great. Uh. Yes, thank you, D... D-von?

D-VON JAMES

Or Devon. But I prefer D-von.

PETER BUTANE

Oh. OK. D-von. "D-von!" Oh, that's cool. I get it. Niiice.

D-VON JAMES

Thank you. Can I have your name, sir?

PETER BUTANE

Yes. Peter. It's Peter.

D-VON JAMES

What can I do for you, Peter?

PETER BUTANE

Well, D-von - that's cool, I wish I, I wish my name, you know, I wish I could do that with my - anyway.

(nervous chuckle)

What were we talking about?

D-VON JAMES

Names, sir. Yours and mine. You're Peter.

PETER BUTANE

You're D, D-von. Uh. What? D-von what?

D-VON JAMES

James, sir. D-von James.

PETER BUTANE

Oh. Well. Uh. Nice to meet you, D. Von. James.

D-VON JAMES

Likewise. May I have your full name, sir? Please.

PETER BUTANE

Yes. Yes!

(laughs with relief)

That I can do, D-von James. I'm Peter Butane. That's Butane. Here, let me spell that for you D-, Devon. D-von. OK, that's "B" as, uh, in "Boy," uh, "U" as in "Uterus," "T" as in "Tom," "A" as in "Apple," "N" as in, uh -

D-VON JAMES

What?

PETER BUTANE

"N" as in -

D-VON JAMES

What?

PETER BUTANE

As in -

D-VON JAMES

As in what?

PETER BUTANE

"N"! "N" "N"! As in... uh... "N" as, uh... uh...

D-VON JAMES

Don't say it. Don't you say it, don't you dare.

PETER BUTANE

Say what?

D-VON JAMES

You were, weren't you? Going to say it.

PETER BUTANE

Say - ? No. No, no, no. No, I was not.

D-VON JAMES

You were thinking it, though. First word that came to mind.

PETER BUTANE

That's not true. You thought it first.

D-VON JAMES

"N" as in "Nancy"? "N" as in "Neighbor"?

PETER BUTANE

Yeah! Yeah! OK. That'll work. "N" as in "Neighbor." Thank you.

D-VON JAMES

You're welcome, Mr. Butane. Butane. Where's that come from? Alabama?

PETER BUTANE

Yeah, well, no. Not that I'm aware of. It's Anglo-Saxon. It's British. Butane's used to make buttons. It comes from the old French word "boton." The English were, they were always stealing French words and making them sound English, you know? Um, your last name is Irish, D-, D-von, right?

D-VON JAMES

Éirinn go Brách.

PETER BUTANE

Ireland Forever! Cool. That's cool. OK? Are we cool? You know, family history can be fun, to explore. Know anything about your history? I know a little something about Black Irish history.

D-VON JAMES

What did you say?

PETER BUTANE

Um.

D-VON JAMES

Did you say Black Irish?

PETER BUTANE

Um. Yes. Yesssss. Yeah. I did. I said that. I'm sorry. I don't know what I'm thinking. What I meant to say was, what I mean, what it means is - Black Irish - what it means is, it's a term to describe people of Irish origin who have dark features. You know. Like. Dark Irish people from Ireland.

D-VON JAMES

You mean black.

PETER BUTANE

Well. Um. No, not... not that way. Not the way you're thinking black.

D-VON JAMES

No, the way you're thinking black.

PETER BUTANE

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to offend you. D-von. That's cool, that's so cool. I love it. DDDDDDD-von. Can't do that with Peter. I wish you could.

D-VON JAMES

PPPPPPP-Peter.

PETER BUTANE

OK. Look. I'm sorry. This has really gone off the rails. I want you to know that I support Black America, OK? I support Black Lives Matter, power to the people, all that. I've held signs that say "Honk if you love BLM." I wear my BLM baseball cap backwards. I've stood on street corners with my nieces and nephews, waving and shouting at the cops. I've shouted at cops - pigs. I've shouted at pigs. So, I'm, I mean, I'm not a pig pig. You know? I'm not. And I'm sorry. This has just really gone off the rails. Holy crap, I, I, I don't even know what I'm saying. I'm not racist. I just... I just forgot my password. That's why I called. I just need my... oh my god, I just need my password.

D-VON JAMES

I can help you, Mr. Butane. It's easy to do what you did. I can do it. Let me turn my MAGA baseball cap around and let's see... Your last name has a kind of... white ring to it, doesn't it? Southern white? Butaiiine. Confederate maybe? I think I nailed it: Alabama. It's probably got a fiery history, burning crosses, lynching people, things like that.

PETER BUTANE

You're accusing me of being racist.

D-VON JAMES

I'm not accusing of being racist, sir. I am accusing of you of being a dumbass cracker.

PETER BUTANE

You know this call is being recorded.

D-VON JAMES

For quality assurance, sir.

(beat)

Did you know the term - Black Irish - it isn't used in Ireland? It's only used outside Ireland. To describe descendants of immigrants. Like the descendants of the Spanish Armada in the 1500s who washed up on Ireland's shores after the storm. Their Spanish crews assimilated into the Irish people. But the Irish didn't call them Black Irish. Only people outside of Ireland called them Black Irish. People like you, I guess. The Butaiiines. I know that. That's something I know. Did you know that?

PETER BUTANE

I'm sorry, no. I, I, I didn't. I know about the Spanish Armada and all that, yeah, but no, I did not know that that, about Black Irish. But did you know that Black Irish can be a reference to invading forces from the Celts, the Normans, and the Vikings, who were referred to as "dark invaders" and "black foreigners?" So it's not all about skin color. Vikings were blond haired and pale skinned. Blue eyed. And tall. They were tall and tattooed. That's what they look on like on the History Channel.

D-VON JAMES

Yeah, I've seen that show. You seem to know a lot about Irish history, Mr. Butane.

PETER BUTANE

I'm half Irish.

D-VON JAMES

Me too.

PETER BUTANE

Yay! Group hug.

D-VON JAMES

I can give you your password, sir.

PETER BUTANE

Thank you. Thank God.

D-VON JAMES

But first, I need you to confirm your identity. Can you do that, sir?

PETER BUTANE

Yes.

D-VON JAMES

I need you to answer a security question.

PETER BUTANE

OK. Got it. Go for it. Give it to me.

D-VON JAMES

What's your favorite color? I'm thinking it's probably not black.

PETER BUTANE

Oh, come on! That's not fair. That's so not cool. I said sorry, I'm... I'm nervous. You've made me freakin' nervous.

D-VON JAMES

Why? Because I'm black?



PETER BUTANE

No. Yes, but no. No! Because I don't want to offend you. I'm afraid of offending you. I'm so afraid of offending you, I offended you!

D-VON JAMES

That's called white guilt. Pay up, buddy. You owe us.

PETER BUTANE

And that's called black privilege.

D-VON JAMES

What? Black what?

PETER BUTANE

Privilege. You point at everyone else and criticize them, but God help anyone who criticizes you. I call bullshit on that.

D-VON JAMES

You're accusing me of being racist?

PETER BUTANE

No, I'm not accusing you of being racist. I am accusing you of being an intolerant asshole.

D-VON JAMES

You want your password?

PETER BUTANE

Yeah, I want my password.

D-VON JAMES

Go fuck yourself, Mr. Butane. I think that's it.

PETER BUTANE

Yeah, that's it. Go fuck yourself, Mr. James. Thanks, DDDDDDD-von.

D-VON JAMES

Any time, PPPPPPP-Peter.

(They end the call.)

PETER BUTANE

Oh my god! Oh! My! God!

DEVON JAMES

"N" is for... Big breath.  
Biiig breath.

(Peter pockets his phone, slips into his jacket, and crosses Downstage Right.

Devon removes his headset, slips into his jacket, and crosses Downstage Left.

A rectangular wooden bar is rolled Centerstage as the men walk Downstage. The name of the pub is painted on the bar: "Domhan Amháin, Authentic Irish Pub & Restaurant."

Two stools are placed behind the bar, side by side.

Peter crosses to a stool and sits.)

PETER BUTANE

Bartender? Beer. Guinness. Please.

(A BARTENDER enters with a Guinness, placing it on the bar. Peter takes a big drink.

Devon crosses to the stool next to Peter.)

D-VON JAMES

You mind?

PETER BUTANE

Yeah, no. Have a seat.

D-VON JAMES

(to the Bartender)

Uh. Whiskey. Powers. Powers Irish Whiskey. On the rocks. Double.

(The Bartender exits.)

PETER BUTANE

That kind of day, huh?

(The Bartender enters with a Powers, placing it on the bar. Devon takes a big drink.)

D-VON JAMES

Yeah. That kind of day.

PETER BUTANE

Me too. Sláinte, brother.

D-VON JAMES

Sláinte, brother.

(They toast one another, knock their glasses together, and drink.)

BARTENDER  
Two more of the same. Yeah?

(Devon and Peter nod, then laugh  
together.)

CURTAIN.