

The Dressmaker (Excerpt)

by

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INT. CHAPEL STREET FLAT - NIGHT

As the opening notes of Bruch's Violin Concerto sound, we  
FADE UP on a set of bloodshot eyes.

They belong to BRIAN EPSTEIN, 31 years old. Attractive in a  
soft, provincial kind of way. He sits on a mildly-disheveled  
bed in silk pajamas, in a sea of important-looking papers.

On the night-table next to him are several pill bottles,  
lids on, and a small glass, half-full. Leaning up against  
his headboard, he stares, glassy-eyed. At nothing. *Is he  
even alive??*

Then: his eyes flicker. Yes, he's alive - but not at all in  
a good way.

Some movement in the room causes him to slowly rouse  
himself - he tries to focus on it in the moonlight:

It's a BEAUTIFUL MAN, in a suit, with a mop-top, Beatles-  
style. Slowly undressing as he approaches the bed..

Brian perks up as the Beautiful Man arrives at the bed and  
starts pulling his trousers down. He closes his eyes as a  
lazy smile of anticipation spreads over his face...

But after a beat, nothing happens. Something is wrong. He  
snaps his eyes open:

The Beautiful Man is now a MATADOR, in traditional garb. He  
lords over Brian, close, gazing at him with sympathy and  
love.

Brian struggles to get the words out:

BRIAN  
(woozy and soft)  
Are you...here for me?

MATADOR  
Of course, signor. I love you..

Brian's eyes tear up with love and joy. The Matador leans in  
and kisses him, hard. Urgent and passionate. Brian's arms  
snake up around the Matador...

And then his eyes POP open...all is still. He's instantly  
wide-awake. He looks around the room:

It's empty. A thin sliver of moonlight through the curtains  
is all that illuminates the room.

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TITLE: August 26th, 1967. 3 AM.

Brian slowly reaches to the night table, grabs a pill bottle and the glass and downs one. He's careful to replace the cap and set it back.

Sitting up now, his head lifts slightly, eyes trying to focus on a picture that hangs on the wall, barely visible in the light:

A picture of the Matador in his dream, delivering the final blow to a defeated bull.

He stares at it, focused on the dying bull. His mouth turns slightly up in an attempt at a smile as he ENTERS the picture...

FADE TO:

INT. BULLFIGHTING RING - NIGHT

Now illuminated by bright theatrical lights, Brian - his boyish face regal and grand - plays to the crowd, dressed in the Matador's garb.

The faceless crowd cheers him on as he waves and bows, smiling ear to ear. Very much in his element, he enjoys being part of the spectacle.

The Bruch fades into the just-discernible notes of an upbeat tune...

FADE TO:

EXT. SHEA STADIUM - NIGHT

...But as we enter Shea Stadium at the height of the Sixties, the screams of a young and hip SEA OF TEENS completely overpowers the music...it's inaudible.

On the field, just off the side of the stage, stands Brian in a perfectly-tailored suit. He gazes out - and up - to the full stadium, a look of triumph on his face.

Above him, on the stage, THE BEATLES - only their backs visible - play through their set, not that anyone can hear them.

The screams reverberate as Brian beams: he's at his peak, basking in the glory of worldwide success.

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A phone rings, piercing through the screams.

CUT TO:

INT. BEVERLY HILLS HOTEL, LOS ANGELES

CU on BRIAN'S EYES as they DART open. Bloodshot, pupils dilated.

He sits lolling on the floor of a luxurious suite, upright against the bed. He is *high*.

The phone continues ringing.

TITLE: August, 1966

Wobbling on his hands and knees, he reaches for it. Mustering the most calm and professional voice he can:

BRIAN  
This is Brian Epstein.

A masculine American voice answers.

BUD (V.O.)  
Hey.

*He's back.* Brian's face bursts into a gleeful, drug-riddled smile. Conversation continues as we:

FADE TO:

EXT. BEVERLY HILLS HOTEL, LOS ANGELES - POOLSIDE - DAY

Brian sits at a poolside table in the glorious LA sunshine, an expectant look on his face as he scans the exclusive crowd.

BUD (V.O.)  
So how come you're not with them in  
San Francisco?

The voices sound over the action below:

A waiter drops a second drink. Brian discreetly reaches into an inner pocket in his shirt and pulls something out, which he pops into his mouth, then downs the drink.

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BRIAN (V.O.)

Tomorrow, tomorrow - but there's time for you and me before then. Why don't you come by?

BUD (V.O.)

On my way.

Suddenly, ROBERT "BUD" GILES appears, in all his tortured-masculinity. 25, masculine and stunning. Radiant, in Brian's eyes..

BRIAN (V.O.)

Oh, splendid. Bud... SO delighted that you called. I just knew we'd reconnect again.

BUD (V.O.)

Yeah, me too, Brian.

Brian runs up toward him, just barely stopping himself from kissing him, embarrassingly aware of the public venue. Instead, they shake hands, gently.

BRIAN

Bud, it's so good to see you.

BUD

You too, Brian.

BRIAN

Would you like to go...upstairs for a bit? Before we have a swim?

BUD

Sure.

They head up.

INT. BEVERLY HILLS HOTEL, LOS ANGELES - HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Brian enters, leading Bud in. He lets the door shut as they walk further into the room.

He turns to Bud, then stands - heart pounding, hungry.

Bud grins and waits, ready. Brian releases his guard and moves quickly toward him, grabbing him.

Bud grabs him back and roughly THROWS Brian onto the bed, then slinks down next to him and lies back.

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CONTINUED:

He takes a deep breath as Brian, giddy as a schoolboy, starts to remove Bud's trousers.

FADE TO:

INT. FANCY HOTEL RESTAURANT - LOS ANGELES - DAY

Brian sits across from Nat. They argue over an elaborate and expensive brunch.

BRIAN  
He's changed. I know it.

NAT  
Guys like him don't change, Brian.  
Trust me.

BRIAN  
That's not true...he has.

NAT  
(incredulous)  
I don't get it - you could have  
anyone you want! Why do you keep  
going after these types?

BRIAN  
Why do you keep trying to stop me?  
I'm just trying to have some FUN for  
once..

NAT  
For ONCE? All this isn't fun?

BRIAN  
No, I mean...it's fine. But... it's  
just - this is it, Nat.

NAT  
What? Whaddya talkin' about??

BRIAN  
It's over after this. Their last  
concert is tomorrow night. They just  
don't want to do it, and why should  
they, really?

NAT  
Why *should* they?? Cause that's their  
*bread*.

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BRIAN

No..they can stay in the studio for the rest of their lives, they know that. Where does that leave me?

Brian's voice catches a little as he speaks. Nat is sympathetic but dismissive.

NAT

They're a little burnt out, is all. It's all talk.

BRIAN

(voice rising)

I'm telling you. They can't take it anymore, and I don't blame them. Especially after Manila, and this whole Jesus affair...It's *my* responsibility to protect them and I can't even do THAT!!!

Nat looks around uncomfortably...other patrons glance sidelong. The whispers are audible..

NAT

OK, OK.. calm down.

BRIAN

I'm just...what do I do now? They're all I've got...I'm not a studio manager, Nat.

NAT

What about Cilla? And Gerry? They're doing well, right?

BRIAN

Yes, fine. I don't know. Cilla's upset with me, I think. And Gerry, bless him...he does his best.

He trails off, morose, shaking his head. Clearly distraught. Nat doesn't know what to say...

BRIAN (cont'd)

They're going to sack me when our contract's up.

NAT

What? Come on. That's just crazy talk - you're the reason they exist! They wouldn't do that...

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CONTINUED: (2)

BRIAN

They would if they didn't need me!  
And if they don't tour anymore, they  
don't!

NAT

Ahh, they'll come around... Let 'em  
back in the studio, let 'em get an  
album out. They'll miss the screaming  
girls, you'll see.

Brian is not optimistic.

NAT (cont'd)

(grin)

And besides, just think about that  
briefcase upstairs, huh? It's been a  
good couple weeks. Aren't you glad we  
didn't cancel?

Brian smiles... then his expression FLICKS to one of stark  
terror. He quickly tries to hide it, but it's too late - Nat  
has noticed.

NAT (cont'd)

(alert)

What.

BRIAN

No. It's nothing..

NAT

No. It's something. What did you just  
remember?

BRIAN

It's fine, Nat. Don't worry. Let's  
get the bill...I'm sure he's still  
sleeping.

Nat chokes on his drink...

NAT

You left him in the room??!

BRIAN

Nat, please don't make a scene.

NAT

He's a hustler, Brian! This is what  
they *do*!! Don't you learn??

(CONTINUED)

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BRIAN

Nat, there's no reason for the tone.  
I promise you he's changed. Please  
just trust me.

Nat jumps up and moves quickly toward the hotel lobby as  
Brian looks around for the server.

INT. BEVERLY HILLS HOTEL, LOS ANGELES - DAY

Brian and Nat walk into their adjoining rooms:

They're trashed. Drawers pulled open, clothes everywhere,  
their suitcases dumped...it's a mess.

NAT

That fuckin' guy... It's GONE! My  
case is gone.

Brian stands - stunned, in shock. collapses in a heap.

BRIAN

My god..Nat. Twenty thousand doll....  
and...the....the..

NAT

What? What else?

BRIAN

My PILLS!

Brian is on the verge of a panic attack. Nat tries to calm  
him, keeping his head.

NAT

OK, OK. This'll be OK. I'll find him.  
He won't get far..

Brian sits on the bed, almost hyperventilating.

BRIAN

Please...Nat, don't, don't hurt  
him...he's not like that. I don't..I  
didn't want this...he's so  
talented....

Nat looks at him, incredulous and concerned. Brian lays  
back - weak, defeated. His face softens into a trance as the  
muffled sounds of his own voice start to fade through:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRIAN (V.O.)

In the beginning, I was very fierce about..uh.. this business of the manager not being known at all...

FADE TO:

INT. UK TONIGHT SHOW STAGE - DAY

Brian, sitting stiff and upright against a curtained background, in the midst of an interview. He's reserved and proper, but his eyes slightly betray his neuroses.

BRIAN

...and, uh.. fortunately or unfortunately, I don't know, but..it's just happened to me, actually, and uh.....

INTERVIEWER

Was it consciously done? Were you conscious of doing it?

CU on the grainy, black and white image of Brian, maintaining his public mask.

BRIAN

No. Not really...not at all. In fact for twelve months, I was careful about even letting my name get out. But I do enjoy it now, doing television and programs and such..

INTERVIEWER

You enjoy it, but do you ever envy the Beatles.

Brian pauses.

BRIAN

(big smile)

No, no.

INTERVIEWER

What *don't* you envy about them?

BRIAN

Well I couldn't do what they do, obviously. It's not my...job...

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INTERVIEWER

You mention in the book that when you first saw the Beatles, they had little idea of stage presence, which implies some sort of knowledge - have you had training in this area?

BRIAN

Yes, I studied at RADA for eighteen months, prior to going back into the family business.

INTERVIEWER

And what sort of family is yours?

FADE TO:

INT. CHAPEL STREET FLAT - NIGHT

Brian - as in the opening - sits awake in his disheveled bed.

BRIAN (V.O.)

Middle class. Perhaps a bit better. Furniture and retail, you know.. Old, established.

In his hands, a PICTURE: A boyish, teenage Brian, dressed well, stands arm-in-arm with a PRETTY WOMAN and a SMILING MAN - his parents, QUEENIE and HARRY Epstein.

BRIAN (V.O.) (cont'd)

When I left school at the age of sixteen, I had ambitions to be a dress designer and an actor, but I allowed myself to be swayed back into the family business.

ON PHOTO: They both look straight at the camera, beaming - Brian's reserved smile stands in stark contrast.

Brian holds the photo closer, looking deeply at his father.

BRIAN (V.O.) (cont'd)

I think I was more anxious to leave school than anything else, which I didn't enjoy very much...

FADE TO:

INT. LIVERPOOL COLLEGE - CLASSROOM - DAY

TITLE CARD: 1944

On a board in front of a class of ten-year olds are several maths problems. An OLD TEACHER points.

The teacher turns back to the class and his face drops.

OLD TEACHER  
Brian Epstein!!

TEN-YEAR-OLD BRIAN jolts his head up, startled. He holds a large note-pad under his desk.

The teacher marches up to him.

OLD TEACHER (cont'd)  
What have you got? Give it here, now.

Brian reluctantly brings the note-pad up as the class titters. The Old Teacher grabs it:

It's gorgeous: a beautifully-drawn programme for a concert, featuring dancing ladies and elaborate fonts.

Some of the women are topless, and very anatomically correct.

The Old Teacher is decidedly not impressed. He motions to the door, and Brian - eyes brimming - rises and collects his things.

Oooohs spew forth from the mouths of the children, and as Brian walks out:

CHILD (O.S.)  
(under his breath)  
Jewboy..

Some snickers from the other children. Brian maintains a stiff walk, head high...

FADE TO:

INT. HEADMASTER'S OFFICE - LIVERPOOL COLLEGE - DAY

Brian sits off to the side in the headmaster's office, ignored.

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CONTINUED:

Brian's PARENTS - HARRY, gruff and staid, and QUEENIE, pretty and demure but with fire in her eyes - sit in front of the HEADMASTER, looking over Brian's programme.

Brian hides in his imagination as their words float from far away...

HEADMASTER

...just not, how shall I say...*right* for our Academy. He might, perhaps, be more comfortable in a place more suitable for his, uh...temperament..

QUEENIE

(not a question)  
And what do you mean by that,  
Headmaster.

HARRY

Don't make a scene, Malka...

HEADMASTER

I am sorry, Mr. and Mrs. Epstein.

QUEENIE

(standing)  
Of course. Come, Harry.  
(to Brian)  
Let's go, young man!

Harry nods an apology to the headmaster as Queenie drags Brian out.

EXT. LIVERPOOL COLLEGE - DAY

Queenie storms out, Brian in tow. Harry rushes to catch up to them.

HARRY

Malka, slow down, please. What's gotten into you?

QUEENIE

Me? Why are you not more cross??  
Don't you see they've kicked him out  
because we're Jewish?

HARRY

(appalled)  
The boy was drawing naked ladies...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

QUEENIE

And that's enough to get him expelled? No - this is something else.

Harry sighs...at a loss.

QUEENIE (cont'd)

But good riddance, I say. He doesn't belong here, anyway.

HARRY

Well he doesn't belong ANYwhere then, does he? How many schools can one boy go to in eleven years?

BRIAN

(helpful)

This is number five, Daddy.

HARRY

Hush, you. If you were paying attention to your studies, this wouldn't be happening.

QUEENIE

It's NOT his fault!

(to Brian, soft)

We'll find you another school, love.

Harry sighs as he gets into the car.

FADE TO:

EXT. BEACONSFIELD SCHOOL, SUSSEX - DAY

The private, Jewish boarding school sits in the rolling English countryside.

INT. BEACONSFIELD SCHOOL DORMITORY - BRIAN'S ROOM

In one room with four bunks, Twelve-year-old Brian sits, studying a Hebrew text. He chants the melody, practicing - his voice is melodious, his ear perfect.

But he's interrupted - a commotion sounds from outside, followed by screams of a child in agony. Concerned, he goes to investigate...

INT. BEACONSFIELD SCHOOL DORMITORY - HALLWAY

Outside his room, a crowd has gathered in the main foyer - forty boys stand, transfixed, their faces stone.

The only sound is of two young voices crying in pain.

Brian moves forward. The crowd parts to reveal the source of the screams:

In full view of the entire student body, TWO BOYS are being caned, bare-bottoms and all.

A deathly silence, except for the boys' wails, which bounce off the stone walls.

Brian turns to an OLDER BOY:

BRIAN  
(whispering)  
What'd they do?

OLDER BOY  
Headmaster caught 'em wankin'  
together...

Brian watches the whip as it hits the boys' bottoms - each strike reverberates in his eyes and ear. He's transfixed by the scene...almost in slow-motion from his POV...

The screams recede in his head as he continues to stare - ashamed of his excitement, but unable to look away.

FADE TO:

INT. WREKIN COLLEGE - DINING ROOM - DAY

TITLE CARD: 1950

VO under the FOLLOWING:

Brian - a teenager now, wise beyond his years - stands at a mirror in a bathroom, meticulously combing his hair.

BRIAN (V.O.)  
Dearest Father, I write to you now in  
a state of both excitement and  
nervousness, for it has come time for  
a change.

Other boys walk by - Brian catches a glimpse of them laughing at him in the mirror. He continues to comb.

INT. WREKIN COLLEGE - CLASSROOM - DAY

V.O. continues as Brian sits in class, doodling. A STODGY TEACHER holds forth as we hear:

BRIAN (V.O.)  
I'm afraid that the experience here at Wrekin is no longer what it should be. My studies, for example, are not what I would call engaging.

The picture Brian draws is of a a gorgeous gown, similar to his earlier drawing but without the nudity, and much more sophisticated and refined. It's stunning.

Then: An ERASER smacks him in the forehead.

STODGY TEACHER  
Eyes UP, Mr. Epstein.

Brian looks around sheepishly as other boys contain their laughter.

INT. WREKIN COLLEGE - THEATER - DAY

With grand and theatrical motions, he choreographs a group of boys through a scene in a play...

BRIAN (V.O.)  
And though there are certain things I enjoy, I have grown restless, and my time here has ceased to be productive.

He's clearly in his element at the helm of a production.

EXT. WREKIN COLLEGE - A RUGBY PITCH - DAY

A GROUP OF BOYS, dirty and torn, just done with a game, all walk together off the pitch. Among them is Brian...

...but he's immaculate. Not a scratch or a tear on him - even his shoes are fairly unstained. The other boys give him some side-long glances as they walk. VO Continues:

BRIAN (V.O.)  
The so-called 'manly pursuits' around here, though mildly enjoyable, are taken far too seriously for an artistically-minded person such as myself.

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CONTINUED:

One of the boys (GRAHAM) calls over:

GRAHAM  
(biting sarcasm)  
Oy there, Eppy - not hurting, are you?

BRIAN  
(smiling)  
Not at all, Graham. I'm doing quite well, thanks.

Some boys shake their head in begrudging admiration, but Graham glares as Brian continues to walk, head held high.

But his lip quivers, just ever so slightly..

INT. WREKIN COLLEGE - BRIAN'S ROOM - DAY

Brian sits at a desk in his room, finishing the letter.

Sketches of costumes and theatrical sets and all kinds of drawings hang on the wall in front of him.

VO Continues as he writes:

BRIAN (V.O.)  
And so, father, I write today to ask for your blessing. It is my sincere wish to leave this Wrekin I hate to embark on a career in fashion design as a dressmaker. I have developed quite a talent for this style of work, and I feel that it would be a fulfilling career for me to undertake.

Just then, TWO BOYS, sweaty and carrying a football, enter the room and head to their bunks.

They begin to change out of their clothes. Brian watches them sidelong, trying to hide his stare.

One of the boys, about to drop his trousers, notices Brian looking - he stops, pulling his trousers back up.

Brian quickly turns back to his writing, mortified. He throws a discreet glance in the mirror back at the boy, who has retreated behind his bunk.

Brian's ears burn as he examines his letter, then looks up to see the lad hurry out of the room in a towel.

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CONTINUED:

Brian looks at the letter, then finishes it.

BRIAN (V.O.) (cont'd)  
I would be ever so grateful for your support and understanding. I remain, as always, your loyal son BRIAN.

He signs it, then catches a glimpse of the OTHER BOY in the mirror. Other Boy is still shirtless - and he's staring right at Brian...

INT. THE EPSTEIN HOME - LIVERPOOL - DAY

The family sits in a tense silence. Brian sulks as Harry holds the letter.

HARRY  
(breaking the silence)  
I mean, really, Brian.. How can you possibly expect to make a career doing that? If you're going to quit your studies, at least do something useful.

BRIAN  
(bitter)  
Such as selling furniture, eh?

HARRY  
Well, yes! It's better than throwing away your future on this tosh!

BRIAN  
Bloody hell, Dad..

HARRY  
Don't you swear at me!

QUEENIE  
Brian! Apologize.

Brian sits stoic, unmoved.

HARRY  
Right then, you either return to school tomorrow, or report to the shop on Monday. Nothing more to talk about.

He stands up and walks out - uncomfortable with being a taskmaster.