

= Tom & Gerri =

" Tom & Gerri " is the third episode of British dark comedy anthology series Inside No. 9 . It premiered on BBC2 on 19 February 2014 . The episode was based on a play that Steve Pemberton and Reece Shearsmith had written while living together prior to the development of their series The League of Gentlemen . While the play had originally been around two hours in length , the episode was only half an hour . " Tom & Gerri " follows a difficult period in the life of Tom (Shearsmith) , a primary school teacher and aspiring writer , and his partner Gerri (Gemma Arterton) , a struggling actress , after Tom invites the homeless Migg (Pemberton) into his home . Conleth Hill stars as Stevie , a man worried about the mental health of his friend Tom . The entire episode takes place inside Tom 's flat .

Reviewers generally agreed that " Tom & Gerri " was significantly darker but less funny than previous episodes of Inside No. 9 . Nonetheless , the response to the episode as a whole was very positive . Critics disagreed about the presentation of Tom 's mental illness in the episode , with one journalist suggesting that the episode 's ending " set back public awareness of mental health at least half an hour " , but another saying that the story presented " a fine ? if cartoonish ? take on mental illness " .

= = Production = =

Writers Steve Pemberton and Reece Shearsmith , who had previously worked together on The League of Gentlemen and Psychoville , took inspiration for Inside No. 9 from " David and Maureen " , episode 4 of the first series of Psychoville . This episode , in turn , was inspired by Alfred Hitchcock 's Rope . " David and Maureen " took place entirely in a single room , and was filmed in only two shots . At the same time , the concept of Inside No. 9 was a " reaction " to Psychoville , with Shearsmith saying that " We 'd been so involved with labyrinthine over @-@ arcing , we thought it would be nice to do six different stories with a complete new house of people each week . That 's appealing , because as a viewer you might not like this story , but you 've got a different one next week . " As an anthology series with horror themes , Inside No. 9 also pays homage to Tales of the Unexpected , The Twilight Zone and Alfred Hitchcock Presents .

The " loose story " of " Tom and Gerri " was written originally as a two @-@ hour play while Shearsmith and Pemberton were on the dole and sharing a flat , prior to the production of League of Gentlemen . The story was inspired by their experiences in this environment . The character of Tom has his " life energy " drained in the same way that , the writers suggest , is experienced by jobhunters . The " sinister " atmosphere of the episode is meant to evoke the feeling that a person has when they " can 't quite manage to leave the flat " and they " can 't be bothered to tidy up " . " Tom & Gerri " ended up " quite different " from the play , which featured a character much like Pauline from The League of Gentlemen . Pemberton described the feel of the episode as Pinteresque , comparing it to Harold Pinter 's A Slight Ache . This sentiment was echoed by critic Gareth Lightfoot , writing in Teesside 's Evening Gazette .

As the format of Inside No. 9 requires new characters each week , the writers were able to attract actors who may have been unwilling to commit to an entire series . In addition to the writers , " Tom & Gerri " starred Gemma Arterton and Conleth Hill . The flat in which the episode was filmed , with its boardgames and " misery " , was , for Shearsmith , similar to the flat once shared by the writers . The episode was filmed in winter , and Pemberton described a " grim " atmosphere during filming . He also said that he hated the wig and beard he wore to play Migg , which irritated his skin . David Chater , writing in The Times , said that the hair meant Migg " has an eerie resemblance to the Cowardly Lion from the Wizard of Oz - only not nearly as benign " .

Considering the title of " Tom & Gerri " , critic Bruce Dessau suggested that it was likely not a reference to the Tom and Jerry of 1970s sitcom The Good Life , as the life of Tom and Gerri is " anything but good " . Instead , he suggested , the reference was more likely to cartoon characters Tom and Jerry , saying that there " is definitely a hint of cat and mouse " in the plot . Metro critics Larushka Ivan @-@ Zadeh and Carol Carter concurred , saying that the plot consisted of " a game

of cat and mouse " .

= = Plot = =

The episode begins with Tom (Shearsmith) , a primary school teacher , apathetically marking work while chatting to Gerri (Arterton) , who is going to audition for a part in a play . Tom complains about a tramp begging outside their house . Later in the evening , Tom is home alone and Migg (Pemberton) , the tramp , comes to his door , to return Tom 's wallet . Tom rewards him with £ 40 . Migg comes back later with a bottle of whiskey for Tom . Reluctantly , Tom invites Migg inside for a drink . Migg says he knows Charles Bukowski , a writer Tom idolises , and Tom warms to Migg as they drink .

Tom awakes the next morning on his sofa . Gerri is alarmed to see him there , as he should be at work , and then gets angry that Migg was invited in . Migg emerges from the bathroom as Gerri leaves the house , and encourages Tom to call in sick . It is revealed that Tom had promised Migg some of his clothes , and Migg makes breakfast . Later , Migg and Tom play Risk and drink wine . Tom is concerned that Gerri has not called . When Tom heads out to buy cigarettes and wine , Migg hides Tom 's mobile and deletes an answerphone message left by Tom 's colleague Stevie (Hill) .

A week later , Tom lies in bed , smoking and writing . Gerri enters the room , and it is revealed that Tom has left his job . She has been rehearsing in Portsmouth and says she left him dozens of messages , but Tom thinks he lost his phone . The pair fight over Migg , who is still living with Tom . Later still , the flat is a mess , and Tom is unkempt and drinking heavily . He has no messages on his phone and no post . He sits down to play Scrabble with Migg , and it is revealed that it is Tom 's birthday . The two argue about washing up , and Migg says that Tom has " no right " to judge him . Tom storms out of the room , and Migg flicks through birthday cards he has hidden from Tom , saying " Thank you , Grandma ! " and taking the £ 10 that Tom 's grandmother sent . The house and Tom have deteriorated further when Stevie comes to visit . He has brought Tom vouchers for The Body Shop . Stevie invites Tom out for dinner , but he declines . Stevie leaves , and Tom settles down with Migg on the sofa .

Tom 's electricity is cut off , and he weeps . A shaven Migg , wearing clean clothes , enters the house . He has started a job , working with children , and gives Tom £ 40 because Tom has " done so much " for Migg . Migg wants to take over the tenancy on the flat until Tom 's benefits come in . He walks into the bathroom to get into the bath as Gerri walks in and comforts Tom , who asks her not to leave . Gerri tells Tom that he has invented Migg to cope with what has been happening . She says Tom is depressed and has had a nervous breakdown . The pair head into the bathroom , but there is no Migg . Gerri tells Tom to " get this Migg out of [his] head once and for all " . She leaves , and Migg emerges from a hiding place ; he asks if everything is alright .

Things apparently get better : the flat is tidy , Tom is smartly dressed and clean @-@ shaven . Gerri is happily chatting to him . Tom answers the door to Stevie , who asks Tom to come back to work . He is alarmed to see Tom call Gerri ; Stevie says that Gerri was killed in a car accident , and that Tom went back to work too soon . Stevie heads to the bathroom to get Tom 's medication , but freezes when he sees the corpse of Migg in the bath . Tom tells him not to worry , and that Migg is not real . He invites Stevie to stay for coffee , saying Gerri is just boiling the kettle .

= = Reception = =

Reviewers generally agreed that the episode was darker than previous episodes , but not as funny . However , Will Dean , writing in The Independent , said that his observation that the episode " wasn 't really in the slightest bit funny " was " no complaint " . The critical response to " Tom & Gerri " was overwhelmingly positive ; Dean was " moved by its sad brilliance " , while Gerald Gilbert , also writing in The Independent , called it " another finely worked playlet " . Bruce Dessau said viewers would be " totally immersed from start to finish " .

Critics disagreed on how " Tom & Gerri " compared to previous episodes of Inside No. 9 . Writing in The Guardian , Mark Jones said that " Tom & Gerri " was the " highlight of the series so far , with

Shearsmith and Steve Pemberton on top form " . Pat Stacey , of the Evening Herald , agreed , though considered the previous episodes weak . By contrast , an anonymous reviewer in the Liverpool Echo thought " Sardines " was stronger , but said " Tom & Gerri " was " definitely the creepiest " of the first three , and Chater also disagreed with Jones and Stacey ; while he praised the episode as " a sinister tale about the fragile nature of sanity performed by actors who are frighteningly good " , he felt that it was not as strong as earlier installments . Like Chater , Dessau stressed the quality of the acting , praising the performances of both Shearsmith and Pemberton , especially the latter .

There was further disagreement on the episode 's approach to mental illness . Andrew Billen , writing in The Times , said he initially thought Mind may be able to use " Tom & Gerri " as a teaching aid , but he said that the ending " set back public awareness of mental health at least half an hour " . By contrast , Dean considered the character of Tom to be " a fine ? if cartoonish ? take on mental illness " .

Billen called the episode " distressing comedy to watch " , but said that " the acting , the scripting , the satisfactions of one @-@ act resolution and the laughter it generated " were redeeming qualities , and gave the episode four out of a possible five stars . Dessau felt that parts of the script were predicable , but some twists " catch you completely unaware " , while the ending " may haunt [viewers] for days " . Jack Seale , of the Radio Times , suggested that viewers will believe that they have guessed the plot by the half @-@ way point in the episode . However , he said that the writers " give their story of how we 're all one slip away from the gutter a chilling sense of rising dread " which counteracts this . " Nobody " , he said , " plays wicked games with the audience more skilfully . " Larushka Ivan @-@ Zadeh and Carol Carter , writing in Metro , suggested that viewers would want to rewatch the episode in an attempt to pick up clues to the plot twists that they originally missed .