

His Guiding Hand

by

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Characters:

BRENNAN – *Headmaster of the school*

TURLEY – *A junior teacher at the school who wants to be better known and appreciated by Brennan.*

Setting:

*The action of this play is intended to take place inside the Headmaster's office of a school, filled with the relevant décor. A **window** for both characters to look out of is essential.*

*The staging is minimalist and therefore quite adaptable, but the characters and the language they use are intended to fit a somewhat pre-contemporary Ireland, so décor and clothing would ideally fit a **1980's/1990's** aesthetic.*

Props:

A plate with sandwiches

- PLAY START -

- CURTAIN-

BRENNAN *is at the window, looking out and humming a tune.*

TURLEY *enters in a fluster, holding a plate with sandwiches.*

BRENNAN: Ms. Turley? Are you alright?

TURLEY: Oh yes Headmaster, I only thought I'd bring you some sandwiches from the service.

BRENNAN: Ah you're too kind...*[Re-focusing on the window]* But won't you be missed by the other teachers?

TURLEY: I just thought you must be so lonely stuck up here while everything's going on.

BRENNAN: Yes, well...you're too kind. God bless you.

TURLEY *gives the plate. BRENNAN places them on the window sill without looking at them.*

TURLEY *stays by BRENNAN at the window.*

TURLEY: You've got a fantastic view of it all up here.

BRENNAN: It's always important in my position to keep a good vantage on things.

TURLEY: And how do you feel the ceremony is going?

BRENNAN: Splendidly, all off without a hitch. Exactly what the boys deserve. They're the cream of the crop you know.

TURLEY: We're all very proud of them Headmaster.

BRENNAN: Oh please, no need for titles up here. Paul will do fine.

TURLEY: [*Hesitant*] Well...you must be very proud of them too Paul.

BRENNAN: Of course, they're the future captains of industry and leaders of this country, mark my words. Brilliant young things. And this is exactly the day they deserve. The Lord is taking good care of everything, his guiding hand can be felt in it all.

TURLEY: Thanks be to God, I was so worried all this nonsense would disrupt everything.

BRENNAN: Well it very nearly did, but that's all sorted now.

TURLEY: So they're all finished up already? All questions asked? No big investigation or-

BRENNAN: It's not the time to speak about these things. Ms. Turley. Today is a day of celebration for the boys.

TURLEY: Well I saw them drive off anyway. That's how I knew it was the right time to come in and give you the sandwiches. If I'd waited any longer they'd have gone stale, hard as a brick!

BRENNAN: Yes...[*Poking at the sandwiches*] You're really too kind Ms. Turley.

BOTH *quiet as they stare down through the window.*

TURLEY: It'll be me down there with them some day soon.

BRENNAN: Hmmm?

TURLEY: When my son is graduating I mean.

BRENNAN: Ah yes, how is little Tiernan settling into his new class?

TURLEY: Oh Tommy's loving it. His classmates are all a good bit younger than him now so things don't get quite as...physical.

BRENNAN: Splendid, splendid. I was so sorry to hear of all the trouble before. Children can always be so...

TURLEY: Some of them. It's hard doing it all by myself, but I know I've raised Tommy to be a good boy.

BRENNAN: Well I hope he hasn't taken the whole experience too much to heart. It could be a good chance for him to reflect now, perhaps toughen up a little.

TURLEY: I...what do you mean Paul?

BRENNAN: Well he can't always go running to his Mummy at every hint of trouble now can he?

TURLEY: The bullying was quite-

BRENNAN: It's all behind us now anyway.

TURLEY: I-

BRENNAN: And it's no good making mountains out of molehills. [*Laughs*] We know all too well where that can lead.

TURLEY: Well...I suppose so.

Beat

TURLEY: I almost think that-, well I probably shouldn't say but-, well I'm sure it's alright for you to come down and join the rest of us.

BRENNAN: [*Icily*] It's always been perfectly alright for me to come down Ms Turley.

TURLEY: Of course, I didn't meant that- it's just that you don't need to stay and-

BRENNAN: And as I told the officers just now there's absolutely no evidence of any-

TURLEY: Oh yes, I know that, but you don't need to-

BRENNAN: But I *decided*, for the sake of our boys, not to risk any disruptive scenes from those malicious enough to intrude upon their day.

TURLEY: But Paul, it really hasn't come to that.

BRENNAN: Oh I'm afraid there's ample evidence to the contrary Ms. Turley.

TURLEY *looks puzzled.* **BRENNAN** *points out to window.*

BRENNAN: There.

TURLEY *looks out.*

TURLEY: Oh. Schofield. That's the boy who was-

BRENNAN: Who has made up all the nonsense, yes.

TURLEY: Why isn't he with the rest of the boys?

BRENNAN: Like I said, he's malicious. As you can see by the woman beside him.

TURLEY: Oh is that not his-, well I suppose she's a bit too young to be his mother.

BRENNAN: Because she isn't. Her name is McNamara. From the Tribune. And I believe that's her photographer next to them. I doubt he's carrying anything innocent inside that camera bag of his.

TURLEY: Oh my God! I can't believe anyone would-

BRENNAN: And Schofield's been searching the quadrangle non-stop! Looking for me no doubt!

TURLEY: Jesus Mary and Joseph, I had no idea anyone would stoop so low. On Graduation as well!

BRENNAN: I'm sure I've left them very disappointed, but they won't catch me off-guard any time soon.

TURLEY: I just can't..., why does he have it out for you so much Paul? Why has he caused all this trouble? It was only last year he was lifting the Schools cup and now he's-

BRENNAN: I'm sorry to say he was always something of a bad egg Ms. Turley. I personally did my best to take him in hand from an early age but he was always making up stories and causing trouble for the other boys, refusing to listen to the wisdom of his elders. A promising young sportsman, yes, but as I was just informing those good officers, he's sadly fallen victim to several vices already. A fantasist too fond of certain unhealthy appetites.

TURLEY: What? At his age?

BRENNAN: I've said too much already Ms. Turley. But suffice it to say the officers are now well acquainted with the delinquency of young Schofield.

TURLEY: The little demon! After everything you did for him he has the cheek to make all this trouble?

BRENNAN: A bad egg is unlikely to let any good deed go unpunished Ms. Turley, but we'll all be rid of him soon thank God.

TURLEY: But what could possess a promising young man to carry on like that?

BRENNAN: Oh I suspect it all started at home Ms. Turley. A troubled situation, the father was never really present.

TURLEY: I-, well that doesn't condemn a child all by itself.

BRENNAN: Of course, of course. I imagine his mother failed him as well. A cautionary tale for us all.

TURLEY: Paul, my son will never be a troublemaker like him.

BRENNAN *is confused for a moment, then apologetic.*

BRENNAN: Oh no I didn't mean-, I wasn't saying *that*, I just meant- but I heard he's a good little runner your Tony, isn't he? Set a school record recently?

TURLEY: Oh yes, Tommy loves his athletics!

BRENNAN: Well you know of course that sporting achievement is a very important part of our school's legacy. And I understand how things may be challenging for the poor lad and...well, rest assured that I'll make sure to do all I can to foster his talents.

TURLEY: [*Overjoyed*] Do you think he could one day-, do you think he could compete in the Schools-

BRENNAN: If he can get anywhere, he'll get there with us Ms. Turley, never doubt that.

TURLEY: Oh he'd be over the moon!

BRENNAN: But I warn you, it won't come easy. He'll have to show discipline and dedication to a strict training regime if he wants to achieve greatness.

TURLEY: Well as long as it doesn't take away from his studies too much, I know he'd be only too happy.

BRENNAN: The studies can wait, and besides we take good care of all our bright stars don't worry. We make sure to balance out all the hard work with a bit of fun, keep things from getting too rowdy.

TURLEY: Well...I suppose it's more important for Tommy to have strong sources of male bonding, since at home he doesn't have any- well I know it would just be so good for him.

BRENNAN: Oh yes indeed, we show our boys how to become men, let me tell you! [*Laughs*]

TURLEY:[*Laughing too*] As long as you don't have him out drinking you have my blessing!

BRENNAN: Ah a little drinking under supervision does no harm Ms. Turley. Better they do it around us so that we can monitor it rather than leaving them to do it in some park or under a bloody bridge.

TURLEY: You mean...you let the boys drink around you?

BRENNAN: [*Winking*] Only if they win Ms. Turley. We don't tend to reward losing.

TURLEY: But Paul I...I really don't think that sounds very responsible.

BRENNAN: Nothing could be more responsible Ms. Turley, don't be silly.

Beat

TURLEY: Did...did you ever bring Schofield drinking like that?

Beat

BRENNAN *turns to* **TURLEY**

BRENNAN: Excuse me?

TURLEY: Nothing I just-

BRENNAN: Ms. Turley...*[Beat]* I think they're going to start missing you downstairs if you stay gone much longer. Best to hurry back.

TURLEY: Yes, yes you're right, I should go.

TURLEY *goes to leave then stops.*

TURLEY: Paul, I have to ask.

BRENNAN: What? What is it now?

TURLEY: Do you think that-, do you think that maybe Schofield may have gotten onto the wrong track with his habits as a consequence of-

BRENNAN: Ah for the love of God Ms. Turley, now is not the time to be-

TURLEY: But did you let the Guards know in case it could help them to-

BRENNAN: Jesus Christ, the Guards? Are you mad! That would be throwing petrol right on the fire!

TURLEY: But Paul, if you haven't been wholly honest with them they may not be able to-

BRENNAN: Wholly honest? And who are you to be throwing out accusations like that?

TURLEY: Paul I didn't mean-

BRENNAN: A fallen woman who doesn't even know who fathered her little bastard, telling a respectable leader of this august institution that he should-

TURLEY: P-Paul don't say those- leave Tommy out of this, he-

BRENNAN: With talk like this you'll have the wrath of God down on you never mind my own!

TURLEY *holds her composure for a moment and then begins to sob.*

BRENNAN: Oh Jesus Christ... [*Sighing, then indicating the window*] Come here now. Look.

TURLEY: But-

BRENNAN: Good God, do not test my patience any further woman, not today of all days! Come here!

TURLEY *comes. BRENNAN stands over her, pointing out the window.*

BRENNAN: What do you see?

TURLEY: I-, I see t-the b-boys.

BRENNAN: And what else?

TURLEY: I s-see...oh no, i-it's Schofield again a-and...h-he's crying!

BRENNAN: For the love of God not that fairy too, I swear I'll-, but keep looking Ms. Turley. Keep looking. [*Beat*] Now think to yourself: Where do I want my son to be? What path will my actions lead

him down? Do I want him to stand proudly beside his peers...or do I want to see him wailing into the grass?

BOTH *quiet for a moment and then TURLEY, calmer now, turns away from the window.*

TURLEY: But Paul-

BRENNAN: I think it would be best if you were to call me by my title from now on Ms. Turley.

TURLEY: Headmaster...I really just don't understand why it's so wrong for me to ask about-

BRENNAN: *[Exploding]* Because I refuse to see their futures compromised by hysteria and scandals! Do I make myself clear Ms. Turley?

TURLEY *gives a meek response.*

Beat

BRENNAN: I'm sorry you forced me to demonstrate the strength of my convictions so bluntly, but you have to understand that I have the best interests of the boys at heart. You know that, don't you?

TURLEY: Y-yes. Of course.

BRENNAN: Good. And now let that be the end of it. Go, and for the love of God not back down there. Return home and try to calm yourself, come back only once you have. Is that clear?

TURLEY *nods and leaves.*

BRENNAN *watches her go and then turns back to the window. After a moment he relaxes and begins to hum the same tune as he had been humming before.*