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A CAT IN A BAG

By

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A 30 minute Sitcom

Character List

Shortie aged 25 (Very Tall)

Paul aged 19

Paddy aged 70 (Irish)

Barry aged 40

Barmaid aged 39

Policeman aged 25

ACT 1 SCENE 1

In a municipal square the four tramps (Shortie, Paul, Paddy and Barry) are sitting on a bench. There is a large church towards their right that has a clock that chimes every quarter of an hour. Off left there are alms houses for old people. There is a damaged telephone box in the middle of the square.

SHORTIE Paul, did you go the hostel last night?

PAUL Nay.....I was too late. You know I have to be there at 10pm
Otherwise they lock us out.

SHORTIE But where did you go then when we went for our kip in the cemetery?

PAUL DUNNO. I just fell asleep here and when I awoke it was 12.15am.
12.15 am and no where to go. No money to go and kip in a pub and
freezing cold....Had to keep stamping me feet to get my circulation
going.

BARRY You were doing well at that hostel. Set you on to sell “Big Issue”
once the hostel gets the franchise.

PAUL BIG DEAL....No one buys the Big Issue in this town. People don`t
care about us except to move us on. It`s not our fault we have not got
a home or a job.

PADDY My Missus threw me out cause I kept spending the rent money on
The drink to be sure. She just left it waiting for me to pay the rent
man and he never got paid to be sure. Here was my missus working
5 jobs and I was on the grog all day. That was the life until the old
bailiffs came and took the tele and the washing machine then I was out
on my ear.

SHORTIE Well I got to the hostel anyroads. Has some lovely soup, a nice warm
Sleeping bag. They keep the central on for us aswell. It`s a good place
to go if you close your mind to flipping religion. Jesus died for me.
Like hell he did.

PADDY Don`t blaspheme. Mary God Bless her had her baby Jesus in a stable
as there was no room at the Inn.

PAUL There`s no room at the Inn anyway for me as they barred me last time
as I kept falling asleep and not drinking.

SHORTIE Do you still keep going to that pub after they`ve barred you?

PAUL Of course. The landlord is the same size as me and he used to give me
his old clothes. Proper modern gear and all.

BARRY But they don't fit us. We maybe could sell them for the price of a couple of pints.

PAUL Oh no they're mine. Hands off !

Clock chimes 8am

SHORTIE 8am. Time for the office to get our cider.

All four scatter out their change. Look at it and add it up.

PAUL We're 20p short for a bottle of strong cider but we could get 3 cans of lager.

BARRY Why get lager when the cider is much stronger. We will have to beg someone for 20p for the price of a cup of tea.

SHORTIE Where to you know where you can get a cup of tea for 20p?

BARRY Well 20p does not sound as much as 50p when you're begging.

PAUL I remember asking some guy once for 50p to buy some sausages.

BARRY Sausages? What good are they to us?

PAUL It was just something I thought of at the time.

BARRY Did some poor sucker give you 50p then?

PAUL Yes and No. The guy said that if you know somewhere where you can buy sausages for 50p I'll give you a pound and you can get me some.

BARRY It is no fun begging these days...Old dears sometimes feel sorry for us. By the grace of God go I ...and then throw us a quid or two, but none of us has got a dog. The public are more in sympathy when they see a dog with its head propping out of a blinder with its pleading eyes. Man's best friend and all that.

SHORTIE Maybe we could nick a dog. Whistle it over when the owner lets it loose to have its run.

PAUL It won't come to a whistle. We have to lure it over with something tasty and smelly.

BARRY Paul's socks.

PAUL No let me think ...Sausages

SHORTIE Is it a sausage dog then?

ACT 1 SCENE 11

Sharing Cider between the four of them on the Park bench.

SHORTIE Leave some for me. I contributed the most money for it.

BARRY Paul, isn't it your day to go to the social to get some beer money?
You're using the hostel address aren't you.

PAUL No it's tomorrow, but I canna read and write. At the hostel they want to train me to do what they call functional skills and use a computer. What good is that to me? They said I would learn the internet and emails.

PADDY It sure is wonderful this new technology. My gran kids were always on the internet finding out things and sending emails all over the world. I was lost on the computer. Did not know how to switch the dame thing on. My gran kids kept on saying I would crash it, but I did not see it had any wheels.....Yes, with all this new technology I'm lost. When I went home last Christmas my kids asked me did I want to watch National Geographic on Sky. Sky? I said the only sky I sees now is the sky I sleep under at night.

SHORTIE Ahh. Everyone say Ahh

PAUL When I'm at the social tomorrow you could try asking people for the price of a telephone call. Tell them you've no change.

BARRY The phone box is vandalised. Is there nothing sacred.

PAUL There is that church over here. We could see if there is any brass candlesticks going begging.

PADDY You wouldn't violate a church. It's Gods house.

PAUL It's our house if they forget to lock it up.

BARRY But, Paul, you do have the hostel to go to.

PAUL I know, but they throw us out at 7am. So they can clean up before they go to work. Anyway, its not open it it's if it's not cold at night.

BARRY But you od have an address. We can't get a job as we have not got an address. An in order to get pad we need a big deposit. How can we save money we don't get?

SHORTIE You can sell the Big Issue.

PAUL And do you know how many years that will take me to make £100. Get real.

PADDY You`ll be in your grave?

PAUL You`ve got it. What really annoyed me was when I was begging at the railway station asking people for the price of a warm drink one person had the audacity to say get a job..... I didn`t know what to say to that.....When you ask someone for a fag they say “I don`t smoke” What is the world coming to? And with this NO SMOKING in public places there is no one lighting up anyway. They are all afraid of the smoke police.

BARRY Now we don`t know when our next pint or meal is coming from. Wonder that they`ve left in the bin over there.

Goes and rummages in a bin which is near them on their left.

Onley cigarette boxes, coke tins and old newspapers....We`re all right for newspapers tonight. We can look forward to a warm night. Great insulation newspapers !

Looks towards back

I say is there ever such a large smart looking cat over there sitting on a wall. Phew he`s a big one and got a lovely long coat. Lucky sod!

PAUL (Looking towards hewre Barry is Looking) Tha`s a Maine Coon. They came over from America you know. People show them as they`re pedigree. I have not seen one in the flesh before. Wonder if he is lost?

BARRY No, he`s living on his wits like us. Now we`ll have to have some kip to pass the time away before we start looking for somewhere to sleep.

PAUL I don`t want to go to the creeping Jesus hostel again. Ok you`re warm but I don`t want to be bible bashed. Besides they charge £1 a night each now and we have not even got £1 between all four of us.

BARRY I don`t fancy the cemetery either. It`s spooky...All them spirits and not the sort to drink. I sees enough weird things in my dreams, as it is, without adding to them.

All push newspapers down their fronts and throw a blanket from a holdall over themselves then they go to sleep. Snores and coughs are heard as they try to get a comfortable position.

ACT 2 SCENE 1

- PAUL Hurray today it's Giro day. Get our boose money, and we can go to the pub for a warm and a change of scenery.
- PADDY That's if we can find one, to be sure. Which the landlord won't we'll frighten off the customers.
- BARRY We'll be able to have a shave in the gents.
- PADDY Thee are no slipper baths now at the Batris. It was lovely going years back when we hadn't got a bathroom at home. Things change for the worse I think to be sure.
- SHORTIE I would have thought you would have had a good wash in the peat bogs of Ireland.
- PADDY Ireland is more civilised now. Thanks to EU money we have motorways now. No dirt tacks anymore.
- SHORTIE But do still drink your NIFFY waters.
- PADDY To be sure you can't beat Guinness. It is poured right and nor left to clog up the pipes like your lager.
- BARRY True your Guinness is more creamier in Ireland. I was once on holiday there and it was beautiful. Proper nectar of the Gods.
- SHORTIE I know where we might go for a drink today.
- BARRY
PADDY
PAUL Where?
- SHORTIE A pub away off the beaten track and I don't think it does much trade so it will be only too glad of our trade.
- PADDY How come. I not know where it is.
- SHORTIE You probably have been in it and with no customers walked out as we all know there is nothing worse than sitting in pub with no-one to pass the time of day with.
- BARRY You've got me guessing as well. Put us out of our misery.
- SHORTIE The Red Cow

- PADDY That used to be a good pub at one time years ago, but it got a bad name due to all the fighting and once a pub gets a bad name no one goes in
- It except people like us who haven't got a choice where to go... Come on Paul go down the social and do the business.
- BARRY (He does a quick reckon up of his change and throws it down in disgust)
- Do you notice that no one drops any loose change anymore. You can no longer say "Here's a penny pick it up and all day long I'll have good luck". Lets face it when was the last time that any of you saw some copper lying on the pavement?
- SHORTIE Come to mention it your're right. Can't even find those fiddly 5ps that get stuck in the corner of your pocket.
- BARRY Wish I had a room full of them though.....Now look back all of you have your ever found any big amounts of money ever?
- SHORTIE I once found a ten pound note outside a pub, but when I was counting my money out in the pub I realised it was the £10 I had lost the day before.
- PADDY As a kid I lost a ten shilling note and it snowed and I thought I had lost it forever. Then the thaw came and I could see it shining in a block of ice.
- When I was working I use to hide me Missus's housekeeping money in Different places in the house even in her handbag and she would nastily ask me for it when she had it all along. I liked to play this game with her until I stuck it in one of her brown medicine bottles and forgot where I'd put it. There was all hell to play. She accused me of blowing it on grog. For weeks she dusted the shelf where the medicine bottle was then the light must have been catching it right for she found her house keeping money two months later. This stopped me hiding it from her.
- SHORTIE 10 year back, I must have been 15, I found a wallet with a few notes in it and with the notes was a card with the wallet owners name on it. I was soft and innocent in those days and thought it might have been a pensioners pension so I went and posted it through the door.
- PADDY I was in a phone box once and there was a large bag containing a few hundred pounds and the name and phone number of a woman who was obviously in business and was on her way to taking it to the bank. As I don't drive I had a taxi to go 18 miles to her house. When I knocked her door she said "Thank you very much".
- BARRY (Butting In) Did you get a reward?

PADDY Not likely. She did not even pay for my taxi...I said never again will I be honest. Finders keepers.

BARRY Talking of rewards as a kid I used to go round looking at peoples gardens for nice cats and I would bring them home on a piece of string tied round their neck. I'd put them in the shed and scan the local paper seeing who had lost them and if they offered a reward. I'd phone up. If no reward I'd let them go home.

PADDY Quite and entrepreneur wern't you then !

BARRY Oh yes and I would nick bike handlebars and whells and put them on old frames, paint them up and flog them. Could have quite a business of this but someone else started up with more pocket money than me.

ACT 2 SCENE 2

In the pub. The bar at the rear. The four are sitting at a table to the front. They have Got their drinks which they are drinking slowly.

PADDY Oh this is cosy in here....It's nice for the smokers round the back as well. There are benches, tables, buckets for fag ends, ashtrays and an electric fire and all of it is under cover. There are even loudspeakers to hear the pubs music and on a shelf ornaments to make it look like a pub room. There is even a clock hanging up so we know when closing time is..... I remember years ago pubs did have smoke rooms. It said so on the windows. Now on the glass they put no smoking signs. The reformed smokers love that. They love thinking of new ways to persecute the smokers. At one time you could smoke at cinema, the theatre and on public transport. I agree it is not nice to have cigarette smoke when one is eating in a café or restaurant, but its gone too far.

BARRY When I worked I could not stand all the health and safety malarkey so I quit. Health and safety on a computer I ask you? Or should I say a work station.

PAUL Can't remember much about health and safety as I was hardly ever at work. Had to look after me Mam's baby so she could work and my Dad walked out and went to live with his fancy piece. Me Mam could not afford to feed me so she thre me out on the streets. She said She didn't like me music said it made the baby squeal so she couldn't Have a good nights sleep.

SHORTIE I read in the paper that you can no longer use a step ladder and on an ordinary ladder you have to keep both hands on it. How do you manage if you're a painter? Soon any upper room or loft jobs will require scaffolding....Imagine you'll need scaffolding for an aerial or satellite dish....Now how does one go on about changing a light bulb. Will have to get a specialist light fitter at £50 an hour.

BARRY I saw where they are building those new houses the floors are full of bags of sand incase you fall off.

PADDY The country has gone mad finding jobs for people to do and they have so much power they can close a firm down.

BARRY These jobs worth are killing this country.

SHORTIE You don't know what to eat now. One week its good for you. The following week its bad.

PAUL We don't have to worry about what to eat. We worry about when we last ate.

SHORTIE How about the race to keep up with the latest technology.

BARRY We have no need to upgrade. What use are ipods and mp3 players To us or a laptop computer. And we never go on a train so we don't need the quiet zone. We don't even need a digital tele as we have no electric in the open air. But we do know about body warmth. Newspapers to us are a wonderful invention. Our clothes we wear in layers to keep the heat in. But we do know the importance of Wearing a hat as heat escapes from our heads.

SHORTIE Do you think we humans are the only ones in the universe?

PAUL I certainly think there are other life forms.

SHORTIE But it will take too many light years for us to see them.

PADDY God created this world in seven days.

PAUL Don't bring religion into it. Sup up lads.

Paul takes his empty glass to the bar.

BARMAID 4 of the same?

PADDY We don't want the same to be sure. We've drunk that. We want similar pints.

Barmaid pulls 4 pints.

BARRY Don't you believe in God Paul?

PADDY He doesn't. We create the suffering as god gave us free will to do what We want. There is enough wealth in the west to feed the third world.

BARRY I could murder a bacon sarny or even a bacon splash.....Can You remember when we last has a decent meal?

PADDY To be sure we keep ourselves going with chips from the chip shop now and again.

BARRY But that's not proper grub like roast beef and yorkshire pudding.

PADDY I can never understand why people always have a roast on Sundays when there are seven days in a week. When I was with me Missus I was always too canned up on a Sunday to enjoy a proper dinner so we would have it on a weekday and I'd enjoy it more.

PAUL You being Irish I would have thought you would have gone to mass on Sunday mornings,

PADDY No, to be sure I would enjoy a good (lib in) with my missus and have a jump.

PAUL Food and sex how I miss those two most important things in life. Can` t remember the last time I had my end away...I say that barmaid here is a bit of a looker. You Shortie, go and ask her to come round the back with me.

SHORTIE No, she`s my girl Ask Paddy. He has more blarney than any of us.

PADDY Oh. I fancy her myself to be sure. It is a long tome. It be a long time since I pulled a bit of skirt and I think madame Luck is looking down down on me on that score.

BARRY You`re far too old for her. She`s more my age group, my generation. I`ll ask her what her zodiac sign is and take it from there.

Barry goes up to the bar and places his glass which is empty on the bar.

BARRY Hello darling you remind me of my sister same jet black hair and blue eyes and lovely big (he stammers).....

BARMAID I`ve had enough of you all giving me the eye.....
Your`re barred. Drink up and get out NOW !!!!

ACT 3

A week later on the bench dinking cider.

POLICEMAN Move along you can't stay here.

PAUL We've been using this bench for the last three years. We meet here.

POLICEMAN You can sit here then, but not drink alcohol. This is an alcohol zero tolerance zone which means you will be fined if you are seen in possession of alcohol beverage.

BARRY Why, we are only minding our own business doing no harm to anyone. Where do we go now to drink?

POLICEMAN That is your problem, now hand over the cider.

PADDY We've paid hard brass for that.....Who brought out this silly law Anyway?

POLICEMAN The Council has as there has been a number of complaints about you harassing people and urinating in public places.

BARRY Well the Council should provide more public toilets which are open. Why do they all close at 6pm? Aren't people supposed to go to spend a penny after 6pm?

POLICEMAN Most people are at home by then which you don't appear to have being of no fixed abode..Now hand over that cider bottle or do you want a fine?

SHORTIE You know we can't pay it so you'll have to send us all to nick where we'll have a holiday on the state. Imagine 3 good meals a day and we can play pool all day.

BARRY We might even do a degree.

POLICEMAN If I have my way you won't be in a soft prison, but in a hard one where you won't come out of your cell at all and you'll be sharing with the scum of the earth, who will make your life hell.

BARRY We don't care for we'll see our mates who we met at the cemetery. Now have our flipping cider bottle. There's not much in it anyway.

Policeman exists with cider bottle.

PADDY We've lost our meeting place now to be sure. Where can we have a craic. Shop doorways are getting difficult to sleep in aswell the public are always moaning about us and reporting us to the police.

Even the cemetery they lock up now at dusk who is going to come Out of there I ask you.....It's a dead end place to be sure.

SHORTIE Me and Barry found us a lovely spot at the Red Cow. The landlord was ever so considerate and left us the fire to plug in the smoking area. Yes, me being tall could climb over the fence then we could sleep on the benches. We were in heaven with so much heat. But the rotten landlord once he found out we were using his fire took it inside the pub and he stopped me climbing over the fence, by putting benches near the fence upside down to ensure we would break our necks on descending.

PADDY Is there no justice anymore?

PAUL We must have to think about going straight and finding a job and a home and I will have to start selling the Big Issue to get me started so I can get a deposit for a flat.

PADDY I'm too old for work.

BARRY I'm 40 and employers think we are past it.

PAUL You're on the scrapheap at 40 these days. You go for an interview, but They tell you you haven't got the experience, but how do you get Experience except by working.

SHORTIE I'm too old for an apprenticeship at 25. It means I have to go unskilled to a back braking job in a factory. I blew that when I wouldn't get up for work due to the boose the night before. My employers were very good to me a couple of times and excused me, but they can only take so much. It was my only job since leaving school, so where would I get a reference and new employers always want to know the bosses in your old firm.

PADDY I could give you a reference....The best boozier in the world..

SHORTIE Look here is that posh looking moggy again. Think we've got some left over chips for (looks in pocket , cat comes forward and eats chips). Oh. You're starving. Poor thing. Bet your owners are missing you. Such a good looking puss as you.

PADDY Give over being soft to that flea bitten moggie.

SHORTIE I would take you home if I had a home. He must be living by begging like we are, but he's got very scraggy so he must be a stray now. His owners have lost home somehow and he's earning his keep foraging in dustbins. Poor thing.

BARRY Are we up for the Red Cow tonight? It's my shout.

PAUL I'm getting a bit fed up of drinking.

PADDY I could drink the pub dry so I could to be sure. Can just see a pint of Creamy Guinness (smacks his lips)

PAUL What can we do without the evil drink? Any ideas? Suppose we could go to the hostel stone cold sober. We've got the £4 entry fee. We will be able to watch TV. Maybe there's a footy match on.

BARRY You stone cold sober Paul? That will be the day. Don't say you have got religion. Is that hostel playing into your subconscious?

PAUL No, but there must be something more to life than dosing around and Sponging on society.....(Looks to telegraph pole on right) Hey, There's a notice here. Wonder what it says.

BARRY It will be about this being a zero alcohol tolerance zone.

PAUL Wait a minute I'll go and have a deco. (studies notice) Jesus !! It is a reward for one thousand pounds for that flea ridden moggie with a telephone number to ring.

BARRY Now how can we ring? Our mobiles we sold way back as we had nowhere to charge them up and that phone over there U.S

PAUL I know where there is a working phone. Hold on here while I go and ring it. (exists)

BARRY What could we do with £1000 smackerons.

SHORTIE We could put a deposit on a house then we could start looking for jobs.

PADDY I could celebrate St. Patrick Day early or have a wake for all my old friends. Phew what a party that would be.

SHORTIE Can't you see this might be a way out of us wasting our lives.

BARRY Who cares. Drink today and let tomorrow look after itself.

SHORTIE Have you all forgotten one thing !

BARRY What?

PADDY What?

SHORTIE We need to get the cat and put it in a box to take it for the reward if it is the right cat. Where's it gone by the way?

BARRY Dunno. Suppose we've got to get some cat food now and lure it to Us. It will bound to come if it's hungry.

SHORTIE Imagine if we had our own pad could have our very own cat.

BARRY I would sooner have a Staffie or better still a knackered Greyhound so so the public would feel sorry for us. Here comes Paul and he's Smiling....Is it our cat that is lost?

PAUL Yes, but here is the BIG problem. Where is that darn cat?

Shortie, Barry and Paddy look flummoxed.

PADDY (high voice calling) Puss, puss, where are you pussy? Come to Daddy

PAUL That's enough to scare it away if it's near.

BARRY I'll try (high pitched voice) Come on pretty boy.....Who's a lovely Boy then...Key kitty, kitty..... Sod it. We've blown it....It's gone and bolted. Goodbye grand !

PAUL There is a lesson to learn from this. Which is we are just no hoppers. Stuck in a rut. Forgotten statistics. Not even that for some of us as there are no records for us. We are non people. We don't exist.

BARRY Well lets go for a drink and just hope we won't be barred from the Red Cow again.

THE END