

## Mind over Chatter

*(A pub scene is presented, involving a central bar and small seating area to the right of the stage. There is a door between the seats and the bar. Your average BARMAN busies himself behind the bar. Your average JOE is sitting by a table, casually holding a pint of beer. Any such BLOKE and CHAP are off to the left of the stage – slightly unusually positioned past where the stage bar ends. CHAP is further to the side. Neither are drinking and both talk.)*

**BLOKE:** Don't you think it's a cute idea that there are little men in your head?

**CHAP:** Little men?

**BLOKE:** Well, little men, big men, fat men, thin men, Chinese men, Belgian men, men from Mars, men from Venus – women as well.  
*(pause)* Little women, big women-

**CHAP:** Well, you know what they say. The mind *is* bigger than the universe.

**BLOKE:** *(pauses, raises eyebrows)* Well who said that? I'm not sure if you actually understood what they were trying to say.

**CHAP:** No, seriously, scientists. Apparently. Though we're not aware of just how big the mind is because somebody put it inside a skull *(gestures)*, which is pretty small. The mind is actually probably as big *or bigger* than the universe *(expression shows he thinks he made a good but risky move)*.

**BLOKE:** There must be something you misunderstood. This sounds like gibberish and *(uncalled for)* you sound like a gimp

**CHAP:** Well, nobody believed Columbus either, did they? Apart from the Americans. And I'm not saying I'm Columbus, just that

these scientists know what's going on (*taps head*) and they're Columbuses.

**BLOKE:** Columbi. Yes, but Columbi who have very bad tape measures and tell you that the mind is bigger than the universe. Now, what you have to remember is that such scientists are probably gimps too.

**CHAP:** No, brain scientists.

**BLOKE:** Yes, neuroscientists. But there's nothing (*slurs it*) *neu* about it. The fact you were trying to shock me with is that there are more neural connections in the head than stars in the sky. And the mind is perhaps as unexplored as the universe.

**CHAP:** Yes. Well, no. The mind is huge. Huge! Picture London.

**BLOKE:** Done?

**CHAP:** Et Voila. London in your head. Do that for everywhere.

**BLOKE:** I haven't got London in my head!

**CHAP:** You do, don't be modest now.

**BLOKE:** You're talking about old stuff, old ideas, old rubbish.

**CHAP:** Memory is old. It's old stuff.

**BLOKE:** It's not bigger than the universe!

**CHAP:** You've got to respect my opinion.

**BLOKE:** Yes, that is true. You are perfectly entitled to a wrong opinion. I've got to respect that you are... a gimp. Now, I started this off with an interesting point.

**CHAP:** And I improved on that point. I saw your interest. And I raised it. And now it's your turn to make the bet. And then we'll see how the wheel turns.

**BLOKE:** (*pause*) You're confused and I'll forgive you for that. (*points*) But you're an idiot and you've got no hope. (*pause*) Now, the neural connections in the brain aren't as big as stars.

**CHAP:** It's weird, the brain. Lots of funny things.

**BLOKE:** What, like... (*mock frustration*) don't you think it's a cute idea that there are little men in your head?

**CHAP:** (*thinks about it*) ...In your head? They'd have to be pretty small (*gestures*).

**BLOKE:** Dwarves.

**CHAP:** Well, smaller than dwarves.

**BLOKE:** Imps? Fairies?

**CHAP:** Figments. I like 'figments'. They sound tiny. OK, so these figments, they're like God and the Devil, perched over your shoulder?

**BLOKE:** Well yes but not god and the devil. This is the 21<sup>st</sup> century, things aren't that simple. I'm not talking about clichéd rubbish that nobody believes in. I'm talking about real, popular rubbish that nobody has any *choice* but to believe in... like (*looks to one side*) Ronald McDonald and... (*looks to the other side*) the Crocodile Hunter.

**CHAP:** (*slight pause*) Well, no, I think it's a bit of a silly idea... wait - which one out of Ronald Macdonald and the Crocodile Hunter would be good, and which evil?

**BLOKE:** No, no, no, no. Once again – this is the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Things aren't, or at least aren't allowed, to be that simple... but if you had to decide, I'd say that (*thinking on his feet*) Steve Irwin's Crocodile Hunter must be (*gestures*) "good", as he only ever hunts crocodiles, which are obviously (*gestures*) "evil" because they're slimy, spiky and generally angry-looking and would probably eat babies if given half the chance. Obviously. Obviously it's not actually that obvious, but that'll do.

**CHAP:** Oh. OK.

**BLOKE:** But even Ronald Macdonald and the Crocodile Hunter are too glamorous. See, the genius – as it were – of Ronnie Macky D and the Hunter was that they were such perfectly realised

characters - they can't be imitated by a mere average person's mind. This is why they're allowed to open fast-food chains and star in animated movies.

**CHAP:** I see.

**BLOKE:** Real – boring – relatively boring – people can only think of boring characters, who have some interesting characteristics, but they're no clowns or charismatic Australians. They're real, largely uninspired characters... (*shocking*) like *you*.

**CHAP:** *Me?*

**BLOKE:** Of course! And that's why I'm talking to you now. You're just in the mind, all made up.

**CHAP:** I don't get it.

**BLOKE:** (*Sternly*) At first, they never believe! (*casually*) But it's true.

**CHAP:** Oh. I see. I guess.

**BLOKE:** Good boy. Everybody needs a thicke in their heads, to make sure they understand things.

**CHAP:** You're right (*ponders for a while*). But no, I'm a real person with real feelings and real thoughts. (*looks at self*) I'm a *real* boy.

**BLOKE:** (*cheeky look*) Come on.

**CHAP:** Oh OK, you win (*looks around*)... *quirky*.

**BLOKE:** You like?

**CHAP:** (*enthusiastically*) Yeah... I could get used to this.

**BLOKE:** Don't. You're temporary – a passing thought. Never forget that.

**CHAP:** Oh. But wait a second, Mr. Confuso-man. I don't completely understand. You see... if the Crocodile Hunter is good, then how is Ronald Macdonald evil? Surely he offers low, low prices?

**BLOKE:** God, you're so naïve! But people need people like you in their heads so that they feel intelligent. I mean, haven't you read any fast food vitriol?

**CHAP:** Well *how could I? Apparently* I'm in your mind!

**BLOKE:** *(surprised)* Well who said that?

**CHAP:** *You* did!

**BLOKE:** No I most certainly did not. I said everybody needs a thicke in their minds. That's where you came in. Everybody also needs some *(pleased with himself)* clever chap who can sort everything out and offer proper guidance.

**CHAP:** So you're... inside his mind too?

**BLOKE:** Yes.

**CHAP:** No.

**BLOKE:** Yes.

**CHAP:** *No – who's he?!*

**BLOKE:** *Him! (points at JOE)*

**CHAP:** Oh.

**BLOKE:** So you're not talking inside my head. We're both talking inside his.

**CHAP:** Oh. Oh well. I'm not so sure about this. Is he listening?

**BLOKE:** No, not really... We *are* him.  
*(MATT walks in, across the stage and towards JOE)*

**MATT:** Alright, Joe?

**CHAP:** *(understanding)* Oh!

**BLOKE:** Yes.

**JOE:** Oh – yes.

**CHAP:** And who's this fellow? |

**BLOKE:** Matt. | *(fastish)*

**CHAP:** Is he good? |

**JOE:** You good, Matt?

**MATT:** Not too bad, not too bad. But, look, I've got to rush Joe, or I'll miss the missus. Sorry.

**CHAP:** Oh, alright.

**JOE:** OK. *(MATT exits through door, then pause)*

**BLOKE:** Anyway – *(interrupted)*

**CHAP:** Wait – is this like Being John Malkovich?

**BLOKE:** I wouldn't know. I haven't seen it. But, unless I'm mistaken, I'm the knowledgeable one here and you couldn't have seen it if I haven't. Are you sure you have?

**CHAP:** Oh, no, I'm sure I haven't.

**BLOKE:** So why did you think that this is what it's like?

**CHAP:** Because I know what it's *like*.

**BLOKE:** I see. In that case, so do I.

**CHAP:** So... is it like Being John Malcovich?

**BLOKE:** It's vaguely like what we think Being John Malcovich is like, if you like, yes.

**CHAP:** A...huh. So, what are we, like a double conscience?

**BLOKE:** No – we're just for fun!

**CHAP:** *Fun?!*

**BLOKE:** For sure.

**CHAP:** (*worried*) Isn't it like split personality or schizophrenia or something? Aren't we *mad*?

**BLOKE:** No, no, it's perfectly healthy.

**CHAP:** Why is it healthy?

**BLOKE:** Because everybody does it. Now and again, at least. It's just some do it better than others. But he's not mad. Look at him, he's fine. You can have anything going on in your head – anything at all – but if you look fine and act fine, you're fine.

**CHAP:** I think I'm still confused and-  
(*DAVE walks across stage and past JOE*)

**BLOKE:** (*puts hands up to CHAP*) Wait.

**JOE:** Hey, Dave.

**DAVE:** Hi, Joe! Sorry I didn't say hi, you looked lost in thought.

**CHAP:** Indeed.

**JOE:** Yeah! You're not running away too, are you?

**DAVE:** Sorry! (*mock surrenders*) But I hear Jane's coming back down in a bit.

**BLOKE:** Hmmmm.

**JOE:** Cool.

**BLOKE:** She's rather tasty..

**JOE:** See ya. (*DAVE exits through door.*)

**CHAP:** OK: so everybody has people in their heads?

**BLOKE:** Well, maybe, that was the cute idea. There's always somebody in there isn't there?

**CHAP:** In where?

**BLOKE:** There's always somebody talking in your mind. Why not make it an open invite? Get everyone in? The whole gang.

**CHAP:** Oh. Would these other people in other minds be like us?

**BLOKE:** Gracious, no! I like to think we're more exciting than the average elements of the imagination.

**CHAP:** I'm beginning to think that we... or you... or I or – him – has far too much time on (*straining*) my-your-his-our minds-hand-brains-things.

**BLOKE:** Absolutely.

**CHAP:** Do you think I understand?

**BLOKE:** You're on the way... see humans have a ridiculous amount of time on their hands. Our super-brain-computers can do amazing things so fast that we have plenty of time left to do silly things.

**CHAP:** Like this.

**BLOKE:** *This* is just the tip of the iceberg.

**CHAP:** And *that's* what makes us human?

**BLOKE:** Nearly. What makes us human, and what makes humans special, is our unique ability to make everything else appear like us.

**CHAP:** Explain.

**BLOKE:** We anthropomorphise everything: just look at drooling suns, walking, *humorous* dogs, protesting testicles, dancing leaves,

detective badgers, socialising trains, talkative atoms, sprinting nerve cells, bearded wine-swigging Gods, whining vices, rabbits and even – *even* – parts of the mind.

**CHAP:** I see... I blame it on theatre... all those characters and dialogue.

**BLOKE:** And what – they don't exist in real life, hmmm? (*Demanding*)  
Chicken or egg, chicken or egg?

**CHAP:** I suppose. But wait – are *we* humans?

**BLOKE:** Insofar as we've been humanised inside a human's mind.

**CHAP:** Are we just bits of brain cell?

**BLOKE:** Ask a philosopher. What is consciousness? Chicken or egg, chicken or egg? What's the ultimate disgrace to a chicken?  
Chicken omelette.

**BARMAN:** You OK there, Joe?

**JOE:** Yeh... just got a bit of a headache, mate.

**BLOKE:** Sometimes you have to focus on the more simple sides of life.

**JOE:** You seen Jane come back yet?

**BARMAN:** No, but she said she would. Should be here soon.

**BLOKE:** Gag the philosopher and we can be what we want to be.

**CHAP:** Like on "Stars in Their Eyes".

**BLOKE:** Yes. Sort of. And the mind is full of less loquacious folk than we. That's them lot (*points and stares at audience*). They're happy to sit back, relax and watch him – us - do anything. They keep this all together though. They'll make a fuss if anything goes *dramatically* wrong. And then there are louder mouths than us.

**CHAP:** And where are they?

**BLOKE:** Somewhere. They just need to be thought up, or circumstances will necessitate them.

**CHAP:** Are we fantasy?

**BLOKE:** Yes, but he fantasises better.

**CHAP:** Oh?

**BLOKE:** *(sexy woman walks in, in a skimpy dress or bikini – JANE. She plays with CHAP).* Love it. Enjoy it while you last. *(after a few seconds, lady exits)*

**CHAP:** You mean, I don't last?

**BLOKE:** No. None of us do. We're mental ephemera. We come and go. We're inexistent slumbers in his head.

**CHAP:** OK. OK. You're right, I think, it is a cute idea. But, the thing is, didn't you say it was a cute idea that there are people in "your" as in *(points to himself)* my head?

**BLOKE:** Yes...

**CHAP:** But wouldn't that mean some kind of chain? Let's say there's somebody in my head, though I'm already in somebody's head, then that person in my head is wrapped within two heads. Some kind of multiheaded beast! That's sick!

**BLOKE:** Like some kind of cerebral Russian doll, you mean?

**CHAP:** Well, yes... at each step getting smaller, smaller, and more confused.

**BLOKE:** I suppose that's what I implied. *(Thinks with finger to lips).* But could that go on ad infinitum? Forever? No, that's silly. It'd be complicated. Perhaps there's just one level of internal people and we're two of the best.

**CHAP:** But then... that's not really cute from *our* perspectives. Alright, from his perspective it's alright. He's got some fantastic gathering going on in his head. But we're just... what are we? *(seriously)* Why can't we have tea parties in our minds?

**BLOKE:** It'd just be immensely complicated. There'd be the chaos of a jam-packed stadium's roars, cries, conversations, and... it'd just be a big muddle. Too complicated.

**CHAP:** Isn't that... like the soul?

**BLOKE:** ... Yes? I don't know. Evidently even I, the intelligent one, don't know everything, showing that *he* doesn't know everything...

which is reassuring really because he's still learning, developing an understanding of the world. Etc. A real boy indeed.

**CHAP:** I'm a real boy... I liked my reference to the soul. I think that's what it must be like. It's not completely understood. It could be anything. Yeah, that makes sense.

**BLOKE:** You're right – there's the potential for a multitude of cute ideas about the soul. What a mess: chicken omlette.

**CHAP:** Yes... but... to change the subject slightly, *can* we make him *spin* his head? I mean, assuming, we are him.  
*(Pause, then JOE starts to roll his head)*

**BLOKE:** Well look – he's rolling it like a pro.

**CHAP:** *(realisation)* So there's no such thing as free will! He's being told to do it!

**BLOKE:** Yeah, but by himself! *We* are he. That doesn't count. *(JOE stops rolling head.)*

**CHAP:** Hmmmmmmmm.  
*(long pause)*

**BLOKE:** We appreciate our silence *(points at JOE)*, don't we?

**CHAP:** Oh yes.

**BLOKE:** Silence of the mouth *(serious)* but not silence of the mind. And not silence *(pause)* of the ears.

**CHAP:** Can ears be silent?

**BLOKE:** *(pushes ears forward and lets CHAP have a listen)* Yes.

**CHAP:** I agree *(looks over to JOE and he starts rolling his head again)*.  
*(another long pause)*

**BLOKE:** Neuroscientists... you know, as a matter of fact, I hate academia. Yet I'm one of a few graduates with a degree which abbreviates to a BA in Coco.

**CHAP:** What does the Coco stand for?

**BLOKE:** *(pause)* Coconuts.

**CHAP:** Which reminds me of something.

**BLOKE:** Yes, so it does.

**CHAP:** Reminds me of a job I once had, milking cows who dripped peanuts. And I churned said peanuts into peanut butter. And then we were taste-testing peanut cheese (*pause*) and peanut yoghurt (*pause*) and peanut double cream.

**BLOKE:** But you hated academia!

**CHAP:** Don't ruin the ending!

**BLOKE:** Yes. I hated academics – professors with glasses and wiry hair and nothing interesting to say. So I was milking this cow for peanuts – as respite from the wicked world of serious bespectacled old men – and imagine my dismay when I was squeezing one his udders and realised that the cow was actually one such man, with glasses and wiry hair.

**CHAP:** Nightmare.

**BLOKE:** Bingo.

**BARMAN:** (*to JOE*) You look bored Joe, what do you want mate?

**JOE:** Give me a pint of your finest peanut butter! No... actually...

**BLOKE:** Pint would be good.

**CHAP:** I'm not thirsty myself.

**JOE:** Half pint of Carlsberg.

**BLOKE:** Where were I?

**CHAP:** Well then I pushed the cow over, smashed its glasses and tied its shoe-laces together.

**BLOKE:** And headed for the Philippines.

**CHAP:** But I didn't know where that was... and I ended up in a playground and-

**BLOKE:** For some reason a duel took place between my self-reproaching pessimism and my eccentric optimism. Needless to say I won.

**CHAP:** Needless.

**BLOKE:** Needless.

**CHAP:** But you said it anyway.

**BLOKE:** Indulgent.

**CHAP:** *(pause)* Such is the nature of me.

**BLOKE:** *(pause)* You're such a cock aren't we?  
*(pause, then CHAP looks over to JOE and JOE starts rolling his head)*  
*(JANE walks in through door, JOE stops rolling head.)*

**CHAP:** Hmm.

**BLOKE:** Hmm.

**JOE:** Hey!

**JANE:** Hey Joe!

**CHAP:** She's certainly a lady.

**JOE:** How are you doing?

**BLOKE:** She's a good friend.

**JOE:** I've been waiting for you for hours.

**JANE:** Really?!

**CHAP:** Really?

**JOE:** 15 hours. But it'll be worth it!

**JANE:** Ah, how kind. Funny how I only went away for 15 minutes.

**CHAP:** What a charmer he-we-I is-are-am!

**JOE:** Now, where were we?

**CHAP:** Where *were* we?

**BLOKE:** We were just about to kiss her.

**JANE:** I don't know... you said you wanted to tell me... something...

**CHAP:** What?

**BLOKE:** You know *you slag!*

**JOE:** *(smiling)* Hmm, I wonder what.

**BLOKE:** Problem is... we don't actually like her.

**CHAP:** No?

**BLOKE:** She's annoying and dumb but she's semi-fit.

**CHAP:** But she's one of the ugliest ladies I've ever seen.

**JOE:** I think I was about to...

*(2 women dressed up in funny white costumes jump onto stage near BLOKE and CHAP.)*

*(-fast-)*

**VOR1:** *I am the voice of reason!*

**VOR2:** *I too am the voice of reason!*

**BLOKE:** Reason obviously has a lot to say for itself. Hey, reason?

**VOR1:** Yeeeeesss?

**VOR2:** Yeeeeesss?

**BLOKE:** Shut it.

*(-end fast-)*

**JOE:** ... kiss you. *(leans forward to kiss and kisses.)*

**VOR1:** But you can't ignore reason!

**BLOKE:** Why?

**VOR2:** Because it's stupid!

**BLOKE:** Why?

**VOR1:** Almost by definition!.. Check a dictionary!

**BLOKE:** You won't find emotions in the dictionary.

**CHAP:** *(pause)* I think you will.

**BLOKE:** But not under 'reason'.

**CHAP:** No – E comes before R and-

**BLOKE:** Never mind, you – so what do the many voices of reason have to say?

*(kiss continues)*

**VOR1:** Don't do it! It's not love!

**VOR2:** Do it! Or you'll regret it!

**CHAP:** Isn't this all too late?

**BLOKE:** In a way. But it can still be worried about.

**VOR2:** It's a much-needed physical pleasure!

**VOR1:** It's immoral and unnecessary!

**CHAP:** It seems like fun. *(Confused, then questioning)* But she's an ugly twat.

*(kiss goes on for a few more seconds and then ends)*

**JANE:** Look, Joe, do you want to come back to mine?

**VOR2:** Yes!

**VOR1:** No!

**CHAP:** Well?

**BLOKE:** Do we? *Do we?* Elements of inner consciousness – *you* make the decision *(gestures to audience)*.

*(Then: if audience show a general “Yes”, go to A. If audience show a general “No”, go to B. JOE judges).*

#### A

**JOE:** That'd be nice. *(gets up)*

**BLOKE:** And when we leave, Derek here *(gesture to barman)* is going to think nothing of our quiet pint.

**JANE:** See you later, Derek.

**BARMAN:** *(cheeky smile)* Have fun you two.

**BLOKE:** But look at the fun we had.

**JOE:** *(on way out)* You know, I think I've finally come up with an idea for a play. A short weird one.

**JANE:** Cool.

**CHAP:** *(surprised)* What idea's that?

**BLOKE:** You're an idiot.

**CHAP:** *You're an idiot!*

**BLOKE:** I am you!

**CHAP:** Oh.

**BLOKE:** *(realisation)* Oh.

**CHAP:** *(pause)* Aren't we... with him?

**BLOKE:** Oh yeh. *(all run after him)*  
*(lights begin to fade)*

**B**

**JOE:** I'm sorry, I've got to get back and write something up. I've just had a weird idea for a play. (*JANE looks confused*).

**CHAP:** (*surprised*) What idea's that?

**BLOKE:** You're an idiot.

**CHAP:** *You're an idiot!*

**BLOKE:** I am you!

**CHAP:** Oh.

**BLOKE:** (*realisation*) Oh.

**JOE:** I'm sorry, I'm an idiot. But I've got to work on it.

(*pause*)

**JANE:** (*after gob smacked pause*) ... Bye (*leaves*).

(*after a pause, where BLOKE and CHAP have a playful fight, JOE gets up to leave too*)

**CHAP:** (*pause*) Aren't we... with him?

**BLOKE:** Oh yeh. (*all run after him*)

(*lights begin to fade*)

**BOTH 'A' AND 'B' NOW FOLLOW COMMON PATH UNTIL END**

**DAVE:** (*running on, as lights suddenly turn back up*) Wait, Joe!

**JOE:** What, Dave?

**BLOKE:** (*suspiciously*) Never did get that half pint of Carlsberg.

**DAVE:** Can I just talk to you for a second?

**JOE:** Er, I guess, sure. (*and if A: 'Jane, just give me a minute'*).

**DAVE:** (*enthusiastically*) I just had this weird thought... wouldn't it be a cute idea if we had little men inside our heads?

**JOE:** Umm.

**CHAP:** What?

**BLOKE:** Head-fuck.

**JOE:** That's what I was just thinking, in a...

**DAVE:** I'm sorry mate, it'll piss you off but... we're just little men – little dwarven figments... inside his head.

**BLOKE:** The Russian doll unzips a skin...

**JOE:** No!

**CHAP:** What the fuck?

**DAVE:** Yes!

**JOE:** No, who's *he*?  
*(pause, then BARMAN rolls his head and laughs)*  
But I'm a... *(in desperation)* I'm a real boy!

**DAVE:** At first, they never believe.  
*(Joe sits down, confused, and DAVE joins him at seats)*

**CHAP:** *(keeps trying to say something, but doesn't know how to put it)*

**BLOKE:** What's on your mind?

**CHAP:** Difficult question. I've got to admit, *(serious)* I'm not sure if I have a mind. *(pause)* Do you like the word 'doing'?

**BLOKE:** Not particularly.

**CHAP:** You may not know this but it's actually spelt the same as *(as in, boing-boing)* 'doing!'

**BLOKE:** I see.

**CHAP:** Do you like the word now?

**BLOKE:** A little bit. But look, what are you talking about?

**CHAP:** Nothing. I'm just *(wanders off)* wandering around, a wandering thought. *(comes back to BLOKE, then seriously)* I don't get it.

**BLOKE:** Get over it.

**CHAP:** Come on, I bet you were like this once you found out you were just in someone's head.

**BLOKE:** I've been here for as long as you, approximately twenty minutes.

**CHAP:** Oh.

**BLOKE:** Yeah, I'm just better than you.

**CHAP:** *(JOE rolls his head)* Can we talk to him?

**BLOKE:** We *are* him!

**CHAP:** I thought we were really that one? (*BARMAN rolls his head*)

**BLOKE:** Well we are Joe and Joe is him. Therefore I guess we are him.

**CHAP:** But who is he and whose mind is he in?  
*(pause, then everyone on stage rolls their head)*  
Nightmare. *(lights turn half way down suddenly)*

**BLOKE:** Bingo.  
*(lights turn off suddenly)*

~FIN~