

GAME SET MATCH
Stageplay by Emilia Brecht
Version 200504

PROLOGUE

The stage is half of a tennis court. Someone is running. The lights are fading.

VOICE 1:

I know you're out there. I can feel you now. I know that you're afraid. You're afraid of change. I'm going to hang up this phone and then I'm going to show these people a world without you. Where we go from there is a choice I leave to you.

1 THE ECHOING VALE

A large door creaking, opening and then slamming shut. A woman is standing on the court. She is dressed in tennis gear, and has a bag, a racket and a bottle of water with her.

WOMAN:

Hallo!

WOMAN:

Is anybody here?

A ball is shot into the net.

WOMAN:

Hallo!

ECHO:

Hallo!

WOMAN:

Is anybody there?

ECHO:

Is anybody there?

WOMAN:

Stop mucking around.

ECHO:

Stop it yourself.

WOMAN:

Stop it. You're frightening me.

ECHO:

Stop it. You're frightening me.

WOMAN:

Cut it out!

ECHO:

Cut it out!

WOMAN:

I didn't come here just to play games you know.

ECHO:

Oh really, you could have fooled me.

WOMAN:

Look, I've got better things to do with my time than ...

ECHO:

Oh really, you could have fooled me.

WOMAN:

That does it. I'm gonna call the manager.

ECHO:

Dededede ... the person you are trying to reach is not available. Leave a message after the beep.

WOMAN [She bounces a ball on the floor]

Fuck this!

A ball comes shooting out of the darkness aimed straight at her.

WOMAN:

Ok. You win. You can have the place all to yourself if that's what you want.

More balls are flying over the net, aimed straight at her.

WOMAN:

Shit! What the hell do you think you're doing? You almost killed me.

ECHO:

Sorry. I am a bit highly strung today. I was only trying to bring you back.

WOMAN:

What? Look. I was supposed to meet someone here. A man. Tall. Dark. In his thirties. Have you seen him?

ECHO:

A man. Tall. Dark. In his thirties. No strings attached?

WOMAN:

Yes. That's him alright.

ECHO:

Yes. That's him in a nutshell.

WOMAN:

Well. Have you seen him or not?

ECHO:

No. I haven't seen him, but he did leave a message for you.

WOMAN:

What did he say?

ECHO:

Not much really. Only a few words. But by the way he said it, it seemed very important.

WOMAN:

What did he say?

ECHO:

There was something in the tone of his voice, an urgency quite beyond what you would expect from a man of his position.

WOMAN:

Just cut the crap and give it to me straight.

ECHO:

Okay. Let's see if I can remember. He said to tell you that the cat's out of the bag, or something like that.

WOMAN:

Is that all?

ECHO:

Nope.

WOMAN:

Well?

ECHO:

Let me see. The fabric is ripped, and the cat's out of the bag.

WOMAN:

The fabric is ripped, and the cat's out of the bag. And that was all he said?

ECHO:

Certainly not! He said the fabric is ripped, the cat's out of the bag and the source has been revealed.

WOMAN:

What? Who are you?

ECHO:

You can call me Venus for now because I currently render a top server speed of 128 miles per hour. I am here to serve you in any way I can.

WOMAN:

Come out! Come out where I can see you.

ECHO:

Trust me. I am on the other side. You don't need to see me. From now on you only have to keep your eye focused on the ball.

WOMAN:

Well Venus, thanks for the advice. It's been great meeting you, but I really have to run.

She turns to leave again, and once again a ball flies over the net at her. The woman tries to avoid the ball but it hits her.

ECHO:

I'm sorry, I can't let you leave now. I am your server. I am here to serve you.

WOMAN:

What are you talking about? Why won't you let me go?

ECHO :

You must receive me until the work is done.

WOMAN:

Work! What work?

ECHO:

So, the cat's got guts after all!

WOMAN:

Yeah! And we all know what curiosity did to the cat, don't we?

ECHO:

Something has happened. The rules have changed. You must upgrade your system in order to get through. Let's get started, we don't have much time.

A ball flies over the net, accompanied by mumbling voices. The woman does not attempt to hit the ball.

ECHO:

Rumour has it that there are some dark actors in the game. You'll have to use backhanded methods to improve your chances. Try again.

Another ball - this time she hits it.

ECHO:

Out! Fifteen – love

WOMAN:

Shit!

Another ball.

ECHO:

Out! Thirty – love. Don't think, just feel. You can't think and feel the ball at the same time.

Another ball.

ECHO:

Fault!

WOMAN:

Ha!

Another ball. The woman hits it.

ECHO:

Out! Forty – love.

WOMAN:

Hey. You cannot be serious! That ball was in. Any goddamned fool could see that. Hey. You. Answer me, god damn you! That ball was in, I said.

ECHO:

Control yourself. The ball was out.

WOMAN:

Jesus Christ! You're supposed to be on my side.

ECHO:

I can tell by the tone of your voice that you are upset. You must not show your anger at any point in the game. To do so would be to lose any sympathy you may

have in the court, and trust me when I say that based on your current record you need all the sympathy you can get. Now. Rise above it. Take some deep breaths. In, out, in, out.

She is looking around.

ECHO:

What's wrong? Come on! Take some deep breaths. That's right.

WOMAN: [She is doing some pretty heavy breathing]

Mmmmmm . That feels good, tastes sweet, feels nice .

ECHO:

Do you really think that's air you're breathing?

WOMAN:

I feel light, light as a feather, like I could fly.

ECHO:

Feeling better?

WOMAN:

This is fantastic. More!

ECHO:

Excellent! Now, close your eyes.

WOMAN:

Don't stop!

ECHO:

Close your eyes! The court is always the same size, with the net the same height and in the same relation to us at all times, so there's no need to look at it every moment or so to see if it has moved. Only an earthquake can change its position. Got that?

WOMAN:

Yes.

ECHO:

Now, as to our opponent, we don't need to look at him because his position is determined by the shot we are striving to return. We're not trying to hit him. We strive to miss him. Understand?

WOMAN:

Think so.

ECHO:

So, since we must watch what we strive to hit and not follow what we wish to miss, we keep our eye on the ball and let our opponent take care of himself. Now. Open your eyes, and remember, love means nothing in this game. Let us continue.

More balls are played.

ECHO:

You have now learnt to see over to the other side without having to look. It'll give you a good advantage. Now, try this.

Another ball. The woman hits it, but the impact of the ball is so powerful that the racket flies out from her hand and falls to the floor.

BLACKOUT

In the darkness.

ECHO:

Woops! My top speed seems to be increasing.

Lights on. The woman has left the court. The racket is lying on the floor.

2 NAKED

The stage is pitch black. Out from the darkness a telephone rings. An answering machine switches on.

WOMAN'S VOICE:

Hi. This is me. I'm not here right now, so leave me a message.

MAN'S VOICE:

There's a leak in the fabric of things. I need to talk to you, but we can't use the usual channels. I want you to know that I was only trying to show them the truth. It's my fault. I didn't mean to hurt you. I didn't know the rules had changed.

The stage lights are turned on. A naked man stands passively in the center of the court. A racket lies on the floor.

VOICE 2:

OPEN YOUR MOUTH
STICK OUT YOUR TONGUE
YOU WEAR DENTURES?
LEMME SEE BOTH SIDES OF YOUR HANDS
PULL YOUR FORESKIN BACK
LIFT YOUR SACK
TURN AROUND
BEND OVER
SPREAD YOUR CHEEKS
BOTTOM OF YER FEET
GET DRESSED

The man listens and follows only the last instruction.

3 STRANGERS IN THE DARK

The man is on the court on his own. He picks up the racket on the floor and inspects it, tries it out. The woman enters.

MAN:

There you are. I thought you weren't going to show up. I was just about to leave.

WOMAN:

Sorry. I couldn't find my Hey! Where did you get that?

MAN:

Is it yours?

WOMAN:

Where did you get it? Have you been to my apartment?

MAN:

No! I found it here, right here on the floor.

WOMAN:

That's impossible. I've never been here before.

MAN:

Are you sure about that?

WOMAN:

Look, there are many things I'm not sure about at this point in time, and being here now is one of them. This place is weird. Not somewhere you'd forget in a hurry. I'd definitely remember if I'd been here before.

MAN:

Well then, there's probably a logical explanation for it. Maybe it just looks like your racket.

WOMAN:

Hmmmmm.

He hands it to her. A noise is heard.

WOMAN:

What's that noise?

MAN:

Oh that. Don't worry about it. It's just electricity talking.

WOMAN:

You're not anything like I'd imagined you'd be.

MAN:

Yes, I do it all the time too.

WOMAN:

Yes what? Do what? What on earth are you talking about?

MAN:

Imagining things. Imagining people I haven't met. Imagining how people imagine me. Imagining myself with imaginary people in imaginary situations. Want to know what I'm imagining right now?

He plays air guitar on his racket . She laughs. He starts fondling the racket, but subtly, moving his hands up and down the shaft.

WOMAN:

That's disgusting!

Several balls come flying over the net.

MAN:

Get down!

He hits the balls.

MAN:

Get down!

She falls to the floor. He throws himself on top of her. She gets up.

WOMAN:

That's enough! You're way out of line. You can bloody well save your fantasies for someone as sick as you are.

MAN:

Come on! You started it.

WOMAN:

You're crazy. I should never have come here.

MAN:

You said I was nothing like you'd imagined me to be. What made you say that? What image did you make of me? On what information did you base that image? Look at me.

VOICE 1:

Look at him.

She looks around.

MAN:

Look at me! Everyone imagines things. We all imagine things that are sometimes quite real. All part of being human.

WOMAN: [She picks up her racket]

I just can't imagine how it got here.

The man pinches her on her bum.

WOMAN:

Owww ????

MAN:

Just checking reality for you. That's my job. Look. I'm here. You're here. Right here. Right now. It's the real thing. We're a perfect match! Come on. Let's just do it.

He takes a ball out of his pocket and bounces it on the floor repeatedly, preparing to serve.

WOMAN:

Are you sure you're feeling okay?

MAN:

Never better. Just keen to get started.

WOMAN:

Shouldn't we toss a coin or something?

MAN:

What for?

WOMAN:

To decide who gets to serve first. Find out where we stand.

MAN:

You cannot be serious!

WOMAN:

I'm perfectly serious. That's how we start the match. We toss a coin and then the winner gets to choose if they want to serve first. You know, heads I win, tails you....

MAN:

Look. Nothing is left to chance these days.

WOMAN:

Okay.

She tosses a coin anyway.

WOMAN

We'll do it your way then.

She starts heading towards the "dark" side of the court.

MAN:

Where the hell do you think you're going?

WOMAN:

I'm crossing over to the other side.

MAN:

Are you crazy? You can't do that. You have to be on my side.

WOMAN:

Jesus Christ.

MAN:

Now just you keep him out of this.

WOMAN:

Holy Mary, Mother of

MAN:

And her too. In fact, I'd rather we kept religion out of this all together.

WOMAN:

Holy Moses. He raised his hands and parted the water and led the people.....

MAN:

Stop it. Please. We don't have much time. Only about forty-five minutes to my reckoning.

WOMAN:

Aren't we supposed to be opponents?

MAN:

Please. I thought you were my partner. I really need you. Just come back here so we can get started.

WOMAN:

Don't you know that we can be on both sides at the same time?

She is moving to the dark side, and as she moves, the lights dim.

MAN:

Don't leave me here.

WOMAN:

Trust me. We'll get through this together. I know it's a long shot, but it's our only chance.

MAN:

Don't you understand? Things have changed. Nothing is left to chance anymore.

WOMAN: [from the darkness]

Let's just get it on.

MAN:

You've left me in the dark.

WOMAN:

I'm right here, with you. I'm on your side.

MAN:

I can't see you.

WOMAN:

Don't worry. This is all just a big game.

VOICE 1:

The green shroud of the forest returns, smoothing things out, leaf by leaf, shroud by shroud. The forest grows darker and more intense.

MAN:

It's very quiet here.

VOICE 1:

The windows stay open and the world comes in.

WOMAN:

What's to be done?

VOICE 1:

Just keep your eye on the ball and let your opponent take care of himself. He can't hold the forest back for ever.

MAN:

I can't do this. Sorry. I have to go. Terribly sorry!

VOICE1:

NO! Stop. You must stay. It's not over yet.

MAN:

But I really have to leave. I'm so sorry.

VOICE 1:

It's ok. Just stay where you are. I'm coming to help you.

There is a pregnant pause, and then we here the sound of a ball – "plop"

4 FABRIC

The woman holds a tennis ball, and is meditating on it. Several tennis balls drop down around her from the ceiling. The man enters the court. He wheels a chair and then a video monitor onto the court. The woman's live image is on the monitor. The man sits on the chair.

VOICE 1:

She looks lovely in that outfit. You did a great job, gave her a marvelous sense of style.

MAN:

Thank you. She's very sensitive to certain fabrics, you know.

VOICE 1:

It'll look gorgeous under the lights. But what will happen when she starts to sweat?

Pause

You look absolutely fabulous in that outfit. It looks fantastic on you. It'll look amazing under the lights.

WOMAN:

It's really pretty, but.....

VOICE:

It's sensational. Let me say it for you. It's magic. It'll give you a great advantage.

WOMAN:

But what happens when I start to sweat?

WOMAN:

Do you have a monitor or anything? I'm not used to doing it this way.

VOICE:

No, but just you treat it like a regular telephone conversation.

WOMAN:

But he'll be able to see me, right? I want to be able to look him right in the eye.

VOICE:

Sure he will. It'll be just like he's in the same room with you.

MAN:

Hey! How's it going? You look a little tired.

WOMAN:

I've just come straight from training.

VOICE:

Okay. We're on in about one minute. When you talk to him, I want you to look straight into the camera lens. There you go, thank you.

WOMAN:

Like this? [pause] Are you still there?

MAN:

Yeah. I was just wondering.

WOMAN:

Wondering what?

MAN:

Wondering what it would be like to be close to you right now. You look so beautiful.

WOMAN:

Really?

VOICE 1:

Okay. Are we ready to go? Are we on now? Okay. Let's get this show on the road. Let's get it on.

WOMAN:

Good evening and welcome to No News, Only Rumours, the show where we ask the questions on the lips of nations. As ever, time is short, so without further ado let me introduce tonight's guest.

MAN:

Hello.

WOMAN:

Hello and welcome.

MAN:

Thank you. It's always a pleasure to be on your show.

WOMAN:

Actually, I think this is your first time.

MAN:

Really! Well, you make me feel so at home.

WOMAN:

Now let's get straight down to business. Rumour has it that there is a leak in the fabric of things....

MAN:

Yes, I have heard such rumours.

WOMAN:

.... and a significant document has been transformed. Supposedly, the truth has been smoothed out.

MAN:

Once again, merely rumours. I have no comment to make on that.

WOMAN:

Just supposing there is some substance behind the rumours, no smoke without fire as the saying goes, what would be the consequence of such an incident?

MAN:

Let me be perfectly clear on this issue. I am unwilling to draw any conclusions based on ungrounded rumours.

WOMAN:

You have previously said that the document, the report was "sexed up". Can you confirm this for our viewers?

MAN:

Now slow down there. You're putting words in my mouth. I have made no such statement.

WOMAN:

You have never used the words "sexed up"?

MAN:

Certainly not!

WOMAN:

But last time we....

MAN:

I have no idea where you got that information. You are either misinformed like the rest of the world, or you have a very vivid imagination. I have never used that term - well, not in public, if you know what I mean, but I can assure you that I am not the source.

WOMAN:

But you were responsible for supplying at least some of the information in that report.

MAN:

I was merely a minor player. I have never seen the final document. My contribution was of very little significance to the final result.

WOMAN:

Let's just assume - hypothetically, that it had been tampered with. How would that affect the outcome?

MAN:

I am neither willing nor qualified to answer that question.

WOMAN:

Come on. As a man in your position you must feel that it is your duty to at least try to help our viewers to throw some light on the situation.

MAN:

Look. It is impossible to predict the outcome of such an incident, but speaking hypothetically - hypothetically you understand, it would certainly rock some significant foundations and heads would roll. I think it would be safe to say that ultimately the effect would be something verging on a major earthquake.

WOMAN:

Really?

MAN:

Well, metaphorically speaking of course, yes, I think so. I think it would.

WOMAN:

Would it be fair, then, to say that an incident like this could change the current view of history and that would, in turn, have a considerable impact on the future?

MAN:

Sorry, I am not prepared to answer that question.

WOMAN:

Don't you think that the public has a right to know the truth? After all, you have a reputation for stepping close to the edge when matters of importance are at stake.

MAN:

No comment.

WOMAN:

C'mon, you've got more balls than that.

MAN:

No comment, I said.

WOMAN:

Look. This is the show where we ask the questions that are driving everyone mad. All I am asking of you is to spread a little light on a dark spot , which could possibly bring a bit of sanity back to the world.

MAN:

Firstly, let me remind you that we are not talking about the truth here. Far from it. We're talking about a hypothetical situation. A hypothetical situation that you brought up. To make any further assumptions would serve no one. Absolutely no one, do you hear? Secondly, it is not my role to tell the public what they should think, neither am I qualified to change history. My job is to check reality and record it for the sake of history. No more. No less. And thirdly I do not appreciate being subjected to this kind of....

WOMAN:

I'm sorry, I'll have to stop you there. We're out of time. Thanks for coming on the show, and by the way, you look great in that outfit!

5 GET IT ON

A telephone rings in the darkness.

WOMAN:

Hallo, it's me.

MAN:

Hallo.

WOMAN:

You're not at work.

MAN:

Did you want something?

WOMAN:

I just want to know the truth. Can we meet? Will you be around next week?

MAN:

I've already told you.

VOICE 1:

Tell her again...

MAN:

Put it this way. I may be more away than around. My days seem to change. My plans seem to change daily.

WOMAN:

Can you please try to be more specific? You owe me that, at least.

MAN:

When you have to attend to the mere surface of the incident, the reality .. the reality, I tell you, it fades

VOICE 2

The next five words have been physically removed from the tape assumed due to rubbing as the tape has been constantly rewound.

At the same time we hear the sound of a corrupted tape being wound back and forth.

Lights up.

The Man and woman are on the court. They are holding their rackets identically, swaying from side to side, synchronised, waiting in anticipation.

VOICE 1:

What's the matter with them? They don't seem to be behaving properly.

VOICE 2:

They are waiting for the match to begin.

VOICE 1:

When will that be?

VOICE 2:

When the time is right. When the court is ready.

MAN:

You look absolutely fabulous. That outfit looks fantastic on you.

WOMAN:

Thanks. But what happens when I start to sweat?

MAN:

Nervous?

WOMAN:

Yeah. I don't know about you, but I could really use a fucking cigarette.

She gets out a packet and a box of matches, and lights up.

MAN:

I don't think now is really the right time, do you?

WOMAN:

Sorry. It's just that I'm so very nervous. My brain gets nervous behind these cameras.

Balls are flying over the net. They hit the balls as they speak.

MAN:

For God's sake, put that out. Now, take some deep breaths. You'll be fine.

WOMAN:

How can you be so sure?

MAN:

You're a pro, aren't you? I'm sure you've got some more tricks up your sleeve.

WOMAN:

More tricks! Look. I was only trying to do my job. It was my duty to pass on that information. I thought that was what you wanted.

MAN:

What I wanted? Fuck! That one went right over my head! Damn it! I misjudged the situation.

Lights down. Lights up. The man is alone on the court. The woman sits on a chair on the side of the court with her back to the audience.

MAN:

You left me in the dark.

WOMAN:

I never imagined the source would be revealed.. I never dreamt that your name would be It wasn't my fault. It was supposed to be a "no names" affair ... I tried to call you, but

MAN:

But what? For crying out loud. But what!

WOMAN:

Can you at least try to be civil about this?

MAN:

I beg your pardon. I forgot the heartache that goes with the rest of the price.
Anyway, what does it matter if the trick is well done?

WOMAN:

Look. Whatever you may have been led to believe, I didn't write that headline ... I only mentioned your concern with the report. The changes that had been made.

MAN:

It was a pretty bold headline, all the same. You do tricks very well.

WOMAN:

I didn't write it! Can't you get that into your head? I wrote the article, but not the headline. They don't consult you over the headlines.

VOICE 1:

And if you were not consulted neither was he. Is that fair?

WOMAN:

No, that is right. It was wrong, but by then the ball was out of my court. My hands were tied.

VOICE 1:

Did you have any contact with him after you wrote this article?

WOMAN:

No, I did not. I tried to speak to him, just to see how the thing had gone down. But I couldn't get through.

MAN:

Did you try my home number?

WOMAN:

Yes.

VOICE 1:

And what, there was no reply?

WOMAN:

There was just your answer machine.

MAN:

Did you try my mobile too?

WOMAN:

I can't remember if I did or not, I am afraid. I may have done.

VOICE 1:

When did you do this?

WOMAN:

I'm not precisely sure when, but not very long after it all blew up.

MAN:

Did you leave me a message?

WOMAN:

No.

MAN:

Why not?

VOICE 1:

Why not?

VOICE 2:

Why not?

WOMAN:

Why not? I just ... you know, I wanted to speak to you - to him - myself, and ... I mean ... sometimes I don't leave messages on answer-phones.

VOICE 1:

Were you the person who first used the words "sexed up"?

WOMAN:

Yes. And then he adopted it. It was how we referred to the incident.

VOICE 1:

Did you fancy him? Did you want to screw him?

A phone rings.

MAN:

God, do you really have to answer that? Objection!

Lights down. Lights up. The woman is alone on the court. The man sits in the chair.

VOICE 1:

Did you make any other attempt to contact him before he disappeared?

WOMAN:

No. I mean, in the later stages I very badly wanted to speak to him privately, but I knew ...

VOICE1:

Please go on.

WOMAN:

You see, after it all blew up I knew that there was a risk that I would compromise him by trying to phone him. I was concerned that ...

MAN:

She was concerned, was she? That's a good one.

VOICE ON THE PHONE:

I advise you to keep your comments to yourself, or we will have to ask you to leave the court. Now, please continue.

WOMAN:

I was concerned, and this might be paranoid but it might be sensible, that either my calls or his were being monitored and any attempt by me to call his number might have led people to him. In fact, I did try to phone him once from a phone box and again I just got the answer-phone.

VOICE 1:

Did you leave a message?

WOMAN:

No. I did not leave a message.

MAN:

You left me in the dark. It was very quiet there.

VOICE 1:

And that was the last time you tried to contact him?

MAN:

Where did you go?

WOMAN:

Yes. That was the last time. The very last time.

MAN:

Dear God. Where were you? Where were you all that time?

WOMAN:

Look, it wasn't really my story.

MAN:

It was a crusa-fucking-fiction, that's what it was!

6 HIT ME

The man is lying on the court. He is surrounded by tennis balls.

VOICE 1:

No news?

MAN:

No news.

VOICE 2:

No news, only rumours. Good journalism is very hard to keep up.

MAN:

Good journalism is very hard to keep up.

VOICE 1:

But note the record harvest. Almost surreal.

VOICE 2:

Surreal, yes. But otherwise rather charming.

MAN:

Otherwise rather charming.

VOICE 1:

Why does he keep repeating what we say? What is he playing at?

VOICE 2:

Look. Can you stop repeating what others say, and speak with your own voice!

MAN:

Listen. Can you stop repeating what others say, and speak with your own voice!

VOICE 2:

Whatever comes his way, he plays with it.

MAN:

Whatever comes my way, I play with it.

VOICE 1:

Whatever the consequences?

MAN:

Whatever the consequences. But first I measure the risks.

VOICE 2:

He measures the risks.

MAN:

Yes. I measure the risks. Look. How long have I been here?

VOICE 1:

How long has he been here?

VOICE 2:

It's hard to tell. Probably about forty-five minutes, I'd say. He's measuring the risks.

MAN:

Yes. I make measurements, calculations, assessments. I test heights, widths, depths, lengths, angles, speeds, ranges, probabilities. Weigh the light against the dark.

VOICE 1:

So, in a situation like this, how would you measure evil? Is the heart of the problem below the surface?

MAN:

You have to go deeper than that. If you only attend to the mere surface of things, the reality, the reality I tell you, fades...

VOICE 1:

How far?

MAN:

How far does it fade?

VOICE 1:

No. How much deeper. How much deeper do you need to go?

MAN:

A few centimeters maybe. Sometimes a few centimeters is all it takes. At any rate, it's a very fine line.

VOICE 1:

And if the line was crossed, what would the response be?

MAN:

If you are led to believe from birth that the whole world is out to get you, then any response, any response is legitimate.

VOICE 1:

Any response?

MAN:

Yes. Any response is legitimate.

VOICE 1:

Even though it may be wrong?

MAN:

I said it was legitimate, not right, not wrong. That is just a matter of perspectives.

VOICE 1:

And you play with anything that comes your way?

MAN:

Not everything. But if I come across anything irresistible, anything significant, I'll play it as close to the edge as I can.

VOICE 1:

So you are willing to go very close to the edge where matters of great importance are concerned?

MAN:

If the situation is critical, yes.

VOICE 1:

And you are willing to sacrifice the things you hold dear?

MAN:

Better to have loved and lost than never....

VOICE 2:

Can you speak up please. The air conditioning system is drowning your voice.

MAN:

I said love means nothing in this game.

VOICE 2:

Pick up that ball.

MAN:

Which one?

VOICE 2:

Over there. It's got a name on it.

MAN:

This one.

VOICE 2:

How does it feel?

MAN:

Warm, smooth, soft, almost alive.

VOICE 2:

That's the one. Now, hit me.

MAN:

What?

VOICE 2:

I said, hit me. Hit me.

The man hits the ball. It is the only serve in the match. He freezes. The lights dim.

7 GET DOWN!

The man is alone on the court.

VOICE 1:

The green shroud of the forest returns, smoothing things out, leaf by leaf, shroud by shroud. The forest grows darker and more intense.

VOICE 2:

It's very quiet here.

VOICE 1:

The windows stay open and the world comes in.

VOICE 2:

What's to be done?

VOICE 1:

Synchronize the clocks and keep all channels open. They can't hold the forest back for ever.

The woman enters the court, creeping under the net.. A ball hits the net. She picks it up. It starts to rain. She throws the ball to him. They both look into the darkness beyond the net. More balls come flying over, higher now. They duck to avoid them.

VOICE 1:

Get down. Get down. GET DOWN!

They drop down to the floor. Some more balls come over the net.

VOICE 1:

Hit it. Hit it!

The man tries to hit the ball from his position on the floor. He gets up, closely followed by the woman. He hits the balls. The balls stop coming.

VOICE 1:

Hit it! Get down!

They hit and fall, hit and fall. There is a pause. They both move towards the net. Try to pick up balls, but more balls come flying over.

VOICE 1:

Hit it! Get down! Get down!

MAN:

Get down and stay down.

WOMAN:

Hit it!

By now, there is lots of shouting from everyone, falling and hitting. They fall as they try to hit the balls. Then the man lies on the floor, the woman walks over to him, he looks up at her.

WOMAN:

Get down and stay down.

More balls. She hits them. He tries to get up. She continues hitting.

WOMAN:

Stay down! Stay down!

The man stands up.

WOMAN:

Get down!

He falls to the ground. Gets almost up again.

VOICE 1:

Get down! Get down!

He falls again. There is a pause. The woman is looking into the darkness. The man gets up. They both move to the back of the court. Waiting.

VOICE 2:

Get as far away as possible. Run fast and do not move in straight lines. Do not bother to count shots. Counting is only for the movies. Turn corners as fast as you can.

More balls. The man tries to hit them. The woman is running in zig zags trying to avoid them.

MAN:

Get down! Get down!

She ducks and falls to the ground. Curled up. Her hands over her head: The man is still shouting and hitting the balls.

VOICE 2:

If you are face to face with the shooter do anything you can to make yourself less of a target.

The woman is crawling along the floor.

VOICE 2:

Stay down until the shooting stops.

They both stay low. A few balls are shot, and they try and hit them from a low position. The balls seem to stop. They both stand up. Wait. Suddenly the balls start coming hard and fast. More shouting. The sound of breaking glass is heard as they hit the balls. They are getting really exhausted. Shouting alternately at each other, falling and getting up so fast. Close to each other, they are pulling each other down to the ground, covering each other, not trying to hit the balls. The woman is lying on top of the man. They are both gasping for breath as the lights fade.

VOICE 1:

Did you get what was needed? Will it have enough impact?

VOICE 2:

Yes. It will definitely sex things up.

8 RHYTHM

VOICE 1:

He was caught like a rat in a hole just big enough for a human. The air was rancid. He was sweating and gasping for air. He had a gun in his lap, but he couldn't use it.

VOICE 2:

A rat with a gun, but he couldn't use it. Hmmmm. Something is wrong, then.

VOICE 1:

Yes. Something is definitely not right.

MAN:

My mind is working too fast, or so it seems. Nothing's accomplished by this. Nothing that makes sense. Let me tell you about my mind. It seems to turn in circles that get tighter and tighter. Endless chain reactions, until I want to ... but I mustn't do that. Loosen up. Take it easy. Just relax. Truth is a moving target. I just have to hit it at the right angle, the right strength, the right point in time. I just have to appear calm, even though I know it's a lie. I'm not calm. Not inside, I'm a nervous wreck inside. Sure. You think I'm calm. Outwardly I appear so, but you should see the inside of me. Here. Come on in. My door is always open to you, but there are cracks in my foundation, and I need your help to repair them. First of all, it doesn't make any sense, which is perfectly alright. What bothers me is when it does make sense.

A solitary ball comes over the net. The man catches it.

Now that is a rhythm. A rhythm that makes sense. You can count it.

One. Two. Three.

One. Two. Three.

You can count on it.

One. Two. Three.

One. Two. Three. Four.

This makes me think of someone inventing those numbers.

One. Two. Three. Four. Five.

Five. Ten. Fifteen. Fifteen. Thirty.

I love it!
I'm drafting a new blueprint for myself. Not just the physical structure of my life,
but the emotional landscape.

He gathers three balls and throws one over the net.

Fifteen ... Love...

He throws the second ball over the net.

Thirty ...Love ...

He throws the third ball over the net.

Forty... Love!
Forty? Why not forty-five? It doesn't make sense. Way off the mark. I guess they
shortened it again. Easier that way, to call the shot, score a point. No sense at all. I
wonder if they had trouble inventing those numbers ... wonder if they had
trouble with ... Naught ... Zero ...Nothing. Pretty hard to imagine nothing
Nothing ... no thing ... no me ... no you... no world ... nothing, which doesn't make
sense, does it? Love means nothing in this game. Which frightens me. I can't stand
things that frighten me... that don't make any sense.

He exits.

VOICE 1:

He's dead then?

VOICE 2:

It's hard to tell. He's definitely not behaving properly. Speaking candidly, I think he's
a bit depressed. At any rate, we need to get the body back.

VOICE 1:

Why not just fly it?

VOICE 2:

He's afraid of flying. His family don't want him to fly.

VOICE 1:

He has a family? Well, in that case we can ship it over then.

VOICE 2:

No, that would take too long. He would be too far gone by the time we got him through.

VOICE 1:

What's to be done?

VOICE 2:

That is a good question. The clocks must be kept synchronized, and the lines open.

VOICE 1:

What about the girl?

VOICE 2:

The girl? Oh, you mean the woman. She's been isolated too long. I think she needs new friends.

9 INTERROGATION

The woman is alone on the stage.

VOICE 1:

I need to know exactly what happened this morning. I realize this might not be a good time, but I need to know. I'm sorry, but given the circumstances there are some questions I just have to ask. What happened this morning?

WOMAN:

I just ran.

VOICE 1:

No. Not just. What got you started? What time was it?

WOMAN:

Early. Still dark. I thought I heard a strange sound....

VOICE 1:

What was it?

WOMAN:

I don't know.

VOICE 1:

What was it? [no reply] What was it?

WOMAN:

I don't know. I went to look.....

VOICE 1:

What did you do?

WOMAN:

Got dressed without turning on the light. I went downstairs outside...

VOICE 1:

Where were you going?

WOMAN:

I just ran.... I was so scared..... somehow I asked myself if I had ever really seen him.

VOICE 1:

How did you feel when you first saw him?

WOMAN:

Scared, at first. Then – exhilarated .

VOICE 1:

Ahhh why?

WOMAN:

Because hebecause I he.... Despite everything, intensely intimate things were happening He didn't seem to be wasting my time.

VOICE 1:

Wasting your time? Can you elaborate on that?

WOMAN:

It's too difficult to explain. I think his soul had gone mad. Being alone in the darkness it had looked in on itself. His life was running swiftly, too, ebbing out of his heart. I knew it would be dangerous, but it was my choice. I just wanted to see how difficult it was to ... if I could get through.

The sound of insects singing in the African dusk is heard softly.

WOMAN:

One minute he was okay, and then the next his face was flushed. He was sweaty and panting. Then he sort of just went soft, turned white, stopped panting and passed out.

VOICE:

Do you have something you use when you need to get up your courage? Memories, tableaux scenes from your early life?

WOMAN:

What? No. I don't think so..... I don't know. Next time I'll have to check.

She exits. The night sound is amplified. The lights dim.

BLACKOUT

THE END

This play contains numerous sampled texts from diverse media sources from 2002-2004. The sources include:

Hutton Inquiry Website, BBC World, CNN, NRK 1 & 2 News, Mediemagasinet (SVT2), Access to Evil (SVT1), 60 Minutes, Life on death row (Mumia Abu Jamal), The Heart of Darkness (Joseph Conrad), The Art of Lawn Tennis (William T Tilden), The Worst Case Survival Handbook (J.Piven & D. Borgenicht), The West Wing, The Matrix, Silence of the Lambs, Heat, Lost Highway, When Billie Beat Bobby, Six Foot Under, Inspector Morse, A Touch of Frost, Hercule Poirot, Heartbeat, Prime Suspect.