

# **Play Up and Play the Game**

**a black comedy**

**by**

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**Sydney  
July, 2002**

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**Cast**

<b>JOHN / JEAN LUSETTE</b>	<b>(“JL”)</b>	<b>either sex 20 / 30</b>
<b>ISRAELI COLONEL</b>	<b>(“IC”)</b>	<b>50 ish</b>
<b>PALESTINIAN OFFICER</b>	<b>(“PO”)</b>	<b>50 ish</b>

**Time****Now**

**PLAY UP AND PLAY THE GAME**

*Left side of stage illuminated only revealing Jean / John Lusette.*

JC: This is Jean / John Lusette reporting for BBC World News. I am standing outside the border post building between the West Bank and Israel proper, where the weekly meeting between the security chiefs of each side of the border is about to take place. Some commentators have seen the continuation of these weekly meetings as the only light of hope in the present situation. They are the only official contact of a regular kind between Israeli and Palestinian representatives. Here comes the Palestinian officer now.

*Palestinian officer enters from stage left.*

LJ: Sir, can you tell us what is going to be discussed in the meeting today?

PO: We will do what we can, but no real steps can be taken towards stability and peace so long as the Israeli forces continue their unjustified occupation and terrorism on ordinary Palestinian citizens.

*He moves off rapidly to stage right where low-lighting shows a table with two chairs and a couple of glasses. He takes a seat and seems to relax. On stage left, an Israeli army colonel enters.*

JL: Colonel, can you tell the BBC World what you hope to be discussing today with your Palestinian opposite number?

IC: We won't be able to make any real progress towards peace and stability until the Palestinians and their leaders bring this detestable war of terrorism on innocent civilians and children to an end. But we will do what we can.

*IC also crosses right. The light on left stage fades so that JL can no longer be seen and the light on stage right brightens. IC crosses to the table in a relaxed way and sits down. He does not say anything at first. He puts his hat on one side of the table and pulls out a hip flask. He pours some of its contents into the two glasses and pushes one towards PO. They both take a swig and put their glasses down. They are both quite relaxed.*

PO: It's been a busy week. A lot of activity.

IC: Yes, we had better add up the score.

*PO puts some paper in front of himself and picks up a pen. He draws a line down the centre of the page to have two columns. He starts writing.*

PO: That bomber at the wedding killed 27, so that's 27 points. Do I get any extra points for the wounded?

- IC: No, we never agreed on points for wounding unless they die afterwards or are quadriplegics.
- PO: But the 27 killed in that blast included two children. We get double points for children.
- IC: Why double points?
- PO: Because it greatly adds to the terror if we are killing innocent children.
- IC: Well then, our shelling of that police station killed 6, and 2 children. I should get double points for those too.
- PO: No, you don't get any points for killing children. They get you bad press and loose you support. Probably, when you kill children there should be a minus.
- IC: I suppose so. I don't understand how you always seem to have good news reel footage of these killed children. If they are blown up with a shell, there are just bits of them. You can't photograph that.
- PO: No, when we have a photographic child corpse, we take a lot of shots of it from different angles and the next time a child is killed we take footage of the distraught parents weeping and we cut in pictures of some of our photogenic dead children. A dead child is a dead child – who tells the difference?
- IC: Well that's clever. I must pass that on to our propaganda department – I mean media officers.
- PO: I get extra points because the US warned Israel that they had to exercise restraint.
- IC: Yes, but it wasn't the president or secretary of state this time, it was only the secretary of defence. That's only worth 5 points to you. And what about Jordan urging Arafat to show restraint.
- PO: Yes, but at the same time, they let through another shipment of arms so they cancel each out.

*Pauses – writes.*

- PO: I suppose I loose some points for those two suicide bombers who managed to blow themselves up before they even got into Israel.
- IC: No, I get 10 points for those. One of my agents blew them up. He threw a grenade through a window from 30 metres. That man can throw wonderfully. He is beautiful to watch. He learnt throwing that like that by playing cricket for years.

- PO: Was that the same man who threw that 2 kg bomb into the back of our moving truck last week?
- IC: No, that was another man, but he also learnt to throw like that playing cricket. Cricket is wonderful training for warfare. When I was at an English speaking school they gave us a poem about cricket and warfare which I thought was just the usual British patriotic crap, but it did have a real point.
- PO: I would have thought baseball would be just as good for throwing. What is special about cricket?
- IC: Throwing practice is much the same, but if from childhood you are trained to put on pads and pick up a bat and walk out into the middle of an oval where everybody is watching you and where you are surrounded by the enemy and you have to do your best all alone to score, then war holds not terrors for you.
- PO: When the British left Palestine, they left quite a number of cricket ovals, but they all got turned into military parade grounds or markets or even got dug up to plant vegetables. What a waste.
- IC: Incidentally, my man who threw the grenade said that the female suicide bomber who was preparing was quite good looking. He said he would have rather fucked her than killed her. But he didn't have time to do both. *[Pause]* He's a good lad. Does what he's told.
- PO: We don't get many good looking women in the martyr's brigade. The good looking ones can usually get out of the refugee camps by working as prostitutes in Lebanon or Syria or Egypt. Providing they don't catch AIDS they have then got hope and can do something for their families. Our suicide volunteers have all got no hope at all.
- IC: You ought to try teaching cricket in the refugee camps. That way you would be able to have soldiers who could throw bombs rather than carry them.
- PO: Our people are so hopeless at throwing, we have had to give up trying to use Molotov cocktails. They are more likely to injure their own people than to hit one of your tanks.
- IC: Well remember all the Brits are mad. All you would have to do is to write to any English cricket club and they will send out instructors for the children and probably send you some old equipment as well.
- PO: But we haven't got any cricket ovals.
- IC: Most kids learn cricket playing in streets anyway.

*During the above conversation each has been taking swigs from their glasses. IC now refills the glasses. After a pause.*

PO: Well I win this week, 34 to 15.

*IC takes some notes out of his pocket and passes them over.*

PO: Hold on. We agreed always US dollars.

IC: Sorry.

*He takes those notes back and passes across dollars. PO picks them up and pockets them.*

PO: Do you think we will ever stop this game?

IC: I don't think so. Each side has got systems in place to produce new generations of fanatics and extremists. We will never run out of Jews wanting to drive every Palestinian Arab out of the area. You will never run out of fanatics who want to kill every Jew that ever was born. They both do it in the name of God. That is always a powerful motivator. It is an argument about who has the best imaginary friend.

PO: You don't think there is a God?

IC: Heavens no, you have only got to look at the world. No one is in charge.

PO: Perhaps we could solve it by converting both sides to Christianity.

IC: Are you mad? The Christians have a 2000 year tradition of killing each other. If both sides were Christians it would be even worse.

PO: Perhaps we could convert them both to Buddhism.

IC: Now if you could do that, it would work, and if you could do that, it may even make me believe in God.

*They each take a final swig and IC puts his cap back on as he stands up.*

PO: What will tell them we have been discussing? Reduction of border tensions is getting a bit thin. We have used that for the last four weeks.

IC: Let's try: simplifying procedures for allowing workers to cross the border. Incidentally, I have told my people that you personally are off limits. I do not know what I would do if I did not have someone sane to talk to at least once a week.

PO: Same. See you next week.

*Lights on the right side of the stage fade as IC cross left, and left illuminates to show JL waiting.*

JL: Colonel, can you tell us what you have been discussing?

IC: We have been discussing simplifying border controls to allow workers to pass back and forth more easily.

JL: Do you see any hope for broader discussions between the two sides in the near future?

IC: Israel will continue in supporting the international war on terrorism and until Palestinians abandon terror tactics, there is nothing to talk about.

JL: Thank you very much indeed Colonel.

*IC moves off rapidly left just as PO comes out from stage right which is now in darkness.*

JL: Mr Azea, your opposite number has told us that you were discussing simplifying border controls for workers. Was anything else on the agenda?

PO: What else can one talk about while Israel sends tanks to blast innocent women and children. Until they end their illegal occupation, no possible progress can be made.

*He also moves off rapidly left.*

JL: Thank you very much indeed. Well, this is Jean / John Lusette returning you to London.

*Curtain or lights.*