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TILT

by Catherine McKinnon

EXTRACT

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Catherine McKinnon
(Pages 117)

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CHARACTERS

ANNA, an actor, plays RDCC GUARD, YOUNG WOMAN.
JULES, an actor, plays MAN ONE and INTERROGATOR.
SHARAD, a writer.
THEO, an actor, plays OLDER BROTHER.
DAN, an actor, plays YOUNGER BROTHER.
SELINA, an actor, WOMAN, CATGIRL and CATERINA.
LOU, a director.
FRANKIE, an actor, plays SOLDIER and ADMINISTRATOR.
JACK, an intelligence agent and ex-interrogator.

Various cast members play STAGE MANAGER and RDCC DETAINEES. Names without dialogue indicate active silence between those characters. The action of the 'play within a play' moves between a series of locations in two third world countries to a series of locations in a first world country. One of the fictitious locations—first or third world—is set in the country the play is performed in.

SCENES

ACT ONE

PROLOGUE: AT THE END IS WHERE IT BEGINS

1 EXTRAODINARY TIMES
2 THE WORLD IS CHANGING
3 THE OLD RULES DON'T APPLY
4 TRUTH GAME
5 TRUST NO ONE
6 EVERYTHING IS DIFFERENT
7 A MADE UP STORY
8 A TRUE STORY
9 THE HARD BIT
10 LOOK OUT FOR EACH OTHER
11 THERE MUST BE A REASON
12 CATGIRL'S DEAL
13 THE REFUGEE ROLE
14 IT'S A ROLE I PLAY
15 I DON'T TRUST PEOPLE
16 YOU HAVE TO BE TOUGH
17 UP CLOSE AND FRIENDLY
18 IT'S DIFFERENT TO HOW I EXPECTED
19 GOOD NEWS
20 BETRAYAL

ACT TWO

21 ALL THE SINGERS ARE DEAD
22 BEAUTY CATCHES BY SURPRISE
23 IMAGINE THE FUTURE
24 FOREIGNERS
25 RELEASE
26 REACH OUT AND TOUCH IT
27 THE PAST CATCHES UP
28 TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT
29 CAN MOTHER'S RETURN
30 SAFE FOR EACH OTHER
31 FINDING YOUNGER BROTHER
32 THE TRUE STORY
33 TELL ME THE NAMES
34 NOT THE BAD GUY
35 A DEAL
36 DIFFERENT KINDS OF BLAH
37 SOME STORIES ARE NOT FOR TELLING

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PROLOGUE

AT THE END IS WHERE IT BEGINS

Darkness.

A rough plank table.

On the table, piles of scripts.

A window bangs and a gust of wind blows pages into the air.

As they drift to the ground— disembodied voices.

The sound of rain, then thunder and lightening—a storm.

The wind, gathering intensity, scatters the pages so they twist and turn, the voices colliding, the scattered pages morphing into screeching seabirds that fly away. As they disappear the storm does too. All is calm. A magnificent watery blue light.

From the light WOMAN emerges.

WOMAN. Terror is born in darkness, from the real and from the imagined. It takes on ghostly shapes, walks in human form, rises from the earth itself. It is always with us. My eldest son knew terror. He woke to rain but had dreamed a typhoon. 'It's just a storm,' I said. 'It's the storm season.' But he could find no peace. His younger brother said, 'He dreamed a wave coming over the land.' I took both boys down to the beach to see for themselves that all was as it should be. That was when I felt terror. Waves crashed onto the shore and ran along roads, thrashing like an animal in pain. As we ran for high ground water smashed into restaurants and swept away houses. Rooftops became rafts. And the sea kept coming. People were screaming, this is the end, this is the end.

Pause.

Later, I remembered the ancient proverb—at the end is where it begins.

1

EXTRAORDINARY TIMES

A Home.

WOMAN *stares in disbelief at the watery mud-covered floor. She begins sweeping water out through the doorway.*

MAN ONE *arrives, exhausted.*

WOMAN. You're here. I've been worried.

MAN ONE. I'm safe.

They kiss.

WOMAN. The boys are helping at the school.

MAN ONE. I saw them. Rescuing books.

WOMAN. I've never seen so much water. It just kept coming.

MAN ONE.

WOMAN. I'm so sorry about ... please tell your family I'm sorry.

MAN ONE.

WOMAN. Where are you staying? When I clean up here—What is it?

MAN ONE. We're moving. The whole family. Up to the mountains.

WOMAN.

MAN ONE. There's nothing left here, so we're going. We're to start a new business with my aunt.

WOMAN. What about us?

MAN ONE. I know.

WOMAN. How will we see each other?

Beat.

Tell them you don't want to go.

MAN ONE. This whole fucking—it's changing everything.

WOMAN. Move in here. Stay here. You, me and the boys, we can—

MAN ONE. I have to help my family now.

WOMAN. But why must they leave? Convince them to stay.

MAN ONE. We've lost too much.

WOMAN. Your family has savings. You told me so /yourself.

MAN ONE. You're not seeing into the future.

WOMAN. Your mother's restaurant was popular. Rebuild and it will be /popular again.

MAN ONE. When I was a boy I had to walk five streets to the beachfront. Four of those streets have gone. Land is disappearing.

WOMAN. It can't all disappear.

MAN ONE. My brother knows about these things. In a few years this town might not exist.

WOMAN. I can't, no, they won't let that, they'll think of something, the government won't let that happen.

The sound of shattering glass from across the road, followed by a round of bullets. MAN ONE and WOMAN crawl to the door. MAN ONE peeks out.

WOMAN. (*Whispers.*) What is it?

MAN ONE. Looters.

More bullets are fired.

MAN ONE. They're only firing rounds to scare people.

WOMAN. The boys!

MAN ONE. They're safe. The guard is at the school.

WOMAN *peeks*.

WOMAN. How can they do that?

MAN ONE. I feel like I'm dreaming.

WOMAN. The government will send soldiers.

MAN ONE. Don't bet on it.

MAN ONE *pulls out a gun and some ammunition*. WOMAN *looks shocked*.

MAN ONE. Take it.

WOMAN. No.

MAN ONE. Just in case.

MAN ONE *pushes the gun towards her*. WOMAN *stares at it, then him*. MAN ONE *keeps an eye on the street*.

MAN ONE. For the first time I'm thinking about the future and it scares me.

WOMAN. You have to tell your family about us.

MAN ONE. How can I tell them?

WOMAN. If we don't want to be apart?

Beat.

Then we should move with you. The boys and I, why not?

MAN ONE. I can't tell them—this is definitely not the right time.

WOMAN. Your mother will still need a cook? She can't run a kitchen on her own.

MAN ONE. My aunt will help her.

WOMAN.

MAN ONE. Don't you understand, everything is gone, everything is different now.

More bullets are fired, but further away.

MAN ONE. They've gone the other way.

WOMAN. I thought we were to be together always? You, me, and the boys.

MAN ONE. I do love you.

WOMAN.

MAN ONE. Okay, this—I'm not supposed to tell anyone, I promised my brother I wouldn't—we're crossing the border.

WOMAN.

MAN ONE. We leave tonight.

WOMAN. (*Shocked.*) But visas? No one can get across.

MAN ONE. We can get visas through my aunt.

WOMAN. You're leaving me? Forever leaving me?

WOMAN *cries*.

MAN ONE *is distraught*.

MAN ONE. Please. Stop. (*Softer.*) Stop now. It's not that I haven't thought about—

Beat.

(*Hesitant.*) I do know a place. An orphanage.

WOMAN. An orphanage?

MAN ONE. If you put the boys in an orphanage then you could easily get work.

WOMAN. I—

MAN ONE. It wouldn't be forever.

WOMAN. I can't put my boys in an orphanage.

MAN ONE. Plenty of women leave their children there. It has a good school.

WOMAN. This orphanage is across the border?

MAN ONE. It will be safe there.

WOMAN. You can get us visas?

MAN ONE.

WOMAN.

MAN ONE. (*Carefully.*) I was told you could make it on your own if you take a few risks.

WOMAN. *Risks?*

MAN ONE. If you cross through the mountains.

WOMAN. What?

MAN ONE. It's a long way, I know.

WOMAN. Why are you being like this?

MAN ONE. My family has lost everything.

WOMAN. You're behaving like a stranger.

MAN ONE. Can you not see what is happening? Can you not see that these are extraordinary times.

WOMAN. So why can't we live up to them? Let's be extraordinary.

MAN ONE *takes out some money.*

MAN ONE. My brother asked me to give you this.

WOMAN. (*Astonished.*) Your mother owes me wages.

MAN ONE. Everything we had was washed away.

WOMAN. She owes me for three weeks.

MAN ONE. My brother is handling the money now. All spending must be reigned in.

WOMAN. Wages is not spending.

MAN ONE. Times are tough, he says. The old rules don't apply.

WOMAN. Your family has savings. The bank hasn't washed away.

MAN ONE. This is from me.

MAN ONE *tries to give her money. She slaps his hand away.*

MAN ONE. It's everything I have.

WOMAN.

MAN ONE. I don't want to hurt you.

WOMAN.

MAN ONE. The world is changing.

Pause.

I can't do anything about it.

WOMAN. Yes, you can.

MAN ONE. No, I can't.

MAN ONE *leaves.*

2

THE WORLD IS CHANGING

Rehearsal Room.

A rough plank table. On the table, three piles of scripts and a bag of oranges.

A man is mopping up water.

ANNA enters, sliding a little on the wet floor.

ANNA. Oops!

The man doesn't see and keeps mopping.

ANNA looks around for somewhere to put her bags, jacket and umbrella. There is nowhere.

ANNA. Do we have any chairs?

ANNA steps forward so the man can see her. He's listening to music, but when he spots her, he takes out his earplugs.

ANNA. If you—because we're having rehearsal in here today—if you could get us some chairs that would be helpful.

The man stares as if not comprehending.

THEO *enters*.

THEO. Hiya stranger.

ANNA. Theo?

THEO. Don't look surprised. Or didn't you know?

ANNA. I—no, I didn't—

THEO. I'm filling in for Josh.

ANNA. For Josh?

THEO. The flood—

ANNA. Oh! Of course—

THEO. They were in the kitchen, all this water suddenly came gushing in. No warning. Josh managed to push his daughter into the attic. He looked back and saw Danni being swept away.

ANNA. No!

THEO. She caught hold of a tree branch. He and his daughter pushed their way onto the roof. Watched their furniture float off down the road. Spent the night up there calling out to Danni.

ANNA. They're okay?

THEO. (*Nods*.) But a massive clean up. Not just their place, the whole town. Did you see the footage of those cars being swept down the main street—

ANNA. I've never seen anything—

THEO. So much water and it just kept coming.

THEO looks around for somewhere to put his things.

ANNA. *(To the man who has gone back to mopping.)* Excuse me. We really need some chairs in here.

The man exits.

THEO. This space is amazing.

ANNA. I haven't had a chance to take it in.

THEO walks to the opposite door and peeks through.

THEO. Incredible.

ANNA. Is it finished?

ANNA joins him.

THEO. I'm looking forward to—it'll be great working together again.

ANNA. Theo, I—I don't know about this—

THEO. We're professionals.

ANNA. Yes, but everything is—

THEO. It's bound to happen sometime. Us /working together.

ANNA. Not if we agree /not to.

THEO. It's been so long since I've seen /you.

ANNA. See already—

SELINA enters.

SELINA. Hello. Am I in the right place? Oh yes, I'm in the right place.

DAN enters, drinking Red Bull.

DAN. Hey, wow, what a building. How's the acoustic. *(Shouts.)* Good. Good acoustic.

He shakes ANNA'S hand, then THEO's.

ANNA. Hi.

DAN. Dan.

THEO. The theatre's through /there.

ANNA. We're rehearsing in here.

DAN. Yeah, right, but hey, good acoustic for rehearsals.

DAN goes to shake SELINA'S hand but she backs away.

SELINA. No, my hands are dirty. I rode my bike. No offense, but you don't want to touch them. I don't want to touch them, and they're my hands, so—so it was longer than I thought, took me nearly an hour to get here but that was because I got knocked over by a bus.

ANNA. What?

THEO. Knocked over?

DAN. You okay?

SELINA. This bus just tipped the back of my bike. But the driver didn't even get out to check I was okay. I was lying there and he just put his hand on the horn.

ANNA. No one stopped?

SELINA. Another cyclist lifted my bike out of the gutter. The bus drove on but there was this one motorist still screaming at me and the cyclist who was helping me had to yell out, 'Just let her get her breath back.'

The man brings in chairs.

I lay there, not sure if I was okay—were my legs broken?— everyone in their cars pissed off and only worried about getting to work.

ANNA. Are you sure
you're alright?

THEO. So many fascists
out there.

DAN. Not cool.

SELINA. I mean, who are we?

DAN. Fucked-up.

SELINA. I understand people worrying about being late for work.

ANNA. Maybe we should call a /doctor.

SELINA. But if I thought I'd knocked someone over I'd check if they /were okay.