

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



Centre Caught

by Peter Fyfe

EXTRACT

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Dramatis Personae

David	Male, twenty-something, strong, rugged, handsome, rural Australian.
Benjamin	Male, twenty-something, more cute than handsome, open, vulnerable.
Umpire	Female. played by the same actor as Patricia.
Presenter	Male, played by the same actor as James.
Patricia	Female, vaguely forty, curvaceous, glamorous (or trying hard to be).
James	Male, urbane, thirty-something to forty-something (it's hard to tell), smart, sophisticated, and a little too well presented.

Regarding the Stage Directions...

Act One contains a lot of stage directions, which should be taken as a guide and starting point only. A wise director will ignore them and find with the cast the movement and work that achieves the appropriate game points. This was certainly the approach taken by Andrew Davidson for the workshop, to great success.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to the generous friends who read the first draft in my lounge room on Sunday 25th February, 2001: Mik Beckley (David), Brad Hall (Benjamin), Lyn Pierse (Patricia) and David James (James).

Thanks also to Anne Harris (Australian National Playwrights' Centre) for her assessment and dramaturgy.

I respectfully salute Edward Albee, not least because a few of his "forest sounds" have made their way into this play. And the late Bette Davis, mostly for just being Bette Davis.

Finally, sincere thanks to Andrew Davidson for taking a chance on an unknown and giving me my first taste of being a playwright with a script in front of an audience.

History

Act One of the play was short-listed by Peta Murray for the 2003 Glen Eira Council's literary award for a short play.

Centre Caught was short-listed for the Play Lab at the 12th Annual Edward Albee Last Frontier Theatre Conference (2004), in Valdez, Alaska, USA.

Act One of Centre Caught received a workshop production at the National Institute of Dramatic Arts (NIDA) on 11 August, 2004, directed by Andrew Davidson, designed by Tobhiyah Feller, and choreographed by Sarah Reece. The production featured Nathin Bulter (Benjamin), Steven Rassios (David) and Oliver Wenn (Umpire).

Centre Caught was short-listed for the 2004 Rodney Seaborn Playwright's Award.

Centre Caught was featured in the Australian Script Centre's Collection #6 (2006).

Act One

- *A tennis court, real or metaphorical.*
- *Up-stage centre is a tennis umpire's chair, flanked on either side by chairs for two tennis players.*
- Presenter** *(voice over)* Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen, and a warm welcome to centre court for this evening's love match.
- *The two boys enter, wearing towels and carrying sports bags. They each take their respective places by their chairs, drop their bags, and set up "shop" for the game, laying out their clothes and accoutrements.*
- Presenter** *(voice over)* First up tonight, a high seeded player who is no stranger to centre court, please make welcome four-times district champion, David.
- *David acknowledges the crowd.*
- Presenter** *(voice over)* Challenging David tonight is a rookie outsider making his first appearance on centre court, please make very welcome Benjamin.
- *Benjamin acknowledges the crowd.*
- Presenter** *(voice over)* This evening's love match is the best of three, advantage sets. David has won the toss and elected to serve.
(beat)
- *The Umpire enters, and takes her place up-stage centre.*
- Umpire** Play.
- *Music bursts forth, loud, hot, and fun.*
- *The boys prepare for a night on the town (a set piece). Their movements are almost identical as they do their hair, apply a little too much cologne, vainly preen and dress for their night out. They frequently regard the "mirror" (the fourth wall) to check their progress. A careful adjustment of the basket completes the routine.*
- *Lights and music tell us we're now in a club.*
- *David mimes a serve.*
- *The boys walk into the club, see each other, then adopt an "I'm not looking" pose.*
- *After some time, Benjamin sneaks a look at David.*
- Umpire** Fifteen love.
- *David smirks.*
- *Benjamin fidgets a little nervously, then tries to steal a second look.*
- Umpire** Thirty love.

- *David smirks again and looks disinterestedly at Benjamin.*

- *Benjamin attempts eye contact, but David is too quick for him.*

Umpire *Forty love.*

- *David gives Benjamin a good long cruise, but reveals nothing.*

- *Benjamin feels the gaze, holds out for a while, but finally meets David's eyes.*

Umpire *Game, David. David leads one game to love, first set.*

- *The players change sides, granting each other a hunter-like regard as they pass.*

- *Benjamin prepares to serve.*

- *Benjamin stares at David, then, getting no response, looks away.*

Umpire *Fault.*

- *Benjamin steels himself then stares at David.*

- *David checks to see if Benjamin is looking at him, sees he is, then disregards him.*

Umpire *Love fifteen.*

- *Benjamin's gaze remains unbroken.*

- *David checks Benjamin out but displays no visible opinion.*

- *Benjamin, a little abashed, breaks eye contact.*

Umpire *Love thirty.*

Benjamin *(under his breath) Damn! Come on, Benjamin.*

- *Benjamin returns to staring. When David looks, Benjamin attempts a smile.*

- *David smirks and looks away.*

Umpire *Love forty.*

Benjamin *Damn it!*

- *Benjamin determinedly does not look at David, who now stares at Benjamin. Benjamin looks at David, who smiles at him. Benjamin smiles.*

Umpire *Game, David. David leads two games to love, first set.*

- *David slips into second gear, and brazenly checks out Benjamin.*

- *Benjamin breaks into a slightly embarrassed grin.*

Umpire *Fifteen love.*

- *David gives Benjamin a look. Benjamin responds and a rally of looks ensues.*

- *Benjamin winks.*

- Umpire** Out.
Thirty love.
- *With a flick of the head, David indicates “come over”.*
 - *Benjamin indicates “who me?”.*
 - *David indicates “what do you reckon?”.*
 - *Benjamin shrugs and steps toward David.*
- Umpire** Forty love.
- *They meet at the “net”.*
 - *David looks at Benjamin but doesn’t speak.*
 - *Benjamin attempts to catch David’s eye, but misses.*
 - *David looks to Benjamin.*
 - *Benjamin looks away.*
 - *David looks straight ahead.*
 - *Benjamin goes to speak.*
- Umpire** Out.
Game, David. David leads three games to love, first set.
- *The players change ends in heavy cruise mode, almost touching but not quite.*
- Umpire** Quiet please.
- *Beat.*
- Benjamin** Ummm...
- Umpire** Fault.
- *Benjamin attempts to speak a second time and trips over his words in a jumble of untamed syllables.*
- Umpire** Double fault.
Love fifteen.
- *Benjamin takes a moment to Zen out.*
- Benjamin** Hi.
- David** Hi.
- Benjamin** Benjamin.
- *David nods but looks away.*
- Benjamin** And you are?
- David** David.

Umpire Fifteen all.

- *Benjamin is relieved to have finally scored a point.*

Benjamin David...

David Yes?

- *Benjamin tries to say something but dies in the attempt.*

Umpire Fifteen thirty.

Benjamin Are you having a good time tonight?

David I was.

Umpire Out.
Thirty all.

Benjamin Do you come here often?
Fuck.

Umpire Fault.

Benjamin Is there an easy way to do this?

David Do what?

Benjamin Strike up a conversation with a complete stranger.

David Oh, that.

Benjamin Yes.

David No.

Benjamin Why is that?

- *David shrugs.*

Umpire Forty thirty.

Benjamin It's easy in theory.

David What?

Benjamin This. I mean it's easy at home in front of the mirror.

- *David gives Benjamin a look.*

Umpire Deuce.

Benjamin Can we start again?

David Why not?

Umpire Advantage, Benjamin.

Benjamin Hi.

David Hi

Benjamin My name's Benjamin.

David David.

Benjamin Pleased to meet you David.

David Are you having a good time tonight?

Benjamin I was up until now.

Umpire Deuce.

Benjamin Fuck! I can do this. I can do this.
(*pause*)
God, you're beautiful.

• *David is caught off guard.*

Umpire Advantage, Benjamin.

Benjamin Can I buy you a drink?

David Sure.

Umpire Game, Benjamin. David leads three games to one, first set.

• *A ball-boy/girl brings on water bottles.
Benjamin takes a large gulp from his.*

David You look like you needed that.

Benjamin I did.

David You shouldn't get so worked up.

Benjamin Well, it's just that...

David Am I that terrifying?

Benjamin Yes, I mean no, it's just that...

Umpire Fifteen love.

David You're a good-looking guy.

Benjamin Do you think so?

Umpire Thirty love.

David Well, I'm attracted to you.

• *Benjamin takes a nervous gulp of his drink.*

Umpire Forty love.

David Relax.

Benjamin OK.

David I'm not going to eat you.

Benjamin Sure.

David At least not here.

- *Benjamin is dishevelled.*

Umpire Game, David. David leads four games to one, first set.

- *The boys change sides, as if moving to another part of the club.*

Benjamin What do you do, David?

David Me?

Benjamin No, the guy next to you.

Umpire Fifteen love.

Benjamin So what do you do, David?

David What do I do?

Benjamin Yes, what do you do.

David What do I do, or what would I like to do?

Benjamin Ok, What would you like to do?

David You.

Benjamin Oh.

Umpire Fifteen all.

Benjamin No I meant... What do you do... for a living?

David Oh, a bit of this and that.

Benjamin Not very specific.

David No.

Umpire Thirty fifteen.

Benjamin If you don't want to tell me...

Umpire Fault.

Benjamin I mean I'm just trying to make conversation.

Umpire Double fault.
Thirty all.

- *Benjamin pauses and attempts to regroup.*

Benjamin What star sign are you?

David Why don't you ask me what you really want to know?

Benjamin Why don't you ever answer a question?