

## AS GOOD AS IT GETS

By Abraham McNeil Adams

*A vast space with chalk lines to indicate some kind of sports arena. There should be a display with a scoreboard with clearly marked 'HOME' and 'AWAY' like the old school scoreboards at high school games.*

*Production Note: If you cannot afford to have the OWNER fly in and hover over players to drop things, the same effect could be achieved with ladders strategically placed or some other construct allowing the actor to enter offstage and appear from a height to drop the things. The ending would, of necessity, need to be modified but I leave that to production's discretion.*

*We open with six actors onstage. Barely clothed but not nude. They all appear to be dirty and bruised. There are three women and three men. Half of the actors should be people of color. One of the pairs should be mixed.*

*One of the group holds a ball.*

*The entire group looks outward, toward the audience, waiting.*

*There should be a sense of anticipation and urgency.*

*We are waiting.*

*We wait some more.*

*Then a loud buzzer sounds. It might startle the audience but it sends the group into action.*

*A voice is heard that is loud and omnipresent. They sound like they are eating something.*

VOICE Let us play!

*The group begins to play a game with the ball. It should not be readily identified as any specific sport that we know. They just play and continue to play, enjoying each other and the sport. There is laughter and clear joy despite the clear story of hardship present on their bodies.*

*The buzzer sounds again.*

*A voice is heard, loud and terrible. The voice is still eating.*

VOICE Stop fucking around and PLAY!

*The entire group stops.*

*The atmosphere has shifted. They know what the voice means.*

*The buzzer sounds again.*

*The group is sent into action, only this time the play is much more intense, borderline violent. The group plays until someone is knocked down or injured.*

*The buzzer sounds.*

*The scoreboard reads 'HOME: 1, AWAY: 0'*

*The OWNER, whose voice we just heard, appears hovering over the PLAYERS.*

VOICE YES! That's IT! That's what I'm talking about.

*The OWNER produces some scraps of food that they throw down onto the field. There is not enough for everyone.*

*The PLAYERS all scramble to get a piece.  
There is sharing & caring amongst the PLAYERS.  
This displeases the OWNER.*

OWNER      Sharing?! Did I say anything about sharing?  
We play to win and win what we earn and earnings aren't for sharing.  
Fucking socialists.

*The OWNER presses a button on something and the buzzer sounds.*

New Game! Use this.

*The OWNER produces a long, thick rope or a chain. The OWNER throws it  
down onto the field.  
The OWNER disappears and the buzzer sounds again.  
There is a moment where the PLAYERS take in the rope/chain and each other  
trying to figure out what the score is.  
The OWNER speaks again, unseen:*

VOICE      Play you fucking Pussies or nobody gets nothing!

*The PLAYERS spring into action, fighting over the rope/chain.  
The ball is forgotten.  
There is a real struggle and the men overpower the women, tying them up.  
One of the women is injured and this affects their male partner.  
The buzzer sounds.  
The scoreboard reads, 'HOME: 2, AWAY: 0'  
The OWNER appears hovering over the field.  
The OWNER is eating something.*

OWNER      Good! Good! Hope its nice and tight!

*OWNER produces more scraps of food. Less than before.  
The men scramble for the food.  
Some try to share it with the women.  
This displeases the OWNER*

OWNER      Of for fuck's sake. Stop! You eat what you earn.

*The OWNER presses something and the buzzer sounds again.*

New Game!

*The OWNER produces a whip and throws it down on the field.  
As they exit:*

OWNER      Use this. Make it interesting.

*The buzzer sounds again*

*Another moment where the PLAYERS take in the whip and each other trying to figure out the score.*

*The OWNER is losing patience:*

VOICE I'm waiting!

*The free remaining players, all men, scramble to fight over the whip.*

*The winner should be a man of color.*

*The winner whips the other two into submission. The fight should be awful and prolonged. The whipped are lying prone on the floor, exhausted and bleeding. There is crying.*

*The buzzer sounds again.*

*The scoreboard reads, 'HOME: 3, AWAY: 0'*

*The OWNER appears again, hovering above the field, eating something.*

OWNER Excellent! Such a good little player.

*The OWNER produces a perfect apple for the one remaining PLAYER.*

*The OWNER, feeling magnanimous, reaches down to hand the PLAYER their apple.*

*The PLAYER stares at the extended apple.*

*They look at the field and its contents.*

*They look at the whip in hand.*

*The PLAYER suddenly whip the OWNER so that they fall from their perch.*

*The OWNER screams, writhing on the floor*

*The PLAYER who whipped the owner whips them again and again, perhaps bludgeoning them with fists, until they grow quiet. This should be awful and take time.*

*We have a few moments of breathing and blood.*

*The scoreboard reads 'HOME: 0, AWAY: 0'*

*The PLAYER, seeing the apple, picks it up and tastes of it.*

*The PLAYER transforms.*

*There is a new OWNER, strapping themselves in to the fly rig (or climbing the ladder).*

*The new OWNER surveys the landscape.*

NEW OWNER We play to win and win what we earn and earnings aren't for sharing.  
Fuck socialists.

*There is a beat of stillness. Then all the PLAYERS, including the old "dead" OWNER arise, throwing rope and whip offstage, becoming the new PLAYERS.*

*There remains only the ball.*

*The PLAYERS position themselves as they were at the top, looking out toward the audience and waiting with anticipation. The NEW OWNER still suspended above the field, looking out.*

*The buzzer sounds.*

NEW OWNER Let us play!

*Blackout.*

**END OF PLAY**