



# TENDER NAPALM

BY PHILIP RIDLEY



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TENDER NAPALM was first produced by Supporting Wall Ltd  
at the Southwark Playhouse, London on 19th April 2011.

**SPECIAL NOTE ON MUSIC**

A CD containing the original music by Nick Bicât is available through the Play Service for \$25.00, plus shipping and handling. The nonprofessional fee for the use of this music is \$20.00 per performance. The following acknowledgment must appear on the title page in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the Play in which this music is used:

Original music by Nick Bicât

TENDER NAPALM received its world premiere at the Southwark Playhouse in London, England, opening on April 19, 2011. It was directed by David Mercatali; the production design was by William Reynolds; and the original music was by Nick Bicât. The cast was as follows:

MAN ..... Jack Gordon  
WOMAN ..... Vinette Robinson

# CHARACTERS

MAN

WOMAN

*Sexual love is the most stupendous fact  
of the universe and the most magical mystery  
our poor blind senses know.*

**Amy Lowell**

*We must embrace pain and burn it  
as fuel for our journey.*

**Kenji Miyazawa**

*Our life is what our thoughts make it.*

**Marcus Aurelius**

# TENDER NAPALM

MAN. Your mouth.

WOMAN. What about it?

MAN. It's such a ... wet thing. (*Slight pause.*) I could squeeze a bullet between those lips. Point first. Press it between those rosebud lips. Prise it between your pearly whites. Gently. I wouldn't break a single tooth. Your tongue would feel something cold and hard. Taste of metal and gunpowder. There might even be a slight ... retching reflex. I'd wait a moment. I'd make calming, soothing noises. I'd be like a ... like a tree full of doves spreading my cooing branches around you. Then ... then I'd continue pushing slowly, so slowly. You'd be quite calm by now. Your mouth would relax. You would accept this bullet in your palate. It would feel as natural as ... as a pearl in the palm of an oyster.

WOMAN. ... You're in a fucking poetic mood.

MAN. It's all your fault.

WOMAN. Me?

MAN. You ... inspire me.

WOMAN. Oh, my love.

MAN. My love. (*Slight pause.*)

WOMAN. Your eyes.

MAN. What about them?

WOMAN. They're such ... pearly things.

MAN. Go on.

WOMAN. I could get a spoon and prise it in your eye sockets. This part here. Above the cheekbone. Your eyes would water. Your tears would fill my spoon. So that when your eyes eventually pop out they would land in the spoon with a gentle ... splosh. Like the sound of a goldfish turning suddenly in its bowl.

MAN. You're excelling yourself today.

WOMAN. Inspired by you, my muse.

MAN. My snare.

WOMAN. My bayonet.

MAN. My noose.

WOMAN. My hooligan.

MAN. My ghost. (*Pause.*)

WOMAN. Have you seen the view? (*Slight pause.*) Tell me, have you ever seen such a glorious day?

MAN. Never.

WOMAN. Nor have I. And what about the sea? Have you ever seen it so clear and calm and tropically island perfect? In all the years we've been shipwrecked here.

MAN. Shipwrecked?!

WOMAN. Yes. Stranded. Solitary. Have you ever seen the sky so blue and the sea so calm and the beach so smooth and the palm trees — oh, the palm trees! So full of coconuts and parrots and — Oh, look! Little monkeys! Hundreds of them! Thousands! Have you ever seen that? Well, have you, for fuck's sake? Ever?

MAN. No.

WOMAN. Shall I tell you what I'm going to do?

MAN. Why not?

WOMAN. I'm going to strip naked and run down to the beach. I'm going to feel the sun on my skin and the sand between my toes. I'm going to spin round and round till I'm dizzy. Then I'm going to fall to the ground and roll over and over till my whole body is golden and crunchy with sand. Then ... you know what I'll do?

MAN. What?

WOMAN. I'll rush into the sea and let the surf splash me clean. Its frothiness will ... it will fizz all over my skin. I'll lick my lips and taste its salty warmth. Then I'll collect some seashells from along the shore — those tiny bright blue ones with flecks of gold — and I'll decorate my hair with them. Then I'll make a necklace of sea urchins and pearls. Then I'll sit on a rock — that one over there! Shaped like a whale. You see? And then I'll let the monkeys feed me mango and passionfruit. And then ... oh, then I'll lay back, calm and tranquil, and drift into a universe of dreams on the back of my luxurious leviathan. (*Pause.*)

MAN. Your cunt.

WOMAN. ... What about it?

MAN. It's such a ... a ...

WOMAN. Mmm?

MAN. A precocious thing.

WOMAN. Oh, you're flirting with me now.

MAN. I could squeeze a grenade up there.

WOMAN. I should hope you'd lubricate it first.

MAN. Of course. What d'you think I am? A savage?

WOMAN. No.

MAN. A telly evangelist?

WOMAN. Oh, no!

MAN. A vegan?

WOMAN. You? Never!

MAN. Thank you. Of course I'd lubricate the grenade first. Not only would I thoroughly lubricate the grenade but I would thoroughly lubricate your pussy first.

WOMAN. You spoil me.

MAN. I'm a romantic at heart.

WOMAN. I'd forgotten.

MAN. ... I'd pull back the layers of your cunt like the leaves of an artichoke. Your cunt would get pinker and pinker the deeper I get. When I've reached the deepest, pinkest, tenderest part, so tender I can see tiny veins like red hairs throbbing, I'd press the tip of the grenade inside you and —

WOMAN. Do grenades have "tips"?

MAN. ... The *end* of the grenade.

WOMAN. What "end"?

MAN. The end that is not the pin-pulling end. I'd push it into you. At first your cunt might react against such a cold alien thing inside you. Your cunt would try to spit me out. But I would push gently, gently, gently, coaxing your convulsing cunt into acceptance. The muscles would begin to relax, begin to welcome this man-made fist of metal, spitting would become sucking. I would push deeper, deeper, deeper, and, gradually, you would learn to love this gunpowder egg nestled dynamite in your womb. (*Slight pause.*)

WOMAN. I remember ... when I was seventeen —

MAN. The pin's still showing.

WOMAN. Eh? What?

MAN. The pin of the grenade. It's still peeking from your pussy. It's like the beak of a clockwork cuckoo.

WOMAN. Oh ... I see.

MAN. Shall I tell you what I'm going to do?

WOMAN. Why not?

MAN. I'm going to tweak the beak.

WOMAN. Really?



MAN. Really.

WOMAN. Well, I'm not sure I want you to do that.

MAN. Well, I'm not sure you being not sure is enough to stop me.

WOMAN. Really?

MAN. Really. (*Slight pause.*) I tweak. (*Slight pause.*) I tweak. (*Slight pause.*) You're beginning to enjoy each beak tweak.

WOMAN. I'm not.

MAN. You are. Tweak.

WOMAN. Oh ... I am.

MAN. You urge me on to ever more audacious tweaking.

WOMAN. Tweak my beak!

MAN. Your nipples become hard.

WOMAN. Oh, tweak, tweak.

MAN. Your body's convulsing!

WOMAN. Tweak!

MAN. Tweak!

WOMAN. Tweak!

MAN. I pull the pin. (*Woman continues to moan. She reaches orgasm as —*) BOOOM! (*Pause.*)

WOMAN. I remember — when I was seventeen — I was invited to this party. It was an eighteenth birthday party but — oh, it was special. It was given for a friend of a friend. Janis, that was my friend, she'd left school the year before me and got a job in some gift shop and one of the girls in the shop — her dad had just come into a whole lot of money — a lottery win or inheritance we all supposed — and he said he wanted to give his daughter the biggest birthday bash anyone had ever seen. Anyway, this girl from the shop invited Janis — who Janis'd become bestest friends with apparently, though she hadn't mentioned her once before this, not once, but that's Janis all over — and Janis asked this girl, "Can I bring someone?" and this girl said, "Of course," and so Janis — as I really *was* her bestest friend — asked me.

MAN. ... You seen the — ?

WOMAN. Invites were sent out. The most amazing invites you've ever seen. The paper was all textured and yellow like old parchment. And the writing was all swirly and curly and — oh, oh, all round the edges. Gold leaf! It used to come off on your fingers when you held it too long.

MAN. You seen the — ?

WOMAN. "Dress Elegant." That's what it said on the invite. So

# TENDER NAPALM

by Philip Ridley

1M, 1W

TENDER NAPALM is a high-impact, high-concept exploration of the relationship between two people and the violent world that surrounds them ... and the place where these things meet. Explosive, poetic and brutal, the play weaves a compelling tapestry to re-examine and re-define the language of love ... and how that love struggles to survive in the face of catastrophe.

*"Ridley explores intense sexual and emotional connection, and evokes the processes of grieving and psychological healing without cliché or clumsy sentiment. It is heady, heart-stopping stuff; wildly intoxicating."*

—The Times (London)

*"In the way it digs the loam of memory and explores how lovers create their own stories and mythologies, Ridley's play is completely and dizzyingly of itself. The writing seethes and burns. It goes not just into the bedroom, but into the mind, the secret places that we hide from everyone except lovers. Seldom has sexual love been explored on stage with such ferocious honesty, brutality and melting tenderness. Language is both a consolation and a weapon used to penetrate and castrate in 80 unflinching minutes so intimate you want to avert your eyes."*

—The Guardian (London)

*"This new 85-minute duet for an unnamed Adam and Eve is a seriously wild workout ... If Pinter is the poet of Hackney and the Balls Pond Road, Ridley is the rogue rioter of Shoreditch and Snaresbrook."*

—The Independent (London)

*"It's evocative, hallucinatory stuff ... an unforgettable 80 minutes."*

—Time Out London

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