

## NO PLAY

By Murray Mednick

--There's a protocol.

--So what?

--You can't do the culling out of hand.

--Why not?

--It's procedural.

--Kid can't talk, mother grovels in the plaza.

--Who is that?

--The Wilsons.

--Are you going out, Jim?

--I'm going out

--Hunting?

--Hunting.

--Good luck then.

--Thank you.

--In the office and the city?

--Yes.

--Kill the motherfuckers.

--Yes, I will.

--And what about the Wilsons downtown?

--What about them?

--They must be killed as well.

--I know.

--Onward.

--It's a shame.

--She was born good that one.

--She was.

--No one knows what happened there.

--Nothing happened there.

--Bad genes happened there.

--Far as we know.

--It's not important.

--What's important?

--The killing is important. Protect the good.

--Okay.

--Protect the holy.

--Right.

--Protect the bank.

--Of course.

--Get on it.

--There will be a hearing.

--What for?

--There is a relative, an Uncle John. He has his own show.

--What does he want?

--Fairness. Justice.

--Oh, come on.

--\_He's allowed to express his views.

--About you?

--Yes, and the procedure. It's lawful.

--Meanwhile. Don't let her sleep around. Mrs. Wilson.

--She's home arrested.

--Don't let any men in there.

--Of course not.

--We'll get progeny for sure.

--Yeah.

--Must kill them all then.

--How are you feeling, Jim?

--I feel like I want to throw someone out the office window.

--Hang in there.

\_Forty-fifth floor. See the body splash on the pavement.

--The Uncle John is here.

--Blood and guts strewn about.

--He wants to talk.

--Let him talk.

--With you.

--I don't think so.

--It's the rule. One relative gets one shot. Live.

--Should be a firing squad. Set it up for everyone to see.

\_She'll be hunted down as it is. We let her out and let her run for her life.

--So what does the Uncle want.

--A head start maybe, for his niece.

--I get it.

--Maybe not.

--Then what?

--A repeal, a reprise, a reevaluation of the evidence.

\_We don't do that anymore. The genealogy is unpredictable. But we'll let her run. And then we'll shoot to kill.

--A head start then.

--We'll see. Let him come. Let him come in for an interview.

--How are you, dear?

--I'm fracked.

\_I don't know what that means.

\_In globs of plastics and rubber cement. Not good. Blown to smithereens. When the time comes. I'd like to fuck a young man with sense. I've been fucking around for years, and I haven't found one. Not one.

\_It's over, dear. The hunt is on.

--Let it come.

\_I'm trying to negotiate with the idiot savant whose name is Jim.

--Good luck, Uncle John.

--Thank you, Sarah. We'll get it reviewed or a head start.

--How long?

--Maybe a mile.

--A mile is good. Fucking robots clanking after me. Wired up dogs. Vengeful females.

--The rest of the family.

--Yeah?

--What do we do? They'll be also on the run.

--Head for the mountains. Cross the desert. Go out to sea.

--And you?

--The forest. I'll need at least a mile.

--And then?

--I have a spot in the hills. A sweet clearing in the woods, hard to find. I know it well and would be happy there.

--What will you do there, Sarah, in your glen?

--I'll start a school – Arts and crafts for runaways. Perhaps song and dance as well.

--Well, Uncle John.

--Hello, Jim.

\_What can I do for you? Speak English please. That is the language of our society.

--I know that.

\_And its laws.

--Right.

--Speak up.

--How is Martha?

--Come on.

--Children well? Because that's the point. The gene pool. The moral good and so on.

--Yeah?

--There are doubts.

--There are no doubts.

--Something could sneak in, slide in, jump in, fly in, who knows?

--We have laws. We cull.

--My niece, as you know, as you recall, Sarah Wilson–

--Come on. We'll let the family go -- wherever it wants, out of the country, goodbye and good luck, but we will kill your Sarah according to Law.

--Let's talk.

--We're talking.

--Law says the villain gets a good head start. Let her run.

There is a virtual law built into the system.

--It's not a law. It's only a suggestion.

--Giving the accused and slandered the right to run for it.

--Laws are hard to come by John. Takes hard work and sacrifice. Time and effort. Good will and cooperation. We are not insects.

--I beg your pardon.

--Not Communists.

--I understand.

--A system that works for all Viewers regardless, laws and protocols and customs. Okay, where were we?

--Negotiation.

--Right.

--We submit to a certain rage sir on the part of my Sarah who likes to dance around like a dervish and has too many intimate relationships.

--So?

--Give her a couple miles.

--No. We go after her and we kill her right away so we can clean this thing up.

--Did we forget the Wilsons?

--We did.

--Let's not forget them.

--I'm sorry, dear.

--Leave us not forget them.

--Say more.

--Raggedly ones scurrying along like they were going to get away with it.

--Right.

--But we got them where we want them.

--They don't do like we do.

--No.

--Who knows what they're doing? They're on trial. They're not on screen.

--That's what I'm saying.

--Call the Judge.

--The Judge 's gone up in a blaze.

--I heard.

--We have a way. --How the world came to be, how our community is organized.

--We have our way of doing things.

--That's what I'm saying.

--Judge Dingo.

--He burned up in a barn fire.

--Sorry.

--Turned over a lamp while hiding.

--Why hiding.?

--Can't say these things. It's the decency regulation.

--Move on.

--Generations to come, the genealogy of fate, so to speak.

--Yeah.

--Corruption breeds on itself like a mold.

--Yeah.

--Hunt the woman down, make an example.

--I will do that, sir.

--Jim.

--Martha.

--Office life becoming weird?

--Terrifying.

--How so?

--The boss wants us to get out there and kill some people.

--Oh.

--And not sit around playing games.

--Which people?

--Like the Wilsons.

--Do what you must do, Jim.

--And there's a money pot, a bassinet filled with money for any Derring do. You can imagine the competition.

--Insinuate.

--Yeah.

--And talk to people. Make friends with people and get them on the run. Plus, the madwoman bounding around dropping her water all over.

--What do you mean by that?

--It's an image.

--I see.

--Gutless wonders.

--Who is that?

--They're interviewing Uncle John live. Look-- They keep on smiling. It could be the Black Death God forbid. Can't lose the Viewers. Don't upset the Viewers. They constitute the Republic.

--Right.

--We don't want to upset them. They're complicated. Hard to figure them out and follow through on the plan.

--I understand.

--That's what I'm saying.

--What's that?

--Separate them out. Snatch their kids.

--Who is this fellow Jim?

--Funny guy.

--Go on.

--He's made a fetish out of his self-image. A character he is playing. It's a form of schizophrenia in my view. So, he's like this weird performance of a person.

--Oh, my God.

--It's insecurity. It's like you don't feel sure if it's working. So, you step back and make proposals. James Dark. Jimmy Dark. It's the insecurity. There's nobody there essentially.

--Jim.

--He's dangerous.

--Fake, like he knows something.

--His wife 's the power in those operations. Martha. A control freak.

--What operations?

--Public safety. Communications.

--I see.

--So, he has his proposals.

--Don't let him speak into the Camera.

--I don't know if I can do that. My powers are limited by the constitution.

--And Judge Dingo is gone.

--Right.

--Keep an eye out. Maybe we kill this skunk. If we get a chance. If there's an opportunity.

--Will do.

--This is Uncle John talking to you direct. There is a woman running around town with her hair on fire. Stay home. Don't interfere. We've got the fire department out with the trucks and the hoses. Note that Judge Dingo's memorial has happened. Speaking of fire. We've got it on tape. You can't get drunk and throw a kerosene lamp into dry straw in an old barn, an antique old American barn. Was it intentional? We'll never know. He was a mountebank, a judge for show, for aggravating the common good. His fat simmered in the flames. Strike that. There'll be an election sometime soon. Do not gather. Stay home. We will call you when the time is established and then you can freely vote. This is not a dictatorship where one person decides who gets plenty and who gets none. We'll find a new Judge who can stand up to criticism and look good on your devices. Myself, I feel imperiled by technology. I could say more but I'll stop now. Thank you. Thank you very much. I just want to add right here – my niece, Miss. Sarah Wilson is irritating to some of you because of her independent spirit, her charm and her honest demeanor and her entertainment value, her joy in performance –you might deliberate on the envy factor in these proceedings, envy and the wish to harm, thank you. I'll say no more.

--What's this about Uncle John?

--He's fucking his niece.

--Come on.

--I saw the tape.

--Where does he get the balls?

--He appeared on TV and developed a following and there you have it. The Viewers decide.

--And his niece?

--She's quiet and docile.

--What do you think?

--I like her a lot. I like the way she walks. And that smile.

She is alluring.

--She is alluring. But can she perform? Under stress?

--I see. Can she get that asshole off her unless of course she enjoys the whole thing.

--You're jealous.

--I mean, who is this person who thinks he can make proposals -- how folks should live and die?

--He was elected by the viewers.

--I'm not jealous. I really don't care. I want to do my job is all.

--It's hard. Power is hard. Especially if you don't know what you're doing.

--Thank you for that.

--There will be snipers.

--I know.

--Keep your head down.

--Right.

--You are a brave fellow.

--Thank you, Martha.

--It's like opening a valve.

--Is what?

--I feel like I'm feeding off the atmosphere and the skin of the earth coming through me and down the drain and down into the earth again.

--What is the valve here?

--My mouth. I've stopped eating and drinking.

--It's not allowed.

--Fuck that. I'll fast for a day.

--Viewers think I'm screwing you.

--They can think what they want. Of course, they're not exactly thinking, are they?

--They are not.

--It's more like clack clackety clack.

--In addition to that, I am tired of the reproductive process.

--They're like ducks. Quack - quack.

--Okay. We need to decide. Evade persecution. The mountains perhaps.

--No.

--What then?

--Let's fight back. Call a hearing. You're entitled to a show. Am I right?

--You are.

--Let's give them a run for their money. I have a secret which is - my favorite boy was Jimmy Dark. Sweet and vulnerable and terrified. Tell that to the Committee.

--You see that we don't have much more to do, Jim. Keep your hat on.

--Remember I have a superior.

--Who is he? I'll tell you - he is interested in what his body gives off - his ears and his mouth and his sweat and his nose material and his armpits and his emotions. His faulty emanations. Doctor Dee. In private sitting around or watching TV.

--He's a God guy, we're working for the good of God.

--You can handle it.

--I'm no good being swept up by G-d. I mean what is that? I need to function like a man with a job, a man with a job to do.

--Stop doing that. You can't keep doing that.

--What?

--Stop doing it. Your hands are moving.

--Thank you.

--There's a woman floating around in the atmospheres high up in a balloon.

--Who is she?

--Don't know. She emerged on the screen day before yesterday. She's dropping mud bombs.

--Shoot her down of course.

--Of course.

--Whack her out of there and clear the flyways.

--Will do, Martha.

--Stop.

--What?

--The jiggling of your hands. It's driving me nuts. Stop it.

--You've heard of the Woman in the mountain, a thousand tentacles and five hundred mouths, a hundred eyes, of course.

--No.

--She eats lies.

--Don't tell me.

--Static.

--Ah.

--She sneaks in there and causes static.

--Let's get organized.

--Get up there with two-thousand-pound bunker bombs.

--Okay, Jim.

--Smithereens.

--Time to organize, name our people.

--Martha had some clues.

--You all right, Jim?

--Definitely, Dr. Dee.

--Avoid chaos.

--Of course.

--Factions appear. It's only normal. You must take a stand.

--Right.

--And at the same time hang onto power. Be brash have attitude. Look good on the screen.

--Now the Judge is down the laws are prickly.

--What do you mean?

--I might make a move. I might do a sideways two-step.Drop the charges and it goes away.

--I think it's a good move, drop charges and get out of the way.

--So do I.

--So, do I what?

--I understand your point of view, and where you're going with this.

--I'm not going anywhere.

--His reputation is ruined in any event. Old Jim.

--People get out there and grab it, get famous and make money.

--Entertainment has a value.

--What I'm saying. Here's Martha: It's a November afternoon in the city. The dryer in the garage thrums, cars go by. The maid makes incongruous noise in another room.

--Continue.

--He died right there in the hall; he was trying to put his pants on.

--No. He took a twelve gauge to his mouth. Blew his brains out.

--Well. It depends on how you see things. We're not all the same mind.

--There's an insurance issue and a criminal issue here.

--Let's get this straight. He just died. Nobody killed him, nobody cried, he just died.

--That's not what I heard.

--What did you hear?

--He went on a rally tour and busted his chops. Tongue out, eyes bulged, hair fell out, veins popped, and he dropped dead right there on stage, a hundred people clapping their hands. They applauded as he stood there dead. An ambulance came and they chanted his name. The President's. We don't speak his name no more out of decency and respect.

--And the Wilsons?

--I have not forgot the Wilsons. They are hunkered down in Middletown.

--Oh, for G-d's sake.

--What?

--The inveterate rhyming. What's wrong with you?

--I had wonderful teachers in English class.

--Okay.

--Fine men who towed the line.

--I'm talking flesh and blood right now, not English bullshit. Blood and entrails and brains.

--Right.

--Set up a shoot and we'll take care of business.

--Will do.

--Use good people, ones who won't faint or lose their bowels. This country is going to the dogs.

--Your Uncle John?

--Signals me.

--How so?

--By how much he leaves on his plate. Yes or no. Go or stay.

--You'll be offstage as it were, off screen as well.

--That's the deal.

--And then you run.

--Then I run. And I have a mile head start.

--That so?

--It's in the books.

--Will you regret your life?

--No.

--Remorse?

--No, I enjoyed myself in hell. Hard to do, eh? I enjoyed my body to its full and I kept it pure as heaven; whatever people mumble in the dark of their stupidity and their cowardice. Creepy minds scuttling about or glued to their screens.

--We are not mountebanks like you and your family. And now what will they do under the circumstances?

--They'll disperse. The mountains and the sea. I to a forest glen.

--Somewhere the grinding of a motor endlessly grinding and a plane in the sky roaring.

--Okay.

--Looks like rain to me I can smell it.

-- Okay.

--And the quest. Let's get down to it.

--Setting the scene. Late afternoon in the city. Longing for rain.

--Okay.

--We attacked in force and the line of force concludes the issue.

--Wait a minute.

--What?

--What did you say? I have no idea what you're talking about.

--What?

--You said "quest."

--You are one dumb fuck. You must think Jews have artillery on the moon.

--I do not.

--Aimed our way.

--No, but you must keep an eye out.

--Start looking for a job. On a farm maybe.

--Yes, sir.

--Onward.

--The Wilsons put up a fight in the court of public opinion.

--The verdict?

--Sarah gets to make a run for it. The family will receive boats and camping equipment. Funds to be verified by the Jury.

--A catastrophe for Jimmy Dark. And Martha?

--Someone in her camp denounced her.

--Jealousy no doubt.

--No doubt.

--Dolores.

--A co-conspirator.

--Sadly, sadly.

--Made an entire B movie out of it, a noir, double crosses, fake identity, the lot.

--The Viewers will do that sort of thing, spread lies and back stab. I remember one fellow in the department. Like Jimmy. Thought he was smarter than everyone else.

--We can't have that.

--Henpecked fellow. His family were high-end producers.

--We hung him in the plaza at dawn. Left the Camera on him for twenty-four hours.

--I remember. Do it for Dolores, too.

--It's done. We buried her alive on the high plains. Camera there for the end.

--You know, the things people will do on TV. It's astonishing.

--You can't be sure of the species anymore.

--I didn't expect a thunderclap, an earthquake or hurricane when Jimbo died, but I thought a proper mourning was his due. He gave his life for this society.

--What did he do?

--Come on. He kept the streets clean. He enforced the law. What more do you want from a person? Today? He had his faults. Perhaps I over-bearded him. Made demands. He tried. Kept his dignity. Was able to stand there as I yelled. Kept his composure. Just barely. We went for counseling, and he cried for an hour. One hour straight. No pause.

--What will you do now, Martha?

--And his endlessly moving hands.

--What will you do?

--I'll stay on. I'll maintain. I have my slots, my social media, and I'll make an appearance here and there. And I'll keep an eye out. People who sneak in. People who don't belong, like the Wilsons. Others. We've only cracked the nut. There's more to go. Meat and bones. Concentration camps. Wire.

--Thank you.

--You bet.

--Thank you.

--The time will come, you know, high walls and machine guns. Arrows. Viruses and war. A higher vigilance for all.

--Thanks, again.

--No problem. Live long and prosper.

--Let's go my dear, the hounds are howling.

**End No Play**