Male dramatic

**Foreskin** from Greg McGee’s *Foreskin’s Lament*

**Time:** Saturday night

**Location:** a veranda outside Larry’s house.

**Foreskin** is a university student and fullback on the local rugby team. He has a more delicate physique than other team members but is nonetheless athletic. In this excerpt from the play’s second act, the team is celebrating the day’s victory at an increasingly drunken after-match function. Meanwhile their captain Ken is in hospital in a coma after being injured in the game. While the others assume the injury was a result of opposition foul play, Foreskin alone saw his ambitious team member, Clean, deliver the kick to Ken’s head that rendered him unfit to play, thereby ensuring Clean of the captaincy. At the climax of the party the increasingly angry and frustrated Foreskin hears that Ken has died as a result of his injuries.

Foreskin’s monologue is initially addressed to Clean and their coach Tupper, but is progressively delivered directly to the audience. It is the last speech of the play, summing up Foreskin’s mounting disillusionment, sorrow, and frustration with the violence that pervades the game. This excerpt has been abridged.

**FORESKIN:**

Gentlemen. Lads. Boys. Unaccustomed as I am to the customs here, unaccustomed as I am to the small ethics of the situation, or to death, dying, obituaries, eulogies, wakes, kicks, comas or … dear, dear friends – there, I’ve said it plain enough. He’s dead plain enough, Ken. And that ought to be a finish, an end to it, surely. But I’m unaccustomed to leaving questions unasked – I’ve never
measured my questions by the possibility of answers. So I ask: why? Why? Oh, in the asking I realise that I’m putting a dash after his death, making a pathetic demand for continuity in place of the natural void. I’m sorry, almost. I’m so unaccustomed to being … unaccustomed. I suppose we really ought to do this right: sing ‘For He’s a Jolly Good Fellow’ and ‘It’s the way we do it in the army, the navy and on the football field’ – he was a jolly good fellow. Ask the lads, the boys, to form a ruck at the side of his grave, rake earth over him with their sprigs, make a wreath of dirty laces, and ask the ladies to bring a tear – would that I could, but like most of you, us, we were taught not to cry a vale of tears ago. We’ll thank the referee, or the god almighty, he might have made a bad fist of it, we can understand some of his decisions, but, lord, it’s a tough game, a game still, for men, for men called boys.

I was born of the same mother as you – all! I was party of a whole generation that grew up on wintry mornings running from between mum’s warm coat ends on to the dewy green fields that seemed as vast as the Russian steppes. And we’d swarm, this way and that, the ball a nominal focus, and the rows of earnest parents at our sidelines, having no idea how to score, how to win, or lose, or even which way to run if we got the ball, except away … from all the attention. But even then, ambition wasn’t far away, we could feel it rising in steam-breath from the screaming side-line mouths – Kill him!

http://www.tki.org.nz/r/arts/drama/nzmonologues/index_e.php
There were times of closeness, father and son, brother and weary brother, waking very early on cold mornings, huddling together under a blanket in front of a wireless waiting for it … wait for it, wait for it! – and for a whole generation god was only twice as high as the posts.

Then, later, a lot older, slower, more in need, standing on the bare boards in cigarette smoke, a cold sausage roll in one hand and a warm jug of beer in the other, listening once again for one for the ref and one for the ladies' plates. And an arthritic future to look forward to in the myths of old, criticisms of new; while the nectar flowed till you could almost see the reflection of your youth in its dregs … passing … passing.

I know the lore. I know the catechism. It's funny. I look at you all. I was born of the same mothers as you. And now … I'm wondering what happened after that. Why am I so … unaccustomed?

Oh, I escaped from all that – I think that's probably where I left you. I went from here and wandered … I seem to have wandered drunken through that life, sometimes vital and frothy as a jug, sometimes slack-jawed and despondent, sometimes almost … original! Tortilla-flatted in the university ghetto; winoed the night under cherry trees too cold to blossom, butch cassidy bi-cycled buxom blonde Bergen birds … and, intellectually … awakened – bellowed at, barthed, pynched on, covered into submission

my words

http://www.tki.org.nz/r/arts/drama/nzmonologues/index_e.php
my life
parenthesised.
Calvined at conception.
A press-ganged preterite
what could I possibly say that was original
write that was not already Khayamed
pray that was not already pregato
breathe that was not already oxidized
think or shrink that was not thurbered vonnegutted
a perelmaned pun
behanned and bowied
bergered goebelled and
stymied Stanley
kubricked in kinky –
my violent reaction already
slow motion peckinpahed.
Oh yes, there was the option –
withdrawal to burroughs
garboed in solitude
rasputined into perversity
heroined insularly
pneumatically welched and squelched in water pipes
kerouacked into speed
keseyed into acid
rubined into protest
cleavered
luthered
black-mailered into mystical honesty!
But never, ever, blessed with the absence of resonance –
someone else’s naturally.
Always the other
where the hell was I?

http://www.tki.org.nz/r/arts/drama/nzmonologues/index_e.php
Ah, but I came back.
I think you saw me, playing fullback I was,
a rugby player of some small note
pirouetting upon the green sward
parading all those vanities –
adidas boots in yellow day-glo insets,
candy-striped socks, rippling quads
being smitten hip and thigh
believing the lie
doing the osteo crunch!

_Smacks fist into palm and stamps foot on floor on “crunch”._

Being bokked
scrummed rucked mauled hooked jinked
cauliflowered around the ears
skinnered on the knees
brained on tremain
DBed and chocolate wheaten beaten
for our own god whose own we were.
And now the dance is done.
I’m hanging up my boots – whaddarya?
kicking for touch – whaddarya?
chucking it in – whaddarya?
kicking it in the guts
shimmying away on the blind-side
just … couldn’t … hack it.

_Vicious racking movement with his foot._

Can’t play the game.
Can’t play the game.
or anymore wear the one dimensional mask

http://www.tki.org.nz/r/arts/drama/nzmonologues/index_e.php
for the morons’ Mardi Gras
where they ask you whaddarya
but really, really don’t want to know.
Well.
Why?
What are you?
Mm?
Eh?
Whaddarya?
Whaddarya?
Whaddarya?
Whaddarya?
Whaddarya?
Whaddarya?

Quick blackout.

Commentary

Considered one of the contemporary classics of New Zealand theatre writing, *Foreskin’s Lament* was first performed a year before the notorious and contentious 1981 Springbok Rugby Tour of New Zealand that sparked widespread protests and divisions.

The play went on to be performed throughout the country to glowing reviews and packed houses and was widely appreciated as much by lovers of rugby as by lovers of theatre. It was a popular and critical success, although different audiences may well have appreciated it for differing reasons.

The first half of the play (set in the locker room) gave audiences a first-hand, no-holds-barred glimpse into the world of small-town rugby. The language, nudity, and sheer physicality of the play had an immediacy that resonated with audiences throughout the country. The events of the play – the inadvertent
killing of one player by another in an attempt to win his captaincy – were based on a true events and the play was shocking in its day for its exposure of rugby violence and for its social commentary.