

SHORTHANDLED

A Ladies Game

By Michael Grant



Dedicated to the memory of Sue Parr

A true fighter

A true lady

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Cast

All the characters are 45 to 55 unless specifically noted.

PADS: The goalie and effective captain of the team. Pads is unmarried and has a secret that she isn't sharing with everyone.

SPARKS: Sparks, the mother of three teenage boys, is a little out of shape. She is also Pads' confidante.

FITZY: Fitzzy is married with several children. Currently she has her in-laws living with her and that's not going so well.

AWOL: Right winger for the team, Awol is always late. She is also socially awkward with questionable morals and is known to smoke a bit – and we don't mean tobacco.

WELLER: Weller married money and has the best of everything. The others are a little jealous.

ENDER: Ender is well kept and in excellent condition. She is confident and competitive – maybe overly competitive.

SUDS: Suds is a police officer. She also has a bit of a drinking problem.

CANDY/: The newest member of the team (35 to 45). She really doesn't know her place on the team yet and is having some family issues.

Shorthanded

A Ladies' Game

By Michael Grant

(As the curtain rises we see a dark arena dressing room. The entrance is USR. SR is the exit to the washroom and showers. There is a large plastic trash can down stage centre in the room. The walls are lined with wooden benches with a row of hooks above. There is a heating vent somewhere under the bench. Everything is worn from years of abuse and should have many beaten layers of paint on the walls and benches given the appearance of an old small town arena.)

PADS: *(entering in the dark carrying a goalie stick, shouting)* Give me victory, or give me death! *(Noticing the dark empty room.)* Ah, shit. *(She sets the stick against the wall, turns the lights on and exits and re-enters with her hockey bag and pads. She sets them down and sits on bench directly in front of the vent. She immediately feels the heat coming out of the vent. It is hot. She picks up her equipment and moves to another location in the room. She retrieves her stick and looks around to confirm she's alone. She picks up the trash can and moves it onto the bench. She retrieves her stick and begins to re-enact a past hockey moment as she also announces the play. During which Sparks enters and watches unseen.)* Here it is, OT at the Gold Medal game and Shannon Szabados is in net and some U.S. chick is flying down the left wing. Szabados readies herself. Yankee girl fakes the shot. Szabados almost goes for it, Yankee girl passes it across, Szabados slides across the crease, another Yankee girl one times it to the open corner. Szabados flashes the leather and robs her like the hydro company! *(Celebrating.)* Canada wins gold! Canada wins gold! *(Noticing Sparks, she stops immediately.)*

SPARKS: Hi.

PADS: Hi Sparks.

SPARKS: Canada won eh?

PADS: *(embarrassed)* Yeah, I guess.

SPARKS: Good thing we had Szabados.

PADS: *(even more)* Yeah, I guess.

SPARKS: You channeling Szabados tonight?

PADS: Yeah, I guess.

SPARKS: Shouldn't you be channelling Raty? Undefeated season, played in a pro men's league...

PADS: She's Finnish. (Mocks spitting on the floor.)

SPARKS: Good call. Stick with Szabados. How you feeling Pads?

PADS: Pretty good.

SPARKS: Pretty good?

PADS: I'm fine. (*Seeing Sparks about to sit in front of the vent,*) I wouldn't sit there.

SPARKS: Why not?

PADS: Eddie's cranked the furnace. When it kicks in, it's like a sauna by that vent.

SPARK: Oh. Thanks.

PADS: No problem. You got the ice?

SPARKS: As always.

PADS: Remember when we didn't have to sneak the beer in, just buy the arena dude off with a couple of cans?

SPARKS: You say that every week.

PADS: But it feels ridiculous, like we're back in high school sneaking it into the prom. (*She opens her bag to reveal a large cooler inside.*)

SPARKS: You never snuck booze into the prom, Pads! You were too worried about getting caught. I snuck it in for the both of us.

PADS: I was speaking metaphorically Sparks. Besides, I wasn't worried, I was your lookout.

SPARKS: Look out? Pads, you were thirty feet behind, pretending you didn't know me.

PADS: All part of the plan. I was undercover. Besides, I was fixing my hair.

SPARKS: Your hair was locked down so tight with gel you couldn't fix it with a pick axe.

PADS: True.

SPARKS: (*Handing her a bag of ice.*) Put the ice in the cooler.

(Pads starts to empty her old equipment that she's stuffed into the cooler, Sparks watches with some interest. Finally Pads removes an old and well used jill from the cooler.)

SPARKS: Nice.

PADS: What?

SPARKS: We're going to be drinking out of that later.

PADS: So?

SPARKS: So, do you really think that is the most hygienic place to store the old protector?

PADS: You don't have to drink any if you don't want to.

SPARKS: *(pondering this)* You have any contagious infections or anything?

PADS: Nothing that's been diagnosed.

SPARKS: I'm comfortable with that. *(Throwing an old hand towel at her)* But wipe it out first just to be safe.

PADS: Because this is the sign of sterile. *(She wipes out the inside of the cooler.)*

(Fitzy enters with a bag and stick.)

PADS: *(Placing the cooler downstage centre.)* Hey Fitzy.

SPARKS: Fitzy.

FITZY: Ladies.

SPARKS: How's Joshua's arm? Did he finally get the cast off?

FITZY : Finally. Yes

PADS: He'll be happy about that.

FITZY: Oh yeah, he can't wait to get to karate class tonight. Alex is walking him down.

PADS: What about the twins?

FITZY: His parents are putting them to bed.

SPARKS: The In-laws are still there?

FITZY: Yep.

SPARKS: Unbelievable!

PADS: How long have they been there?

FITZY: Three weeks.

PADS: Three weeks?!

SPARKS: I told you Fitzy, you have to lay the law down with Alex. That's no way to live, his mom and dad always there looking over your shoulder. You don't need that shit.

PADS: Don't they have their own house?

FITZY: Yeah, it's in Elliot Lake so they don't get to see the grandkids that often.

SPARKS: No one held a gun to their head and made them move to the black fly capital.

FITZY: It's good for the kids to spend time with their grandparents.

SPARKS: Yeah, but is it good for your marriage?

FITZY: We're fine.

PADS: Can't imagine going at it with old ma and pa on the pull out down the hall.

SPARKS: The only time you don't imagine going at it is when the batteries are charged.

PADS: *(sarcastically)* Ha ha.

FITZY: They're not on the pull out. They're in our bed.

SPARKS: What?!

FITZY: Yeah, we're on the pull out. His dad's sciatic started acting up

SPARKS/PADS: Shit!

FITZY: Tell me about it.

PADS: Oh, Fitz, I wouldn't sit there.

FITZY: What's that?

SPARKS: Nothing! *(Shooting Pads a knowing look.)* You make your doctor's appointment in time today?

FITZY: Just. Thanks for letting me have the afternoon off. I appreciate it.

SPARKS: No problem. How did it go?

FITZY: Well, he figures it's just a matter of time before menopause sets in.

SPARKS: It has to happen sometime I guess.

FITZY: Unfortunately.

PADS: You on "Beer Duty" tonight?

FITZY: *(Picking up hockey bag to display its lightness)* Nope.

SPARKS: I think it's the Rookie.

FITZY: We're in the seventh game of the finals. I think you can start calling her by her real name.

SPARKS: I guess.

(Long pause as Sparks and Pads ponder)

FITZY: It's Candy.

SPARKS: Candy!

PADS: I knew that!

SPARKS: Where in the hell is this Candy girl? I feel a need for a beer.

PADS: I say, let's save it for after the victory celebration. I say no beer or wine until we win this game.

SPARKS: Are you nuts?

PADS: Besides, I have something better *(She pulls a box out of Ferrero Rocher Chocolate Balls.)*

FITZY: Oh my God, I love the golden balls.

SPARKS: Every guy in town knows that Fitzzy. Pass them around, Pads.

PADS: Easy girl, we have to ration them. There are only 24 for the whole night.

SPARKS: Pads, I've known you since kindergarten. There is no way in hell you bought just one box. Cough it up. *(Pads sheepishly and slowly pulls a second box out of her bag. The others simply continue to stare. Reluctantly, Pads produces a third.)* Now pass them over here. I'll put them in the cooler before they melt. *(Pads reluctantly hands them over.)* We can eat these until the beer gets here.

PADS: Fine, but this is game seven of the finals! I'm not drinking until after the game. I want one hundred percent focus.

SPARKS: A hundred percent focus eh? Is that what you had last time we were in a game seven, Pads?

PADS: That was ringette not hockey!

SPARKS: And the ring was bigger, but you still found a way to let that one in.

PADS: Screw off!

FITZY: She's just messing with you Pads, ignore her.

SPARKS: Oh sure, ignore me, just don't ignore the small black puck this time.

PADS: That was over 20 years ago.

SPARKS: And the town hasn't seen any kind of championship since then. It's cursed. You cursed it!

FITZY: Could I have a Golden Ball?

PADS: The Curse? You're saying that's my fault?

SPARKS: No Pads, it's not. Just that one goal is.

PADS: You're a bitch! *(Exits to the bathroom)*

FITZY: That was a little off side don't ya think?

SPARKS: Just stoking the fire in her belly. Trust me, when she's got the fire in her eyes there's no one better in net, ringette or hockey. She's the best goalie this town ever produced, male or female. Trust me, I'm doing us all a service.

FITZY: But to bring up the goal? That's going to rattle her.

SPARKS: That's where we need her, on the edge. She knows I don't mean it really. It's all part of the "game".

(AWOL enters like an explosion with bag and stick in hand. She immediately rushes to get ready.)

AWOL: Shit! Shit! Shit! Sorry, Shit! Shit! Shit! I'll be ready in time! *(She quickly drops her pants then notices others)* Hey you guys aren't dressed yet.

SPARKS: Hell of an observation, AWOL.

AWOL: Where is everybody? The game should have started by now.

SPARKS: Not by my watch.

AWOL: What the hell is going on? Is the Olympia broke? I left my house ten minutes ago with only fifteen minutes till game time!

FITZY: The Olympia is fine. We've got half an hour yet.

AWOL: Really?

SPARKS: Yeah.

AWOL: Damn, I'm messed up! I could have sworn I was late! The clock on the wall at home said... then the one in the car... my cell phone...

SPARKS: You get some bad shit again?

AWOL: What? No, of course not...

PADS: *(Entering from bathroom)* Ah AWOL, I see you decided to show up on time.

AWOL: Ah, yeah.

PADS: I figured you might.

AWOL: What?

PADS: I ran into Bill today at the hardware store. After I made him adjust the clock in your truck, I told him to go home and turn all your clocks ahead by thirty minutes. The fact that you're here tells me he did.

AWOL: Why the hell...?

PADS: He's such a good boy.

AWOL: But...?

PADS: Game seven AWOL, All hands on deck. *(Moving her hands in front of her face and watching them as if stoned)* even the ones that leave cool vapor trails behind them, dude.

AWOL: Are you kidding?! I lost an hour's sleep.

PADS: But we've gained a right winger for the start of the game.

SPARKS: You can make it up tomorrow night. Pads' right, we need you here.

AWOL: Tomorrow night! Bill plays hockey. I'll have to watch Natalie.

SPARKS: She's sixteen, I think she can take care of herself while you nap.

AWOL: You have three teenage boys?

SPARKS: Yeah?

AWOL: And that is why I have to watch Natalie.

SPARKS: You're an idiot.

AWOL: And it's not just your three little peckers, it's every little pecker in town.

PADS: Whatever.

AWOL: I'm just saying I'm far too young and beautiful to be a grandmother.

FITZY: Wow! That is some good shit you have.

AWOL: I'll never tell. *(Noticing Pads getting dressed/undressed.)* Pads, you hitting the gym? You look like you've dropped a few.

PADS: Just eating better I guess.

AWOL: You got yourself a man you're dolling up for?

PADS: I don't need that headache.

AWOL: *(Going to cooler and opening it)* I'll drink to that. Hey, where the hell's the booze?

FITZY: Not here yet.

AWOL: Oh, chocolate. *(She takes one and eats.)* Who's the Booze Babe this week?

SPARKS: We think it's Candy.

AWOL: Who?

SPARKS: Candy.

AWOL: Who the hell is that?

FITZY: Rookie.

AWOL: That's her name? Candy?

PADS: Yeah.

AWOL: *(Pause)* You know, she doesn't look like a "Candy". Candy sounds like a stripper name. *(Mocking)* Alright gentlemen, put your hands together for Candy!

(All laugh)

FITZY: Actually....

SPARKS: What.....?

AWOL: *(Shocked.)* Nnnnooooo!

PADS: What are you saying?

FITZY: I'm not saying anything.

SPARKS: The hell you ain't. Spill it.

FITZY: It's nothing. Alex and I ran into her at the mall....

PADS: I've seen her there too. I think she works there.

FITZY: Anyway, Alex said that his friend saw her at the strip joint.

PADS: So, Alex's friend is the one who saw her at the strip joint? Not Alex? A likely story.

AWOL: Why is it always the friend and not the husband who does that kind of shit?

FITZY: Alex would never go to those places.

SPARKS: He has a pecker. Of course he'd go to those places.

AWOL: I don't care where Bill get's his appetite as long as he comes home to feast.

SPARKS: I'll drink to that.

AWOL: You can't. Candy isn't here yet.

PADS: Are you serious Fitzy? She's a stripper?

FITZY: That's what Alex says.

AWOL: I believe it.

PADS: Really?

AWOL: Sure, look at the tight little body on her. Hell, I'd even pay the cover charge to see that.

(Long uncomfortable pause)

SPARKS: You know AWOL, you really have an amazing ability to make a moment very awkward.

AWOL: I'm just saying, I'd pay to see that stuff!

FITZY: Wait 'til she spits out a couple of kids.

SPARKS: That'll be a game changer.

(All begin to open bags and begin getting dressed for the game. Weller enters. She is well dressed and well kept. She is carrying a new hockey bag which contains the newest and best equipment of the bunch was well as the newest and best stick. She carries a Starbucks coffee. The others notice and greet her with "Hey Weller", "G Day Weller" and "Wellsy")

WELLER: Ladies.

PADS: Weller, you made it back from Aspen?

WELLER: I did, but my luggage did not.

SPARKS: That sucks.

WELLER: Yeah, I'm forced to wear these rags.

(The others give each other a "look")

FITZY: That must be tough.

WELLER: I told Justin not to book with the low budget airline, but do you think he'd listen? Anything to save a buck.

SPARKS: Unbelievable.

FITZY: Doctors can be so cheap.

AWOL: You poor thing.

PADS: How was the trip? You actually stayed in Aspen?

WELLER: Yes. It was nice.

SPARKS: Isn't that the kind of place where the pretty people all hang out.

AWOL: Yeah, did you see anyone famous?

WELLER: I met Ryan Gosling. We took the lift together.

AWOL: No way!

FITZY: Really.

PADS: You gotta be kidding.

WELLER: Nope.

AWOL: Did you jump him?

WELLER: What?

AWOL: I would have thrown myself all over that big beautiful piece of man meat.

(Pause)

SPARKS: Again, awkward AWOL.

AWOL: Come on, you have to admit it. He's hot!

FITZY: I'd take a run at that.

PADS: He looked hot in that Deadpool suit.

AWOL: That was nothing! Did you see The Green Lantern? Not much imagination needed there.

WELLER: That wasn't him.

AWOL: The hottest Canadian ever!

PADS: I thought he looked better in the Wolverine movie than the Deadpool one.

AWOL: Oh yeah, more flesh is always better.

FITZY: I loved him in Scrubs!

SPARKS: That's old school.

WELLER: And not him.

FITZY: Did you see him in The Proposal?

AWOL: Definitely hot.

WELLER: And not him! Ryan Gosling. *(Pause.)* The Notebook? Drive? The Big Short?

(Long pause)

PADS: Nope.

AWOL: Is he hot?

WELLER: Most think so.

SPARKS: Canadian?

WELLER: Yeah.

AWOL: That's good enough for me. Give me a spring board 'cause that sounds like jumping material right there.

WELLER: It didn't really seem appropriate with the kids on the chair lift behind me.

AWOL: Are you kidding me? Did I never tell you about the time we were on a road trip and the kids fell asleep in the back seat?

PADS: No!

SPARKS: And let's keep it that way.

FITZY: You're disgusting AWOL.

AWOL: But it's a hell of a story. It includes a moose.

FITZY: Just stop!

PADS: Imagining the story is disturbing enough.

AWOL: Your loss.

WELLER: Hayley Wickenheiser sat at the table next to me for dinner one night.

PADS: Really?

SPARKS: No way.

WELLER: Yes way. She was there for a speaking engagement.

AWOL: Did you get her autograph?

WELLER: She didn't ask for mine, so why would I ask for hers?

PADS: Because she's Hayley friggin' Wickenheiser!

SPARKS: You at least took a selfie with her, right?

WELLER: Of course not. I'm not 14 years old.

PADS: Unbelievable!

AWOL: Hayley friggin' Wickenheiser right there beside you!

FITZY: And you just snubbed your nose at her.

WELLER: Who said I snubbed her?

AWOL: You didn't ask for an autograph!

WELLER: No I didn't.

SPARKS: Then you snubbed her.

PADS: You snub everybody.

WELLER: No I don't.

AWOL: You snubbed me outside the bistro last week.

WELLER: OK, I'll admit I snubbed you. But can anyone blame me? I was with girls from the Country Club.

PADS: What's that have to do with anything?

SPARKS: *(In an English accent.)* Out on the town with the high society ladies, were you?

WELLER: Forget it. I didn't snub her. I asked her how her dinner was.

SPARKS: No way!

PADS: You spoke to her?

FITZY: What did she say?

WELLER: That her dinner was excellent.

AWOL: Amazing!

SPARKS: Incredible.

AWOL: What did she eat?

WELLER: Pot-au-feu

AWOL: A pot of what?

WELLER: Pot-au-feu.

AWOL: A few what?

WELLER: It's a French Stew.

AWOL: Then why didn't you just say that?

WELLER: Never mind. You wouldn't like it, it's not microwavable.

AWOL: Hey, I can cook.

WELLER: Kraft Dinner and hot dogs is not considered cooking.

AWOL: You're a boob.

PADS: But a fancy fed Boob.

WELLER: Unlike you Pads, you're simply a well fed boob.

SPARKS: Screw you!

(Ender and Suds enter. They both carry bags and sticks. Ender's is well kept and in excellent condition. She is a tall, confident and competitive in her mid-forties. Suds is shorter, a good looking woman in good physical health and seems to always have a smile on her face. She seems to always be looking for a good time or a good laugh.)

SUDS: Easy girls. Do I have to call the paddy wagon before the game even starts?

PADS: We're fine Officer Suds.

FITZY: You may want to have it on stand-by. Weller's in a mood.

WELLER: I wasn't 'til I got here.

SPARKS: The airline lost her guchi wardrobe.

AWOL: She's forced to wear her Alfred Sung collection.

ENDER: The poor thing.

WELLER: Bite me.

ENDER: Good evening to you too. You gals ready? (*Ominously.*) Game seven.

(All respond with less than excited "You bet", "Oh yeah", "Bring it on" and such.)

SUDS: (*Over exorbitant.*) Let's bring the Cup home girls!

SPARKS: Easy Suds, I don't think it's a cup, just a trophy.

SUDS: Can I drink out of it?

SPARKS: If anyone could find a way, it's you.

ENDER: You ready Pads?

PADS: Yeah.

ENDER: You sure?

PADS: Yeah, yeah, I'm sure. (*Ender stands over her watching.*) What?

ENDER: We don't want another repeat Pads.

PADS: Go to Hell! That was over twenty years ago.

ENDER: I'm just making sure.

PADS: Get over it, all of you! Are your lives that pathetic that all you think about is losing one ringette championship twenty years ago?! Move on for crying out loud! Our lives didn't end when we lost that game.

ENDER: "We" didn't lose that game.

PADS: I know, I know, you didn't lose it. I did. I cursed the town. Well you sure as hell didn't win it did you, you arrogant mouth breather? How many goals did you score eh? Nowhere near the amount of offsides you had.

ENDER: Piss off Pads.

PADS: Come on little Miss MVP, how many?

SUDS: Take it easy girls.

FITZY: Yeah, come on, don't do this.

PADS: This is absolutely ridiculous!

(She slams down the equipment she's holding and storms out of the room. There is a long pause as everyone considers what has transpired and wondering if they'll have a goalie for the game.)

FITZY: You had to pick at that scab didn't you Ender?

ENDER: Pads knows I don't mean anything by it. I'm just making sure her head is in the game.

FITZY: Her head may be in the game but her ass is in her car driving home!

ENDER: Pads won't leave.

SUDS: I hope you're right.

ENDER: I am.

SUDS: You'd better be, otherwise you're wearing that gear.

ENDER: Sparks can wear it. She's closer to Pad's size.

SPARKS: You know Ender, it never ceases to amaze me how quickly you can piss a person off.

ENDER: You know the funny thing. My first husband said the same thing.

SUDS: *(At cooler)* Hey, where's the booze?

FITZY: It's not here yet.

SPARKS: But there's chocolate.

PADS: You're giving it all away!

SUDS: What!

AWOL: She brought Gold Balls!

SUDS: Nice! *(She takes two and gives one to Ender.)*

ENDER: Who the hell is on Booze Duty?

SPARKS: Candy is.

ENDER: Who?

SPARKS: *(Proudly.)* Candy... Rookie.

ENDER: That's her name? Candy?

SPARKS: Yep.

ENDER: Who knew?

AWOL: See I told you.

SUDS: You didn't know her name?

ENDER: Nope.

SUDS: I saw her husband this morning at the beer store.

SPARKS: *(Proudly.)* Ty.

SUDS: What's that?

SPARKS: That's his name, Ty.

SUDS: Yeah, Ty.

SPARKS: He's on leave.

SUDS: What?

SPARKS: From the military.

WELLER: Whatever, what were you doing at the beer store? I thought you were working.

SUDS: We had a D and D there.

SPARKS: D and D?

SUDS: Drunk and Disorderly.

ENDER: Doesn't that happen after a trip to the Beer Store?

SUDS: You'd be surprised.