

**SUSPENSE: "THE GAME"**

**CAST:**

NETWORK ANNCR

ANNOUNCER (A.K.A. JOHN DEHNER)

PENN: SAM EDWARDS

RED: GIL STRATTON, JR.

HERB ELLIS, DIRECTOR

KEYBOARDIST--ESTHER GETTY

MUSIC --TENDS TO BE DISCORDANT, ON EDGE

FX:2 BELLS

NETWORK ANNCR:And now... tonight's presentation of radio's outstanding theatre of thrills... "SUSPENSE".

FX:2 BELLS

NETWORK ANNCR:Tonight the story of two young men and a frightening dare. We call it "The Game". So now, starring Sam Edwards and Gill Stratton, Jr. here is tonight's Suspense play, "The Game".

MUSIC, UNDER

ANNOUNCER:There were two of them. They stood on the corner of Main and Elm, leaning back against the wall, indolent. The summer sun warm, bringing to them the stringent odor of soft tar in the cracks of the sidewalk. It was two o'clock by the hands of the jeweler's clock a few doors down the street, and it was at 2 o'clock quite innocently, at first, that the dreadful game began.

MUSIC OUT

FX:TRAFFIC NOISES

RED:What do you wanna do, Penn?

PENN:I dunno. You?

RED:I dunno.

PENN:I guess we could have a couple of games of ping pong. You got the dough?

FXCLOCK STRIKING TWO IN BACKGROUND, SOUND OF SEVERAL COINS IN HAND

RED:40cents.

PENN:We could, Red.

RED:I dunno. Nah, I don't feel like it.

PENN:OK. Hey, we could shoot some pool?

RED:What's the matter? You always want to play games. Kid stuff. You know somethin'?

PENN:What?

RED:I feel like gettin' drunk.

PENN:You're kiddin'!

RED:I'm not kiddin'.

PENN:You're kiddin'. What do you want to get drunk for?

RED:For fun.

PENN:Some fun.

RED:My folks won't be back till later tonight.

PENN:Uh uh. Not me, boy, not me.

RED:I can get hold of a bottle.

PENN:Not me, boy.

RED:Chicken?

PENN:That's me.

RED:OK. So long.

PENN:Hey, Red, wait a minute. You kiddin'? What'd you wanna do that for?

RED:You got any better ideas of what to do?

PENN:Nah, but...

RED:OK. I'll see ya.

FX:FOOTSTEPS UNDER

PENN:You know what would happen if they ever found out.

RED:They won't find out You can stay over my house tonight. Call your folks and nobody'll know.

PENN:It's crazy

FX:CAR PASSING

RED:No, it isn't. Don't you ever want to do somethin' different? We're not kids. Maybe you are. Maybe you need a couple of drinks to grow up.

PENN:Big man. I'm two weeks older than you.

RED:Not up here, boy, not up here.

FX:CAR HORN HONKING

PENN:Nuts to you.

FX:MUSIC INTERLUDE - UNDER ANNOUNCER

ANNOUNCER:Anyway, they walked slowly, carrying the idea to a white house with grey trim. The house, well lived in; empty now but waiting. And the boys went in, upstairs, and to a room papered with ships and pennants, signs and maps. The one, Red, disappeared for a few minutes. The other tried to become interested in a book of fighting ships. He was afraid of what was to come. Knowing why, and not quite knowing.

MUSIC OUT

FX:FOOTSTEPS, DOOR OPEN, CLANKING BOTTLE, GLASSES

PENN:Is that your father's?

RED:No, the gardener hid it in the woodshed. I found it a couple of weeks ago. Hid it somewhere else. Boy, I bet that fractured him. (laughs) How'd you like it?

PENN:I don't care

RED:Straight?

PENN:Sure.

RED:Water chaser?

PENN:What about you?

RED:No water for me.

PENN:Same thing, then.

RED:Sit down, we'll talk.

FX:MUSIC UNDER ANNOUNCER

ANNOUNCER:They drank, and they didn't like it. But they'd started the game and they couldn't stop. A small clock with an owl front piece ticked above them, the eyes of the bird metronomically switching from side to side. A car passed occasionally, and there

was a tension until the sound of tire and engine faded away. It didn't take too long for the warmth to grow and the eyes to become hot, the tongue loose.

MUSIC OUT

FX:CLANKING GLASSES, LIQUID POURING, GLASS PUSHED ACROSS TABLE

PENN:Thanks. (GULPS) Boy. Not bad, huh?

RED:Feel pretty good?

PENN:Yeah, Pretty Good.

RED:Boy, Elaine. Wouldn't be bad havin' her up here, huh?

PENN:Yeah. Wouldn't be bad.

RED:Did you ever take her out?

PENN:Couple of times, I guess.

RED:All right, huh? Neck?

PENN:Nah, not much.

RED:Oh, I thought you two were like that. That's what I heard last term.

PENN:You kiddin'?

FX:BOTTLE PICKED UP, LIQUID POURED

RED:You know, You know what's the matter with you, Pen?

PENN:What?

RED:You're soft. I'm your friend, boy, I can tell ya - what the other guys say, think, ya know? Guts, boy, not all there, not enough. I'm your friend, Penny. I like ya, but you gotta have guts.

PENN:I've got guts.

RED:Not enough, and that's what all the guys think. Pen's OK, but kinda soft, ya know? Chicken.

PENN:Yeah?

RED:I'm tellin ya. I don't wanna be the pal of a guy who's soft. Ya gotta be hard, be like the other guys.

PENN:How do ya figure all this? Nobody asked ya. I know what I am. I know. I'm not soft. I'm not chicken.

RED:Aw, you. You were afraid to get drunk with me.

PENN:I'm gettin' drunk with ya.

RED:Because you were afraid I'd think you were chicken, that's why. That's why.

PENN:You're crazy.

RED:I've seen ya afraid, Penny. I had to explain it to the guys.

PENN:When? When?

RED:That time we went shootin' ducks with your old man's shotgun. You were chicken then.

PENN:You're crazy.

RED:The guys thought you were. Afraid of the gun.

PENN:That's not chicken.

RED:That's what I told em. But I'm not sure.

PENN:Let's forget it.

RED:Uh uh. You can't run out on that, boy. I'm your friend, Pen. I'm tellin ya for your own good.

PENN:OK, OK. You've told me. I'm chicken, no guts. Forget it.

RED:Afraid of a gun. You and me could never go huntin' up in the mountains. I'll tell you that.

PENN:Cut it out.

RED:You are a kid. You're chicken.

FX:CHAIR SCRAPING THE FLOOR

PENN (angry):You wanna fight? Is that what you want? You wanna, cause if you do, I'm...

RED:What for? That doesn't mean anything. Kid stuff. I got a better idea. You wanna really do something? That will show it, boy, that will really show it.

PENN:Do what?

RED:Play a game. You like games. Real easy game to learn, nothin' to it. Here, have a drink. Sit down.

FX:SCRAPE OF CHAIR, AS PENN SITS.

PENN:Game?

RED:Uh hum. I read about it a while back. Russian Roulette.

PENN:Never heard of it. Some kind of gamblin'?

RED:I'll tell ya - 's real easy. First you get a gun--a revolver, Penny. Bullet gun.

PENN:So what?

RED:You take one bullet and you leave it in the gun, see? Then we take turns.

PENN:What kind of a crazy game is that?

RED:We take turns pointing at our heads and pulling the trigger. If nothin' happens to you, I take the gun, spin the cylinder and point it at my head and shoot.

PENN:You call that a game?

RED:Sure. See which one goes chicken first. You never know where the bullet is and if you spin the cylinder and the bullet comes up on your turn, blooie.

PENN:That's nuts.

RED:Well, in this book they went at it a long time and then one guy got like you'd get. He was chicken and he folded up.

PENN (angry):Listen, I'm sick of hearing you say that. I'm sick of it, you hear? You wanna know something? You'd get chicken before me. You.

RED:Ah, I wouldn't do it to you, Penn. Don't worry. It wouldn't be fair. Forget it.

PENN:Wait a minute, now. You started this. So go ahead and finish it. Your old man got a gun? Has he?

RED:Sure.

PENN:OK. You wanna be crazy, go ahead, get the gun. Go ahead. Well, go on. Get it. Let's start playing.

FX:MUSIC INTERLUDE

ANNOUNCER:Red smiled a smile of pity. With deliberate ease he sauntered from the room. Penn might have seen him stagger for a moment as he reached the door, but he wasn't looking. He was noticing for the first time his hands lying flattened on the table. Disassociated. And there was a scar on the right index finger. He'd got it when he'd cut himself 12 years before on his first borrowed Scout knife. Now, the scar, a memory on a trigger finger. He didn't look up again until Red came back with the gun.

MUSIC OUT

FX:STEPS - CHAIR SCRAPING ACROSS FLOOR

RED:Thirty-Eight, and that's the best gun. Wanna hold it?

PENN:No.

RED:(Snort) I figured you wouldn't. It's OK. We'll forget it.

PENN:Uhm mm. Go ahead - take out the bullets.

RED:OK. Take out five - leave one. Huh, Penny?

PENN:Yeah. Take out five - leave one.

FX:CYLINDER TURNING AND BULLETS HITTING TABLE ONE AT A TIME  
(CLOCK TICKING IN BACKGROUND)

RED:One bullet - for you or for me. OK?

PENN:OK.

FX:CYLINDER CLICK - GUN PLACED ON TABLE

MUSIC: (SINISTER MUSIC PLAYED UNDER ANNOUNCER)

ANNOUNCER:The gun. The gun rested muzzle to the wall in the center of the table bearing scratches made by a three-year-old in a forgotten moment of high experience. The boys sat opposite each other looking down at the gun. And the gun waited.

MUSIC OUT

FX:CLOCK TICKING

RED:You wanna go first?

PENN:Doesn't make any difference.

RED:Me, neither.

PENN:Flip a coin.

FX:RATTLE OF COINS

RED:OK. Call.

FX:COIN HITTING TABLE

PENN:Heads.

FX:COIN HITTING TABLE.

PENN:OK. I'll take the first shot.

FX:MUSIC UNDER ANNOUNCER

ANNOUNCER:There was a ceremony to the game, then. Sportsmanship with a toss of the coin, a drink of whiskey, a glass put down, and next to come the lifting of the gun. Penn stared at it and thought how he had best reach out to take the handle. Gracefully, practically. He'd never held a revolver in his life.

MUSIC OUT

FX:CLOCK TICKING (SOUND OF GUN MOVING ON TABLE)

PENN:I've got to spin the cylinder?

RED:Yeah.

FX:CLICK

RED:Naw, naw. The other way.

FX:CYLINDER TURNING

RED:Now.

PENN:What's the odds the bullet comes up when I shoot?

RED:I dunno. One in six, I guess. I dunno.

FX:CYLINDER SPINS

PENN:OK.

SINISTER MUSIC

ANNOUNCER:He was a careful boy. And so he didn't put the muzzle to his head immediately. At this point of the game there was a numbness which did not allow for speculation of pain, mother, father. Rather he was surprised by the weight of the gun. Physical oneness with it lying in his hand. He was afraid of it and fascinated in his fear. Red watched, his mouth open a little, eyes reddened with drinking, but bright, watchful. Seeing the friend of his youth slowly raise the gun, unsteady and awkwardly turning the barrel to his head. He wet his lips and waited.

MUSIC OUT

FX:CLOCK TICKING (LOUD)

FX:CLICK OF TRIGGER.

PENN:(Deep sigh.)

RED:It didn't go off.

PENN:No.

RED:How'd it feel, Penn?

PENN:I don't know.

RED:Were you scared?

FX:TRAIN WHISTLE IN BACKGROUND



PENN:I guess so. I don't know.

RED:You sure looked scared. Real white. I didn't think you'd do it. You took long enough.

PENN:You're doing a lot of talkin'. You scared? It's your turn.

RED:Gimme the gun.

FX:GUN PUT ON TABLE, SLIDING ACROSS.

RED:Boy, that's a real gun. Remember when we were kids? Cap pistols. Bet you never thought we'd be doing this.

PENN:No.

RED:Ok. (slight sigh) My turn.

FX:CYLINDER TURNING

RED:Where are ya, baby, where are ya?

(FX:cylinder turning)

Wanna make a side bet on this one? (laughs).

PENN:Who's gonna pay me if you lose?

RED:(Laughter)

(FX:cylinder turning)

Watch, Penn. When you make up your mind to do it, do it quick see, like this.

FX:PULL TRIGGER

RED:(Heavy breathing) Now, you sweat it out.

FX:SLIDES GUN ACROSS TABLE

RED:Pretty good game, huh? I'll make you one bet, though.

PENN:What's that?

RED:You crack before I do.

PENN:You're nuts.

RED:Buck? A buck?

PENN:Sure, a buck.

MUSIC UNDER

ANNOUNCER:The game had taken another turn. It presented an added incentive to win. A dollar bet that one boy would be a coward. A boy would lose his nerve, wouldn't have the guts to take another chance at blowing his brains out. Good bet that. The room was

too warm and outside the middle afternoon sun blazed down hot on the heavy sycamore trees, dusty and still. A twelve-year-old passed by on the street, whistling tunelessly on his way to the drugstore for a soda.

MUSIC OUT

FX:WHISTLING (CLOCK TICKING)

RED:Go ahead. Or do you want to quit now?

PENN:I'll do it. Don't worry. I'm not quittin'.

FX:CYLINDER TURNING

RED:Boy, I'll say this for ya. For a guy whose as scared of guns as you, you're doin' alright. It gets tougher now, though. It's all in the luck ya know. Ya lucky, Penn?

PENN:Yeah. I'm lucky.

RED:That's good. Maybe you need another drink.

FX:CAR DRIVING BY

PENN:No, I don't want any more.

RED:OK. Well?

PENN:Red?

RED:What's the idea, huh? What are ya pointin' it at me for?

PENN:Ya scared?

RED:No, I'm not scared.

PENN:Maybe we should play it this way for a while. I shoot at you and you shoot at me.

RED:That's not the game!

PENN:Why not? Same thing.

RED:No! That'd be like murder. You wanna play, you play it right.

PENN:Who says the way we been playin' is right?

RED:Oh, I get it. You're trying to get outta taking your next shot.

PENN:I'm askin ya. Who says the way we're playin' is right?

RED:Listen. Will ya quit pointin' it at me?

PENN: (getting angry) What difference does it make? Just tell me that.

RED:(angry) It's the difference we're playing Russian Roulette. That's the difference. If you wanna quit, say so.

PENN (angry):I'm not quitting.

RED:OK then take your shot.

MUSIC UNDER

ANNOUNCER:It was a thing to be well considered on the part of Red. The present abstract quality of self-destruction was one thing. But a gun pointed at him, a gun held in another hand--this was not a game of his choosing and he would have no part of it. Suddenly he knew himself to be sober. Terribly sober and because of this and the fact that the game had mushroomed beyond his understanding. There was no stopping the play. He knew that Penn was sober too and as from a great distance he saw his friend raise the gun, but steadily this time. Pressure whitening the index finger, the muzzle touching just at a pulsing vein he had noticed in Penn's temple.

MUSIC OUT

FX:TICKING CLOCK

FX::CLICK ON EMPTY CYLINDER.

RED:You're a lucky guy.

FX:GUN DOWN ON TABLE - SLIDING ACROSS

PENN:Yeah.

RED:I'm lucky too.

PENN:You'd better be.

FX:MUSIC LOUDLY DISCORDANT, UNDER, AS RED IS ON FILTERED MIC

RED:(on filtered mic, talking to himself) My turn now. My turn. Why doesn't he quit? He's never had guts. Why didn't he quit? Maybe he's so drunk he hasn't got the sense.

FX:CYLINDER TURNING

RED: (FILTERED MIC) No, he's not drunk. Why didn't he quit? It's my turn. I gotta do it. He'd tell everyone if I didn't. He'd tell 'em all, and they'd laugh.

FX:CYLINDER TURNING

RED:(FILTERED MIC) I don't know. It feels - it feels like the bullet might be comin' up. Not yet Penn, not yet.

FX:CYLINDER TURNING

RED:(FILTERED MIC)I gotta smile like I was enjoyin' it.

MUSIC OUT

FX:CYLINDER TURNING

RED:(REGULAR MIC) This'll be somethin' to tell our kids, huh, Penn?

PENN:Yeah, sure will. How long you gonna take?

RED:What's the matter? Make you nervous?

PENN:Why should I be nervous? It's your shot.

RED: (nervous) OK - shuttup, huh?

FX:CYLINDER TURNING

MUSIC, DISCORDANT, UNDER, AS PENN IS ON FILTERED MIC

PENN:(FILTERED MIC, to himself) He's scared. Red's scared. He doesn't wanna do it. I'm not the only one. All his big talk, he's no more than me. All that big talk. Look at him. He's scared!

MUSIC--MORE HARMONIOUS, UNDER

ANNOUNCER:It was at that moment that Penn discovered this truth. That he knew if he wanted to, he could quit the game, and as he looked at Red, he became aware of a great anger that had no direction, no apparent reason, but it filled him and made him strong.

MUSIC OUT

PENN:Let's quit, Red.

RED:You're crazy.

PENN:I want to quit.

RED:Nuts to you, it's my shot.

PENN:I don't care, we're quittin'.

RED:You quit when it's your shot. I'll take care of myself.

FX:CHAIR SCRAPING ON THE FLOOR, AS PENN GETS UP

PENN:I'm tellin' ya, Red, put the gun down.

RED:Drop dead.

PENN:Put it down!

FX:SCUFFLING

RED:You're chicken!

PENN:Yeah?

FX:SCUFFLING - GRUNTS - THINGS FALLING, GLASS BREAKING

RED:I'll kill ya! I'll kill ya!

PENN:Oww.

FX:FIGHTING - PUNCHING, BOYS GASPING FOR AIR

FX:PHONE RINGING IN BACKGROUND

PENN:You better answer the phone.

FX:FOOTSTEPS.

RED (GASPING):Hello? (gasps) Oh, hello, Mom. Oh, fine. No, No, I'm with Penn. No, I'm fine. Oh, outta breath, we've been playing. Kinda rough, I guess. Oh, sure, Mom, everything's fine. OK. OK, Mom. Sure, Mom. (starts to sob) So long. (Crying)

MUSIC UNDER

ANNOUNCER:Red stood by the telephone for a long time and he cried as he hadn't cried for a long time. Penn stayed in the room. He felt it too. And his throat, the thickness, the tight-held tears. Neither boy knew what it was or why, and then, after a while, it was calm again. Red came back in.

MUSIC OUT

FX:FOOTSTEPS (CLOCK TICKING)

RED:That was Mom.

PENN:Oh?

RED:She said we could go to the tavern for dinner if you'd like, and charge it.

PENN:That'd be OK, Red.:Swell.

RED:Yeah. Guess we'd better clean up, huh?

PENN:Guess we'd better.

MUSIC UNDER

ANNOUNCER:They cleaned up, not saying much to each other. They felt very close, but were not able to express their closeness. Then there was a last thing to do and the last part of the game to be played. They had to know, so they walked to the edge of the town into a shallow ravine and Red took the gun from his pocket. He still had the shot he'd never fired at himself. He aimed at a half-burned tree stump, some thirty yards away and slowly began to squeeze the trigger.

MUSIC OUT

FX:BIRDS CHIRPING  
GUNSHOT - BIRDS CHIRPING.

FINALE MUSIC

MUSIC OUT

NETWORK ANNCR: Suspense! (MUSIC CHORD)- in which Sam Edwards and Gil Stratton, Jr. starred in tonight's presentation of "The Game" Next Tuesday, the story of a rehearsal and the performance of murder. We call it "The Cellar". That's next week on (MUSIC CHORD) SUSPENSE!

END MUSIC (MARCHING MUSIC)

NETWORK ANNCR: Suspense was produced by the Radio Enthusiasts of Puget Sound, and directed by Herb Ellis. Anthony Ellis wrote tonight's play. In tonight's cast was Sam Edwards as Penn and Gil Stratton, Jr. as Red; reprising their roles from the original production. Music by Esther Geddes. Also featured was \_\_\_\_\_. Sound effects by Ray Erlenborn. Technical engineering by Dave Dintenfass, Jay Wang, and Donald Zongker. The script was transcribed by Lynda Glaspey and Joy Jackson.

This is the CBS Radio Network.