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JUST A GAME

A TV SERIES

Created, Concived and Written by
Joseph Sharpe



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JUST A GAME

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DRAMATURGICAL SUPPORT
Grace Nettle

Letter from the

Writer

*We were the
the only 15
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world... we
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pressure
cooker*



Just a Game is a TV show that was conceived about 10 months ago, expanded from a short film script I wrote. It was born over a phone call to a friend, as we discussed our short film. I wanted to draw from my favourite parts of that script, whilst expanding the world into a story I loved and wanted to tell. The core concept of the show is drawn from my time on tour. On tour, there were 15 kids in the cast, and really, we were the only 15 kids

in the world. This strained our relationships with one another, and intensified every feeling; we lived in a pressure cooker. The show centres around 7 pre-professional tennis teens training in hopes of a career on the professional tennis circuit. The show blends teen-drama, sports, and psychological themes to create a compelling series. This book hopes to convey the unique visual style of the show, and a bit more about it.

Joseph Sharpe
CREATOR

An aerial photograph of a resort complex. The houses are white with prominent red roofs and blue accents. They are arranged on a hillside overlooking a beach and turquoise water. Several swimming pools are visible, some with lounge chairs. A winding path cuts through the lush greenery. The text 'The World' is overlaid in a white, elegant script font across the center of the image.

The World



Eden island is a man made paradise set on reclaimed coral reefs east of Mahe, the largest of 115 Seychelles islands. Eden Island was opened in 2008 and has become synonymous with wealth and luxury, whilst still feeling homely and never dystopian, which many luxury projects can.

I spent a great deal of my childhood in Eden. During 2020 I lived there for around 6 months, and spend my teen years in between England where I go to school and Seychelles where my mother lives. Seychelles has a small population, as does Eden. Whilst in reality there are a considerable amount of children on Eden, in our ever-so

fictionalised version of the island these teens are some of the only children there. A big part of my own experience on tour is that we were children in mainly adult spaces, and I want to replicate that feeling in the show. The world is clean and luxury juxtaposing the gritty tennis, and deep emotions of the characters.

Whilst the show is set on Eden, we will venture out throughout the series. In Seychelles there is a deep sentiment that Eden isn't the 'real' Seychelles. Which I partially agree with. We will see other parts of the beautiful country venturing out into the ocean and onto the mainland.



Tennis is not just a game (you see what I did there) It is a language. And our show is written in it.

Tennis

is

Art



At it's core tennis is a conversation... In Just a Game I want to manipulate the trajectories of games to illustrate how the human mind works.

Tennis is a game that deeply interests me. At it's core tennis is a conversation. Players hit a ball between one another as intellects throw around philosophical concepts, as teens throw around hate. Tennis is about chemistry. You stand facing your rival, yet tennis is a game of love, if you have no chemistry, no spark with the person opposite you, neither of you will play tennis. Instead you are simply hitting a ball across a net. There is a distinction.

In Just a Game I want to encapsulate tennis as an art form. I want to manipulate the trajectories of games to illustrate how the

human mind works. Because, as I have alluded to before, tennis is a reflection of life, tennis is art.

A key text in shaping my writing of the show is the book, 'The Inner Game of Tennis' By Timothy Gallwey. Within this formative text I learnt about the psyche of a tennis player, and how they think, feel and react to situations. Throughout the text it made me realise more and more how the game of tennis is the same as the game of life.

Like the show, tennis thrives on momentum shifts: long silences, sudden bursts of violence, slow builds toward devastating collapses.

One rally can feel endless, one mistake can flip everything. For the teens we follow, tennis is their identity, their future, and the arena where emotions surface. In tennis they are raw and exposed because tennis is intimate, dramatic, and cinematic: as is our show.

Art is subjective. Deeply subjective. However I think it is agreed that movies, and TV are forms of art, whilst commercial, they still hold value to society. When it comes to sport, the lines are more grey. Where does a sport stop and an art start? Is ballet a sport or an art, what about gymnastics? Football, now that's a sport, right? The dictionary defines art as

something that expresses imaginative or technical skill, emotional power, or conceptual ideas. And I think tennis does that. Tennis expresses human behavior in raw form, tennis is informed by the micro, unconscious and conscious decisions of the human brain. I think that is a 'conceptual idea'. In Just a Game we push tennis to the extremes to illustrate the extremes of human behaviour. Tennis is a tool in creating our art, tennis is our art. So is tennis art? You decide.

‘My show is on’

What I want you to feel watching *Just a Game*, and what it is about, as well as what it is *actually* about.



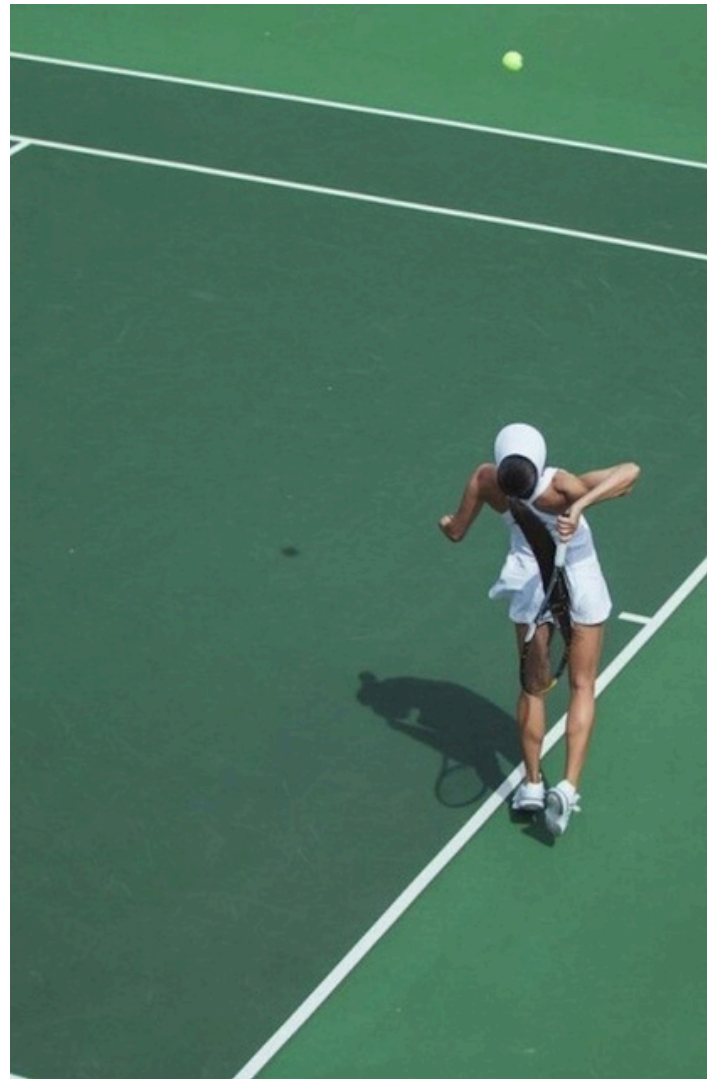
I think it's about time I told you what the series actually is.

'Just a Game' centers around a group of pre-professional tennis players at an elite tennis academy on a luxurious island in Seychelles. The show begins as teen tennis prodigy Stevie Tucker mysteriously returns to the island, after only 9 months on the junior professional tennis circuit. 'Just a Game' pieces together the clues, how have they become this way? What was the defining moment? Over the season secrets leak, loyalties fracture and each player is forced to confront their inner demons. We learn that Stevie's re-arrival is key to bringing forward the inner demons of the characters. The real

reason she returned reveals things no one dares to talk about and what it really costs to succeed. Who is an accomplice, who knew and hid it, and why?

The show is really a character study. On the island every triumph, secret, and betrayal happens under the gaze of the same seven faces. This forced intimacy creates a tension filled life, and show. Their world is self-contained, so every single thing is magnified. The characters all share in an internal isolation, yet appear to be surrounded by love and support. They all love tennis, it's the only thing they know. But secretly they seem to despise it in a

They all love tennis, it's the only thing they know. But secretly despise it, in a way. That is where we pick up from.



way. That is where we pick up from. Just a Game deals with gaps: between forward facing behaviour and internal conflict. Between love and hate for a sport. Between childhood and adulthood. We get to see these deeply flawed characters figure out life, and contemplate whether tennis is just a game, whether life is just a game. Stevie Tucker, Charlie Raye, Carlos Darlings, Taila Creek,

Georgia Reielle, Noah Tucker and Paige Dyers make up our ensemble cast. Their stories are individual, and represent very specific aspects of the story I aim to tell.

I want people to watch this show, and see them. And their feelings, and feel understood. Really I want them to sit down, in front of any sized screen, and say 'My show is on' I want them to feel like it is their show.



To be a part of this process was beyond eye opening. I was able to see Sharpe's mind at work and it is truly like no other.

Just a game was conceived by the brilliant mind of a close friend of mine, Joseph Sharpe. I have been able to see the script develop and to say I'm honoured to have been a part of this process would be an understatement. I was on the phone with Joseph when he first came up with the concept for Just a Game, and he frequently sent me drafts of scenes for feedback. He so kindly based the character of Stevie around me and I loved getting to

workshop different lines and aspects of her character with him. Joseph has always had a strong love and passion for Tennis, he often plays with family and it was only a matter of time before he used this passion to create the magnetic series that is 'Just A Game'. To be a part of this process was beyond eye opening. I was able to see Sharpe's mind at work and it is truly like no other. Joseph is inspirational,

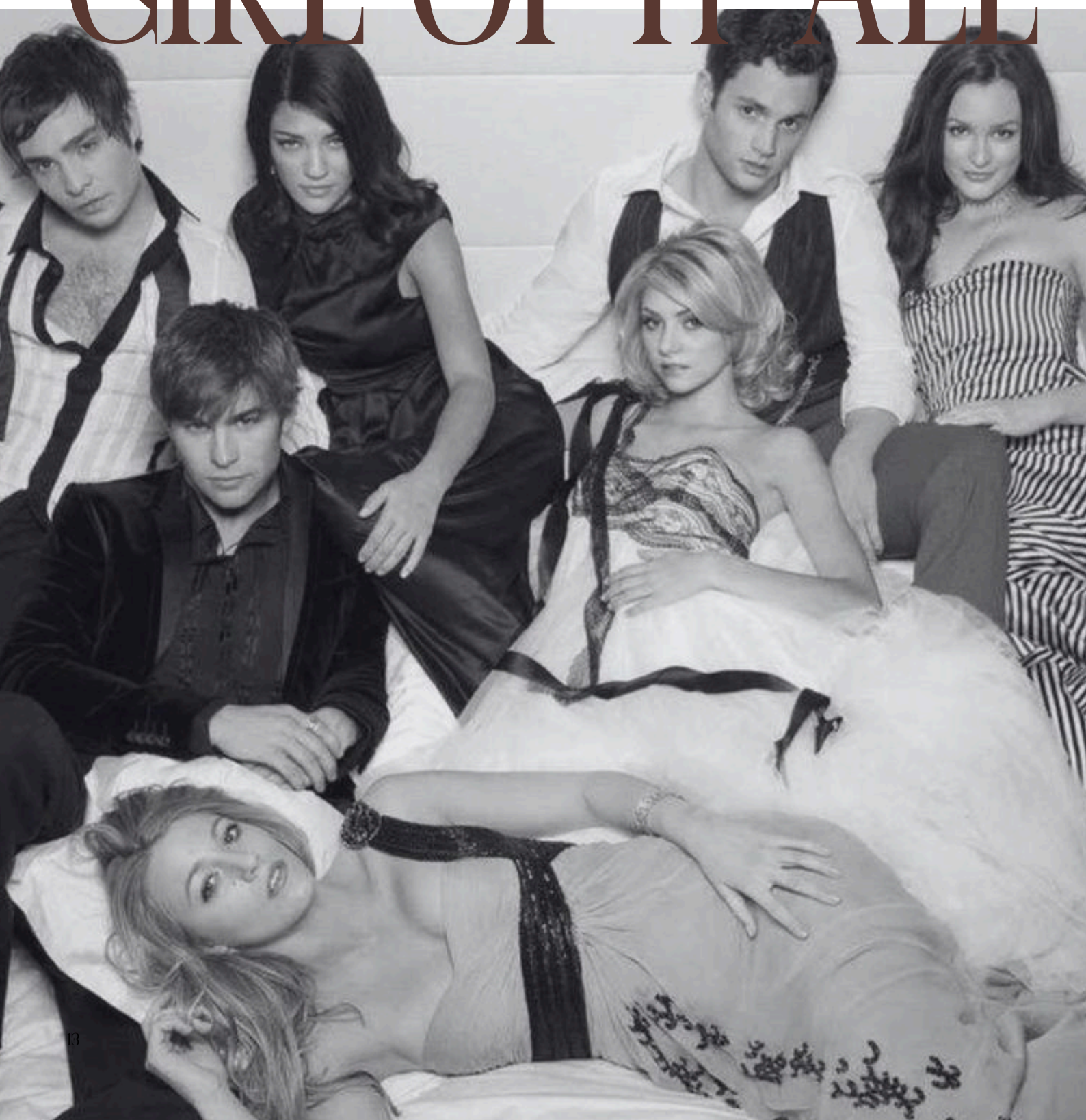
and I doubt this needs to be said as 'Just A Game' will soon speak for itself. To say I am so proud of my dear friend Joseph would not encapsulate how I really feel. I cannot wait for everyone to discover and love the most incredible, engaging series that is 'Just A Game'; It deserves the success it is destined to receive.

Grace Nettle

DRAMATURGICAL SUPPORT

The series' touchstone:

THE GOSSIP GIRL OF IT ALL



Look, I'm going to be upfront and anyone who reads the script, or watches the show is going to see it: there are significant parallels to the generational hit TV series, 'Gossip Girl'. I'm going to take the time here to explain why I will never deny them, why they exist and why Just a Game is still fundamentally different.

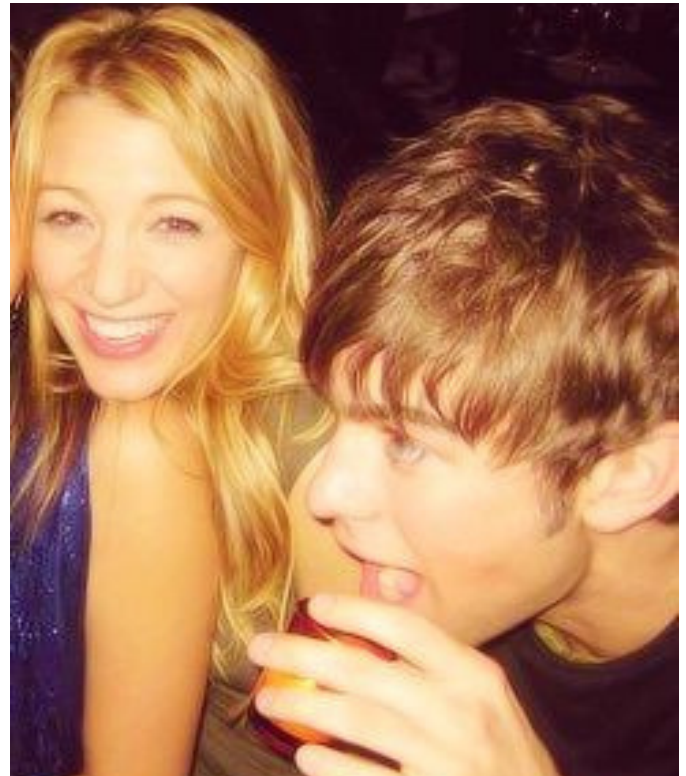
Gossip Girl has been the foundation for many of the teen dramas in our generation. It's concept is hooking, grabbing: it's no wonder it's been replicated in hundreds of different ways.

And that's the key word; different. Just a Game is a different interpretation of a format that has been popularised by Gossip Girl and reinvented by many.

Something that really drew me to Gossip Girl that I wanted to replicate in my show was how they made New York, and the Upper East Side feel. In their show the UES is clouded in glamour and the way the world feels is something I wanted to replicate, but with Eden Island and Seychelles. I want my audience to feel the same way about Eden that they do about Gossip Girl's UES. There's this quality to Gossip Girl that makes you feel something, and I want my audience to feel things too.

Additionally, the 'mystery texter' troupe that Gossip Girl popularised is something that we delve into in this series. But I do it differently. The reveal is an integral plot device. I reveal it midway through the series because it develops our characters by miles. It's important, not an aside. Unlike Gossip Girl the big reveal isn't who but why, and how. Why they did it, and how people react. That's the distinction. Gossip Girl keeps the mystery, we don't, we use the mystery to develop our characters, and show them as full human beings, which is always my goal in writing.

And that's the key word; different. Just a Game is a different interpretation of a format that has been popularised by Gossip Girl and reinvented by many.



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JUST A GAME

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JUST A GAME