The Merchant of Tennis

*Version for Girls*

By Lee Ann Hotovy

Copyright 2007

*A parody of The Merchant of Venice by William Shakespeare.*

Cast:

Tony (or Toni), the Merchant of Tennis (part is written for male, but can be played by female)

Duke (or Duchess) of TennisCourt -Judge

King Arthur Sash

Venus and Serena—two rich tennis-playing sisters

Chris and Evert—two servants of sisters

Bjorn Broke—male/penniless friend of Tony(i)- explorer

Andre Agoknee—male/loud-mouthed friend of Bjorn

Jester—Tennis court jester/comic relief character

Padlock—Greedy merchant and collector of tennis items/locks up things including his heart

Two explorers—Wilson and Penn (inventors for Scheels)—hired by Tony; searching for something to hit

2-6 Extra players to serve as additional merchants in Act/Scene 1/tennis players for Scene 3 and jury members for court.

*Setting: Stage is set as a simple Market place/street. Three vendors are selling their wares, including Toni. She is selling tennis equipment*.

Act 1/Scene 1 Market place

*Opening movement to music as merchants enter/set up shops/ play tennis with rocks/song and dance.*

Two explorers enter.

Explorer 1/Wilson: Mistress Toni, what of thee this day? Art thou pleased with sales?

Toni: In troth I am sad.

Explorer 2/ Penn: Sad? What of? All around the city, there is nothing but talk of your new game…tennis! Many wish to try it!

Toni: Believe me when I say, I know it well. Yet…I am destined for failure, for the rocks are ruining my rackets.

Wilson: Yes, well…rocks are a thing of hard jaggedness, meant for the sea and its heavy bottom. Only a want-wit would choose it.

Toni: I know it only too well. But alas, I know of no stone nor fruit that can bounce or play such as my mind can see.

Wilson: What does thou see…exactly?

Toni: An orange or a lemon…of shape…yet not edible. A sphere that would fit in the palm of a man’s hand, yet toss as lightly as a small sparrow. And bounce…it should bounce.

Penn: Strange…this thing. But the world is wide, and much unknown.

Wilson: Yes…let us explore…might we find this thing…it could change the world of tennis.

Penn: Indeed! And we, good friends, would then be written of in history books. Wilson and Penn…discoverers of the first tennis…thing!

Toni: Three would be nice.

Penn: Three?

Toni: Three…things. They would fit nicely in a can…marketing you know.

Wilson: But there are only two of us. It seems we need a third explorer.

*Bjorn and Andre enter. Andre’s knees are bandaged.*

Bjorn: Hey Toni…what’s with the explorer guys?

Tony: T’is my penniless, but ever faithful friend Bjorn and…

Bjorn: Andre…Andre Ag-o-knee.

Tony: Thou damaged thy knee?

Andre: Yes…tennis elbow.

Penn: But you said it was your knee?

Andre: It was my elbow…okay! If thou has eyes…use them!

Wilson: Thou elbow looks fine…your knees are the item in question.

Andre: Thy knees would looketh like this too, if you were using your elbow for a tennis racket!

Wilson: Aye! Well, Toni, the Merchant of Tennis…we are off to find the *thing* to hit.

Penn: Wish us well…and by the way…what will thy purse hold for us should we return victorious?

Toni: Three thousand ducats.

Bjorn: Three thousand ducats?

Toni: Til we meet again my good friends!

Wilson: To the east, west, north and south we shall sail, each in our own ship without fail…

Penn: May we never put our heads to pillow, until we find the thing of yellow.

Wilson: First one back gets to serve!

*Explorers quickly exit.*

Bjorn: I pray thee, tell me of their quest that should bring three thousand ducats?

Toni: Well, if thou must know… my business will fail unless I discover a *thing* to hit that will not destroy my rackets. The rocks are ill-working.

Bjorn: Thou has sent thine explorers to discover a…*thing*…to hit?

Toni: Yes, in a word.

Bjorn: Might I join their quest as well? I am better served with three thousand ducats then they, for I am with out job or career…and my looks can only get me so far.

Toni: ‘Tis troth thou speaks. Very well…hurry then…and take your friend for fellowship, or hoisting of sails…or whatever he be good at.

Andre: I can yell out orders!

Toni: Indeed.

Bjorn and Andre start to exit. Bjorn stops.

Bjorn: Uh…Toni…Pray a word? Not that I am one to display my shortcomings afore those more fortunate than myself…but as you know…I am penniless. I don’t think I can get a boat with just my looks. Might I have a loan?

Toni: I would in a moment, my good man, loan you every ducat I have…but alas, my money is tied up with racketeers, and the rock quarry. Still you may borrow against my name. Try the money-lender, Padlock. He knows my credit is good. Call upon him and tell him he may have a *pound* of my possessions if the loan is not repaid.

Bjorn: I shall…and in due time, I will repay thee for thy kindness and trust.

*Bjorn and Andre exit.*

*Duchess enters with the King and Jester.*

Duchess: You look well, Mistress Toni…better than the last time I saw thee. Does thou have news?

Toni: Indeed, Duchess of TennisCourt! The ill wind of this day hath changed its course. I have just commissioned three explorers to find the tennis *thing* to hit with my racket! Success will surely be mine.

Duchess: Good news indeed! Our city will be known as the city of the Tennis *thing*---I am a bit tired of being known as the city of flying rocks.

King Arthur Sash: Yes Duchess…it indeed will be a mark of glory for our kingdom. May I try?

Toni: I pray you, my best racket and rock.

King and Jester try to play tennis. Rocks fly…Jester gets knocked out.

*King laughs*.

King Arthur: That is jolly good fun. I like the rocks.

Duchess: Well…it seemeth to me, they are a bit hard on the rackets…and you will have need of a new Jester from time to time.

King Arthur: Yes…tis troth. *pause* Duchess…I thirst!

Duchess: Sire…this way…I know of a delightful pub that serves a new drink…Gator Ale. It will quench the thirst of a King. Come.

Toni: Wait! Even a merchant can get thirsty. Let me close up shop.

Duchess: Very good. Come merchant.

*Toni, Duchess, King exit.*

*Jester who has been lying still is approached by Padlock.*

Padlock: Pssst! Jester! Waketh up fool!

Jester: Is this Iowa?

Padlock: Iowa! Want-wit! Pray you…let’s have no more fooling about. Do you want to work for me?

Jester: Huh?

Padlock: I will not throw rocks at thee!

Jester: ‘Tis a good thing. But art thou sure this isn’t Iowa?

Padlock: No…now pray, make haste.

Jester: Wait… I believe I am supposed to give two weeks notice to the king.

Padlock: Well, since thou art a *Jester*…why don’t you give him two *winks* notice, and call it good!

Jester: Clever! I shall.

Jester winks twice, then exits with Padlock.

Act 1/Scene 3

*Merchant movement piece/music/balls going everywhere…no rules to game. Other players enter.*

Bjorn: I say…these yellow fuzzy things really do bounce.

Venus: Yes…we call them balls.

Toni: Tennis balls! They are just what I imagined…still something seems to be amiss. Ow!

Serena: Ow…is this game supposed to be painful?

Toni: No I had not intended it…but it is a thought.

Bjorn: What of two players only…

Andre: Or four?

# King and Duchess enter

Duchess: I say Toni…this is chaotic…Neighboring courts are beginning to complain. The yellow things bounce…and go much further than the rocks.

King: And the rocks were less noticeable…who was to say where they came from…but these fuzzy yellow things, can only come from thine courts! There is no hiding it. OW!

*Everyone/ ow, ow..*

Padlock enters with Jester

Padlock: Get the yellow things! I want them!

Jester: But they belong to Toni?

Padlock: Not anymore! Now go!

Jester acting like ball boy, starts grabbing balls and putting them in his shirt pockets.

Toni: Hey…where art all the balls…what was chaos has now ceased…

Andre: Some one has stolen them…look there!

*Padlock enters holding balls.*

Toni: Padlock…what is this?

Padlock: I have simply collected what is rightfully mine, with interest.

Toni: The tennis balls are not yours! They are Bjorn’s, which I purchased from him for three thousand ducats. He brought them from another land. How can thou say they are thine?

Padlock: They are mine because I provided a ship, against your credit, for thine penniless friend. I have a signed contract stating thou’d give a pound of anything if the loan is not repaid in due time.

Toni: Oh yes…I did tell Bjorn to speak with you. Very well Padlock, I will repay thy loan. A pound of cheese, perhaps?

Bjorn: Toni, wait…it is I that should repay the man.

Padlock: No! The contract lays claim upon Toni, not Bjorn. I will have my pound of Toni.

Toni: A pound of what then? Cheese, bread? I have some nice Gouda?

Padlock: I demand a pound of tennis balls.

*Everyone gasps.*

Bjorn: But that would ruin Tony. Without these amazing balls, he will have no business, and we will have no tennis!

Andre: Venus…are there no more balls to be had? Wheres’t did thou get them?

Venus: A stranger named Spalding left them with me…but I know not where he is!

Serena: Or where he came from, nor how they were made!

Bjorn: We must send out messengers to find this Spalding!

Padlock: But I demand my wage this day, this very hour…I am not inclined to wait.

Duchess: Order, order! I think it is time for a judge to oversee these proceedings and since I am Duchess of TennisCourt, that would be me. Explain thy complaint Padlock.

Padlock: I am a merchant too, but not of frivolous game, rather of money. I make money upon money. This man, Bjorn, penniless friend of Toni, who has relied on his looks for many a day to buy his way out of things, came to me…asking credit upon his friend’s fortune in order to obtain a ship for his journey. I agreed to this with the understanding that I was entitled to a pound of anything in Tony’s possession.

Duchess: Toni, Merchant of Tennis, what have you to say to this?

Toni: Tis troth. Let the man have his due.

Duchess: Padlock, what pound do you desire then?

Padlock: I desire a pound of tennis balls.

Duchess: You desire that which will bring ruination upon this merchant, and end what could be one of the greatest games in the land? Have mercy! Why not take the cheese?

Padlock: No. I want the fuzzy yellow things.

King: Might I have a word in this case?

Duchess: Certainly your Majesty.

King: Padlock…it appears you are determined to cause harm to thy neighbor, Toni. May I ask why?

Padlock: Because…because he hath what I have not.

King: The game of tennis, the fuzzy yellow things…is this what you speak of?

Padlock: Yes that…and well, the admiration of his friends. He has the confidence of the Duchess…he has so much that I do not have…his ideals, the game, all of it. And so I will have my due.

King: Does thou know the golden rule?

Padlock: In my land we speak of no such rule.

King: Learn it then…Thou shall love thy God above all things, and love thy neighbor as thyself. Does thou love thyself in any capacity?

Padlock: Well….not as much as I would like, but I love myself enough to not want suffering.

King: Then how can you wish suffering upon thy neighbor Tony? What has she done to thee to deserve such scorn from your heart?

Padlock: She…she…has done nothing…and that is the cross I bear. She is a good merchant, and has not the bitterness or greed in her that I possess.

King: Thou art jealous then.

Padlock: Yes…but I will have my due. I will not listen to thee, King. I demand the pound now.

King: Jealousy will only get you misery. Very well…bring the merchant her pound of tennis balls.

Venus: Wait…if I may interject your Majesty. When was the contract made between the two men?

Duchess: Apparently on the day that Bjorn set sail.

Venus: And would it not seem the contract should only honor what was then in the possession of Toni…on that day.

Duchess: Yes…I suppose that would be correct.

Venus: Tony did not have the tennis balls on that day…he only imagined them. I do not see how Padlock can lay claim to something that was only a dream at the time of agreement.

Padlock: What…t’is a trick! I will have my pound!

Venus: Then give him a pound of dream.

Duchess: Very well…let us ask the jury…does thou agree to this argument.

Jury members mumble among themselves:

Jury Member 1: It is the law of our land…that such contracts can only lay claim to possessions in hand on day of contract signing.

Duchess: Very well. Padlock you may take your pound of dream from Toni. Toni will you submit this to him?

Toni: Gladly…my dream of that day was to see the little fuzzy yellow things upon the courts of this land…bouncing, bouncing…hitting the rackets, causing joy to the players of the court…victory in their hands.

Padlock: I refuse this…give me the pound of cheese…that I can at least eat!

Duchess: Ah ah ah…Before this court you lay claim to only the pound of tennis balls, which was a dream at the time, and thou must be satisfied with that…the cheese is no longer an option.

Toni: Dear Duchess and members of the court…I am ever so happy to give Padlock his due…the pound of my dream…but as an act of mercy, may I also give him a pound of cake?

Jury Member 2: A pound of cake?

Jury Member 3: Not cheese?

Toni: Well I suppose it could be a pound of cheese-cake.