

Heart of Glass

a short play about Google Glass



By Nick Wray

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Short-listed by the Finsbury Theatre, London,
'Little Pieces of Gold' Competition, June 2014

Once I had a love and it was a gas
Soon turned out had a heart of glass
Seemed like the real thing, only to find
Mucho mistrust, love's gone behind

'Heart of Glass' – Blondie.

This play is based on two (real) short Tweets I received, one about Google Glass, the other concerning 'wearable' biomedical body sensors. Any errors and omissions, and all thinking and fantasy remain mine...

Link to background on Wearables:

<http://www.dezeen.com/2013/03/28/biostamp-temporary-tattoo-wearable-electronic-circuits-john-rogers-mc10/>

Link to background on Google Glass (and next generation Google contact lenses):

<http://readwrite.com/2014/04/17/google-patent-contact-lens-camera#awesm=~oCsbh9847noB4o>

Synopsis:

Sergey Page (SP) a 30-something London-based developer works in 'digital'. He's curious. About people. And he wants to find out more about *you*. Sergey, enters the audience and starts to 'read' people's phones, apparently revealing the owners' characters from these. Em, apparently a member of the audience, is invited onto the stage. Sergey invites Em, a savvy professional Londoner, to try a *Wearable*, a patch that can wireless transmit medical data – like your blood pressure - from an individual onto their phone. Em is soon hooked. She encourages friends to try Wearables too (through what else, but her social networks). The phenomenon grows. Even the audience is caught up in it. Then the 'cracking' begins. Em's data, not just her Wearable but the internet is being read by Sergey. Sergey – part hacker, part virus – is all seeing. All he needs is a bit of code and his Google Glasses to read people like a book.

The play is based on real prototype technologies, Google Glass and wearable electronic circuits that will soon be available. 'Hearts of Glass' was short-listed by the Finsbury Theatre, London, 'Little Pieces of Gold' Competition, June 2014

Biography: Nick Wray is a freelance writer who also works on 'Futures' projects. Nick has written for the *Independent*, *Screen Digest* and *Viewfinder*, as well as other publications and media. Nick has recently completed 'Castles of Steel', a play for Radio 4 about the First World War naval engagement known as the Battle of Jutland. Nick has an MA in Interactive Media from the Royal College of Art and his polemic on the digital world, *The Living Garden*, won the ICL-Fujitsu prize for innovation in media and is shortly to be pitched as a book on crowdsourcing site 'Unbound'.

Cast (in order of appearance)

SERGEY PAGE (SP): Satchelled 30-something man, works on 'digital' in Hoxton.

EM: A 30-something professional woman working in publishing in London.

ACT I

SCENE 1

ANNOUNCEMENT ASKING AUDIENCE TO TAKE OUT THEIR MUTED PHONES. SERGEY PAGE (SG) WALKS ONTO STAGE. PUTS ON GLASSES AND LOOKS AT AUDIENCE. SP ENTERS FRONT ROW, LOOKING AT PEOPLE'S PHONES. EM IS ALREADY SEATED IN FRONT ROW.

SP: Come on, come on, show me. 'Farmville' *Really!?* *Oh little pigs, little pigs; where are you...?* I love the smell of crackling in the morning...

SP MOVES TO ANOTHER MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE AND PRETENDS TO READ OUT A FACEBOOK THREAD FROM THEIR SMARTPHONE (SP MIMICKS 'ZOE' & HER FRIEND USING TWO DIFFERENT VOICES)

"Zoe hates all men!" [FRIEND] What's the matter Babes...?"
[ZOE] "All men are bastards..." [FRIEND] "You're beautiful Hun! Ignore him!"

SP MOVES AROUND AUDIENCE AND LOOKS AT ANOTHER PHONE

Candy Crush? ... Are you actually from Finsbury Park?

SP MOVES BACK TO PHONE/AUDIENCE MEMBER WITH 'ZOE' PHONE MESSAGE...

SP: Oh, it's kicking off again: (MIMICKING ZOE) "...but I love him..." (NORMAL) Sad face!

SP MOVES AROUND AUDIENCE AND LOOKS AT ANOTHER PHONE

I'm not an expert in the affairs of the human heart. But will *sexting* those, admittedly, entertaining pictures of your ex to your (BEAT WHILST COUNTING) 453 friends, 453!?!; will that really help with your *affaires du coeur*? Anyway, haven't you heard of SnapChat?

(LOOKS AT ANOTHER PHONE)

SP: You're a bit into yourself!

(LOOKS AT ANOTHER PHONE)

(READING) 'Sad Face', 'Sad Face' 'LoL' (BEAT). "Kim Jong-un and Gillian McKeith are now friends." Heh, No. I just made that one up.

(LOOKS AT ANOTHER PHONE)

Blah, blah. I don't care if it's your birthday. Though I suspect it's nearer '1972' than '1982', isn't it? You lot don't fool me with your 10-year out of date personality pic prostheses.

(LOOKS AT ANOTHER PHONE)

Well, I don't know about you, but 'no' I don't want to install another update to Adobe Acrobat...

(LOOKS AT ANOTHER PHONE)

SP: (COD SADLY) They say no man is an island. But are we alone in a sea of virtual friends (CONSOLING PAT ON AUDIENCE MEMBER'S SHOULDER).

(SELECTS SEAT EM IS SITTING IN AND LOOKS AT HER PHONE)

(TO EM) A Selfie? A Selfie? The selfie's so dead. Don't you know it's *all* about 'Wearables', now.

EM: Wearables?

SP: 'Wearables'! Wireless body sensors? Trending, *hello!*? Everyone's talking about them. Your own digital physician, no two-week-wait appointment. Sensors to Tweet your blood sugar levels, and kidney functions, moment-by-moment to your iPhone. An Android Dr Kildare, always on, always to hand. Just-For-You...?

EM: We'll I have been feeling a bit stressed.

SP TURNS TO AUDIENCE

SP: Don't we all?

SP TURNS BACK TO EM

Here come with me. Try one.

SP & EM MOVE ONTO STAGE. SP HANDS EM A 'WEARABLE'. A LARGE STICKING PLASTER WITH A BARCODE DRAWN UPON IT. EM PUTS IT ON THE SKIN ON THE SIDE OF HER BODY.

SP: (TO EM) Your very own microscope; a check on the inner you? Borderline anaemia? (POINTS TO WEARABLE PATCH) This'll do nicely. (TURNS TO AUDIENCE) Your aches & pains, Sir? *Your Wearable will you tell you how to make it bearable!* (LOOKS AT OTHER INDIVIDUALS IN AUDIENCE). A funny itch solved for you? Or over there – a prescription for that nagging doubt?

SP TURNS BACK TO EM WHO IS TAKING SWIG FROM TAKE-AWAY COFFEE CUP

Ah! Something to lower your Starbucksed-blood pressure. (SOLICITOUSLY.) I know you've been too busy with all your email, to keep an eye on that, um, um...?

EM: 'Em'. My name's Em.

SP: Funny. Somehow, I thought you were an Em. (PAUSE, LOOKS MEANINGFULLY AT AUDIENCE) 'Wearables'; a Godsend, really...

EM SMILES, THEN GETS DISTRACTED BY MESSAGES APPEARING ON PHONE.

EM: Look! It's working already. Oh. An invite to a Bupa health screen?

SP LOOKS OVER EM'S SHOULDER

- SP: (CONSPIRATORIALLY, POINTING AT EM'S PHONE)
Texted nostrums for the day after the night before? Salvation
by patent medicine!
- EM: And it says if I click 'yes', now, I can collect it pre-paid from
my nearest pharmacy!
- SP: Your Wearable knows where that is, too.
- EM: Clever! And 10 per cent off, if I buy now.
- SP: 10 per cent?! And no waiting room ennui. Look, it's
suggesting something to make you happy.
- EM: (ANNOYED) And something to make me *thin*?
- SP: (ASIDE TO AUDIENCE) Skinny latte next time, methinks?
(BACK, CONSOLINGLY TO EM). It's a prototype. But think
about it. Your own microscope to check and protect and
perfect you?
- EM: 'Physician heal thyself'?
- SP: Well, maybe with a bit of help from Boots and Superdrug,
and something in the small print about Glaxo Smith Kline
having access to your body's 'metadata'. *Whatever!*
- SP & EM: (TOGETHER) *Whatever!* And we can all do it now.

SP AND EM TURN TO AUDIENCE AND HAND OUT SOME WEARABLE PLASTERS TO FRONT ROW, ENCOURAGING AUDIENCE TO PUT THEM ON THE BACK OF THEIR HANDS.

SP: (TO AUDIENCE) Listen! We're radio-active. All of us. Can you hear it? The ether's singing our song. Setting us free.

EM: (EM SMILES) I'm going to tell everyone about it! (STARTS TEXTING ETC ON PHONE)

AS EM BUSY TEXTING, ETC, SPREADING THE WORD ON WEARABLES. SP WALKS BEHIND HER LOOKING AT EM'S PHONE.

SP: She's Linked-In to all and sundry: gym bunnies and playground mummies; cut-and-pasters & party makers...

URNS TO AUDIENCE. PLAYS WITH SIDE FRAME OF GLASSES AS THOUGH SCROLLING A MOUSEWHEEL THROUGH DATA

And what about you, mmmhhh? Networked narcissists. Blimey! Necrophiliacs and neo-Nazis, too.

GOES BACK AND LOOKS OVER EM'S SHOULDER WHO IS OBLIVIOUS

SP: See. They can't stop themselves. In the office, at home travelling on the underground: checking their Vitamin C, B12's, optimising their fecundity and fertility. Yes Wearables are really nailing the 'me' in social me-dia.

PLAYS WITH SIDE OF GLASS FRAMES AND SMILES DANGEROUSLY AT EM. (IF AVAILABLE, SPOTLIGHT DIRECTED ON EM'S TOP WHICH BECOMES TRANSPARENT ALLOWING AUDIENCE TO SEE ZEROS AND ONES IN MAKE-UP UPON HER SKIN).

EM: (TURNS TO AUDIENCE) I didn't notice. The Glass Hackers. Like him. Cracking feeds from 'Wearable' users. Like me...like *you*. Intercepting what state we were in, not just your blood pressure, our levels of boredom...

SP: (LACIVIOUSLY PEERING AT EM) or *arousal*...

EM: It gave people, people like him, an edge; in the office, and at home.

SP: (OPPOSITE EM SMUGLY) Chatting someone up in a theatre bar...

TAKES GLASSES OFF AND BLOWS ON THEM COCKILY. REPLACES THEM AND STARES AT EM

EM: (TO AUDIENCE) So, when someone said they knew how you were feeling, it was true...literally.

SP MOVES BEHIND EM AND FEELS HER FOREHEAD, RUBS HER SHOULDERS AND THEN SUDDENLEY GRABS FOR HER HEART, DONE TO SIGNAL POWER AND A LATENT, SEXUAL, PREDATORY MOTIVE.

SP: The good ones, (SMUGLY) like me. We've learned to suck metadata from the cloud too. (MIMES PICKING DOCUMENTS FROM AIR). (TO EM) I know more about you in the now, in the past, the future, than you do.

EM: (TO SP) Sometimes, for a moment, when you're not distracted or double-checking your blood sugar, you can see it in their eyes, in their *narrator* smiles. (SP GRINS). Your heart rate, bank balance, the mirror of your soul, flickering in their glasses. They know what you're thinking. Before you even know. They really 'Get you.' Can read you like a book. Correlate and plot you. Work out the part you're going to play in their life. They can see you, well (TOUCHES WEARABLE PLASTER), wearing your heart on your sleeve.

SP: (TO AUDIENCE) Listen (BEAT). Can you hear it? All those little bytes and data dimes, trickling along the network? Turning into (PATS CHANGE OUTSIDE TROUSER POCKET WHILT THRUSTING GROIN OUT SEXUALLY) liquid gold.

EM: (TO SP) I never really noticed. Until it was too late. Monitoring my inner-me, checking my pulse. But not its beat. Drowning in numbers. (EM LOOKS AT PHONE) Hang on a minute, my blood sugar's up.

SP: I know.

EM: (TO SP) Where was I? What was that phrase a while back? Never...?

SP: Mindful. Mindful's the word you're trying to remember.

EM: Yes. Never *Mindful* of anything except our projected selves.
We never even noticed. Did we?

SP: Oh I noticed. I noticed (TURNS TO AUDIENCE POINTING
ALONG ROWS) *you...*

CURTAIN