

SNOW



a one-act play
by Ed Valentine

*“...When out of the darkness of the cave
burst the blinding whiteness of the bear,
like the very soul of God...”*

- The Cardinal

**[TO READ THE COMPLETE SCRIPT, OR TO INQUIRE ABOUT RIGHTS,
PLEASE E-MAIL ED@EDVALENTINE.COM.]**

© 1997, 2007 by Ed Valentine
ed@edvalentine.com

8 CHARACTERS (3 W, 3 M and 2 either M or W)

REYNALDO'S MOTHER (W)

REYNALDO'S UNCLE (M)

THE REPORTER (M or W)

THE MAYOR (M)

THE MAYOR'S AIDE (M or W)

THE CARDINAL (M)

MRS. SUMMER ROSENBLOOM (W)

THE FOLKSINGER (W)

SCENE:

The Polar Bear House in a Big City Zoo.



AUTHOR'S NOTE

I recognize that a literal set of the bear cage - as I have described it – would be beyond the budget of many theaters. Please note that I am in no way tied to a realistic set design – in fact, I encourage an abstract or impressionistic set. If you can't afford a lake of ice - and who can? - I encourage you to have the Folksinger enter from offstage. There are lots of other creative solutions.

SNOW

SETTING: An imitation ice floe with a blue backdrop of an Arctic sky - the sort of thing you might see at the polar bear exhibit at a zoo. A hole has been poked through the floe. There is blood on the side of the hole, and clawmarks in the ice. Signs of struggle. A printed sign says "SNOW." Another sign reads "NO TRESPASSING". On the SR side of the hole, a podium (with microphone) has been set up with three chairs behind it. Two chairs are set up on the thick ice on the SL side.

AT RISE: Reynaldo's MOTHER sits SL, holding a blanketed bundle. THE UNCLE sits next to her, his arm around her shoulder. A well-dressed REPORTER squats by them.

REPORTER

Brr! They do keep it cold, don't they? Now I know this must be a terrible, terrible time for you. An awful, horrible, terrible time. A tragedy, that's what it is, pure and simple. A tragedy. I can't even imagine what it must feel like. Well, actually, I can. You see, I have two kids myself - here are the pictures - Dylan, and Chessica, with a "C-H", and if anything happened to them I'd just - well, I understand your grief. And that's why - if you feel it would be helpful, therapeutic, even, for you to talk to someone, at any time, I hope you might call me. Rather than, say, Sue Dingle from channel 3, who doesn't even volunteer for Children's Face Painting Day in the park, or Chuck Barfield from Channel 12, who doesn't have children, and isn't likely to, if you get my drift. I'd be more sympathetic than they would. I'd be more than sympathetic: I *understand*. So, here's my - my card... You can call me 24-7. You know there are thousands of people in this city, millions, really, and they all want to hear your story from your own lips. You've seen the papers - the headlines, for the last two days? END OF AN INNOCENCE? INTO THE JAWS OF FEAR? WHITE TERROR IN THE NIGHT? The whole city has taken Reynaldo to heart - like he was *everyone's* little boy. Please take my card.

(The MOTHER and the UNCLE look at each other. UNCLE takes the card and both of them nod at the REPORTER.)

There you are. That's marvelous. Please call - soon. Soon would be better than later.

(Enter the MAYOR'S AIDE, stepping gingerly on the ice floe, checking out the scene.)

Oh, there's the Mayor's Aide - we're starting. Hey - my deepest sincerest sympathies in this, your hour of grief.

THE AIDE

Oyez, Oyez, welcome the Most Honorable Mayor of Our Fair City!

(The AIDE blows a whistle, dons a tricorner hat, and pulls out a bell. Enter The MAYOR. "Hail to the Mayor," his fanfare, plays on a scratchy recording.)

CHEERFUL VOICES (*Singing:*)

HAIL TO THE MAYOR OF THIS OUR FAIR CITY!
HAIL TO HIS WIFE, OH SO GRACIOUS AND PRETTY!
HAIL TO HIS SONS, GROWN UP TALL, STRAIGHT, AND STRONG -
TELL OF HIS GLORIES IN STORY AND SONG -
HAIL HIM IN WINTER, SPRING, SUMMER AND FALL -
HAIL TO THE MAYOR, IN CHARGE OF US ALL!

(During the song, many flashbulbs go off. The MAYOR gives his toothy grin and flashes a two-handed “V-For-Victory” sign. Behind him enter the CARDINAL and SUMMER ROSENBLOOM.

(When the MAYOR sees the grieving MOTHER, his whole demeanor changes. He crosses to her as the music still blares, shakes her hand warmly and comfortingly, and repeats the action with the UNCLE. The CARDINAL follows suit, then follows behind the MAYOR at a respectful distance. The MAYOR steps up to a small podium and taps the microphone.)

MAYOR

Is this on? It’s on. Ladies and gentlemen, members of the City Council, members of the press, and of course, our dear, dear Ms. Gonzalez and your husband - brother? Your brother, we come together today for a morning of mourning, a day of prayer for the poor soul of Reynaldo Gonzalez. Who was taken from you in a horrible tragedy two nights ago. I say taken from you, but I have begun, over the last few hours and days, I have begun to feel that he was taken from all of us here in this fair city. Our citizens have a reputation - an UNFAIR reputation, may I add - for being urbane. For being callous. For being “above-it-all,” or rude, or inconsiderate -

(Looks up from his speech and glares at his aide)

- that’s a little much, don’t you think?

(Resumes his speech:)

This unfair reputation that we have been slandered with is - unfair and is slander. It’s slander! Salamander. Anyway, our people rise to their true height and breadth and length and width and weight of spirit in a tragedy. And ladies and gentlemen, make no mistake, this is a tragedy. A young life ripped away, and for what? Children playing. Playing, may I add, in a zoo, where they should not have been playing, but no matter now. Playing in the City Zoo, where thousands of people come every week, without harm befalling them. No one gets hurt here, almost never. And Reynaldo wouldn’t have gotten hurt either if he hadn’t been trying to get into the polar bear cage with his friends Friday night. Who would think of a child ever DOING such a dangerous thing? And it’s a sad reality, that, when children are playing, as children will do, sometimes they do something illegal and stupid, sometimes they do something wrong, sometimes they break the law - and they were, sadly, breaking the law, as the signs are clearly posted here - NO TRESPASSING, see? NO TRESPASSING. That means, DON’T COME IN. I mean, what kind of kid sneaks into the polar bear cage at night, or even by day for that matter? The City did what it could, despite what the papers are saying! There is no blame for the city, none at all!

(The aide coughs.)

MAYOR (cont'd)

Who is to blame, then? Well, isn't it obvious? Look, if these kids hadn't been sneaking into the polar bear cage at night, there would have been no problem. No death. We wouldn't be here today. But sadly, we are. Here. Today -

(The aide coughs. MAYOR collects himself.)

- to comfort - his family. To remember Reynaldo. And I do want to mention that this very day I am pushing forth a resolution that will make the polar bear cages even safer still – safer than in any other zoo in these United States. As long as I am Mayor, there will be no more tragedies like Reynaldo, ever again. Bottom line: I CARE. Thank you. And now, may I introduce the Venerable Most Holy Cardinal of our fine city.

(The CARDINAL steps up to the podium in the center of the stage. He has a flatulence problem. In the following, his farts are represented by the symbol: *.)

CARDINAL

Thank you, Mr. Mayor. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. (*) For the last forty-eight or so hours, since I heard the news of this tragedy on the telly, I have been haunted by one question, a question the Mayor raised a moment ago, touched on, and then moved away from, as if it were a hot plate: *WHO IS TO BLAME?* (*) Who indeed is to blame? Who indeed. The Bible tells us, “Ask and it shall be opened to you, knock and it shall be answer-ed you.” So I tell you that there is an answer, Mister Mayor, and gathered friends, there must be an answer to our questions, *WHY?* And *WHO IS TO BLAME?* (*) You might say, “The Devil,” and, I admit, ‘tis tempting - tempting, ah? - to blame “Old Nick” - Lucifer, that tricky trickster. But is God not more powerful than the devil? He IS. (* *) So, then, you might say, if not the devil, we'll blame the bear - this bear named Snow. But I ask you - is God not more powerful than any bear? God MADE this bear! (*) God saved Daniel in the lions' den lo these many years ago, by shutting the lions' mouths – (*) - and could not God have chosen to stop up this bear's sharp jaws as well? (*) Of course He could. (*) Of *course* He could have. (Long *****) But - for some reason - He did not. (Small residual *.) But Why? Why would a loving God lead this child into the polar bear cage at night? There must be a reason - everything that happens on God's Earth, happens for a reason. Friends, I believe I know the reason. He did it to prevent this boy from committing worse sins later in life. Yes, God opened the jaws of this polar bear, unfurled the claws of this beast, so that little Reynaldo would not grow to sin any more than he had already sinned, and be foreverafter condemned to the pit of fire, where the torments he would experience would be worlds worse than any temporal agony, even the agony he faced in that cage two terrible nights ago: When out of the darkness of the cave burst the blinding whiteness of the bear, like the very soul of God. Ah, dear friends, make no mistake - God brought this sinning boy into the cage, not to kill Reynaldo, but to save him. Today, we pray for the soul of Reynaldo Gonzalez, which is perched like a bird on the bosom of The Lord. And who could not find comfort in that? Amen.

THE MAYOR

Thank you, Your Eminence.

CARDINAL

Thank *you*, Mister Mayor.

(One final *. As the MAYOR tries to get to the podium and the CARDINAL tries to get to his seat, the two men bump into each other on the narrow ice floe. They share a brief laugh, then take their places.)

MAYOR

Next up - I am delighted to present a very special lady – a well-known patron of the Arts and Humanities as well as a representative from the Mayor’s Council on Wildlife Conservation, among various other councils - Anti-Poverty Coalition, or some such. She has taken time out from her very busy schedule to join us today: Mrs. Summer Rosenbloom! Summer?

(SUMMER steps up, dressed in a chic outfit, her jewelry, hair, and makeup just so perfect. After a moment with the MAYOR - maybe a private laugh? - she takes her place.)

MRS. SUMMER ROSENBLOOM

Roy - Thanks. In addition to the animal rights and anti-poverty committees the Mayor mentioned, I am a member of the Botanical Garden and City Arboretum that abuts this Wildlife Conservation Park. And it is flowers that are on my mind today - flowers for weddings, flowers for funerals... Flowers are in my very name! My parents, the famous Beeches of Martha’s Vineyard? To reflect my heritage, my family named me “Summer.” “Summer Beech.” Well, as you might imagine, the children teased me all through school. Children can be so vicious, it was dreadful, really. And I just could not wait ‘til I was married so I could take another name! Well, *be careful what you wish for!* As you know, I then married the well-known Manhattan financier Israel Rosenbloom and I became - Summer Rosenbloom. Do you get it? It’s a pun: “Summer Rose In Bloom.” My life is so hard. Anyway I’m divorced now but I kept the name - and the China! Ha ha; little joke. I like flowers. And it is flowers I want to talk of today. In the Bible, we hear “Be like the Lilies of the Field - they do not sow, they do not toil, but the Good Lord cares for them nonetheless.” And this child, this Rennato, neither sowed nor reaped - he didn’t work at all with his little brown hands - may I add, like so many immigrants who now have their hands out for welfare or pocket change -

(The MAYOR and the MAYOR’S AIDE both cough)

- but *c’est la vie* in our big city, *n’est ce pas?* Anyhoo. I sat in the arboretum and wrote a little poem for this poor lost soul. It’s called, FLOWERS. BY SUMMER ROSENBLOOM. FLOWERS.

(Recites her poem. Acts it out with excessive hand gestures. Maybe some interpretive dance.)

**[TO READ THE COMPLETE SCRIPT, OR TO INQUIRE ABOUT RIGHTS,
PLEASE E-MAIL ED@EDVALENTINE.COM.]**