

A CONVENIENT YOUTH

A short play

by

Bruce Daniel

Story devised by Helen Sim, Barbara Sanders and Bruce Daniel

Cast

JOHANNA	A young woman. also plays GREEN BELIEVER.
ANTHONY	A young man.
PENGUIN	A penguin and sleuth. Male.
NORGEN VAAZ	An evil capitalist. Male. also plays GREEN BELIEVER.
POPSICLE	Norgen Vaaz's hunch-backed sidekick. Female. also plays GREEN BELIEVER.
ICEBERG	An iceberg. Male. also plays PASSER-BY and TECHIE.
AL GORE	A green evangelist.

Date and Setting

1955.

An icecream parlour, Australia.

Norgen Vaaz's Antarctic hideout.

Scene 1

An icecream parlour. 1950's decor and costumes. Two teen lovers, JOHANNA and ANTHONY, sit at a table in quiet conversation. NORGEN VAAZ, badly disguised as the parlour's female proprietor, and his hunch-backed sidekick, POPSICLE, dressed as a waitress, stand in attendance. They both wear excessive, horrendously applied makeup. PENGUIN, in black trench-coat, nun's veil and sunglasses, sits at a corner table.

(VAAZ paces slowly, eyeing the young couple shiftily. POSICLE brings milk-shakes to them, dragging a foot behind her.)

JOHANNA *(sweetly)* So, what do you think of my idea?

ANTHONY It's fabulous, Johanna! Who'd have thought it would be so easy to design a zero-carbon-emission desalination plant!

(VAAZ and POPSICLE lean in to listen intently.)

JOHANNA Zero-carbon-emission *and* energy-neutral!

ANTHONY *And* energy-neutral! Why hasn't anyone thought of it before?

JOHANNA I know! And here we are in 1955!

ANTHONY Johanna, I think you're amazing. *(holding her hand)* Johanna...

JOHANNA Yes?

ANTHONY Johanna, will you go steady with me?

JOHANNA Yes.

(She giggles. They make goo-goo eyes.)

Oh, there's one thing I didn't explain. It's the most important step in the desalination process.

(VAAZ and POPSICLE are increasingly agitated.)

The critical step in the zero-carbon-emission, energy-neutral desalination process is...

VAAZ *(to Anthony and pointing)* Hey you! Look over there!

(ANTHONY turns. VAAZ and POPSICLE throw a sack over Johanna. VAAZ lets out a sinister laugh.)

VAAZ *(accent like Flakko)* Now the world will never learn the secret to her invention!

(VAAZ and POPSICLE bundle Johanna offstage.)

ANTHONY That's funny. There was nothing there...

(turns and sees the empty table)

Johanna? Johanna? Has anyone seen Johanna?

PENGUIN *(accent like Sam Spade)* Your girlfriend has been kidnapped.

ANTHONY What?

PENGUIN *(standing)* That person behind the counter – that was no small business proprietor. It was none other than the notorious capitalist, iced confectionery magnate and master of disguise, Norgen Vaaz. And you don't think that was a real waitress, do you? No, it was Popsicle – Norgen Vaaz's unattractive, hunch-backed sidekick.

ANTHONY Was she in disguise too?

PENGUIN I'm not sure. Maybe, maybe not.

ANTHONY Who are you?

PENGUIN I am... The Penguin.

ANTHONY How do you know these things?

PENGUIN I am... The Penguin. You can call me... Penguin. I've been on Norgen Vaaz's tail for a long time now.

ANTHONY If you knew he was up to no good, why didn't you try to stop him?

PENGUIN I'm only a penguin. And I'm a coward.

ANTHONY Any other reasons?

PENGUIN No. *(pause)* Yes. By allowing him to escape, I'm hoping he will lead me to his secret hide-out.

ANTHONY Perhaps we'd better follow him, then.

PENGUIN We? Sorry kid, I always work alone. *(pause, still serious)* But I'm only a penguin and I could do with some help. Would you

mind coming with me?

ANTHONY Well... okay. Which way did they go?

PENGUIN I don't know. *(takes off his sunglasses)* I can't see a darn thing with these things on.

(PASSER-BY enters.)

Hey you there. Have you seen a villain and a hunch-back?

PASSER-BY Were they dragging a screaming potato sack?

PENGUIN Yes.

PASSER-BY Was the villain dressed as a woman and wearing excessive, horrendously applied makeup?

PENGUIN Yes.

PASSER-BY Was the hunch-back in disguise also?

PENGUIN I'm not sure. Maybe, maybe not.

PASSER-BY Yeah, I saw them. They got on the bus.

PENGUIN Which bus?

PASSER-BY The one to Antarctica.

PENGUIN Antarctica! That's a long bus trip. When does the next bus go?

PASSER-BY *(consulting pocket timetable)* Not until... after the summer thaw.

PENGUIN Looks like we walk.

(All exit.)

Scene 2

Vaaz's secret Antarctic hide-out.

(POPSICLE is tying Johanna to a chair. VAAZ is removing his costume and wiping off makeup.)

JOHANNA That was a long bus trip. Where are we?

VAAZ My secret hide-out in Antarctica.

JOHANNA Why do you want to stop my invention being realised?

VAAZ Because it will spoil my business!

JOHANNA What's your business?

VAAZ That's *my* business.

JOHANNA Yes. Okay, let me rephrase that. What line of work are you in?

VAAZ I kidnap icebergs from Antarctica, tow them to Australia, melt them down and sell them as fresh water.

POPSICLE We liquidate them.

VAAZ And they make very nice daquiris, too.

POPSICLE I get to put them through the blender!

JOHANNA How do you kidnap icebergs?

VAAZ I spike their drinks. Usually with crystal meth.

JOHANNA You environmentally insensitive cads!

VAAZ Flattery will get you nowhere.

POPSICLE I think that was supposed to be an insult, boss.

VAAZ Shut up, Popsicle. And take off that stupid disguise.

POPSICLE It's not a disguise.

JOHANNA Your evil ploy will never succeed!

VAAZ And why not?

JOHANNA Anthony will come to save me.

(POPSICLE clasps her hands to her breast. She is secretly in love with Anthony.)

VAAZ Anthony? Anthony!?! *(sinister laugh)* Who's Anthony?

JOHANNA Anthony's my boyfriend.

(POPSICLE looks ashen.)

VAAZ Ah, so that's his name. I was wondering what his name was. My dear Johanna, when Anthony arrives to save you, I'm

going to kill... no, no... Popsicle is going to kill him!

POPSICLE No!!

VAAZ What?

POPSICLE Er, I wasn't finished. You interrupted me. I was saying... No!... Way!... You!... Can!... Stop!... Me! (*nervous giggle*)

VAAZ (*standing behind Johanna, lusting after her*) And then, my pretty, when Anthony is dead... Ah, but that's another scene.

(*All three dress as GREEN BELIEVERS.*)

Scene 3

A gathering of the charismatic GREEN BELIEVERS.

(AL GORE *enters.*)

AL GORE (*in Negro Gospel-speak*) ...and I say unto you, Green Believers, that we must stop the wanton destruction of our environment! We must stop those Environmentally Insensitive Capitalists you hear about all the time on Radio National, who would rape Mother Nature! Mother Nature, who is a woman!

(*A TECHIE enters and holds up the sign "Cheering and applause!" and prompts the audience to do so.*)

Bless you, my children!

(*TECHIE holds up sign "Oh Great Al Gore! What must we do?"*)

AUDIENCE Oh, Great Al Gore! What must we do?

AL GORE Green Believers, I will tell you what we must do! We must kill those Environmentally Insensitive Capitalists! Every last one of them. What must we do?

(*TECHIE holds up sign "Kill the Capitalists! Kill the Capitalists!"*.)

AUDIENCE Kill the Capitalists! Kill the Capitalists!

AL GORE Hallelujah! Hallelujah! My children, today is a very special day! Today is the day of the ceremony of the Holy Ice Core!

(*TECHIE holds up sign "Cheering and applause!"*)