

Antarctica

A One-Act

By Hank Willenbrink

Contact:
208 Ridge St.
Clark's Summit, PA 18411
hankwillenbrink@gmail.com
(502) 314-3896

Characters

Shackleton, an explorer	M
Mandy, a tv journalist	F
Gerald, an audiophile (former barbershop quartet member)	M
Amy, an Inuit	F

Place

A journey to the South Pole.

PRELIMINARIES.

(Amy, Mandy, Shackleton, and Gerald are aligned as if they were going to have their picture taken. A record plays. They are not smiling. They smile suddenly and reconfigure themselves. Then smile again and reconfigure. This is like a small dance. They sing along with the record. Suddenly, there is the sound of the earth ripping apart. Lights fade. The sound of ice crunching.)

OPERATION DEEFPREEZE.

(Mandy and Shackleton, alone. She eats a sno-cone. Loudly. Crunch ice and slurpy syrup.)

Mandy

Do you ever wonder why artificial flavoring never tastes like the real thing?

Shackleton

No.

Mandy

And Grape. Grape is the worst.

Shackleton

Maybe artificial grape is how grapes are supposed to taste.

Mandy

Then why do they call it “artificial?”

Shackleton

You shouldn’t go.

Mandy

If it was natural *tasting*, they’d call it natural.

Shackleton

Who can tell anymore.

(Beat.)

Happy people don’t eat sno-cones.

Mandy

What do they eat?

Shackleton

Eggplant?

(He takes a bite out of her sno-cone.)

Mandy

Get your own.

(He takes another bite.)

Hey!

Shackleton

What?

Mandy

Mine.

Shackleton

You eat too many.

Mandy

I'm on the ice diet.

Shackleton

What does that mean?

Mandy

Ice and Syrup. I'm a vegan.

Shackleton

Truth-o-meter. Beeeeeeeep.

Mandy

Fine. I'm not a vegan.

Shackleton

Ice tears the enamel off your teeth.

Mandy

So do razor blades.

Shackleton

Mandy. Imagery.

Mandy

It'll grow back.

You shouldn't go. Shackleton

Teeth grow...right? Mandy

Enamel. Shackleton

Teeth enamel grows. Has to. Mandy

"Local News Anchor" isn't a position of prestige. Shackleton

Tastes like you, George. Mandy

The Falkland Islands. Shackleton

Sugary. Mandy

You don't even speak Falkland-ian-ese! Shackleton

Makes your teeth hurt. Mandy

We own a cat. Shackleton

I think I lost some enamel. Mandy

And some plants. Shackleton

Nah. Mandy

You water them. Shackleton

Look at my teeth. Mandy

So, you can't go. Shackleton

Is my enamel gone? Mandy

(Shackleton looks.)

Enamel is transparent. Shackleton

So am i. Mandy

(She vanishes. Maybe her smile stays. Just for a second. Shift.)

MEN WANTED.

(Elsewhere, Gerald groans. He is sprawled out in what looks like a painful position. The crew must be assembled before the trek can begin.)

What's wrong with you? Shackleton

Gerald groans. It sounds like: "Some asshole way-layed me."

Did you see a girl go by? She's cute. Answers to "Mandy" Shackleton

Gerald groans. It sounds like "she's a magical fox."

Shut up.

Gerald groans again. This time he seems to say: "I will not."

Do you know where Falkland Islands are?

Groan: "Didn't we bomb them in the 80s? I think it's in South America."

Is that far?

Groan: "Uh, no."

I wasn't totally against a long-distance thing.

Groan: "It would never work out."

How do you know?

Groan: "Mandy? I think I took her out on a date."

Liar.

Groan: "Yeah. I bought her tic-tacs."

Whatever. Catch you 'round.

(He starts off. Then:)

Groan: "What? Are you just going to leave me here?"

Do you need some help?

Groan: "Yes!"

Fine. I'll tell you what, if I help you, do you promise to repay me?

Groan: "Fine."

Deal.

(Shackleton helps Gerald up.)

Gerald

Thanks.

Shackleton

So.

Gerald

What?

Shackleton

You said you'd repay me.

Gerald

Already?

Shackleton

Have you ever been on a trek?

(Light Shift. The expedition has begins. South.)

HI, I NAME THINGS.

(If there was a sign behind Shackleton here, it would read: "Men Wanted: For Hazardous Journey. Small Wages, Bitter Cold, Long Months of Complete Darkness, constant Danger, Safe Return Doubtful. Honor & Recognition in case of Success.)

Shackleton

I. I have discovered. I have been all over. I NAME things. I have named and named for you. I have called things by your name when they were not you and I have put your name over things that were previously named with different names. I discovered The South Mandy Sea. This is south of the North Mandy Sea. Which forms the Mandy Ocean and the Mandy Islands and the Mandy causeway over the Mandy Stream that feeds the Mandy River flowing from the Mandy-tops. From the Mandy of Mandy to the Mandy-ness of un-Mandy. I have done these things. I. I have done these things. I have not created a flag. I have not gotten a tattoo, nor a bad habit. I name. For you. I for you.

(Light shift.)

TRIAL AND TRIBULATION.

(Shackleton scales a small rise and throws his pack down. He is breathing heavily. Gerald follows closely behind, less winded, carrying a small portable record player. He sits close by. Somewhere, a mysterious Inuit is watching.)

Shackleton

You're always sitting.

Gerald

My legs hurt.

Shackleton

I can't breathe.

Gerald

Would you like my inhaler?

Shackleton

No.

Gerald
Would you like to sit down?

Shackleton
No.

Gerald
Want to split a sandwich?

Shackleton
No. No. No! You know why this is so easy for you? Huh? Cause you're always sitting down and eating sandwiches! What're you going to do when the going gets tough? Who's gonna let you sit down and feed you sandwiches then? This shit's hard Gerald, and if you can't get used to it, I suggest you pack up, cause explorers aren't pussies.

Gerald
I packed a lot of sandwiches.

(Silence. Gerald digs into a pack and takes out a sandwich. He unwraps it from the plastic, and takes a big bite. Shackleton looks back at him quickly, meanly. Would you like some? Shackleton shakes his head.)

Do you want to listen to some music?

Shackleton
Fine. But not any of that pansy crap you blared all through Central America. I want something heroic.

Gerald
You liked it.

Shackleton
No I didn't. I was coddling you.

Gerald
Oh.

(Gerald opens a bag and digs around. He takes out an imaginary record, opens the record player, blows on the record and puts it on. It's Beethoven's 5th.)

Gerald
(Singing as if he were the record) BA-BA-BA-BAHHH! BA-BA-BA-BAHHHH!

Shackleton
Played! Gimme something new. With some soul.

(Gerald frowns, takes off the record, finds a new one, repeats. This one is Lynard Skynard – “Sweet Home Alabama.”)

Gerald

Ber-da-ber-dah, ba-ber-da-ber-dah,
Ba-der-der, da-da-da-da

Shackleton

What the H are you doing? Huh? Take that thing off!

(Gerald makes the sound of a record scratching.)

Thank you. You know, I don't want to listen to anything, Gerald. Alright? So lets just sit here. And enjoy the quiet.

(Silence again. Gerald pulls out a new record, without Shackleton seeing him. He puts it on. Kansas – “Carry on my Wayward son.” As loud as possible.)

Gerald

Carry on my wayward son!
There'll be peace when you are done!
Lay your weary head to rest!
Don't you cry no more!

(Shackleton gets up quickly and runs after Gerald who continues with the guitar part as he is pursued down the mountain.)

Shackleton

(As Gerald sings the Guitar Part.)
I can do this with out you!
Come back
You shit!

Gerald

(With Shackleton's line.)
Ba dada dah!
Ba dada dah!
Ba- da-dadla

Shackleton

I don't need you, understand? I can get there by myself. It's only the South Pole. What's so hard? I don't need some half-assed southern rocker following me.

(Beat.)

And I'm taking all the sandwiches!

(Mandy appears.)

Give him the sandwiches.	Mandy
No.	Shackleton
George.	Mandy
Fine.	Shackleton
Hi, Mandy.	Gerald
Hi.	Mandy
You know her?	Shackleton
We went on a date.	Gerald
Gerald.	Mandy
I paid didn't I?	Gerald
For Tic-tacs.	Mandy
Still.	Gerald
You vermin!	Shackleton
George! Stop it. I'm here to help.	Mandy

Shackleton

I don't need any help.

Mandy

Really? Because it looks like you almost lost your whole expedition to a Classic Rock related disaster.

Shackleton

Appearances can be deceiving.

Mandy

I see all.

Shackleton

Cut it out, Mandy. You lie a lot too.

Gerald

A lot is not always.

Shackleton

I gave the cat away.

Mandy

I know.

Shackleton

I gave it to the homeless guy who thinks he's a pirate.

Mandy

No you didn't.

Shackleton

But, I could have.

Mandy

This is not the way to win me back.

Shackleton

I'm tired of all this cryptic female shit, Mandy. I just wanna cuddle up and watch TV. Ok? So can you stop all this and just come home?

Mandy

I can't. I'm not here.

Shackleton

Yes you are.

Mandy

No. I'm not. You've only begun. And I know you're looking, so, you won't find me. And even if you do find me. It takes a lot more than finding a person to win one back. I find people all the time. It's part of my job.

Shackleton

You know I hate it when you're smug.

Mandy

Sorry.

Shackleton

So, what am I supposed to do? Just let you go?

Mandy

Yes.

Shackleton

Unacceptable.

Mandy

That's the way things are.

(She goes.)

Shackleton

Mandy!

Gerald

My thigh hurts.

Shackleton

So what! Didn't you see what just happened?

Gerald

What do you mean?

Shackleton

Mandy. Appearing. Out of nowhere.

Gerald

Oh, yeah. That was weird.

Shackleton

Damnit Gerald. I gotta get her back. And I'll be damned if your weak legs are gonna hold me up.

Gerald

Where are we going?

Shackleton

We're going to make sure she finds us.

(Shift. Shackleton turns to see Amy, the Inuit. A moment. They connect. Even Gerald sees this. Amy motions to them to follow her. Shackleton does. Gerald waits for a moment, behind, when he notices this:)

Gerald

Wait for me!

(Further south. Lights shift.)

IN BY INUIT.

(Amy is an Inuit. She lives in an igloo.)

Shackleton

I want to live here. Forever, with *you people*. Live here in ice and hunt whales and burn blubber. Make love by blubber light.

Amy

Oh, we don't do that anymore. Burn blubber.
What do you mean "you people"?

Shackleton

You know, you people.
Native Americans.

Amy

You're not in America.

Shackleton

What about ice-fishing, do you guys still do that?

Amy

Sometimes. The South Pole?

Shackleton

No, the *South* Pole.

Amy
I said the *South* Pole.

Shackleton
You did?

Amy
Yeah.

Shackleton
Cause, there are only two poles you know. There's no "East" or "West" Pole. Cause the world is round.

Amy
I'm Amy.

Shackleton
George. George Shackleton.

Amy
Like the guy who crossed the South Pole.

Shackleton
Who?

Amy
Shackleton. Ernest *Shackleton*.

Shackleton
Uncle Ernie?

Amy
He crossed the Antarctic continent.

Shackleton
Look, honey. You're cute, but you've been had. My uncle Ernie paid some guy a couple hundred kopeks to hitch down to Argentina, throw some dogs on the sled, stick his face in ice and say he crossed the South Pole. It's a myth, all right. The closest Ernest Shackleton ever got to the South Pole was the time he found a frozen potato chip stuffed between the couch cushions.

Amy
He called his boat the "Endurance."

Shackleton
You should've seen that chip.

*(An uncomfortable pause. Another hero of Western Exploration falls.
Amy thinks. She is a full body thinker.)*

Amy
The South Pole?

Shackleton
YES! That's what I said! I'm going to discover the South *fucking* Pole!

Amy
Played.

Shackleton
Really?

Amy
Yeah.

Shackleton
Totally?

Amy
Pretty close.

Shackleton
But.

Amy
A Hawaiian Island, now that's a trek.

Shackleton
What do you mean?

Amy
There's all that – Ocean.

Shackleton
The South Pole is surrounded by Ocean.

Amy
They surf sharks in Hawaii.

Shackleton
The South Pole has penguins.

Amy
No shit?

Shackleton
Yeah. They live underground in group-homes.

Amy
Are they ferocious?

Shackleton
Um, no.

Amy
You're not helping your case.

Shackleton
I think someone's died from a penguin attack.

Amy
Well in that case. I'd be impressed.

Shackleton
Not just saying that?

Amy
Nope.

Shackleton
Sweet!

(He kisses her cheek, lovingly. She looks at him. They make out. Big time. As they make out, Gerald enters. They don't notice him.)

Amy
We should go to Hawaii.

Shackleton
The South Pole is cold.

Amy
I don't like cold.
I like poi.

Shackleton
Polar bears.

Luaus. Amy

Icebergs. Shackleton

Sno cones. Amy

Mandy. Shackleton

(Shackleton places his hand in Amy's shirt. She is frightened.)

(simultaneous) Did you. Gerald

(simultaneous) What was. Amy

(simultaneous) Woah momma. Shackleton

Who's the dumbass, now? Gerald

I. Shackleton

You better write her a note. Gerald

It was a mistake. An error in perception. The air's different out here. Shackleton

(Amy and Shackleton move close, again. He places his hand in front of her stomach. He grabs the air tightly around her.)

Mandy. Shackleton

Not my name. Amy

Oops. Shackleton

(Shift.)

SEALERS AND SAILORS.

(The frontier. Gerald and Shackleton run on and collapse..)

Amy

I am not fully Inuit. I'm one sixteenth. This is enough to make some money if I were in one of those tribes that has casinos. But no one can make any money off casinos in arctic climates. It's counter-intuitive. Vegas? Hot. South Pole? Not so much. I do have 140 words for snow, which is nice. But honestly, being one-sixteenth of anything doesn't have that much of an ethnic currency. Sure it's nice to fill out "Other" on those forms that want your "optional" race. Why can't they just tell you they want your race? Is ethnicity really optional? I filled out "Other" for my race at the Justice of the Peace. But, I didn't change my name. And things have been good. I was kicking it, South American style. I'm not really supposed to be down here. I mean, we're an arctic people not an Antarctic people. But who wants to live that close to their ex?

Gerald

No one called.

Shackleton

I don't see why you're always checking your messages.

Gerald

Some one might call.

Shackleton

You aren't the kind of guy people leave messages for.

Gerald

What kind of guy am I?

Shackleton

The kind that people dial by mistake and talk to and forget that they weren't meaning to talk to you at all that they really wanted to talk to someone else, but what the hell, you're on the line now and they might as well talk to you. They probably lost the other number anyway.

Gerald

Do you think someone's called yet?

Shackleton

No one leaves messages for me either.

Gerald
I wish you hadn't messed things up with that girl.

Shackleton
That's not nice.

Gerald
We had to do a lot of running after you fouled everything up.

Shackleton
I never said this was going to be easy.

Gerald
You didn't say it would involve running.

Shackleton
She wasn't the girl for me.

Gerald
You *thought* she was.

Shackleton
Stop it.

(Amy has been watching. She shares a moment with Gerald similar to the one she shared with Shackleton. Gerald follows her. Light Shift.)

IN BY INUIT (VERS. 2.0).

(Amy's igloo. Gerald and Amy alone. He's nervous about this. Amy has a small tray of appetizers set out.)

Amy
Blubber-cicle?

Gerald
What's in it?

Amy
Whale blubber. Some Gulcose. And a stick.

Gerald
You kill whales?

Amy
Yeppers.

Aren't they, like, endangered?

Gerald

No. We've got plenty of whales. But we only eat them on special occasions. We don't want everyone to eat them all the time.

Amy

Wow, you're really into your heritage.

Gerald

What's the future without the past?

Amy

Uh, it's still the future isn't it?

Gerald

That was rhetorical. Blubber-cicle?

Amy

What flavor?

Gerald

Lime.

Amy

Sure.

Gerald

(He takes a blubber-cicle and licks it, absently)

So, what do you do for *fun*?

Amy

Besides thumb-war?

Gerald

Yes.

Amy

That's a toughy.

Gerald

Do you have a girlfriend?

Amy

Gerald
I'm uncomfortable answering that question.

Amy
Why?

Gerald
I don't believe that I should divulge aspects of my personal life willy-nilly. Especially with someone who had an involvement with a personal friend.

Amy
Shackleton?

Gerald
Yeah. I saw.

Amy
I have 140 words for snow.

Gerald
Do you use all of them?

Amy
No. Honestly, it's a bit of a pain in the ass.

Gerald
I'm single.

Amy
I could tell.

Gerald
How?

Amy
You act single.

Gerald
Oh! Music! I love music!

Amy
Really?

Gerald
OH yeah. Apeshit for music, I am.

Amy
That's nice.

Gerald
I used to have an a cappella singing group and then one of the guys learned to play an instrument. And this was at the same time that I bought my record player and I felt kinda guilty about it. So we broke up. I used to sing all my music, before I got records. Then I lost my records.

Amy
I hate music.

Gerald
You what?

Amy
I hate music.

Gerald
That's stupid.

Amy
I do.

Gerald
How can you hate music?

Amy
It's pretty easy.

Gerald
Is that part of your heritage?

Amy
No.

Gerald
What do you listen to?

Amy
What do you mean?

Gerald
What do you *hear*?

Amy

I can't tell you.

Gerald

Why?

Amy

I hear it. I can't explain it to you.

Gerald

You can tell me.
I'm trustworthy.

Amy

I hear all sorts of things. Things you aren't supposed to hear. Special things.

Gerald

You should listen to music!

Amy

I don't like it.

Gerald

That makes no sense. Music is to be enjoyed. To be savored.

Amy

People like you make me hate it.

Gerald

It's...religious.

Amy

People with too many cds in the back of their car and the music so loud they can't hear them clack together.

Gerald

It's beautiful.

Amy

Click-clacking cheap plastic.

Gerald

How can you not like it?

Amy

It's another thing to own.

Gerald

WHAT DO YOU HEAR?

Amy

I can hear inside your heart.
Here, I'll show you.

(Lights shift.)

COO COO CHA-CHOO.

(Shackleton sits alone. Mandy is a Walrus. She watches him. If there was a sign here, it would read: "Welcome to the Falkland Islands. Beware Earthquakes." But Shackleton wouldn't see it.)

Shackleton

What do you want?
I can see you Walrus. Okay. So just don't pretend that you don't see me.
I'm right here!

(Beat)

I'm a little confused—
Well, you try dragging some bonehead down here.
And it's getting colder and I'm pretty sure I'm under that hole in the ozone and now I've got some Walrus staring at me. And: No, I don't expect you to understand. You're just a Walrus. You probably don't even speak *English*.

(Beat)

Do you know how to get to the Faulkland Islands?
Didn't think so.
I used to know someone who moved there, you know. We had a thing. And...don't hate, Walrus. I just wanted to, you know,...see her before I went on my trip. But, I think I've gone too far. You see, I'm an explorer. I'm going to discover the South Pole. And I'm going to name it the Mandy Pole and then Mandy will come and she'll be really happy and she'll be the real Mandy not some kind of crazy thing that may or may not be happening in my mind like with the Inuit lady.

(Beat)

The thing about Mandy.
She made me feel stupid. In the good way. In the way that you're supposed to feel stupid around people. Like you have a lot to learn. But, when she left.
I never shed a tear. I.
And then when I thought I'd never see her again.

Like she was gone. Forever.
I knew that I couldn't do that.
I can't do that.
Hello Walrus.
I name you: Mandy.

(We see Amy. A small delusion, but then again, he is talking to a Walrus. She comes to him. She kisses him. Mandy the Walrus is fuming with jealousy.)

Amy

Not my name.

(She places her hand in Shackleton's shirt. He becomes frightened.)

Not. My. Name.

(Light shift.)

END OF EXCERPT
To Read More, Contact the AUTHOR
hankwillenbrink@gmail.com