



THE PRIVATE LIVES OF ESKIMOS

BY KEN URBAN



DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.



THE PRIVATE LIVES OF ESKIMOS

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For Matthew. As always.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to the various spammers who fill my Junk folder every day for inspiration.

Thanks to the actors, directors, and designers who have worked on this play. Special thanks to the MacDowell Colony for time and support during the writing of this play.

THE PRIVATE LIVES OF ESKIMOS received its first production by the Committee Theatre Company (Ken Urban, Artistic Director) at the Linhart Theater in New York City, opening on September 12, 2007. It was directed by Dylan McCullough; the set design was by Lee Savage; the lighting design was by Thom Weaver; the costume design was by Emily Rebholz; and the sound design was by Elizabeth Rhodes. The cast was as follows:

MARVIN..... Michael Tisdale
THE WOMAN..... Carol Monda
DETECTIVE/CHRISTINE/ESKIMO..... Melissa Miller
TOM/COP/ESKIMO..... Andrew Breving

An earlier version of THE PRIVATE LIVES OF ESKIMOS was produced by the Mill (Jaclyn Biskup, Artistic Director) at Stage Left Theatre in Chicago, opening on January 11, 2009. It was directed by Jaclyn Biskup; the set design was by William Anderson; the lighting design was by Jessica Harpenau; the costume design was by Angela Burkhardt; and the sound design was by Matt Test. The cast was as follows:

MARVIN..... Adam Breske
THE WOMAN..... Megan Larmer
CHRISTINE/ESKIMO..... Darci Nalepa
THERAPIST/DETECTIVE/ESKIMO..... Alison Connelly
TOM/COP/ESKIMO..... Joel Ewing

THE PRIVATE LIVES OF ESKIMOS was produced by Open Circle Theater (Ron Sandahl, Artistic Director) in Seattle, opening on March 19, 2010. It was directed by Gary Zinter; the set design was by Ron Sandahl; the lighting design was by Regan MacStravic; and the costume design and music were by Rodney Shrader. The cast was as follows:

MARVIN..... Aaron Allshouse
THE WOMAN..... Retha Tinker
CHRISTINE/ESKIMO..... Flora McGill
THERAPIST/DETECTIVE/ESKIMO..... Lisa Viertel
TOM/COP/ESKIMO..... Josh Hartvigson

CHARACTERS

MARVIN, a disaffected urban dweller in mourning, 30s.

THE WOMAN, a mysterious older woman, face unseen, 40s.

CHRISTINE, Marvin's girlfriend, 30s.

TOM, Marvin's coworker, 20s.

COP, male, who loves/hates donuts.

THERAPIST, female, who might be in the wrong profession.

DETECTIVE, female, who is not, in fact, a detective, but a VBP
(Very Bad Person).

THE ESKIMOS, more like diseased yetis or Teletubbies gone wrong.

ELIZABETH, Marvin's sister, a voice on a cell phone.

PLACE

An East Coast city.

TIME

The present:
Fall (September to December).

NOTES

The play is to be performed by a cast of five (2M, 3W) with this doubling:

The same actress plays Christine and Eskimo 1.

The same actress plays the Therapist, the Detective, and Eskimo 2.

The same actor plays Tom, the cop, and Eskimo 3.

An actress (20s) outside of the company should provide the voice of Elizabeth.

All punctuation and spacing is intentional and gives a sense of the line's delivery.

A slash / indicates that the following lines begin to overlap at that point.

Text in chevrons (< text >) designates the familiar electronic voice of the cell phone, which should be heard by the characters and audience alike.

Text written IN SMALL CAPS designates the language of the ESKIMOS: the language of SPAM. When the Eskimos speak, they speak fast fast fast and without intonation. Even when you think it's fast, it's not fast enough.

The Detective speaks with a bad Eastern European accent that she loses in key moments. For visual clues of what she looks like, see David Lynch's *Wild At Heart*.

The title of each scene is an "Eskimo" word for snow completely invented by the author. Ideally, the scene titles should appear in some way before each scene. Apologies to any actual Eskimos and/or linguists who study these languages.

*I look to my Eskimo friend
When I'm
down
down
down*

— Damien Rice, “Eskimo”

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PROLOGUE

A sliver of light on a cell phone — not a recent model — on a futon in an undistinguished heterosexual male urban living space.

Voices in the dark.

The greeting.

MARVIN'S VOICE. Hi. This is Marvin. Can't take your call. So leave a message. Thanks.

<Beep>

TOM'S VOICE. King of Dude-o-ronomy, it's your office amigo, the Tomster. Get to the office pronto, buddy boy. Supervisor's super into your database idea. HA! I crack myself up. Anyhoo, he wants to discuss it ASAP-a-mundo. Peace out.

< Message Erased >

< Next Message >

CHRISTINE'S VOICE. Marv, why aren't you picking up? Did you leave your phone at home again? We need food. We don't have any food at home. Maybe pick something up. Did you leave your phone, Marv?

< Message Erased >

< Next Message >

The sounds of alarms, falling metal, people crying, screams.

Then a woman's voice. She is crying, trying to get her final words out.

LIZ. Marvin, Marvin. It's me. It's me, Marv —
I'm calling 'cause something's happened on the train and and —
< Message Saved >

A hellish wind begins to howl.

Black snow begins to fall. In the darkness, three figures.

Though we cannot fully see them, let me describe the Eskimos for you now. The Eskimos are more like Yetis from Doctor Who or goth Teletubbies. Due to the toxic landscape, they have a molting problem: burnt skin and blisters.

Their faces are black voids, lacking all features.

Their voices — rapid SPAM spoken without intonation — can be heard, soft at first, then louder and more manic.

ESKIMO 1. (*Quiet.*) YOUR LOAN REQUEST APPROVED YOUR LOAN REQUEST APPROVED / YOUR LOAN REQUEST APPROVED

ESKIMO 2. (*Quiet.*) ALL I DO WANT YOU TO DO IS TO ACT AS THE DEPOSITOR OF THE SAID MONEY BY PROVIDING FOR ME YOUR PERSONAL INFORMATION LIKE YOUR FULL NAMES, ADDRESS, AGE TELEPHONE / AND FAX NUMBERS OCCUPATION

ESKIMO 3. (*Quiet.*) THESE SUPPRESS BLOOD SUGAR SPIKES AND THE FORMATION OF EXCESS BODY FAT FOLLOWING MEALS, ESPECIALLY MEALS / CONTAINING REFINED CARBOHYDRATES

ESKIMO 1. (*Louder.*) SAVE ON YOUR MEDS RIGHT NOW SAVE ON YOUR MEDS RIGHT NOW / SAVE ON YOUR MEDS RIGHT NOW

ESKIMO 2. (*Louder.*) SOFTWARE YOU NEED AT PRICES YOU WANT SOFTWARE YOU NEED AT PRICES YOU WANT / SOFTWARE YOU NEED AT PRICES YOU WANT

ESKIMO 3. (*Louder.*) SHE WILL LOVE YOU MORE THAN ANY OTHER SHE WILL LOVE YOU MORE THAN ANY OTHER / SHE WILL LOVE YOU MORE THAN ANY OTHER

ESKIMO 1. (*Loudest.*) YOU WILL NEVER FEEL ENOUGH / YOU WILL NEVER FEEL ENOUGH YOU WILL NEVER FEEL ENOUGH YOU WILL

THE PRIVATE LIVES OF ESKIMOS

by Ken Urban

2M, 3W (doubling)

After the sudden death of his sister, Marvin turns to his girlfriend, a therapist, and a co-worker for comfort, only to find himself alone in his grief. When he loses his cell phone, Marvin falls for the mysterious woman who has procured his phone. Marvin, however, soon finds himself embroiled in a dark underworld when a threatening detective shows up at his office, making it clear that the mysterious woman on the phone is not who she says is.

“A play for the electronic post-9/11 age by a prizewinning, surreal writer who captures well the absurd elements of contemporary life.”

—**The Seattle Times**

“A taut and gripping contemporary techno-thriller — the kind of tale Hitchcock might spin were he alive in our electronic age.”

—**NYTheatre.com**

“Exceptionally well written.” —**WBEZ, Chicago Public Radio**

Also by Ken Urban

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