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# **The Royal Society of Antarctica**

By

MAT SMART

**Dramatic Publishing Company**

Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

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“*The Royal Society of Antarctica* was developed with support from the Playwrights’ Center’s Core Writer Program.”

“*The Royal Society of Antarctica* was workshopped at JAW: A Playwrights’ Festival produced by Portland Center Stage.”

“It was also supported by a residency and workshop at SPACE at Ryder Farm as part of The Working Farm program.”

“It was developed through the Dorothy Strelsin New American Writers Group at Primary Stages in New York City.”

“It was supported by a residency and reading at the New Harmony Project.”

for Ghost Shark, Stinky T, MarMar, Ling, Daddy, Goose,  
Juicebox, Lolo, Faunie, Annie, Lan, James S. Roth, Compost,  
Trigger, Elizabeth, Duncan, Jeanne, Leslie, CJ, JCS,  
and all of the 2011-2012 McMurdo Janos  
who made my time cleaning toilets at the bottom of the  
world unforgettable

and for Marika  
who helped me get there

*The Royal Society of Antarctica* received its world premier at The Gift Theatre in Chicago. The play ran from Feb. 26, 2015, to May 24, 2015. (Michael Patrick Thornton, Artistic Director; Rita Thornton, Managing Director)

**CAST:**

Dee ..... Aila Peck  
UT Tom ..... Paul D’Addario  
UT Tim ..... Jay Worthington  
Tamara ..... Brittany Burch  
Pam ..... Lynda Newton  
Ace\* ..... John Kelly Connolly  
Miller ..... Brian Keys  
Jake ..... Kyle Zornes  
Understudies ..... Bethany Arrington, Bobby Johnson,  
Curtis Powell, Justine Serino

\*For select performances, the role of Ace was performed by Sean Parris.

**PRODUCTION:**

Director ..... John Gawlik  
Scenic Designer ..... Megan Truscott  
Lighting & Projections Designer ..... Michael Stanfill  
Costume Designer ..... Alarie Hammock  
Sound Designer & Composer ..... Mikey Moran  
Stage Manager ..... Cori James  
Technical Director ..... David Preis  
Properties ..... Rita Thornton  
Casting Directors ..... Hillary Clemens, Emjoy Gavino  
Assistant Director ..... Chika Ike

The development of *The Royal Society of Antarctica* was supported by a workshop in PlayLabs and in the Core Writer Program at the Playwrights' Center in Minneapolis.

It was also supported by a residency and workshop at SPACE at Ryder Farm as part of The Working Farm program.

It was developed through the Dorothy Strelsin New American Writers Group at Primary Stages in New York City.

It was supported by a residency and reading at the New Harmony Project.

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# The Royal Society of Antarctica

## CHARACTERS

DEE (w): mid-20s, a janitor.

UT TOM (m): mid-40s, a utility technician.

UT TIM (m): 30s, the lead janitor.

TAMARA (w): mid-20s, a dining attendant.

PAM (w): mid-40s, a fuel technician.

ACE (m): 30s or older, an FEMC worker.

MILLER (m): 21, a Naval Academy midshipman.

JAKE (m): late 20s, a biology grad student.

PLACE: McMurdo Station, Antarctica.

TIME:

Act I: October

Act II: December and January

Act III: January 17th



## PRODUCTION NOTES

The sun is out 24 hours a day.

There are no blackouts between scenes.

It is always bright.

All of the characters carry plastic Nalgene bottles. They drink water frequently.

There are two intermissions, one after Act I and another after Act II. Do not combine Acts II and III.

# The Royal Society of Antarctica

## ACT I

*(Inside Building 155. UT TOM and ACE look at the board with the flight manifests.*

*After a moment, UT TIM enters.*

*All three of them have mohawks.)*

UT TIM. Good morning, UT Tom.

UT TOM. Good morning, UT Tim.

UT TIM. Is she coming today?

UT TOM. Nope. Boomeranged.

UT TIM. Boomerang-danged again?—It's Con Three out there. You could have a picnic.

The Air Force is getting so prissy about what they'll land in.

UT TOM. Better safe than sorry.

UT TIM. I know, I just—I can't wait to meet her. She's like a celebrity.

UT TOM. Hey—she's off limits.

UT TIM. Dude, come on—I'm not gonna—I'm just saying it's cool that she's the only person ever born at McMurdo.

UT TOM. She's off limits.

UT TIM. I'm gonna be her supervisor—I know she's off limits.

ACE. I'm not gonna be her supervisor.

*(UT TIM and UT TOM give ACE a “don't talk to us, creep” look.)*

UT TIM. I've never been boomeranged. Kind of curious what it'd be like.

UT TOM. It sucks. You fly to Denver for training—then L.A.—then fourteen hours to New Zealand—then six hours in the belly of a C-17 just to turn around and fly six hours back—then to try again the next day? It sucks.

UT TIM. But to come so far and get so close to the bottom of the world—only to have to turn around—isn't it kind of ...

UT TOM. It sucks.

UT TIM. Poetic?

*(TAMARA enters.)*

TAMARA *(quietly, to herself)*. The party don't start till I walk in.

*(TAMARA exits. UT TIM watches her. UT TOM watches UT TIM watch her.)*

UT TIM. What?

UT TOM. Don't go there, man.

UT TIM. Um ...

UT TOM. Could you—for once—just enjoy your time down here without having nonstop drama with some idiot?

*(PAM enters. She walks by UT TIM and UT TOM. She's not going to stop.)*

UT TIM. Hey, Pam.

UT TOM *(quietly)*. Don't, man.

UT TIM. Pam! How are you?

PAM *(exploding)*. What!

UT TIM. How are you?

PAM. I'm fine. I can't believe you actually got a mohawk for the *Mad Max* party. You look like a fucking idiot.

*(PAM exits.)*

UT TOM. Why'd you do that, man?

UT TIM. Are you two really not going to talk at all this summer? It's weird.

UT TOM. That's what we agreed on. It's better this way.

UT TIM. I think I look badass in this mohawk.

UT TOM. You absolutely do.

UT TIM. We both do.

UT TOM. Yeah, we do. We're badass. UT Tim and UT Tom: two badass motherfuckers.

UT TIM. And you know what!

UT TOM. What!

UT TIM. One day until Biscuits and Honey Butter!

\* \* \*

*(Outside the chalet. UT TOM waits. He wears his Carhartt jacket, gloves and sunglasses. A couple of people walk by wearing full extreme cold weather gear—white bunny boots, snow pants, Big Red jacket, balaclava, ski goggles, gloves. No part of their face or skin is exposed.)*

UT TOM. Delijah?

MAN 1 *(played by the actor playing MILLER)*. What?

UT TOM. Sorry.

*(To the next person.)* Dee?

MAN 2 *(played by the actor playing JAKE)*. Nope, sorry, man. You know which way to one-five-five?

UT TOM. That way. Big blue building.

MAN 2. That's where we pick up our room keys?

UT TOM. Yep. Welcome to the Ice.

MAN 2. Thanks, man.

MAN 1 *(quietly, to MAN 2)*. You think this all would be a little more organized.

MAN 2. I know, right.

*(They exit. UT TOM waits. Another person comes out in full ECW gear. No part of their face or skin can be seen.)*

UT TOM. Delijah?

MAN 3 *(played by actor playing ACE)*. Nope.

UT TOM. Sorry.

*(UT TOM waits. A couple more people walk by in ECW gear. He checks their nametags on the front of their Big Reds, but he has to get pretty close to do so.)*

UT TOM *(cont'd)*. Sorry.

*(He waits.*

*He waits.*

*Another person walks out and stares at the Sound.*

*UT TOM walks up to her. He looks at her nametag.)*

DEE. Is it real?

Am I really here?

UT TOM. Welcome to the Ice.

DEE. We were boomeranged three times. To see the Ice out the window and hear them say, “We are being diverted back to Christchurch.”

UT TOM. Hurry up and wait. That’s how we do things.

DEE. How do I know it’s real?

UT TOM. ... Set your alarm for two a.m. Then walk outside.

DEE. It’ll look like this.

UT TOM. It’ll look like this.

*(DEE with her goggles on—UT TOM with his sunglasses on—look at the blindingly bright sunlight all around them.)*

UT TOM (*cont’d*). The sun won’t set for another four months.

That’s how you know you ain’t in Kansas anymore.

DEE. Outstanding.

UT TOM. You don’t need your ECW gear anymore. It’s just a precaution for the flight.

*(DEE doesn’t take off her gear. Her face still cannot be seen.)*

UT TOM (*cont’d*). Ten degrees. No wind. This is a heat wave.

*(They continue to look out.)*

DEE (*pointing*). Those are the Dry Valleys?

UT TOM. Yep.

And those are the Royal Societies:

Mt. Lister.

Mt. Dromedary.

Mt. Rucker.

Mt. Roper.

Mt. Huggins.

Mt. Hooker.

DEE. Those are the most beautiful mountains I have ever seen.

*(DEE takes off her goggles and balaclava. We see her face for the first time.*

*She breathes in. She breathes out.*

*She pulls off her hairband and lets down her hair.*

*She lets out a long, loud, joyous yell.*

*She breathes in deeply. She breathes out. She breathes in.*

*UT TOM watches DEE.)*

DEE *(cont'd)*. I love how the cold

feels

in my lungs.

*(She breathes in and out.)*

In my heart.

*(She breathes in and out.)*

Look at this place.

Look.

Look.

*(She notices UT TOM staring at her.)*

What?

UT TOM. ... I'm UT Tom.

DEE. I'm Dec.

UT TOM. I'm UT Tom.

DEE. ... OK.

UT TOM. Tommy.

DEE. You're Tommy?

UT TOM. Yep.

DEE. Oh my god.

*(DEE hugs UT TOM.)*

UT TOM. Your father emailed me. Told me to look out for you.

DEE. It is ... an honor to meet you.

UT TOM *(bowing)*. The honor is mine.

But this is the second time. You just don't remember the first one.

DEE. Why do you have a mohawk?

UT TOM. The *Mad Max* party was on Saturday night. It's a shame you missed it. But you'll be around for MAAG, the Dolly Parton party, the Royal Society Ball. There's still some good theme parties to be had.

DEE. Crap, I almost forgot.

*(DEE takes a small, glass bottle out of her pocket. She kneels down and puts some snow in it.)*

UT TOM. What are you doing?

DEE. I wanted to keep some snow from when I first arrived.

UT TOM. You can't do that.

DEE. I can't take a little snow?

UT TOM. It's not me. It's the Antarctic Treaty.

DEE. I know what the Antarctic Treaty is, but scientists in the field use snow to melt for water. For cooking. For—



UT TOM. That's in support of science. Not for a souvenir.

This is one of the only places on Earth that countries have agreed not to mess with. Nobody owns it. Nobody can mine it. Nobody can take anything or leave anything. Can't so much as pee outside. This is ... holy land.

*(They look out over the Sound.*

*They look at the mountains.*

*Beat. DEE dumps the snow out of the bottle and back onto the ground.)*

DEE. Can I at least take a picture?

UT TOM. Yes.

DEE. OK, cool—just checking.

*(DEE takes out her camera and gives it to UT TOM.)*

UT TOM. Smile.

DEE. No smiling. I want it to look like an old photograph of an Antarctic explorer.

UT TOM *(in an English accent)*. OK then, Captain Scott.

One. Two.

*(DEE looks stonefaced, determined.)*

Three.

*(He takes the photo.)*

... I have been on Search and Rescue every season of the twenty-four summers I've come down here. I know Ross Island better than anyone. And *every* time I go out, I still hope we'll find her. Twenty-four years later. I hope we'll find her body, her jacket, something—just so we'll *know*.

... You look just like Shannon.

One more.

*(He takes another photo. He gives the camera back to DEE.)*

DEE. Thank you.

UT TOM. Put on your sunglasses. Hole in the ozone is right above us.

*(DEE and UT TOM put on their sunglasses.)*

UT TOM *(cont'd)*. I have something for you. It's something everyone gets at McMurdo.

*(UT TOM gives DEE a green, pocket-sized notebook.)*

UT TOM *(cont'd)*. Your very own green brain. Write everything down. Working ten hours a day, six days a week with twenty-four hours of sunlight will make you forget everything unless you write it down.

DEE. I found hers.

UT TOM. What?

DEE. I found my mom's green brain.

My dad hid it from me—can you believe that?

A few months ago, I was helping him move to a new apartment and I found it—hidden in the back of his desk drawer.

*(She takes out a tattered green, pocket-sized notebook. It is in a Ziploc bag.)*

It's mostly what she cleaned on what days. Random thoughts about scrubbing toilets.

First thing she wrote: "Not that cold here. Suck it, Antarctica."

*(She turns to another page)*

Today:

"October 6th

208, Highway One, and Lounge-side Men's. Barfity barf barf."

But every once in a while:

“What does it say about me  
that in the cruelest place on Earth  
that I found love  
that I found a family?”

UT TOM. ... May I?

*(DEE carefully hands UT TOM the old green brain. He looks at it.)*

DEE. She fell in love here. She found a family here.  
Maybe I can, too.

*(UT TOM doesn't know how to answer. Beat.)*

DEE *(cont'd)*. Have you?

UT TOM. ... You have a family.

DEE. My father is—

He refuses to talk about her—or here—and all my life he's said, “Be careful, Delijah—you're the only good thing left in my life. Be careful, be careful, be careful.”

My mother was this brave, wild woman and he tells this brave, wild woman's daughter, “Be careful, be careful, be careful!”—“Shh!”—“Shh!”

*(She lets out a brief, frustrated yell.)*

I have done *everything* I can do to help him. He keeps getting worse and worse and he is taking me down with him. I had to save myself.

And I found my map.

I applied the next day.

*(She breathes in. She breathes out.)*

She breathed in this air. She looked at these mountains. She found a new life here. I will, too.

Will you tell me about her?

Will you tell me everything you can remember?

UT TOM. I can try.

*(UT TOM reads something in Shannon's green brain. He laughs. He turns to another page. He laughs again.)*

DEE. What?

UT TOM. It was Shannon that got us all doing this. Make a section where you keep track of Biscuits and Honey Butter. It's not "Friday."

*(In a sad voice.)* It's "Six days until Biscuits and Honey Butter."

It's not "Wednesday."

*(In a happy voice.)* It's "One day until Biscuits and Honey Butter."

*(UT TOM gives Shannon's green brain back to DEE. DEE puts it in the Ziploc bag and carefully puts it back into her pocket.)*

UT TOM *(cont'd)*. So, Dee. What day is it?

DEE. It's Thursday.

UT TOM *(panicked)*. What?

*(He opens his green brain.)*

Oh, shit! Shit, shit, shit! What time is it?

*(He looks at his watch)*

Ten-oh-five. Damn it! What is wrong with me? We gotta run.

*(UT TOM starts to run.)*

DEE. Really?

UT TOM. Run! We can't miss it! It'll ruin the entire week—run!  
Run!

*(They run.)*

\* \* \*