

SNOWED

By Alan Haehnel

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CHARACTERS

ANNOUNCER ONE

ANNOUNCER TWO

MARLENE

SARAH

MARLENE'S MOTHER

BILL KENNEDY

PSYCHOLOGIST

AUNT BABS

GREG

THE CONNECTICUT CORMORANTS (hockey players)

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SCENE ONE

(Curtain opens to darkness. We hear the sound of a radio announcer.)

ANNOUNCER: Stock up the shelves and batten down the hatches, folks; it looks like we've got a real Nor'easter coming our way tonight and tomorrow. The snow should start around midnight, possibly mixing with sleet and freezing rain before turning to straight white stuff. Accumulations of two to five feet are likely. I didn't say inches, Gertrude, I said two to five feet! Sounds like a good night for the proverbial long winter's nap, I would say. And now...

(The sound of the radio snaps off and we hear a long, loud, triumphant yell. At the yell, the stage lights come up. The lights reveal a stylized set suggesting a bedroom. There are several very colorful set pieces - a bed, a clock, a fish tank, and a window. All of the set pieces are larger than life. In addition, the set pieces are constructed so that each piece can break into smaller segments. Between scenes, all of the pieces of the set but the bed slowly break apart. By the end of Scene 9, the set should look like an abstract painting - pieces of window intermingled with fish from the fish tank and sections of the clock, all randomly hanging as if in the air rather than against solid walls. Only now, at the beginning of the play, and then again during Scene 9, are the set pieces totally put together.)

At rise, MARLENE is on the bed and looking up, her hands clenched in a pose of absolute victory. While MARLENE shouts for joy, SARAH paces back and forth with a book open in her hand.)

MARLENE: Sarah, did you hear that weather report? Sarah, Sarah, look at me.

SARAH: Marlene, if we don't pass this test tomorrow, we are both dead meat.

MARLENE: Sarah, look... at... me!

SARAH: What?

MARLENE: Do you know who you are looking at?

SARAH: Yeah. A girl who's going to fail the biggest test of her life tomorrow.

MARLENE: You are looking at MARLENE, THE LUCKIEST GIRL IN THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE!

SARAH: Fantastic. What's the first law of motion?

MARLENE: Sarah, let me just paint a picture for you, okay? Tomorrow at school, several terrible things were going to happen to me. One, this killer test in physics you're trying to study for now. Two, a progress report in English that was going to get me grounded for the rest of my life. And three, a scheduled ten-round bout with Lindsey "Bone Crusher" Koloski who promised to beat my head into a mess of Cream of Wheat. But guess what, Sarah?

SARAH: Who was the first to hypothesize the theory of gravity?

MARLENE: THIS IS MARLENE, THE LUCKIEST KID IN THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE! None of those things are going to happen because there's a blizzard on the way and school will be history and then we cruise on in to two weeks of Christmas break!

SARAH: What is the formula for computing velocity?

MARLENE: Snow squared times snow equals... blizzard.

SARAH: How do you calculate mass?

MARLENE: You don't. Because there is one huge mass of snow on the way!

SARAH: Marlene, did it ever occur to you that we just might have school tomorrow?

MARLENE: What? They're predicting three to five feet of snow, Sarah... howling winds, freezing temperatures, the whole shebang. School will not happen tomorrow. Guar-on-teed.

SARAH: I wouldn't count on it.

MARLENE: I *am* counting on it. This one is mine. Nobody's taking it away.

SARAH: What's the third law of motion?

MARLENE: A snowstorm in motion tends to stay in motion, and Marlene at rest tends to stay at rest. Good-night, Sarah. Have fun studying... sucker! ***(As MARLENE settles in to her bed, SARAH shakes her head and keeps looking at the book.)***

SCENE TWO

(It is morning. MARLENE is stirring in bed, luxuriously rolling over for several more hours of sleep.)

ANNOUNCER : So it will still be a white Christmas, but not nearly as white as we thought yesterday. Meteorologist Mark Brown tells us to

expect more like three to six inches up here; the blizzard has missed us and passed to the south. **(MARLENE props herself up on one elbow quickly, her eyes barely open against the glare of the light.)** And I was really looking forward to shoveling out my driveway until next April. Oh, well, here's the latest from **(Names current song and artist. As the song begins, MARLENE swings over and makes a grab for the phone, but falls out of bed. SHE gets up to a kneeling position in back of the bed, phone in hand. Her voice is husky).**

MARLENE: Operator, get me WZZZ, would you? I can't see to dial direct; I'm blind. **(pause)** Yeah, hi. Could you just tell me the school cancellations real quick? **(eyes open now)** What? But you guys had a blizzard set for this morning. You can't cancel like that; people are depending on you! This is a joke, right? What do you mean, look out my window. What if I don't have a window? **(SHE holds the phone away from her ear. Obviously, they have hung up on her. SHE crawls slowly over to the window, gets up and lifts the shade with great apprehension. When SHE sees the truth, SHE stands like a zombie.)** I'm gonna puke. Oh, no, no, no... they can't do this to me.

MARLENE'S MOTHER: **(offstage)** Marlene, get up! It's time for school!

MARLENE: **(sprinting to the bed and jumping back under the covers)** I'm sick!

MARLENE'S MOTHER: **(offstage)** Yeah, and I'm Michelle Pfeiffer; get out of bed. I gotta go to work soon.

MARLENE: **(to herself)** They cancelled my snowstorm! They can't do that. **(goes to the phone and hits redial for the radio station)** Hey, yeah, is this WZZZ again? I just called. Look, who does your weather report? Let me talk to him. What do you mean he's not there? He just cancelled a blizzard! Who is responsible? Give me a name.

MARLENE'S MOTHER: **(offstage)** Marlene Christina Thibedeau, get out of that bed!

MARLENE: I'm sick!

MARLENE'S MOTHER: **(offstage)** If you make me late, young lady... .

MARLENE: **(back to phone)** Whaddya mean, nobody's responsible for the weather? That sounds like a real cop-out to me, pal. Yeah, you have a nice day, too. **(hangs up)** Three to five feet of snow. 40 mile an hour winds. **(MARLENE works herself up almost to tears.)** You don't cancel something like that. Not when a girl's got so much riding on it. That's just not right. It's not fair. They cancelled my blizzard.

MARLENE'S MOTHER: **(entering)** Marlene, I'm going to ignore this room right now because I have something more important to tell you. If you don't get out of bed, I'm going to be late for work again, and if

I'm late for work again because of you, I may have to kill you. It's that simple. Do you understand me?

MARLENE: (**very decisive**) I'm not going. This is totally unfair.

MARLENE'S MOTHER: Marlene, I do not have time for these shenanigans. I'm counting to three, and if you haven't made some move by then... (**MARLENE sits in the middle of the bed, staring stoically straight ahead.**) Marlene, you are really pushing it. All right: One. Two. Three! (**SHE still doesn't move.**) That's it; you're grounded.

MARLENE: Fine. I'm not going.

MARLENE'S MOTHER: You know what your father would do if he were still here.

MARLENE: He's not.

MARLENE'S MOTHER: Well... you know what he would do, anyway.

MARLENE: It doesn't matter. I am not leaving this room. You can't cancel somebody's snowstorm like that.

MARLENE'S MOTHER: Snowstorm? Is that what this is all about? Marlene, that wasn't your storm. It was... everybody's, or... you don't own a snowstorm, for heaven's sake. And nobody cancelled it. What are you talking about? It's weather; it does what it wants.

MARLENE: Fine. Then I'll do what I want. I'm staying here.

MARLENE'S MOTHER: (**torn, looking alternately at MARLENE and her watch**) Oh, look at the time. Marlene... well, I'm not writing you an excuse note for this and I'm not calling the school for you. What am I supposed to say: "Marlene didn't come to school because her blizzard misbehaved"? Come on, Marlene. Please? I'm your Mother.

MARLENE: You're going to be late.

MARLENE'S MOTHER: I already am. Oh, Marlene, you drive me absolutely insane sometimes!

MARLENE: So kill me. You said you might have to.

MARLENE'S MOTHER: Don't tempt me. I'm leaving. Don't you go anywhere. Oh, I can't believe this! (**SHE stares at MARLENE for a long moment, hoping to melt her resolve with an icy glare. It doesn't work and SHE stomps out. MARLENE lies down on the bed and pulls the covers up, though SHE doesn't look pleased with herself. SHE lies straight, her eyes open, her mouth set grimly. In a moment, MARLENE'S MOTHER comes back in with a blazing final attempt. SHE runs and jumps onto the end of the bed, screaming and hopping up and down.**) Marlene, I'm the parent and you're supposed to obey me that's the way it's always been and that's the way it should be and I don't care if your blizzard didn't show up you just need to get out of bed... NOW!!! (**MARLENE lies still, unaffected by her mother's display. MARLENE'S**

MOTHER gets off the bed, straightens her skirt and hair.) You're a royal poop, Marlene.

(SHE exits, running slightly. MARLENE covers her head with the sheets.)

SCENE THREE

(MARLENE has a game of checkers set up on the disheveled bed. SHE is playing lazily. A knock comes at the door.)

MARLENE: Come in.

SARAH: **(enters)** Hey, Marlene. How's it going?

MARLENE: Not bad. How's things with you?

SARAH: Great. Started softball practice. I'm starting pitcher this year. So that's pretty cool. So whatdya know, anyway?

MARLENE: Not much.

SARAH: Same here. So, ah... Greg's been asking for ya.

MARLENE: Greg? You kidding me? Greg has?

SARAH: Yeah. You remember him, right?

MARLENE: Oh, yeah; you can't forget Greg.

SARAH: No, you can't.

MARLENE: You going out with him?

SARAH: No! No, I'm not. He was asking where you've been. He's interested.

MARLENE: Cool.

SARAH: Yeah. So... you know.

MARLENE: Yeah.

SARAH: So, anyway, when I have my first game, you should come watch me. That would be great. But, you know, whenever you... I mean, if you're out and around then.

MARLENE: Yeah. That'd be great.

SARAH: So, do you know anything about that, like, when you're going to be... back and stuff?

MARLENE: Well, I called a lawyer.

SARAH: A lawyer?

MARLENE: Yeah, you know, he said the first visit was free and stuff and he only gets paid if I collect. I figured what the heck?

SARAH: So what're you going to do with this guy?

MARLENE: I don't know, exactly, I just... I mean, it's not fair what they did to me. You remember the night before... I was psyched. It was like that blizzard was just tailor made for me.

SARAH: I remember. You said, "Hey, Sarah, do you know who this is?"
(MARLENE says it with her.) "This is the luckiest girl in the universe."

MARLENE: Right. I mean, I was pumped. And then... it was so unfair. That's why I called the lawyer. Somebody's gotta own up to this. Somebody. **(A knock on the door.)** Hey, maybe that's him. Come in! **(The door opens and a man in a suit walks in. His suit is just behind the times style-wise; his tie is loud; and HE has two flash cameras hanging from his neck. HE walks directly to SARAH and holds out his hand aggressively. This is WILLIAM "Call me Bill" KENNEDY III.)**

BILL: Hi, how're you doing? William Kennedy III, attorney at law, specializing in personal injury suits. Call me Bill, would you please; I prefer it. Marlene, right?

SARAH: No, I'm just visiting. That's Marlene. I gotta go.

BILL: Whoa, before you go, you are...

SARAH: Sarah.

BILL: Sarah. Friend of my client's?

SARAH: I'm Marlene's friend, yeah.

BILL: And you're visiting her in her time of need. That's nice. Touching. Hey, a friend of a client is a friend of mine. Here's my card. If you're ever hurt, call me. Any injury-minor, major, even fatal... look me up.

SARAH: Yeah, sure. Uh, see you later, Marlene. **(exits)**

MARLENE: See ya, Sarah.

BILL: So, you must be Marlene.

MARLENE: That's me.

BILL: Marlene, I want to tell you one thing from the outset; I want you to know something and know it deeply. Are you with me?

MARLENE: I...

BILL: You mind if I take your picture?

MARLENE: Well, I...

(BILL has snapped the flash photo before MARLENE can respond. MARLENE is dazed by the glared.)

BILL: Beautiful. I wanted a shot before I began to talk to you, just to chronicle the damage. You look very pitiful, Marlene, still in your pajamas, sitting here with the checker game. You don't get out much, do you?

MARLENE: Not at all since...

BILL: I know, I know, it's hard to talk about. You look very pale - that's good. Keep it. A pitiful client is money in the bank. Where was I? Oh, yeah. Marlene, I want to make one thing absolutely clear, no matter what happens, no matter who you talk to. Are you with me?

MARLENE: I...

BILL: Yes or no, Marlene. Yes, and I'm here for you, babe, right through to the pay-off. No, and I won't waste another minute of my time. You with me?

MARLENE: I... yes!

BILL: Atta girl. Good. Now, here's the story; here's what you gotta remember: somebody has got to pay for what was done to you. Somebody has got to pay. You hearing me? Somebody... say it with me now.

MARLENE: **(saying it with him now)** Somebody has got to pay. Somebody has got to pay.

BILL: That's it! Be-you-ti-ful! Every morning when you wake up you chant that a few times and we'll be cooking. With me? Good. Now, where are you hurt?

MARLENE: Actually, I'm not...

BILL: **(regarding the photo that has had time to process in his hand)** Whoa, hold the phone, would you look at that! I had a feeling you were a very photogenic kid the minute I saw you, Marlene, but this is tremendous.

MARLENE: I look good?

BILL: No! You look bad. Sickly. Pitiful. That's just what we want.

MARLENE: We do?

BILL: Of course! You need to look bad; I need to look good. The deprived client, the confident attorney; the injured, the champion of the injured. You with me? **(regarding the photo)** You are one terrible-looking kid on film. I almost cry just looking at this snapshot.

MARLENE: Thanks.

BILL: Don't thank me yet. Hold still a minute. **(BILL holds the camera out at arm's length and puts his face next to MARLENE's. HE snaps the picture. MARLENE blinks against the glare.)** I love those dancing blue lights. Image, Marlene; image is what this is all about. You've got the image, you get the bucks. And we, I have strong feeling, have got that image. With me?

MARLENE: I...

BILL: Good. Now, enough idle chatter, Marlene. Where do you hurt? What happened? Who did it? Gimme the facts. Talk to me.

MARLENE: Well, Bill, I'm not hurt.

BILL: Hello? Hello? Am I here?

MARLENE: What?

BILL: Am I here?

MARLENE: Of course you're here.

BILL: Good. I thought so. Uh... who am I?

MARLENE: You're Bill Kennedy, the lawyer.

BILL: Ah. Good. We're on the same plane of reality, then. Good. And, uh, what do I do?

MARLENE: You... I saw you on television and...

BILL: Television. (***crosses himself***) Speak that word with reverence, Marlene. Continue.

MARLENE: And you said that if I or anyone I knew had been injured...

BILL: ... in any way, call me. If you've been hurt; if your rights have been trampled; if you just don't think you're getting a fair shake, especially from a corporation or any other large company, call me now. Because justice isn't being served and that makes me, William Kennedy III, fighting mad.

MARLENE: That's what you said.

BILL: Yes, I did. (***After a pause of self-congratulatory inner applause***) So what concerns me, Marlene, is that I am here, you know who I am, you know what I do, what I stand for. And yet you say you're not hurt.

MARLENE: Not physically.

BILL: Ah! (***points to her head***) Mental pain.

MARLENE: Yes.

BILL: What is that sound? Do you hear it? Do you hear it?

MARLENE: No.

BILL: It's the sound of money, Marlene. When you said those words—mental pain—I heard hundred dollar bills being shuffled. It's a good sign. Look at this picture! (***regarding the photo HE last took***) I look great: confident, poised, magnificent. And you look absolutely pitiful: downtrodden, despondent, even suicidal. Have you ever tried to kill yourself?

MARLENE: No!

BILL: Okay. But don't rule it out. I see big things, Marlene; very big things.

MARLENE: So can you help?

BILL: Can I help? Marlene, when you called my office, when you dialed 1-900-SUE-THEM, you didn't know it, but you changed your life.

MARLENE: Really?

BILL: Really. So give it to me: why are you in mental anguish?

MARLENE: Well, see, they didn't call off school. I was counting on it.

BILL: Give me names. Who? Who didn't call it off?

MARLENE: I... I don't know exactly... whoever calls the radio station to say that school is cancelled.

BILL: You don't know exactly, but it still hurts, doesn't it?

MARLENE: Yeah.

BILL: Some nameless person doesn't do what you wanted them to do, and you get hurt. Someone out there with all the power; some institution; some nameless, monolithic, uncaring super-calloused corporation dumps dirt on you, and you feel it, don't you?

MARLENE: Yes!

BILL: You think, hey, I'm just trying to live my life. I just want to be somebody, to fulfill my small destiny in this great big world. Why does somebody, some unidentifiable entity, have to pick on me?

MARLENE: It's not fair.

BILL: What?

MARLENE: I said it's not fair.

BILL: Say it again, Marlene, with conviction, because that is our battle cry. It's not fair; it's not right; it shouldn't have to happen in these United States of America; not here, not now. Say it, Marlene; say it!

MARLENE: It's not fair!

BILL: **(flashes a photo)** Again!

MARLENE: It's not fair!!

BILL: **(flashes another photo)** That's right, and don't you forget it! I'm out of here.

MARLENE: Where are you going?

BILL: I'm your champion, Marlene, your champion on the legal field of battle. I've got work to do, money to collect for your cause! What's our battle cry?

MARLENE: It's not fair! It's not fair!

BILL: **(crossing back to MARLENE for a moment)** Beautiful, Marlene... just perfect. **(holds out a pen and a piece of paper)** I almost forgot. Sign there, right there.

MARLENE: What is it?

BILL: Just a little contract. Formality. Your John Hancock right there is good. Right there. **(MARLENE signs.)** Perfect. Now, again... what is it?

MARLENE: Not fair!

BILL: Again!

MARLENE: It's not fair!

BILL: Justice isn't being served. And that makes me, William Kennedy III, fighting mad! **(exits)**

MARLENE: **(standing on the bed)** It's not fair. It's just not fair.

SCENE FOUR

(A female PSYCHOLOGIST sits in a chair in MARLENE's room with a notepad on her lap. SHE is dressed very severely in a dark business-type suit. Her voice registers no emotion. SHE looks

blandly over at MARLENE, who returns the stare for a long time, shifting occasionally, but maintaining an uncomfortable, prolonged silence. After a full minute, SHE speaks.)

MARLENE: So, what are we going to talk about?

PSYCHOLOGIST: What do you think needs to be talked about?

MARLENE: Well, aren't you supposed to ask me about my childhood or something?

PSYCHOLOGIST: Do you think you need to be asked about your childhood?

MARLENE: You're the expert here.

PSYCHOLOGIST: Why do you consider me an expert?

MARLENE: Because my mother is paying you a hundred bucks an hour.

PSYCHOLOGIST: Do you resent the fact that I'm getting paid?

MARLENE: No, it's just that... you don't say anything.

PSYCHOLOGIST: Does that bother you?

MARLENE: Yes.

PSYCHOLOGIST: What do you think I should say?

MARLENE: I don't know... tell me what's wrong with me.

PSYCHOLOGIST: Is there something wrong with you?

MARLENE: You don't think there's anything wrong with me?

PSYCHOLOGIST: Do you?

MARLENE: I asked you first.

PSYCHOLOGIST: Is it important to you that you asked first?

MARLENE: Look, my mother hired you, right?

PSYCHOLOGIST: Do you feel compelled to know who hired me?

MARLENE: You're driving me nuts.

PSYCHOLOGIST: What does it mean to be driven nuts?

MARLENE: Do you answer every question with a question?

PSYCHOLOGIST: Do you question every answer with a question?

MARLENE: What?

PSYCHOLOGIST: What?

MARLENE: ***(after looking at her for a long time)*** There's something falling out of your nose.

PSYCHOLOGIST: Does that cause you concern?

MARLENE: No. Leave it. It's very attractive.

(After another long pause, the scene ends.)

SCENE FIVE

BILL: ***(filming MARLENE with a video camera)*** I've got to tell you, Marlene, I think you're wasting away before my very eyes; I really

believe that. This is great footage. You've gone past pitiful. You've reached a stage of being almost, I don't know, despicable. But in a good way.

MARLENE: That's great.

BILL: You sound a little down, Marlene.

MARLENE: Well, it's just... it seems like nobody really cares all that much anymore.

BILL: Look, kid, these things take time. Remember what I said earlier, right? You with me? Remember what I said? What was our motto?

MARLENE: Something about somebody has to pay...

BILL: That's the one.

MARLENE: I don't know... it's not really the money that I'm after all that much.

BILL: Hello? Hello? Who am I?

MARLENE: I know, I know, you're William Kennedy III and you're an attorney and all that, but I don't even want the money so much as just to have somebody tell me... just for somebody to take the blame. I want an apology.

BILL: That is noble, Marlene. I'm just about crying here. I really am. But let me remind you of something: We live in the U.S. of America. Apologies are nice, but they don't mean squat without a dollar sign attached, if you know what I mean. Think of it this way: The bigger the settlement, the sweeter the apology. Personally, if somebody just tells me, "Gee, Bill, I'm sorry," I only believe them with about half my brain. But if they pull up with a U-Haul full of greenbacks and tell me, "Gee, Bill, I'm sorry, and I hope this will help you feel better," well, that is one sincere apology; you know what I'm saying? You with me?

MARLENE: I guess so.

BILL: Hey, I can see you're a little down about this whole process, but that's because I haven't told you about my latest brainstorm. It is big. Bigger than big. The biggest. Media coverage out the wazoo. You with me? Picture this, Marlene, on the front page of the New York Times, okay? Paying attention?

MARLENE: I'm here.

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