

Zoo Story 2.0

By Rich Espey

A ten minute play

Characters

BOB, a male penguin
 BUTTERCUP, a male penguin
 ZOOGOER 1, female
 ZOOGOER 2, female
 ZOOGOER 3, female
 REPORTER, male
 ZOO PSYCHIATRIST, male
 CARMEN, a female penguin
 KATE, a female penguin
 POOKIE, a female penguin

The play can be cast with six actors:

BOB
 BUTTERCUP
 ZOOGOER 1/CARMEN
 ZOOGOER 2/KATE
 ZOOGOER 3/POOKIE
 REPORTER/ZOO PSYCHIATRIST

Time

The present

Place

The Central Park Zoo

Synopsis: What happens when two male penguins try to make a family? Humans largely make a mess of it and force the penguins to fix it themselves.

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(Blue and yellow light shimmers to suggest a pond. There might be some big rocks. There's at least one perch fairly high up. BOB, wearing one of those T-shirts that looks like a tuxedo, waddles around and then makes a little hop. There is a splash. BOB "swims" like a penguin, because he is one. He talks to us.)

BOB

Hello there, I'm Robert the penguin, or Bob,
And I live in New York, got a good steady job
In the flightless bird pen at the Central Park Zoo
Doing two shows a day at 10:30 and 2.

There are lots of nice penguins to date and to mate
With like Carmen and Sadie and Pookie and Kate
But the only one who makes my flippers stand up
Is a cute little guy that they call Buttercup.

(BUTTERCUP is there. He's also got a tuxedo shirt and does a little show for us as BOB describes him.)

He's got plumage to die for, his waddle's the bomb
When he glides through the pond he's the cruisiest tom
The blackest of backsides, the whitest of chests
He's Antarctica's answer to Ryan Seacrest!

But the best thing of all about my guy B.C.
Is that he feels the very same way about me!

BUTTERCUP

What can I say, yo?
Bob 'n' me fit like ice cubes
And a plastic tray.

BOB

A bird of few words, but I like him that way!

We're the happiest couple that Nature selected
We hatched us an egg that some breeders rejected
We're raising a daughter named Abracadoo *(displaying a small stuffed toy penguin)*
(They named her, not us, there's not much we could do)
Except feed her and love her and show her the way
It's a great life until

(THREE FEMALE ZOOGOERS are there.)

ZOOGOER 1

Penguins shouldn't be gay.

ZOOGOER 2

I don't like it.

ZOOGOER 3

It's disgusting.

ZOOGOER 1

Is this some sick joke?

ZOOGOER 2

It's unnatural.

ZOOGOER 3

It's immoral.

ZOOGOER 1

Not for decent folk.

ZOOGOER 2

Propaganda.

ZOOGOER 3

Gay agenda.

ZOOGOER 1

They want special rights.

ZOOGOERS 2 and 3

Oh, I'm soooo sick of that! Aren't you sick of that?

ZOOGOER 2

I'm protesting.

ZOOGOER 3

I'm boycotting.

ZOOGOERS 1, 2 and 3

Action! Camera! Lights!

(A REPORTER is there.)

REPORTER

Here at the zoo there's a couple of penguins who aren't really following the rules. Some people love it but others aren't buying it

ZOOGOER 1

What do they take us for, fools?

ZOOGOER 2

I'm a big donor but my checks will stop
unless something is done right away!

ZOOGOER 3

Everyone knows that our children will suffer
if they think that penguins are gay!

ZOOGOERS 1, 2 and 3

(in a bland unison)

This isn't about us; it's about protecting our children.

REPORTER

Why don't we ask them? Hey fellas, what gives?
Are you really just wired this way?

ZOOGOER 1

They're not!

ZOOGOER 2

It's a choice!

ZOOGOER 3

They could stop in a minute!

ZOOGOERS 1, 2 and 3

Who cares what those two have to say?

BUTTERCUP

Nature doesn't err.
We follow her dictates
Like eating krill. Yum.

*(Large quantities of krill are thrown to BUTTERCUP
and he scarfs them down.)*

BOB

And I was so proud of him. Wasn't he great?
They gave him three times as much krill and he ate
It all up, then I noticed a change in his tone
And the sign in the pen said his name's now "Ramone".

BUTTERCUP

Yo, yo, yo, what uuuuuuuuuuuuuuuup!
 Give it up for Ramone, yo!
 I'm the bird with the word, have you heard?
 Like to do a little dance, shake my feathers for romance.
 I'm the penguin with the sanguine personal-i-tee.
 When I glide on my slide you're gonna notice me!
 Break it down!!

BOB

All that krill sure did change him. They laced it with drugs!!
 Full of hormones and stimulants! Scurrilous thugs!
 And they bring in three females! Oh what can this be?
 Is it...Penguin Conversion Repair Therapy??!!

(A ZOO PSYCHIATRIST is there with a picture, an electric prod and some pills. Three female penguins, CARMEN, KATE and POOKIE are there as well, grooming and posing.)

ZOO PSYCHIATRIST

You're a penguin
 Not a faggot.
 You should mate with hens not cocks.
 Here's a picture
 Of a boybird.
 Arouse yourself you'll get a shock.
 Silly penguin
 Make it easy
 On yourself. Just make the switch!
 Stick your dingdong
 In a coochie
 Let her know who's boss, da bitch!
 Eat some Prozac
 Eat some Xanax
 Here's Levitra, Zoloft, too!
 See these females?
 Give it to them
 Or you'll have to leave the zoo!

BUTTERCUP

My name is Ramone
 You better watch your tone
 And watch your back and watch your face 'cuz I'm about to throw a bone
 To make the ladies moan.
 I know whatcha sayin. Ya sayin how can such a chill bird be alone
 For so long without a lady to call his own.
 Well that's about to change 'cuz I'm a put you on my throne, girl.

This bird is open for bizness, yo. Word.

(The ZOO PSYCHIATRIST places CARMEN next to BUTTERCUP.)

CARMEN

Hola, Me llamo Carmen.
I'm from Tierra Del Fuego.
That means land of fire! Hacha! Hacha!!
You wanna go for a swim and play a little juego?
Maybe a little "backgammon" or something before it's hasta luego?

(The ZOO PSYCHIATRIST places KATE next to BUTTERCUP.)

KATE

Hello, I'm Kate.
I'm from South Georgia.
It's a British protectorate
so I'll expect tea before we mate.

(The ZOO PSYCHIATRIST places POOKIE next to BUTTERCUP.)

POOKIE

My name Pookie.
I am from Vostok.
Is Russian research station.
Is coldest place on Earth with lowest reliably measured temperature of -128.6 degrees Fahrenheit.
You will please make sure your huey is not like ice rod before insertion.
Spasibo.

(BUTTERCUP is unmoved. The ZOO PSYCHIATRIST prods him and appears to inject his backsides with a syringe.)

BUTTERCUP

Yo ladies, I'm-a chill with ya
Eat some krill with ya
Get my fill with ya
Give a thrill with ya
Give ya some Ramone time
Some wail and moan time
And then alone time
'Cuz I can treat a lady right, yo.

(The four penguins dance a suggestive dance which might kind of look like penguin mating.)

BOB

He's mating with females like there's no tomorrow
 While I sit alone here and wallow in sorrow.
 Come back to me, Buttercup, what did I do?
 Come back to me and your chick, Abracadoo.

*(The ZOO PSYCHIATRIST, CARMEN, KATE and
 POOKIE are now the REPORTER, and the three
 ZOOGOERS.)*

REPORTER

Here at the zoo there's a startling reversal that some people find rather strange.
 That gaybird's gone straight, he's found three hens to mate with

ZOOGOER 2

I told you that penguins can change.

ZOOGOERS 1, 2 and 3

(in bland unison)

They just have to want to change badly enough.

ZOOGOER 1

Hallelujah!

ZOOGOER 2

Praise to Heaven!

ZOOGOER 3

Put him on Fox News!

ZOOGOER 1

Shout Hosanna!

ZOOGOER 2

From the rooftops!

ZOOGOER 3

Anyone can choose!

ZOOGOERS 1, 2 and 3

Certain things, that is.

*(BUTTERCUP pulls at his plumage, twitches and rocks
 back and forth.)*

ZOOGOER 1

Flood the airwaves!

ZOOGOER 2

Storm the classrooms!

ZOOGOER 3

Victory for straight!

ZOOGOER 1 and ZOOGOER 2

Penguin nature's not defective!

ZOOGOER 3

(noticing BUTTERCUP's neurotic behavior)

Wait a minute, wait!

ZOO PSYCHIATRIST

Don't you worry
 It's a rumor
 He is not at all depressed!
 He's just tired
 From all the mating.
 Maybe he's not at his best.
 Medication
 And electric
 Shock'll surely do the trick!
 Just you wait
 Until you see
 This Daddy with his newest chick!

(The three female penguins are in a hot spotlight.)

CARMEN

Yo, Ramone was like so nice at first and then he goes all Chris Brown on me for no reason – I deserve more respect than that!

KATE

No, I don't know why he was in that airport bathroom stall and I'm certain that if he tapped his flipper it was accidental and of no significance -

POOKIE

First he says he is hiking Appalachian Trail. Then I find out he swims to Argentina for tryst with –

CARMEN

And he's like pulling out all his own feathers, I mean what is up with that -

KATE

And he just sits and rocks back and forth –

POOKIE

Stares longingly at my picture of Vladimir Putin -

(The ZOO PSYCHIATRIST chases BUTTERCUP who is climbing to the perch. He has the props described below. There is thunder and lightning.)

ZOO PSYCHIATRIST

You're not trying
 You're regressing
 Let me scan your penguin brain
 Here's some Haldol
 For psychosis
 Here's hot needles for your pain
 Here's a journal
 For your feelings
 Wait a minute birds can't write

(BUTTERCUP climbs up on the perch and looks like he's about to jump or try to fly.)

Where you going?
 What you doing?
 You're a flightless bird, all right?

BUTTERCUP
(singing weakly)

I believe I can fly.
 I believe I can touch the sky!

(Thunder and Lightning crash. Rain pours down.)

BOB

No Buttercup! Buttercup, don't! You can't fly!
 If you leap from your perch then you surely will die!
 We'll go back to Antarctica! Find other zoos!
 Who cares what they say about us on Fox news?!
 Screw the shrink! Toss the meds! Take a look in the glass!
 No I won't go away I'm a pain in your ass
 Till you come to your senses and stop this charade
 And come back to the life and the family we made
 It's their small minded thinking that's made you this mess
 You're a penguin of God – no more and no less!!

(The storm sounds stop and a ray of sun bursts forth. There is a rainbow of lights.)

And just then, as if someone important was list'ning
 The rain stopped, the sun shone, there burst forth a glistening
 Rainbow of red, orange, yellow, green, blue
 Violet colors and Buttercup said

BUTTERCUP

I love you.

(BUTTERCUP comes down off the perch and embraces BOB.)

BOB

So we're here at the zoo, doing two shows a day
And we're pretty much like all the others, but gay.
And the critics still carp, get their shorts in a knot.
Perhaps they just envy the sweet life we've got.

*(BOB, BUTTERCUP, CARMEN, KATE and POOKIE
each unfurl a different colored banner – red, orange,
yellow, green, blue...and we need a violet one, too, so
the ZOO PSYCHIATRIST, apparently now enlightened,
gets that one to unfurl.)*

BUTTERCUP

Moral of the tale
Don't let anyone change you.
Live your life with pride.

*(The six banners are woven across the stage in a
spectacular display as some uplifting anthem plays.
Blackout.)*

End of Play