

Excerpt from "Byrd's Boy"
Written by Bruce J. Robinson

Scene Five

(We hear the wind whipping. It's a week later. Night. Lights on Byrd. He takes a plastic bottle from the hut, pours a little bit of water into a cardboard box - a grill on its top - that he's placed on his hut. He takes a drink and puts the bottle back in his hut.)

(As he leaves his hut and heads to the stairs, cross fade on his ascending. Lights on him with his experiment of the old fan mounted on a stage-right pole up on the catwalk. He spins the fan.)

(Birdie enters. She's concerned that she doesn't see Byrd.)

BIRDIE

Byrd?

(Focused on his experiment, Byrd doesn't hear her. She flicks on the light.)

Byrd!

BYRD

Up here. For the last three nights, it was 64 degrees below zero in here!

BIRDIE

(taking out an apple she eats through episode and removing his sandwich-bag)

Then we got the same landlord.

(putting down his sandwich on the medium pallet)

Soup's on!

BYRD

(making way down to get food)

Soupcon?

BIRDIE

What?

BYRD

Soupcon. A French word for "a little."

BIRDIE

Mercy-bo-dang-coo.

(going up to office)

Soup is on.

BYRD

Ah. Soup is on.

(He opens the lunch bag – which contains only a sandwich.)

So... Where's the soup?

BIRDIE

That's an expression which means "food has arrived," Byrd-brain.

BYRD

Thank you.

BIRDIE

For what?

BYRD

For teaching us that expression. We all must teach each other.

BIRDIE

Yeah. Here. Eat up. Peanut butter.

BYRD

I remember peanut butter.

BIRDIE

Good.

BYRD

I should. Seven days here, seven peanut butter sandwiches.

BIRDIE

Oh, so the bill o' fare bores the Frugal Flipped-out Gourmet?

BYRD

We wouldn't mind a soupcon of variety.

BIRDIE

Soupcon means "a little" in French.

BYRD

You speak French!?

BIRDIE

(coming down to floor)

No, Byrd. You told me.

BYRD

(coming down from medium pallet)

I thought you told me. I feel so close to you, I get us confused sometimes. But we taught you! See. We can teach, too.

BIRDIE
 "We?" Okay, what's with this "we?" Have "we" suddenly become the Queen of England?

BYRD
 We. Me and him.

BIRDIE
 Who "him?"

BYRD
 (indicating box)
 Pengy.

BIRDIE
 Pengy?

(He nods.)

Can I look?

BYRD
 Quickly. He's the fastest penguin I've ever seen.

(She nudges over the box's metal screen.)

BIRDIE
 It's a rat.

BYRD
 I consider him a miniature, buck-toothed penguin. Hard to capture; but, rest assured, I used humane means. Been sharing victuals with my friend.

(Instead of eating the last crust, he crumbles it and gives it to Pengy.)

BIRDIE
 Hey, man; don't waste your food on that...that...

BYRD
 Pengy.

BIRDIE
 Pengy.

BYRD
 We all should share. Right?

(She shrugs.)

Right? Right?

Right-right. BIRDIE

(Pause)

I got another sandwich for you. BYRD

No. That's yours. BIRDIE

But we all should share. Right-right-right? BYRD

Right! BYRD

Right. BIRDIE
(starting out)

Birdie? BYRD

What? BIRDIE

You think Pengy's happy in there? BYRD

I dunno. How would you feel - trapped in a box? BIRDIE

Jeez-muh-knees. BYRD

(She smiles at use of her expression.)

Maybe not too good?

Maybe. BIRDIE

So, I should let him go. BYRD

Do what you want. BIRDIE

I've grown very fond of Pengy. BYRD

BIRDIE

Then keep the dirty little r...
 (refraining from "rat")
 hairy-dwarf-bird.

BYRD

No. The Golden Rule. Were I trapped in a box, I'd expect Pengy to free me.

BIRDIE

Even if he wanted to keep you?

BYRD

Don't you see, Birdie!? Penguins care about their fellows. You should see it! A bloody miracle! Antarctic winter at its bone-cracking height! The Bottleneck Penguin species. Thousands! Thousands! Huddled in a huge circle. Why? To conserve body heat! And more marvelous: just as those at the circumference who've absorbed the frigid brunt reach the very...very brink of death, they're...they're sucked into the center's circle. Into the collective warmth. Why? How? Sublime mystery. Divine dance.

(Pause)

But were it not for this, they'd all die. Alone? Dead! But together...together. Life. Life! It's true, Birdie.

(lifting box to release Pengy)

Understand?

BIRDIE

Jeez.

(leaving)

Look; I gotta blow this rat-trap, too.

BYRD

Fly. Fly free, Birdie. Pengy!

BIRDIE

Jeez-muh-knees!

BYRD

Fly, Pengy.

(releasing Pengy)

Blasting! Pumping! Beating! Find my father! Guide him to the warmth. Guide him home: where he'll divulge the geography of chance, the topography of hope, the chart of our value; where we'll give him...everything. Soar, Pengy! To the source. My father!

(stopping the exiting Birdie)

Birdie's daddy! Mikey's daddy! And we'll all cluster. Huddle. Share our heat. Shrug-off the angry tundra. Gather against the fear. Together!

(He waddles downstage.)

BYRD (CONT'D)

Together!!!

(He tucks his head to his wings. Fade to black.)

(These silent vignettes suggest time passing. Lights up on a bucket. Byrd enters the light. Picks up a cloth on the bucket's edge. Puts the cloth in pocket. Lights out.)

(Lights up on box pile. Byrd enters light. Picks up a piece of blanket. Wraps himself in it. Black on him.)