

THE TROUBLE WITH BEING ENDANGERED

a ten-minute play

by

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

ROSALIND	The second-to-last female panda in captivity left on earth.	F
JACK	Her former lover.	M

Scene: The panda cages at the zoo.

Time: Late afternoon.

NOTE ON ACCENTS

The pandas are Irish; however, they do not have a high, light, fanciful brogue, but a hard, gritty one--the speech of suffering.

NOTE ON COSTUMES

They only intimate a panda: regular clothes and black around the eyes and nose.

NOTE ON JOKES

There are none, whatsoever.

(ROSALIND lies on the floor,
rigid, eyes wide open. JACK
enters, holding some very
pathetic flowers. Pause.)

JACK

Uh--.

(Sigh.)

Rosalind. Eh--excuse me. Pardon, Rosalind?

(Pause.)

I just came by--I don't want to disturb you. You--
You're asleep, aren't you. I should go.

(He doesn't move at all.)

ROSALIND

Good morning Jack.

JACK

'S afternoon actually.

(Beat.)

Can I, may I come in then?

(Beat.)

ROSALIND

Jack.

JACK

My dear.

ROSALIND

Jackie.

JACK

Yes.

(Pause.)

ROSALIND

Get out of here, Jackie. Save yourself and me the
trouble.

JACK

I...

(Beat.)

Rosalind.

ROSALIND

Of course of course--come in.

(JACK takes a step forward into
her area, even mimes opening a
door or curtain; wipes feet.)

JACK

I don't want to disturb you--I just came by.

ROSALIND

What is it, Jackie.

JACK
I'm...I'm sorry. About last week. I'm sorry I ate your bamboo; it was in your pile of bamboo, clearly--it was on your side, had your scent all over it.

ROSALIND
(Not hospitably.)
Can I get you some tea?

JACK
Ah, yes, that'd be lovely, thank you.

ROSALIND
(Rising to prepare tea.)
Of course he'd say yes. Have a seat.

(Pause.)

JACK
Did you hear me, then? About your bamboo--I'm sorry I ate it.

ROSALIND
Biscuits?

JACK
Rosalind.

ROSALIND
Biscuits, Jackie. Let's see...we've got Tillman's, but you've never really liked Tillman's, have ye? Always said they upset yer stomach, which I've never understood, so /

JACK
Well, I just feel terrible about the whole thing--believe me, really. I completely lost myself.

(ROSALIND brings a tea service.)

ROSALIND
Here we are.

JACK
Ah, thank you.

(Pause.)

ROSALIND
What are / those?

JACK
Oh! These are for you. Sorry.

ROSALIND
You didn't have to.

ROSALIND

No need to return it just because I give it to you.

JACK

What did, ah, François de La Rochefoucauld say? "The only reason one gives a compliment is to receive one", ah--something like that, I'm I'm misquoting it.

ROSALIND

Le what?

JACK

The, ah, the 17th-century French maximist.

(Beat.)

ROSALIND

How's Margaret?

JACK

Have you lost a few pounds.

ROSALIND

No.

JACK

New haircut then.

ROSALIND

No.

JACK

Well, you look great anyway. Ahem.

ROSALIND

Margaret was always so lovely--a rose.

JACK

I'm sorry I ate your bamboo last week.

ROSALIND

I have lost a few pounds, actually: spinning classes.

JACK

You can tell.

ROSALIND

No.

JACK

You can.

ROSALIND

Thank you then.

JACK

What's spinning, anyway?

ROSALIND

'S like biking.

JACK

Ah.

(Beat. JACK laughs to himself.)

'D'ye remember, Rosalind, 'd'ye remember that one time,
with the rhinoceros, when--

ROSALIND

Ah, no, I don't.

JACK

Ye didn't even let me finish.

ROSALIND

I don't need to hear the rest of the story.

JACK

Why then ye do remember it.

ROSALIND

No, I don't.

JACK

But ye just said /

ROSALIND

I don't want to hear it, Jack.

JACK

How can ye say ye don't remember? We was laughin' 'till
our stomachs hurt at the time!

ROSALIND

Because I don't.

JACK

But how could you /

(ROSALIND slams down the cup
and saucer.)

ROSALIND

I just! don't. Jackie.

(Pause.)

'Tisn't just sex, with Victor.

JACK

Who?

ROSALIND

My, new...mate.

JACK

Ah.

ROSALIND

Not just because we were put together, you see.

Rosalind. JACK
 It's love, it is. ROSALIND
 But ye don't mean it, certainly. JACK
 Why would I say it if I don't mean it, then, Jackie. ROSALIND
 Because you hate me. JACK
 Oh, Jackie. I don't hate you. ROSALIND
 (Pained.)
 Do you love me. JACK
 (Beat.)
 D'y' need something, Jackie--more tea. ROSALIND
 (Rising.)
 No I don't want any more of yer fecken' tea! I want you again-- JACK
 (Rising.)
 Well ye can't have me again! You lost that, when ye--. ROSALIND
 (Beat.)
 You bastard.
 (They are facing each other
 now; he leans in to kiss her,
 she pulls back. Beat. He
 leans in again, she slaps him.
 Pause.
 JACK sits.)
 More tea, then, would be nice. JACK
 (ROSALIND sits.)
That I can give you. ROSALIND
 Thank you. JACK
 And a biscuit? ROSALIND

JACK
Yes, thank you--a few.

(ROSALIND pours more. Pause.)

JACK (CONT'D)
(In a manner that could be
construed as impetuous.)
You're very beautiful, Rosalind. I've always thought
so, always.
(Pause.)
Thanks for the biscuits, anyway.

ROSALIND
I know you do, Jack. And don't worry--about the bamboo,
really don't. It's fine.

JACK
I just feel like a fool.

ROSALIND
It's fine.

JACK
(For the tea as well.)
Thank you. I've always loved you.

ROSALIND
I know you do, Jackie.

JACK
Did you love me? Do you--.

(Beat.)

ROSALIND
How's Margaret?

(Pause.)

JACK
She's doing well enough I suppose.

ROSALIND
You suppose.

JACK
Well she's been depressed as of late, what with being
only one of two o'th' last females on earth--

(ROSALIND pours more for JACK.)

JACK (CONT'D)
--thank you.

ROSALIND
Of course. I know how she feels.

JACK
'Tis is a bit different, though, with her. She's not as
strong as you are.

Right. ROSALIND
(Pause.)
Had any cubs together you two?

No, no. JACK

Why not then. ROSALIND

She's not you. JACK

You really should, or else we might all go extinct soon otherwise. ROSALIND

'S alright with me. JACK

Jack. ROSALIND

You're right. I just can't. JACK

Think of what'll happen if you don't. ROSALIND

I know. JACK

(They drink tea.)

Have you? JACK (CONT'D)

No. ROSALIND

But you're tellin' me I should. JACK

Yes, but / ROSALIND

And yer tellin' me yer in love with him. JACK

It's different with you, Jackie. ROSALIND

And how's that. JACK

You're stronger than I am--not as stubborn. ROSALIND

JACK
That's true.

(They share a small laugh.
Pause.)

JACK (CONT'D)
So he's yer...new...husband, the zoo, ah /

ROSALIND
Yes.

JACK
How is it?

ROSALIND
He sleeps, mostly.

JACK
Ah.

ROSALIND
Yes, he sleeps mostly.

(Pause. They drink tea and eat
cookies. Pause. ROSALIND stops
drinking; then, JACK does.
They look at each other.
Pause. ROSALIND cries. Jack
cries. A minute's pause, while
everyone cries.)

ROSALIND (CONT'D)
This is simply more than I can bear.

JACK
I miss you, Rosalind.

ROSALIND
I know.

(Lights very slowly fade.
End of play.)