

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

CAUTION: Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that this play is subject to royalty. It is fully protected by Original Works Publishing, and the copyright laws of the United States. All rights, including professional, amateur, motion pictures, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved.

The performance rights to this play are controlled by Original Works Publishing and royalty arrangements and licenses must be secured well in advance of presentation. PLEASE NOTE that amateur royalty fees are set upon application in accordance with your producing circumstances. When applying for a royalty quotation and license please give us the number of performances intended, dates of production, your seating capacity and admission fee. Royalties are payable with negotiation from Original Works Publishing.

Royalty of the required amount must be paid whether the play is presented for charity or gain and whether or not admission is charged.

Particular emphasis is laid on the question of amateur or professional readings, permission and terms for which must be secured from Original Works Publishing through direct contact.

Copying from this book is in whole or in part is strictly forbidden by law, and the right of performance is not transferable.

Whenever the play is produced the following notice must appear on all programs, printing, and advertising for the play: *“Produced by special arrangement with Original Works Publishing.”*

Due authorship credit must be given on all programs, printing and advertising for the play.

www.originalworksonline.com
Blinders—Second Printing, 2007

More Great Plays Available
From OWP

American Way
By Jeremy Gable

An Impending Rupture of the Belly
By Matt Pelfrey

If You Take One Elf Off The Shelf
By Francesca Sanders

Good Mourning, America
By Lucy Wang

The PornoZombies
By Matt Casarino

White Money
By Julie Jensen

BLINDERS

by Patrick Gabridge

For Tracy.

Time: The Present

Place: Various places in America

Character Descriptions: (required: 1 woman, 3 men, 4 chorus members of mixed gender)

Karen Sayer, a reporter, committed to the truth

Stack Thompson, the world's greatest salesman

Chris

Alex

Roles that can be played by a 4 person chorus of mixed gender:

Papergirl

Dr. Cooper Gennette

Reporter1

Reporter2

Tipsy Starlet

Dude

Jolene

Shopper1

Shopper2

Jack--Karen's boss (or Jackie, if you cast role as a woman)

Optometrist

Passerby

Cop

Mailman

Floyd Sayer--Karen's Father

Wanda Sayer--Karen's Mother

Psychologist

Inmates 1-3:

Carnac

Miller

Hideout

Fat Dominic

Wilbur Jenkins (or Wilma if you cast role as a woman)

Senator Caldwell

Voice in Crowd

HOG-1

HOG-2

Moderator

Judy

James

An early version of this play (under the title, *Two Snowflakes*) opened at the Plays-in-Progress World Premiere Theatre, in Eureka, California, in November, 1998, directed by Michael Thomas. *Blinders* also premiered, that same week at Studio 44, in Denver, directed by Greg Ward.

The first New York production of *Blinders* was produced by the Sage Theatre Company at Raw Space, May 1999.

Director: Frank Calo
Lighting Design: Krista Stella

Cast:
Karen: Nicole Verbois
Stack: Michael D. Kelber
Chris: Phillip Stafford
Alex: Paul Witte
Ensemble/Chorus: Vance Clemente, Tracy Friedman, Michele McKiernan, Jami O'Brien, Jeremy Shepard, and Celeste Wescott.

Special Thanks: Chameleon Stage, Rhombus, the casts, crews, and staffs of the productions and readings by Chameleon Stage, Out of the Blue, Plays-in-Progress, Sage/Spotlight On, Stage Left, Studio 44, and Yellow Taxi Productions. The Karens who worked with me in production: Margaret Casart, Nicole Verbois, Julie Partyka, and Karen Woodward-Massey. The directors who provided so much helpful input: Greg Ward, Frank Calo, Alice Kroman, and Melissa Wentworth. Thanks also to Jessica Maria Tuccelli, Arthur Bracco, and to the Boston Playwrights Theatre. And, as always, thanks to my ever-patient family.

BLINDERS

Scene 1, TWO SNOWFLAKES

(The stage is dark and bare. Props and set pieces are brought on as necessary, with only the barest minimum used to suggest each scene.)

(Spotlight center stage on a young girl hawking newspapers at the top of her lungs.)

PAPERGIRL: EXTRA, EXTRA, READ ALL ABOUT IT! AMAZING DISCOVERY!!! SCIENTISTS DISCOVER TWO IDENTICAL SNOWFLAKES. EXTRA, EXTRA!

(Her spotlight goes black. Another spot comes up on KAREN. KAREN wears a suit, is about thirty-five years old, and carries a steno pad. Her manner is steady and calm.)

KAREN: Two identical flakes of frozen water. That's how it begins. What could be more harmless?

(Karen walks over to a group of REPORTERS and PHOTOGRAPHERS gathered in front of a podium, eagerly taking notes and snapping photographs. DR. COOPER GENNETTE enters.)

GENNETTE: As you are aware, after the first discovery of identical snowflakes ten years ago, my Department of Theoretical Duplication has searched for a set of human duplicates. After years of painstaking research, we are pleased to announce that we have found two people exactly alike. Let me present to you, Chris and Alex.

(Two men walk out, dressed in identical suits. Maybe ALEX is about twenty-five, blond, tall, athletic. Maybe CHRIS is about thirty, dark haired, not tall, and carries a little more weight than he should. (The important thing is that they should not look at all alike.) They smile and stand next to Gennette for photographs. After sufficient flashes have gone off, they sit in the chairs by the podium.)

GENNETTE: I must admit that we were shocked when we actually found these two marvels of nature. I'd be happy to answer your questions.

REPORTER1: Dr. Gennette, are you sure that Chris and Alex aren't merely identical twins? Perhaps they were separated at birth.

GENNETTE: Any time two people appear identical, our first expectation is twinship. However, in our research with twins we have discovered that the original splitting of the embryo leaves behind a trace marking, a genetic scar, if you will. To answer your question: we are certain that Chris and Alex were not, are not, and never will be... twins.

(A MURMUR runs through the crowd.)

REPORTER2: Are you continuing testing?

GENNETTE: We have already conducted every important test with the most modern scientific instruments. I consider the results one hundred percent verified.

REPORTER1: Rumor has it that you will be nominated for the Nobel Prize. Any comment?

GENNETTE: Everything I've done has been in the name of science. Any recognition is purely secondary.

(Lights cut to black, except for on Karen.)

LOVING PUBLIC

KAREN: Chris and Alex are a smash socially.

(A dazzling young woman with a drink in her hand.)

TIPSY STARLET: Oh, of course I've seen them. They are so cute. I'd love to take one home with me. You can't help wanting to squeeze them, they're so adorable.

(A young guy, DUDE, who shakes as he talks (he's a little strung out).)

DUDE: It's like talking to a fucking mirror, man. Definitely, definitely, I repeat definitely, do not get stoned before going to a party that they're at. It'll pop your circuits. I saw it happen to a guy...

Really. He was talking to them, and his head was turning back and forth, back and forth... and the next thing you know he's flopping on the floor like a fish, his eyes rolling up in his head. Scared the shit out of me. I didn't sober up for a week.

(A middle-aged woman in a prim hat enters, perhaps holding a Bible.)

JOLENE: Praise Jesus! The Lord works in mysterious ways. A miracle in our lifetime. Let those secularists talk all they want about science, we know that true wonderment comes from the Lord. The Lord is surely speaking to us at this time, showing all his Glory. Amen, my brothers and sisters. Amen!

(Two SHOPPERS talking together, carrying baskets or bags from trendy shops.)

SHOPPER1: Have you seen their TV commercial?

SHOPPER2: The one for Reebok or the breakfast cereal?

SHOPPER1: The breakfast cereal. I heard they got five million dollars.

SHOPPER2: More for Reebok.

SHOPPER1: Imagine two people exactly the same playing basketball against each other. It'd be impossible.

SHOPPER2: Everyone has good days and bad days.

SHOPPER1: But they have them at the same time. At least that's what I hear.

SHOPPER2: Can you imagine being with them in bed? I mean... you know.

SHOPPER1: You're terrible... What do you think it would be like?

(They exit.)

INTERVIEW

(Karen, alone on the stage.)

KAREN: I am confused, intrigued, irritated. I think that if I can just get an interview, up close and personal, perhaps I'll see what I'm missing.

(Lights up on chairs occupied by ALEX and CHRIS. KAREN joins them.)

KAREN: Thanks for taking the time to talk with me. I'm sure you must be worn out from all the national touring.

CHRIS: Yeah.

ALEX: Pretty much.

CHRIS: But we don't mind sacrificing--

ALEX: --ourselves. It's all for the advancement--

CHRIS: --of science.

KAREN: Do you think the same answers to all my questions?

CHRIS & ALEX: Sure.

KAREN: Do you share emotions, like some twins do? Sort of a telepathy?

ALEX: It's not necessary, since we're exactly the same.

CHRIS: There's no need to share the thoughts, if they're the same in both places at once at the same time.

ALEX: See what we mean?

KAREN: Were you aware of each other before Dr. Gennette found you?

CHRIS: No. We owe all this to Gennette.

KAREN: How did your families take the news? Are either of you married?

ALEX: No.

CHRIS: But you must be.

ALEX: A good looking woman like you.

CHRIS: I didn't know you could win a Pulitzer Prize--

ALEX: --and still be so--

CHRIS: --delicious.

(Dr. COOPER GENNETTE enters and takes a seat.)

GENNETTE: I'm sorry that I'm late.

ALEX: You didn't miss a thing.

CHRIS: We were just getting to know--

ALEX: --the illustrious--

CHRIS: --the luminous--

ALEX: --Ms. Sayer.

KAREN: Yes. Um. Well. Dr. Gennette, the nation seems fascinated with the results of your research. Is this what you expected?

GENNETTE: It's even better. How wonderful to inspire a passion for science. The press has been most cooperative.

KAREN: So I've noticed.

GENNETTE: We present the facts as simply as possible, so they can flow freely to the masses. I'm sure it's difficult for journalists to refrain from commenting. I'm glad they've been willing to trust the Experts.

ALEX: In matters of Science.

CHRIS: And Miracles of Nature.

KAREN: I was wondering... Are you sure all these measurements are correct?

GENNETTE: Every one has been scientifically verified. We have the most advanced instruments in the world. The technology is incredible.

KAREN: I thought this height reading for Alex might be a little optimistic.

ALEX: Excuse me?

KAREN: With all the money poured into the search, I imagine there would be intense pressure to produce a pair of--

GENNETTE: I don't like your tone, Ms. Sayer.

KAREN: You misunderstand.

GENNETTE: Do I?

(The light on GENNETTE fades.)

PRICE TO PAY

(JACK steps towards Karen, flushed with anger.)

JACK: Karen! Are you a scientist?

KAREN: No.

JACK: You don't look like a scientist.

KAREN: I'm not a scientist.

JACK: When I hired you, you didn't tell me you were a scientist.

KAREN: What's your point, Jack?

JACK: A very famous scientist just called to complain about you.

KAREN: I asked a few questions.

JACK: Cooper Gennette is impossible to get for an interview.

KAREN: It's my job to ask hard questions.

JACK: Your job was to get face-to-face with the first two identical humans and their discoverer. Your job was to give us an excuse to plaster their incredibly popular faces on our front page, so we can sell newspapers. You used to be my best reporter, Karen. One of the best I've ever known. But this... Why would you do this to me? To yourself? Why are you flushing years of hard work down the toilet?

KAREN: They don't even look alike.

JACK: What?

KAREN: Do they look alike to you?

JACK: Do the scientists say they're identical?

KAREN: Yes, but--

JACK: Did our newspaper say they're identical?

KAREN: We were wrong.

JACK: Do our readers think they're identical?

KAREN: They're idiots.

JACK: Fine. We're all idiots, Karen. We're all wrong. The scientists, the media, the idiots in the streets.

KAREN: That's right.

JACK: Because they don't look alike to you.

KAREN: No, they don't.

JACK: I only need reporters who can see straight. Maybe you'd better get your eyes checked.

(Jack exits.)

VISION

(Karen sits on a chair facing the audience. The OPTOMETRIST is a voice over loudspeakers. Perhaps there is a projection of a giant eye.)

OPTOMETRIST: What seems to be the problem?

KAREN: I see things other people don't. Or they see things I don't.

OPTOMETRIST: Headaches? Dizziness?

KAREN: No.

OPTOMETRIST: Double vision?

KAREN: That's the whole problem.

OPTOMETRIST: Hold the paddle over your left eye.

(Blinding light into Karen's face as she holds a plastic paddle over her eye.)

OPTOMETRIST: Look up. Down. Right. Left. Roll it around. Other eye. *(Karen switches eyes.)* Up. Down. Zig zag.

KAREN: Normal?

OPTOMETRIST: So far. I want you to read this.

(An eye chart is projected. It reads something like this:)

A
LEX
ANDCH
RISAREW
ONDERFUL

KAREN: A-L-E-X-A-N-D-C-H-R-I-S... I don't think so.

OPTOMETRIST: No wonder you're having trouble. Which is better, number one or number two?

(SOUND of lenses switching. The chart switches to read:)

*I
LOV
ECHRI
SANDALEX*

OPTOMETRIST: How's that? Karen? Karen?

(beat. KAREN exits. Lights shift to JOLENE.)

JOLENE: My brothers and sisters in Christ, I know that some of you saw the newspaper articles about our beloved Chris and Alex, degrading them, challenging their unique God-given miraculous duplicity. And I ask you to reach down in your hearts, and pray to God almighty, to smite the purveyors of such lies and filth. Boycott that newspaper. Call your Senator. We must not stand for such immoral attitudes.

(JOLENE exits.)

HOME

(Karen's apartment. KAREN sits on the floor, in the dark.)

(STACK THOMPSON enters, talking on his cell phone. He possesses a confident charisma. He wears a business suit.)

STACK: *(into the phone)* No. You're not listening to me. Their product makes customers think their lives will improve. Our product makes them believe. There's a big difference. Exactly. That's what I'm saying. You understand. Perfect. We'll have a contract to you by morning. *(He clicks off his phone, turns on the light, and notices Karen.)* Karen? Why are you sitting in the dark?

KAREN: I have a headache.

(Stack's cell phone RINGS, but he ignores it.)

STACK: Sorry.

(He sits behind her and massages her shoulders.)

STACK: I thought you were working tonight, big celebrity gala with the wonder twins or something like that.

KAREN: Jack made me take a leave of absence.

STACK: What? Why?

KAREN: The story on the freaks. Gennette and his pals complained, readers complained. Jack thinks I'm losing my mind.

STACK: Jack's a weakling. He forgets that your journalistic integrity is part of the reason why his paper is number one.

KAREN: I don't feel good, Stack. This whole thing, the media reaction, the public reaction, it's making me sick.

STACK: You can't let them get to you. Maybe time off is good.

KAREN: They all treat me like I'm wrong.

STACK: Truth is in the eye of the beholder. Or mouth of the seller.

KAREN: Do they look alike to you?

STACK: You know what you see. It doesn't matter what I think.

KAREN: It matters to me.

(Cell phone RINGS again. Stack ignores it.)

STACK: What I think is that if these jokers had a real marketing guy working for them, the sky would be the limit. Christ, I'd kill to represent these guys. Historical freaks of nature. America loves freaks.

KAREN: Do they look alike?