

SNOW IN JULY
A SCREENPLAY
BY JAMES CAMPBELL

MUSIC: GYMNOPEDIE. B&W image of a girl in ballet costume exercising at the barre. She leaves the barre, tries a few steps. A man's voice, "Late, late, you're late..." The vision fades. BACKGROUND SOUND: street noise. Again a man's voice.

MAN

Ah, yeah. Late.

Open to reveal, EXT MORNING in July. A bus stop with a single bench for passengers in a suburb of a large northeastern city. A young woman, ARLENE, is seated on the bench. She is wearing a coat and gloves. The man, FRANK KONIG, is dressed in work clothes.

FRANK

Late. The bus is late. It's late. I might've just missed it. I don't think I missed it. Did I miss it?

Pause. ARLENE stares at FRANK.

FRANK

The bus. Did I just miss it? ... No! I get this every day and I ain't seen you before. If you would'a seen it, you would'n'a been here, You'd'a been on it. I should'a known that. See, 'cause that's what I do...

ARLENE

My name is Arlene and you could if you wanted to.

FRANK

Could what?

ARLENE

Be a Cossack. You have the makings of a first class Cossack. The hawk-like profile, The weathered jaw, the dark, barbaric eyes. You'd look good on a horse.

FRANK

I work on the buses...

ARLENE

You're a driver.

FRANK

Who?

ARLENE

You. You're a driver.

FRANK

I'm kind've in the garage.

ANGLE on ARLENE.

FRANK

I bet you work in a office. Not me. It would drive me crazy. Every day, b'blah, b'blah. In a garage it's different. You can touch things with your hands.

ARLENE

I'm going away.

ANGLE on FRANK, ARLENE'S POV.

I didn't go to college. I know a lot, though. Experience. That's better than out of a book. When something happens to you, you really know it. You know what I mean?

ARLENE and FRANK on the bench.

You married....

ARLENE looks up at the sky, unheeding.

FRANK

I just asked.

ARLENE

It's going to snow. The sky is so white, you you can smell it, almost.

FRANK

Now?

ARLENE turns to FRANK. FRANK extends his hand. ARLENE ignores the gesture.

My name is Frank. Konig. Frank Konig.
That's kind've European, I think.

ARLENE

Eastern Europe. Land of the Cossacks.
Fierce and brutal. Burning towns and
capturing women. They would ride off with
the women.

FRANK withdraws his hand.

FRANK

Well, I certainly ain't no Cossack.

ARLENE looks up.

ARLENE

Oh, look, there's one!

FRANK

What?

ARLENE

A snowflake. It will snow all day. Everything
will be covered in drifts.

FRANK

It's July. You want me to believe it'll snow?

ARLENE

See the clouds, how heavy they are with
snow? You can smell the heaviness in the air.
It's like that before a blizzard.

FRANK

You must really like snow.

ARLENE

Only after it has stopped falling. When
everything is covered. Quiet and clean.

FRANK

Yeah, but then it all turns to slush.

ARLENE

You mustn't always see thing the way they are.

FRANK

But that's the way they are, right?

They have drawn closer. ARLENE studies FRANK for a moment.

ARLENE

What do you mean by sitting so close to me?

FRANK quickly withdraws.

FRANK

Who, me? Nothing.

ARLENE

How old are you?

FRANK

What?

ARLENE

You have evil thoughts. You want to touch me like the things you touch in your garage.

FRANK

I never touched you. I came down here to get the bus.

ARLENE

If you touch me the penalty is death.

FRANK

Boy, you sure think a lot of yourself.

ARLENE

I was lost in the wood, in the Enchanted Forest with a magic prince who turned in to a frog and gave me warts but I'm all right now.

FRANK

You think so.

ARLENE

I was playing a game. When I was a little girl I would always make up games. Didn't you ever do that?

FRANK

Sure. But we used to play real games, like ring-o-leevio, stickball, red light, spit-on-the-pole...

ARLENE

Spit-on-the-pole - What's that?

FRANK

Just a game. Around the neighborhood when it got dark, they would turn on the streetlights. The first kid to see the lights go on would run like hell toward the nearest light pole and spit on it and slap where he spit and say, "First to see the lights go on!" And all the other kids had to do the same thing - slap and spit right where the first kid had to slap and spit. The last kid to hit the pole was "it" for whatever would come next. The last kid, the way we'd get him, was he had to put his hand where everybody else spit.

ARLENE

I would be a princess in a safe castle surrounded by a wicked army and wait for a prince to come and rescue me. That was in a playhouse that my father built under the trees. I would stay there all day when it rained. I would pretend. Did you ever pretend?

FRANK

We'd play "cops and robbers", stuff like that.

ARLENE

I like the other one. The spit one.

FRANK

Spit-on-the-pole. You like that, hah?

ARLENE stands.

ARLENE

Can you show me how you did it? I'll do it with you. Show me how to do it.

FRANK remains seated.

FRANK
There's no lights here. No streetlights.

ARLENE
Pretend that waste basket is a light pole. I'll race you to the light.

FRANK stands, hesitant.

FRANK
How do you know when the lights go on?
This is crazy. I can't do this.

ARLENE is drawing FRANK into it.

ARLENE
C'mon. Look, when I say "Go!" the lights are on and we race to the pole.

FRANK
What for?

ARLENE
To see who gets there first. The one who loses is "it" for whatever comes next. Are you ready? When I say "Go!"

FRANK
Wait. Where do we start? We got to have a place to start from, like a line on the ground, or something.

ARLENE
Ok, here.

ARLENE indicates a line on the sidewalk.

ARLENE
We'll start from here, alright?

FRANK moves next to her, ready to start.

ARLENE
Ready? On your mark? Go!

They race. ARLENE hits the basket rim with her hand.

ARLENE
First to see the lights go on!

ARLENE suddenly grabs FRANK by the front of his shirt.

ARLENE
I'm first. That means you're "it". You have to do whatever I say.

FRANK
Hey, wait a minute.

FRANK tries to pull away. ARLENE pulls him back, fiercely.

ARLENE
No. That's the game. You agreed. You have to play by the rules. You're "it" and you'll have to play.

FRANK surrenders.