

Ice Flow

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This play was inspired by “Ice Watch,” a project by artist Olafur Eliasson in which huge blocks of ice were taken from Greenland, where climate change has melted them off the ice sheet. They were floating in the water, and were hauled to London to melt on the South Bank. Eliasson says the blocks “are individual, they are like beings, they whisper to you. If you put your ear to them, you can hear the air bubbles. And that air is fresh and clean – it has half the CO₂ of the air outside.”

NOTES: A sufficiently “icy” look might be to have the actors in white puffer jackets. You can cut out one of the icebergs for brevity if needed. This is meant to be performed at quite a pace.

Three ICEBERGS speak to us. They are in different parts of the performance space. They interact with the audience. The audience represents the crowd looking at them as art installations.

The ICEBERGS should probably be sitting down, as icebergs are inert, but feel free to take some creative license. Perhaps they’re already starting to float?

ICEBERG 1: I only ask that you might forgive me.

ICEBERG 2: What do you mean, I’m dying? I’ve never felt so alive!

ICEBERG 3: It’s rude, that’s what it is!

If I could get a hold of the bastard who put me here...

ICEBERG 1: The problem is, I don’t know... what I’ve done.

ICEBERG 2: For centuries I’ve been stuck, just sitting there, joined up. I meant nothing, to anyone.

Now I’m important.

ICEBERG 3: I’m known for being someone who doesn’t take anyone’s shit.

I’m known as someone who gets on with things, gets things done.

ICEBERG 1: I spent many years... centuries... not hurting anyone. Not doing anything.

Perhaps it was that? That I should’ve been doing more? Helping more?

Perhaps this is my penance?

ICEBERG 3: I was cemented to my family.

On what you call the ice sheet.

I held sway over them. I disciplined them.

I was strict, yes, but I was fair.

No one crossed me.

No one messed with me.

ICEBERG 2: You get pleasure from seeing me!

How can you get pleasure from something that’s dying?

Pause.

Trouble is, I'm starting to think...

ICEBERG 1: There's clean air still inside me.

I can feel it as it flows through me.

But the outside – it's something else.

It doesn't sing, it cries. It weeps.

Beat.

It chokes me.

ICEBERG 2: I think about what I'm doing here. And why.

ICEBERG 3: I've been hearing a lot of talk, too much talk, about how this might've been down to a weakness in leadership. People, some people, have been putting it about.

They know who they are.

I don't know who started that rumor, but that's all it is – a rumor.

ICEBERG 1: What is the... (*struggles for word*) ice sheet?

That's what you keep calling it: the ice sheet.

I was there. Now I'm in (*again struggling*) South Bank.

That's what you call it.

You say, "Look, this iceberg is all the way from the ice sheet... from Greenland."

So I am from Ice Sheet Greenland. And now I am in South Bank.

And I am iceberg.

ICEBERG 1: I am getting warmer.

ICEBERG 3, *allowing a note of sorrow to creep in*: I... I was separated from them. My family.

They did not push me off!

ICEBERG 2: You bring your children and they put their ears on me. Listening. For something. Something that I used to be.

Oh well, it seems to make them happy.

ICEBERG 1: So you push your fingers into me, down my spine, stick your tongues at me, making me flow and run.

I don't mind.

Pause.

I mind... a little bit.

ICEBERG 2: My master won't let me die.

I've come a long way. My master, he took me on a long journey.

He's a good man, my master.

ICEBERG 3: I was dislodged, we'll say. I fell off the sheet.

Into the water.

ICEBERG 2: He'll come for me. He'll be back for me. I know he will.

But if you see him, could you...?

He won't let me die here. He won't let me melt away. I know he's too good for that. He took me away from my home; took me from my family, but I know he did it for a good reason.

He took me thousands of miles on a boat. I haven't travelled much. That's the first time I've travelled in...

I've not travelled much.

But my master, he must know what he's doing. He must've put me here for a reason.

He rescued me.

I was floating when my master, he fished me up.

I used to belong to my siblings. We were one.

But my master, he'll save me.

ICEBERG 3: It was no one's fault, but the sooner I can talk to someone...

The sooner things can return to normal and I can instill a bit of discipline...

ICEBERG 1: I am an installation.

That's what you say. You say, "We're here to see the installation."

If I could talk to someone, plead with someone... to help me?

Perhaps I could offer some way, some means of paying my debt?

Otherwise...

ICEBERG 2: My master, he's an artist. That means...

He does art.

ICEBERG 1: South Bank will swallow me.

ICEBERG 2: And his art is me.

Is that right?

You should know, you've come here to see me.

Me, shrinking. Me, dwindling. That's what his art does. It shows me, naked.

Pants down.

It's a little embarrassing, to be honest.

Pause.

I am... a little...

When I get a chance to think, that's when... when I feel scared.

ICEBERG 3: You – or you – yes, you over there!

Why are you touching me?

Why are you licking me? It's disgusting!

Anyway, you! Tell whoever put me here to come and talk to me. We'll have a frank and firm discussion.

ICEBERG 2: I'm sorry. I know I should have more faith. But sometimes I worry...

If you see him, my master, could you just remind him?

That I'm here?

ICEBERG 1: Back in the glaciers, back home, hunters and harpoons, the forest of white. Now the towers across the river, watching me with judgement in their million glass eyes, looming over me and aiming their sun rays and smoke at me so that I'll flow into somewhere, into

the river of South Bank, into memories, and I'll be traces of water and I'll be yesterday and I'll be a full stop and I'll be gone.

ICEBERG 3, *softening*: I just... I worry, you see.

My family, they're not much good without me. They need my firm hand.

ICEBERG 2: It's alright.

I'm not dying. I'm having fun.

ICEBERG 3: Without me they get... they tend to get lazy, disorganized.

I... miss them. That is, they need me.

ICEBERG 1: I'll be an example. Of what happens. When they let the sun and the sky take away more of my family and we all melt into some South Bank somewhere.

So many South Banks.

Killing us.

ICEBERG 2, *less sure*: I'm having fun.
