

# Before Night Falls depicts life of Cuban poet, activist

TAM OLIVER  
A & E Editor

After watching this video twice, I'm convinced that Javier Bardem, who plays Cuban poet Reinaldo Arenas in his autobiographical novel turned movie, *Before Night Falls*, deserved the Academy Award for acting last year.

In a beautiful movie probably not seen by many, Bardem brings life to the story of Arenas, a man who was persecuted by Castro's government not only for his writing but also because of his homosexuality. Too often when gay men are included as characters in Hollywood movies, they come out looking like silly caricatures rather than multifaceted human beings. However, Bardem plays the part of Reinaldo with the humor, strength and dignity it deserves.

Reinaldo Arenas was born to a poor family in rural Cuba in 1943. As a teenager he joined the Rebel troops of Fidel Castro to overthrow the Batista regime. When he became older, he realized that he had only helped replace one repressive leadership with another.

Openly gay and openly critical of Castro's government, his nov-

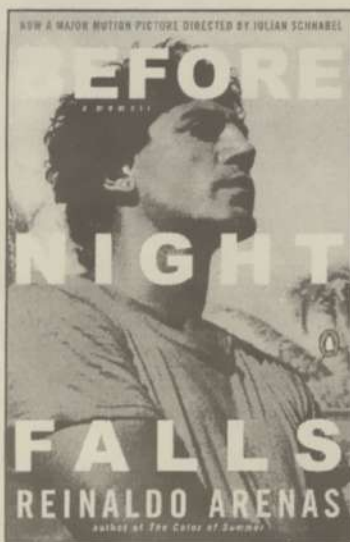
els were banned in Cuba; and to have them published, he had to smuggle them out of the country. After his first imprisonment for trumped-up charges, he is repeatedly imprisoned at El Morro prison in Havana. In prison, he earned cigarettes writing letters for other inmates and then used them to pay for having his work smuggled out. This ultimately led to further punishment, and he struggled to remain sane as he is repeatedly thrown into solitary confinement, a concrete hole not big enough to stand in with one bare light bulb for company. Through it all, he managed to remain true to himself.

He was a vocal embarrassment to Castro who would have had the rest of the world believe that Cuba had become one big happy family where everyone cheerfully worked toward the good of the state. Any discontent, according to Castro, was due to the bad influence of capitalist countries.

Although he loved Cuba, when he had a chance to leave after 20 years of persecution by the government, Arenas realized that if he didn't go ultimately his treatment

in prison would kill him. When Castro allowed a boatful of political dissidents and homosexuals to leave in 1980, he left for New York. His novel *Before Night Falls* was completed there. In 1990 when he could no longer write, he committed suicide at the age of 47 after a long battle with AIDS.

Although this seems like a grim story, the movie is able to convey Arenas' love of life and Cuba. Most amazingly to me, it also captures the nature of his poetic writing during moments when it intertwines narrated Spanish with spoken English translation creating a rhythm that felt like one Arenas would recognize as his own. When he speaks of the love of his life, the old, battered manual typewriter with its clickaty-clack sound and how it combines with his own words to make music, I could feel the cadence they created.



Marvin reveals his inner animal while enjoying a night out with Rianna.

## The Animal brings laughs, crude humor

LIESL MUGGLI  
Staff Writer

*The Animal*, a Columbia Tristar production directed by Luke Greenfield, is a comedy about a young man trying to follow in the footsteps of his father in order to be a cop and will make you laugh if you like a more crude brand of humor.

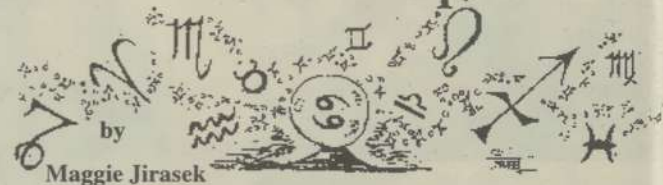
Small, non athletic and suffering from asthma, Marvin (Rob Schneider) never seems to be able to get into good enough shape to pass the obstacle course and become a "real" cop. Teased by his peers, his future changes when he gets into a major car crash and is saved by a crazy scientist who conducts experimental surgery on him by replacing his organs with animal parts.

Things seem to change for the better when Marvin's new athletic capabilities help him fulfill his dreams of being a cop. For instance, he can swim like a seal and smell as well as a bloodhound. He even starts eating out of the garbage.

With his new found self pride, he gets up the courage to ask out Rianna (Colleen Haskell), a girl very concerned about the environment. As the movie progresses, he finds his animal instincts a bit overpowering.

The tension builds when two cows are found dead and a man is assaulted; all fingers point toward Marvin. However, the identity of the real animal may be a bit surprising. This is a movie for you if you like racy jokes, and of course, animals.

## Horoscopes



**Aries:** The possibility of a stranger walking up to you and saying something unusual is very high this week. Take it as a deep spiritual meaning and remember it for later meditation. Your magic food of the week: Raisins.

**Taurus:** Inspiration will come to from the least likely places. A noisy vacuum cleaner might be the source of annoyance. Get rid of old junk you don't need anymore. Your magic food of the week: Cucumber potato salad.

**Gemini:** You will have a strange dream one of these nights. Make sure to write it down since it has a prophetic meaning for your future. Stop procrastinating! Your magic food of the week: Fruitcake.

**Cancer:** Your thinking might be a little cloudy this week. Someone or something is distracting you heavily. You have a tendency to spill liquids. Your magic food of the week: Sauerkraut.

**Leo:** Beware what comes out of your mouth, careless words may cost a friendship. Prevent a loved friend from oversleeping and being late to an important meeting. Your magic food of the week: Spaghetti and yummy sauce.

**Virgo:** Things are about to go your way, so stop jumping at shadows. It would help if you wrote a poem once in a while to increase your brain wave activity. Your magic food of the week: Pumpkin pie cookies.

**Libra:** You have the urge to talk to everyone you meet. A long missed object suddenly appears. Try to relax. Your magic food of the week: Salad a la garden.

**Scorpio:** Your high degree of mental concentration makes you a good student. However, don't concentrate too much to prevent headaches. A secret admirer is watching you! Your magic food of the week: Toast and banana jam.

**Sagittarius:** Do not be afraid of the future. You will be enlightened very soon. You might receive an electrical shock sometime this week. Be careful! Your magic food of the week: Salmon.

**Capricorn:** It's the week of inner peace! Your sixth sense is very strong and you are able to perceive a lot of positive vibrations. It's time to clean the stains in your carpet. Your magic food of the week: Carp.

**Aquarius:** You will have to try harder than you have been in the past in order to catch the eye of the person you like. Wearing sandals might be more comfortable in the heat. Your magic food of the week: Blueberry flavored granola bar.

**Pisces:** Stick with what you know best since new ideas spell trouble. Avoid wildlife since you will have bad luck with the animal kingdom this week. Your magic food of the week: Bread sticks with tomato sauce.

### Build a Butterfly House



Kids between 8 and 12 years old accompanied by adults can learn to build a butterfly house in a workshop June 15, from 10:30 a.m. to noon in the John Inskeep Environmental Learning Center at Clackamas Community College.

The class, taught by Nancy Wallwork, will also explore wildflowers that attract butterflies and find out how to keep butterflies happy in the garden. The \$18 class fee includes a \$12 kit and all materials.

For more information, call 503-657-6958, ext 2351.

### DON'T MISS:

**Word and Form**, an exhibition of work resulting from the collaboration between ceramic students taught by Katy McFadden and advanced writing students taught by Kate Gray, will be on display from June 7 until June 29 at Pauling Gallery.

An opening reception will be held tomorrow from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. Gallery hours are from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. on Monday through Thursday and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Fridays.

For additional information, call 503-657-6958, ext. 2386.

**Writers' Club** will be changing its meetings to 5-7 p.m. on Thursdays in the back room of Maui Camp 3 Restaurant on Main Street in Oregon City. For more information, contact Allen Widerburg at 503-657-6958, ext. 2359.



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