

A DOG'S HOUSE

By

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*For Colonel Frog*

CHARACTERS:

EDEN

MICHAEL

NICOLE

BILL

JOCK (a dog)

SCENE ONE:

The modest suburban starter home of maturing hipsters.  
MICHAEL breathless, is covered in grime and sweat. EDEN stands in her jacket, just home from work, keys still in her hand.

Mid-crisis--

EDEN  
Pull it together.

MICHAEL  
I'm pulled together.

EDEN  
Change your shirt.

MICHAEL  
Changing my shirt doesn't change anything. Except my shirt.

EDEN  
You know what? Take a shower.  
Take a shower, calm down, put on a clean shirt. But hurry up about it.

MICHAEL  
Maybe we could just stop and think for a second.

EDEN  
What's to think about?

MICHAEL  
Our options.

EDEN  
Okay. What are our options?

MICHAEL  
We could, sure, we could make our way over there now and tell them everything...

EDEN  
Or?

MICHAEL  
I don't know what.

EDEN

Well don't tell me we need to weigh  
our options--

MICHAEL

I don't know. I've never done this  
before.

EDEN

--Don't tell me we need to weigh  
our options and then when I ask  
what our options are you say "I  
don't know."

MICHAEL

I don't have all the answers.

EDEN

There's only one thing to do. We  
have to go--

MICHAEL

He didn't know what he was doing.

EDEN

Who?

MICHAEL

Jock.

EDEN

Don't--

MICHAEL

It was an instinct.

EDEN

Don't defend him.

MICHAEL

I'm not defending him. I'm just  
saying he probably didn't  
understand what he was doing.

EDEN

So? So what? How does that change  
anything?

MICHAEL

I'm just saying he's scared.

EDEN

He's scared? Felix is dead.

MICHAEL  
Phoenix. His name is Phoenix, not  
Felix.

EDEN  
Well he doesn't get a name anymore,  
because he's dead.

MICHAEL  
Maybe if we tried to understand  
what happened. More clearly. What  
set him off. Maybe if we fully  
understand what actually happened  
we'd be more prepared to go over  
there and make our case.

EDEN  
There is no case to be made. Stop  
being a pussy. Take a shower.  
I'll grab a bottle of wine.  
(considers)  
I'll grab a bottle of wine?  
(then)  
Scratch the wine.

MICHAEL  
Maybe Jock was provoked or  
confused. We have to figure out  
his motive.

EDEN  
--Dogs don't have motives.

MICHAEL  
Not motives, no, but instincts  
maybe. I think he thought he was  
protecting me.

EDEN  
Against a toy Poodle?

MICHAEL  
I don't know.

EDEN  
Where is he?

Michael points to a crate covered in a blanket that we may or  
may not have noticed. The door is facing upstage, so the  
dog, JOCK, is not visible.

MICHAEL  
In his crate. Sulking.

EDEN

Not Jock. Fuck Jock. Phoenix.

MICHAEL

He's in the shed. Jock knows he's done something wrong.

EDEN

Let me see him. Phoenix.

MICHAEL

He... he doesn't look good.

EDEN

Yeah, I'd imagine he looks pretty dead. Is he in a plastic bag?

MICHAEL

Sort of.

EDEN

What do you mean sort of?

MICHAEL

He's kind of... in pieces.

EDEN

How many pieces?

MICHAEL

Like... two of his paws. Half of his face. Some of his guts.

EDEN

Jock ate him?

MICHAEL

Not all of him.

EDEN

Jesus Christ.

MICHAEL

Maybe they haven't figured out he's gone yet.

EDEN

I'm sure they've figured out he's gone. Pieces?

MICHAEL

Yeah.

EDEN

Show me.

MICHAEL

You don't want to see.

EDEN

I told you this could happen. I  
told you when we went hiking and he  
barked at that chihuahua.

MICHAEL

So it's my fault?

EDEN

It's not your fault. It's not your  
fault, but it is your  
responsibility.

The DOORBELL rings. Michael looks through the peep hole.

MICHAEL

Fuck. I think it's her.

EDEN

Jesus Christ.

MICHAEL

Shit. Hide.

EDEN

She knows we're here. Our cars are  
parked out--

MICHAEL

Stand perfectly still.

Finally, Eden opens the door to reveal NICOLE, sweet,  
emotional, distraught. She carries a folder.

NICOLE

Hey, um, I'm sorry to bother you--

MICHAEL

It's no bother.

NICOLE

I'm Nicole. I'm--

MICHAEL

You moved into that house right on  
Clover. We waved at each other  
this morning.

NICOLE

Right. We haven't officially--

EDEN

Nice to meet you. Officially. I'm  
Eden. He's Michael.

MICHAEL

You're Nicole. That's such a great  
house. Have you been enjoying it?  
The gazebo the last owners put in  
is the envy of the neighborhood.  
We're all jealous. We covet it.  
We covet your gazebo.

(re: his appearance)  
I've been gardening.

NICOLE

Our dog, Phoenix, has run off.  
Little guy. And um, have you seen  
him?

EDEN

I just got home a few minutes ago.  
Michael?

MICHAEL

Yes?

EDEN

Have you seen their dog?

MICHAEL

Hmmmm. Let me think.

NICOLE

Black. Poodle. Bedazzled collar.

EDEN

Michael?

MICHAEL

I can't recall. I don't... I don't  
think so.

NICOLE

He's only been missing a few hours.  
Bill made these fliers. I'm going  
door to door.

She hands them a flier with the dog's photo on it.

EDEN  
(re: the photo)  
What a sweetheart.

NICOLE  
He really is special. I know everyone thinks that about their children but... he really is.

EDEN  
He's beautiful. He's so innocent and pure. And harmless.

MICHAEL  
Did you call the police?

NICOLE  
No. Do you think I should?

MICHAEL  
Nope. I doubt there's anything they could really do.

NICOLE  
He's micro-chipped. And he's got that collar, which is so distinctive. We'll find him. I'm sure I saw him. I'm sure of it. Playing in the front yard. It's got a fence.

(she starts to lose it)  
I'm sorry. I should go. I'm sorry.

MICHAEL  
No, don't be sorry. No. It's okay. We totally get it. It's stressful. He'll turn up.

NICOLE  
You think so?

MICHAEL  
Of course. He's probably in the closet.

EDEN  
What are you talking about?

MICHAEL  
Not like-- No, not gay. I mean, hiding in a closet or--

NICOLE

I checked all the closets.

EDEN

You never know with these things.

MICHAEL

We'll keep an eye out for him. And we can take some of those fliers if you want. Put them up around... around town.

NICOLE

Thank you.

Nicole hands him a stack.

EDEN

He's really cute.

NICOLE

They say that black dogs don't photograph that well. That's why there's more of them at shelters.

EDEN

I hadn't heard that before.

NICOLE

Phoenix isn't from a shelter, but-- I don't know why I said that.

EDEN

He's really adorable.

NICOLE

He is.

Nicole finds Jock, in his crate. We still don't see him.

NICOLE

And is this your guy? Aren't you sweet. He knows something's wrong. Dogs are so intuitive. What's his name?

MICHAEL

J... Jock.

NICOLE

He's so pretty. What kind of--

MICHAEL  
Rottweiler. It's a very mellow  
breed actually. Gentle giants.

Nicole leans down, sticking her face in the crate.

NICOLE  
Aw, Jock. Aren't you a good boy.  
Thank you for all the kisses.

Nicole stands up.

NICOLE  
(getting emotional)  
He could tell something was wrong.  
They're so... intuitive.  
Sensitive.  
(pulling it together)  
I should go keep pounding the  
pavement. Our phone number's at  
the bottom there. If you hear  
anything. Or see anything.  
Anything at all. Thank you.

Nicole leaves. Eden looks to Michael.

EDEN  
"He'll turn up"?

MICHAEL  
Well we were either gonna tell her  
the truth, or tell her that. We  
told her that.

EDEN  
You told her that.

MICHAEL  
So am I still hopping in the shower  
and changing my shirt?

EDEN  
Jesus Christ.

MICHAEL  
What was I supposed to say?

EDEN  
I don't know. I don't know what  
our options are now.

MICHAEL  
Oh, now you want options.

EDEN

Yeah well, now we're like,  
accomplices or something.

MICHAEL

We can still go over there and tell  
them. We can say after she came  
over we found him and... this is  
what transpired. Our dog ate your  
dog.

EDEN

He was your dog. You said if we  
got him you'd train him. That was  
the condition--

MICHAEL

Oh that's convenient, now.

EDEN

That woman--

MICHAEL

We didn't lie to her. We just  
didn't tell her everything.

EDEN

It's the same thing.

MICHAEL

Withholding information is not the  
same thing as lying.

EDEN

We are responsible.

MICHAEL

Option number one, we go over there  
right now. We tell them  
everything. We're all traumatized.  
We all have to live in the same zip  
code, run into each other at  
Target, find ourselves sharing a  
banquette with them at Bertucci's  
some awful Thursday night. And  
Jock is basically a dead dog  
walking. Option number two. We do  
nothing. They'll think he ran  
away. They'll think he's been  
adopted. They'll make up a story  
that'll be much easier to live  
with. For them. For us. For the  
neighborhood.

EDEN

And then what do we do about Jock?

MICHAEL

No TV for a week.

EDEN

I'm serious.

MICHAEL

What do you mean?

EDEN

What are we going to do about Jock?  
He's dangerous.

MICHAEL

(calling her bluff)

I have that blue shirt I just got  
back from the dry cleaners.

Eden goes towards the door of the crate.

EDEN (JUST O.S.)

His paws are covered in blood.

Jesus Christ.

(to the dog, in a sweet  
voice)

What's your fucking problem? Sweet  
baby. Sweet dumbass piece of shit.  
What's your fucking problem.

(to Michael)

Jesus, it's impossible to get mad  
at him.

MICHAEL

He thought he was protecting me. I  
reached over the gate to pet the  
Poodle and--

EDEN

Michael?

MICHAEL

What?

EDEN

I want to see the pieces.

MICHAEL

It's not good. Trust me.

EDEN

I get that.

MICHAEL  
It's really upsetting.

EDEN  
They're gonna ask for the pieces.

MICHAEL  
We can't give them the pieces.

EDEN  
We can't tell them the story and  
keep the pieces.

MICHAEL  
We can't tell them this story.

EDEN  
Dammit. Okay, tell me exactly what  
happened. Again. From the  
beginning.

MICHAEL  
I told you.

EDEN  
The story's in the details, you  
only gave me the headlines.

MICHAEL  
I was taking Jock for a walk. A  
long walk. You always say he  
doesn't get enough exercise, so I  
took him down Maple, across Parker.  
We went through the alley down by  
the Donut shop. I didn't have a  
donut, mind you, so you don't have  
to give me that look. I just love  
that sugary smell. Okay, I had a  
donut hole, but that's nothing--

EDEN  
Too many details.

MICHAEL  
Okay, so we make our way back, up  
Clover. And I see that woman  
through the window.

EDEN  
Nicole?

MICHAEL  
Yeah. She's on the phone. Smiles  
at me. Waves.

EDEN  
So she saw you?

MICHAEL  
Yeah, she saw me. I told you that.  
I wasn't hiding. I'm not some  
fugitive.

EDEN  
Then what happens?

MICHAEL  
I notice the Poodle in the front  
yard. And they have this little  
white picket fence. And the dog's  
just playin', happy as happy can  
be. Sweet, you know. So I reach  
over to give it a little hello.  
Maybe I even gave him a little  
treat of his own. One of those  
peanut butter cookie dog treats  
from Jock's bag.

EDEN  
You gave some random dog a treat?

MICHAEL  
Maybe I did. Then Jock growled.  
So I gave him a treat too. Just so  
it was fair.

EDEN  
Ok. Then?

MICHAEL  
Then my phone rings. And I see the  
caller I.D. It's Computer Candy,  
that graphic design company? Turns  
out Jeremy, the guy who first had  
interviewed me last June and didn't  
hire me, he's been fired. And the  
new HR lady, Pam Bleckner, she said  
she'd been going through stacks of  
old resumes and she came across  
mine and would I consider coming  
back in for an interview because  
they'd been making a lot of changes  
and--

EDEN  
Michael?

MICHAEL  
What? That's good, right?

EDEN

The dog?

MICHAEL

So I'm talking to her for a few minutes. Turn around and all of a sudden Jock's just barreling down the street like a horse or something.

EDEN

He wasn't on his leash?

MICHAEL

Of course he was on his leash.

EDEN

So how could he be barreling down the street if he was on his leash?

MICHAEL

I think I must have, while I was on the phone call-- See, I was standing on the end of the leash as I was talking on my cell and I think he just darted off without me even noticing.

EDEN

You think? You think you let go of the leash? You think it just slipped out from under your foot?

MICHAEL

It probably did. I'm like eighty-four percent sure it probably did.

EDEN

Ok, so you chase him home.

MICHAEL

I did. I got a little winded actually. I mean, I can do eight miles on the treadmill but on the pavement--

EDEN

When have you ever run eight miles on the treadmill?

MICHAEL

You weren't there.

EDEN

So you get home--

MICHAEL

I get home and Jock's on the front stoop. And he's chewing on something.

EDEN

Oh I feel sick.

MICHAEL

Should I stop?

EDEN

No. Keep going.

MICHAEL

It's... Phoenix. In his mouth. So I immediately, of course, immediately try to separate them. But it was too late. Too late for Phoenix. And then I panicked. I didn't know what to do. I just started cleaning it all up.

EDEN

Wait, go back. You said the Phoenix was behind the fence.

MICHAEL

Are you interrogating me?

EDEN

If he was behind their fence, how did Jock... get him in his mouth in the first place?

MICHAEL

It was a Poodle sized fence. Jock probably just hopped right over.

EDEN

So you think when you answered the phone, turned around, dropped the leash--

MICHAEL

You make it sound like I planned it or something? Like I drove the getaway car.

EDEN

Well you left out some key details  
the first time. Jock hopped  
Nicole's fence, nabbed the Poodle  
in his mouth, jumped back over the  
fence to the sidewalk, and ran off.

MICHAEL

Maybe.

EDEN

What do you mean maybe?

MICHAEL

I have developed a potentially  
explosive alternate theory.

EDEN

Well lay it on me Johnnie Cochran,  
I'd love to hear it.

MICHAEL

Coyotes.

EDEN

Coyotes?

MICHAEL

Yeah. Coyotes got to the Poodle  
first. Jock sees this, sweeps in  
to rescue the Poodle--

EDEN

It wasn't coyotes.

MICHAEL

You don't know that.

EDEN

I'm ninety-nine percent sure it was  
not coyotes.

MICHAEL

So you think there's still a one  
percent chance--

EDEN

You didn't call a vet or something?

MICHAEL

He was dead. Trust me.

EDEN

How do you know that? You don't  
know--

MICHAEL

His head was... not attached.

EDEN

Oh. Right. So you cleaned up the  
evidence. Washed it all away.

MICHAEL

No one needed to see that. I wish  
I could unsee it.

EDEN

You were covering up the crime.

MICHAEL

I was mitigating trauma.

EDEN

You keep telling yourself that.  
You're an accomplice--

MICHAEL

Ok Columbo.

EDEN

We both are now.

MICHAEL

It was an accident.

EDEN

Getting hit by a car is an  
accident.

MICHAEL

Depends on who's driving.

EDEN

Slipping on ice is an accident.

MICHAEL

What's this then?

EDEN

Murder. Jesus Christ.

----

SCENE TWO:

Eden and Michael are dressed for dinner. Anxious. Eden's looking through the peep hole. They speak quietly at each other.

EDEN

They're just standing on the porch.

MICHAEL

So open the door.

EDEN

They haven't rung the bell. It looks like...

MICHAEL

Open the door.

EDEN

They're having a moment.

MICHAEL

Do we have to do this?

EDEN

Well, we do now.

MICHAEL

Can't I get the flu or something?

EDEN

This whole thing was your idea. You're the one who invited them over.

MICHAEL

It was impulsive guilt. I was overcompensating.

EDEN

Yeah, I know. And it's happening now and there's no stopping it.

MICHAEL

Just tell them I'm sick.

EDEN

Don't you think that'll seem a little suspicious?

MICHAEL

This whole thing is suspicious.  
Everything's suspicious when you're  
guilty. We put up Missing posters  
for Christ's sake!

EDEN

You put those up?

MICHAEL

Of course I did. I gave you half  
the stack.

EDEN

I didn't put them up.

MICHAEL

What? What's wrong with you?

EDEN

He's dead. We know he's dead. Why  
am I gonna go around--

MICHAEL

Jesus, keep your voice down.  
They're right out--

EDEN

Why would I waste my time putting  
up fliers--

MICHAEL

To keep up appearances. Isn't that  
the whole fucking point of this...  
charade?

EDEN

I can't believe you actually put  
them up.

MICHAEL

What did you do with your stack?

EDEN

I threw them out.

MICHAEL

Oh my God. Jesus. I thought we  
were on the same page about all  
this. What if they find the fliers  
you threw out?

EDEN

How would they find--

MICHAEL

We place our trash cans right next  
to each other on the sidewalk.

EDEN

They're not going through our--

MICHAEL

What if it tipped over?

EDEN

The trash?

MICHAEL

All those fliers spread on the  
sidewalk. Very suspicious.

EDEN

When has the trash ever tipped  
over?

MICHAEL

It's happened. You know it's  
happened.

EDEN

It's in a plastic bag.

MICHAEL

Coyotes! Remember when we had  
those coyotes?

EDEN

That was in Vermont. We were in a  
cabin in the woods. We've never  
had coyotes here. You're being an  
idiot. Coyotes are just your  
excuse for everything bad that  
happens.

The doorbell rings. Eden stomps in place, a sound effect as  
if she is just approaching the door.

EDEN

(throwing her voice back)

One minute!

MICHAEL

Okay, get on with it. It's not a  
radio play.

Eden opens the door to find Nicole and BILL, a bruiser in a  
neck tie.

EDEN

Hi. Come in.

NICOLE

We brought fruit salad.

EDEN

It looks great, thank you.

BILL

Hey Michael.

EDEN

(surprised)

You two have met?

BILL

We walk the dogs together  
sometimes. Late at night.

EDEN

Really? You never mentioned that,  
honey.

BILL

Late at night.

EDEN

How late?

BILL

You're usually asleep.

EDEN

I am?

MICHAEL

Like twice. We've run into each  
other at the field by the high  
school.

EDEN

It's strange you never mentioned  
that.

MICHAEL

Any word on the little guy?

BILL

No.

NICOLE

We'll find him.

MICHAEL

I know you will. Of course you  
will.

NICOLE

Thanks for all of your help with  
the fliers.

EDEN

Oh please, it's the least we could  
do.

MICHAEL

It really is.

BILL

Where'd you put them?

EDEN

Excuse me?

BILL

Where did you put them? The  
fliers?

EDEN

At Baxter's. Down Maple.  
Telephone poles. Car windshields.  
Beans coffee. They have a  
community board. Have you been  
there yet? Amazing coffee. They  
make designs in the foam of the  
milk, it's really something. Like  
an art. Let me take that fruit  
salad.

NICOLE

I brought some fresh cream to whip  
as well.

EDEN

How nice. Can I get you something  
to drink?

NICOLE

Bill's not drinking.

BILL

My wife likes to speak for me.

NICOLE

My husband likes to talk about me  
like I'm not here.

EDEN

No problem. We have water.  
Seltzer water. Orange juice.

MICHAEL

Gatorade.

BILL

I'm not an alcoholic. You make it  
seem like I'm some kind of  
alcoholic.

EDEN

No, no we weren't making any--

NICOLE

He's not supposed to drink when  
he's emotional.

EDEN

Totally cool.

MICHAEL

According to who?

BILL

Exactly.

NICOLE

According to our marriage  
counselor. Drinking exacerbates  
his-- It's nothing. Forget it.

EDEN

I'll go get a bottle of... Seltzer.

NICOLE

I'll go with you.

Eden and Nicole go to the kitchen. Bill and Michael are alone. Bill takes a flask out of his pocket. Swigs it. Offers it to Michael.

BILL

Nice interior.

MICHAEL

Sorry?

BILL

The house.

MICHAEL

Oh, it's all Eden. She's got an eye.

Bill picks up a dog's chew toy.

BILL

This a Tuffy?

MICHAEL

Uh... yeah. I guess. Maybe.

BILL

Tuffy's the best. What number?

MICHAEL

Oh, I don't know.

BILL

Jock's pretty big. It's probably a 9 or a 10. Look at those bite marks. Yeah, see, look at this. Sturdy as hell. Indestructible. We got Tuffys for Phoenix, but he's only 3s. He's so little. Where is Jock?

MICHAEL

He's in the bedroom. We thought--

BILL

I'd like to see him.

MICHAEL

Maybe after dinner. He begs.

BILL

Gotta break him of that. Begging dogs, they can get unruly. Gotta show 'em who's boss.

Nicole and Eden come back in with drinks.

NICOLE

I was just telling Eden that it's really thoughtful to have us over. We don't really know that many people in the area.

BILL

We know more now.

NICOLE

We know more now?

BILL

We went door to door. Half mile radius. Looking for...

NICOLE

Right. But we don't really know them.

BILL

By face.

MICHAEL

That's a helluva way to have to meet people.

EDEN

We're so sorry. About what happened. We really are.

MICHAEL

He'll turn up. It's only been three days. About three days. Three days-ish?

BILL

I was just telling Michael I'd like to see Jock.

EDEN

He's sleeping. He'll come down.

BILL

Michael says he's unruly.

MICHAEL

I didn't say that.

EDEN

He's very well behaved.

BILL

He begs at the table.

EDEN

Why would you say that, Michael?

BILL

Phoenix is trained. Very well trained. Stops and looks both ways before he crosses the street. That's why he might be okay out there.

NICOLE

Eden made the most amazing spanakopita. He loves that.

EDEN

Michael is the one who actually made--

MICHAEL

I'm Greek. Half.

NICOLE

Filo dough is so difficult.

BILL

You can say, "Phoenix, go get the rabbit." And, from a pile of stuffed toys he'll pick through the alligator, and the lamb or whatever, and he'll grab the *rabbit* and drop it at your feet. You could say, "go sit under the chair and wait for me." And he'd do it. He'd wait. Just like that. As long as it took. Like a little person. Like a really well behaved little person. He even got along with cats, if you can believe it.

NICOLE

Bill, honey, can we please--

EDEN

He sounds very special.

BILL

He is highly intelligent. Highly smart. I've had many dogs--

NICOLE

It's not a contest--

BILL

But if it were he'd win. Hands down. He is by far the smartest--

NICOLE

Bill!

BILL

He should be okay. You'd think that he'd come back--

NICOLE  
Bill.

BILL  
I know you're probably wondering  
how a dog so smart could get so  
damn lost.

NICOLE  
I'm sorry.

BILL  
Don't apologize for me.

NICOLE  
Your breath.  
(to Michael)  
Did he drink?

BILL  
Don't let me outta your sight,  
Baby. Don't let me outta your  
sight. Anything could happen.  
This woman watches over me like the  
Secret Service--

NICOLE  
Okay, maybe we should go.

BILL  
I'm not finished. Something about  
Phoenix doesn't add up, right?

EDEN  
Things happen.

BILL  
A dog so smart, how'd he-- She  
watches over me like the Secret  
Service but with him--

MICHAEL  
He'll turn up.

BILL  
She left the front gate open!

NICOLE  
I told you, I didn't--

BILL  
And I said a million times, in the  
new neighborhood, until he was  
acclimated, I said-- I called it.

BILL (CONT'D)  
I said he'd try to find his way  
back to our old house.

NICOLE  
You really think he's on his way  
back to Michigan?

BILL  
They're territorial. I told you  
that. I explained that to you.

NICOLE  
He blames me.

BILL  
I'm stating facts.

NICOLE  
I didn't leave the gate open. It  
was closed and locked. The latch  
was--

BILL  
How'd he get out then?

NICOLE  
I don't know.

BILL  
Did he jump the fence? Does that  
make sense? He can't even jump up  
onto our bed. His legs are this  
big.

NICOLE  
I don't know. I don't know how it  
happened. He was there and then he  
wasn't.

EDEN  
Just because we don't understand  
something, doesn't mean there's not  
a perfectly rational explanation  
for it.

MICHAEL  
Who wants some spanakopita?

NICOLE  
Are we eating now?

MICHAEL  
Just finger foods. Apps. Amuse  
your bouches.

EDEN

Sit. Please.

NICOLE

I'm sorry.

EDEN

Don't be. Seriously.

BILL

Are you apologizing for me?

NICOLE

Yes.

EDEN

We get it. It's emotional. We understand.

MICHAEL

We totally get it.

BILL

Nic's been through this before.  
This is a first for me.

MICHAEL

What?

BILL

This freakish dog thing.

EDEN

Can I get anyone another drink?  
Well, I'd like some.

BILL

She's had a lotta dog accidents.  
Tell 'em the story.

NICOLE

They're not interested.

BILL

You don't know that.

NICOLE

They're not interested. They don't want to hear it.

BILL

Are you interested?

Eden and Michael, caught in the headlights--

BILL

When Nic was seven, her parents got  
her a puppy.

NICOLE

I was eight.

BILL

You wanna tell it?

NICOLE

No.

BILL

Then I will.

NICOLE

Please, no.

BILL

She's got a dog curse.

MICHAEL

I don't even know what that means.  
What does that mean?

BILL

See, he's interested.

EDEN

Michael--

NICOLE

Can we talk about something else?  
Anything else. Can we talk about  
something other than the dogs?

BILL

A curse is very interesting.

NICOLE

It's not a curse.

BILL

You called it that.

MICHAEL

I'm not superstitious. I don't  
believe in that stuff.

NICOLE

(to Eden)

So how long have you been in this  
house?

BILL  
(to Michael)

I wasn't either, but wait till you hear this story. It explains what happened to Phoenix.

MICHAEL  
What do you mean?

EDEN  
Three years.

NICOLE  
It's really nice.

BILL  
Eight years old, her parents get her this puppy, from a pet store.

NICOLE  
This is my story.

BILL  
Then tell it.

NICOLE  
I don't want to.

BILL  
Debbie's Petland, something like that.

NICOLE  
(re: spanakopita)  
This is really fluffy. I'm impressed.

BILL  
They take the dog home--

EDEN  
(to Nicole)  
He uses a very fine haired paintbrush for the butter. Fifteen layers on the top and the bottom.

BILL  
Teddy Bear, that's what they call it. They name a dog after another animal. A fake animal. Teddy Bear, that dog was doomed.

NICOLE  
I don't tell your stories.

BILL

They bring Teddy Bear in to get his balls chopped off. Poor guy has an allergic reaction to the anaesthesia. One in a thousand. T. Bear dies right then and there.

EDEN

What brought you guys out from Michigan?

NICOLE

Work. His work.

MICHAEL

He just died from the anaesthetic?

BILL

Some dogs can't take it.

EDEN

Michael, you're--

MICHAEL

What?

EDEN

Stop asking follow up questions.

BILL

So they get another dog. A Jack Russell. This time from a breeder.

EDEN

(to Bill)

What do you do for work, Bill?

BILL

And you'll never guess what they call this sucker. Teddy Bear Two! The dog is a fucking sequel.

NICOLE

He works at Bristol securities.

BILL

Teddy Bear Two, this genius--

EDEN

What is that?

NICOLE

It's like a prison facility, but for illegal immigrants.

EDEN  
Like border patrol?

BILL  
You wanna know what happens to the  
little guy?

NICOLE  
I don't tell your embarrassing  
family stories to total strangers.

BILL  
These are our new friends in the  
neighborhood. They're not  
strangers.

EDEN  
Michael?

MICHAEL  
What?

EDEN  
Say something.

MICHAEL  
Um... we live in your neighborhood.  
That's correct.

BILL  
Teddy Bear Two--

NICOLE  
Stop it.

BILL  
I'm just explaining the curse.

NICOLE  
Bill's father is a schizophrenic.

BILL  
I don't see what that's gotta do  
with anything.

NICOLE  
His sister's obese. You like when  
I tell your family stories?

BILL  
Teddy Bear Two killed himself.

NICOLE

He didn't kill himself. It was an accident.

BILL

Nic's Mom left his choker collar on in the house, jumped up and got caught on a nail in the wall.

NICOLE

It was a hook for coats.

MICHAEL

He must have been a little jumper, Teddy Bear Two.

NICOLE

They were low coat hooks. For me and my sister.

MICHAEL

Oh. That's crazy.

BILL

They replaced the Teddy Bears with Snoopy.

NICOLE

I loved Snoopy. Can we not talk about Snoopy?

BILL

Snoopy got a disease. Like a liver disease.

NICOLE

No, no not a liver disease. A degenerative muscle disorder. Myasthenia gravis.

BILL

Like one in a million.

NICOLE

One in three million. Humans can get it too. Very rare.

BILL

Snoopy dies. Bam.

NICOLE

I did love Snoopy.

BILL

Then they get a fourth dog, and  
this is all in a year - keep that  
in mind. A fourth dog, what was  
his name?

NICOLE

Clarence.

BILL

Clarence.

NICOLE

Why are you telling them this?

BILL

It's funny.

NICOLE

Not for me, it's not.

BILL

You've told this story a million  
times. And maybe there is a curse.  
Maybe there really is a curse.  
Maybe Phoenix--

NICOLE

That would be good for you, right?  
Nicole has a dog curse and that's  
why Phoenix is missing. She left  
the gate open. She carried the  
curse. It's her fault!

...

MICHAEL

What happened to Clarence?

EDEN

Michael!

MICHAEL

I'm curious.

EDEN

Nicole obviously doesn't want to  
talk about it. She's mentioned  
that several times.

NICOLE

He chewed through his leash and ran  
into traffic. He was a rescue.  
He'd already had such a hard life.

NICOLE (CONT'D)

They'd found him shivering in a box on the side of the highway when he was a puppy. All alone. I held him in my arms on the way to the Animal hospital. He died in my arms in the back of my father's Jeep Cherokee. On the same highway where he'd been abandoned. Isn't that hilarious? Isn't that hysterical? Nine years old and every dog I touch dies. Isn't that a hilarious fucking story.

...

EDEN

So you work at a prison for illegal immigrants?

BILL

Detention center. For illegal aliens.

EDEN

Right.

BILL

I don't get involved in the politics of it. I just punch my time card.

MICHAEL

I'm gonna go check on the chicken.

BILL

Someone's gotta watch these borders though. Up in Michigan we didn't have this illegal alien problem with Canada. I don't think we should electrocute anybody. That's crazy. But people should stay on their side of the fence. Otherwise, it's just chaos.

SCENE THREE:

Dinner's long since over. Three empty wine bottle are on the table. Eden and Nicole chat, light and loose - on the fun side of blitzed.

NICOLE

And he *saw* me. Texting. That's the thing. So when it happened--

EDEN

How much damage?

NICOLE

It was basically a fender bender.

EDEN

Did airbags go off?

NICOLE

No, it wasn't like that. I just looked up and I was right on top of him. It was just your standard rear ending. Oh, but he was pissed. He was so pissed. I felt terrible. But I also thought he was kind of being a dick about the whole thing. So we exchanged insurance information. Didn't call the cops. Whatever.

(then)

Anyway, now I only text at red lights.

EDEN

So the insurance covered it--

NICOLE

My insurance. Yes.

EDEN

So... then what happened?

NICOLE

They issued me a rental car.

EDEN

No, with Bill.

NICOLE

Oh, right. Nothing. We never spoke directly.

EDEN

So how did you--

NICOLE

It was like thirteen months later  
and I was at my dentist's office.  
In the elevator. And I hear, "hold  
the elevator!" Which I did, cuz I  
do, I mean, who doesn't do that?  
Some people don't do that,  
actually.

EDEN

Sometimes some people are in a  
hurry.

NICOLE

Some people hear that and they  
press the door close button. Like  
they don't know the difference. We  
all know the difference. Triangles  
facing out, door open. Points  
touching, door closed. It's just a  
common courtesy. And this man  
comes rushing in--

EDEN

Bill?

NICOLE

Exactly. Bill. And we look at  
each other and neither one of us  
says anything. We're going up and  
up, slow as hell. And right there  
between the third and fourth floors  
the elevator stops. It just gets  
stuck. It like, made that  
screeching sound and everything.

EDEN

You were stuck?

NICOLE

Stuck. So we were kind of forced  
to engage with one another.

EDEN

What did you say?

NICOLE

Neither of us brought up the car  
accident.

EDEN

You pretended like you were  
strangers?

NICOLE

Yeah. Like we were meeting for the  
first time in the elevator. I  
still don't know why I did that.  
Why we both did that. We had a  
history but wanted a clean start or  
something.

EDEN

You rear ended him *and* you got  
stuck in an elevator together?  
It's a fucking romantic comedy.

NICOLE

How did you meet Michael?

EDEN

Match.com.

NICOLE

But you guys seems so cool.  
(then)  
Oh not-- I didn't mean for that to  
sound--

EDEN

No it's true. Our story sucks.

NICOLE

So Bill's gotta be a hero or  
something. Decides he's gonna  
break through the top of the  
elevator to free us, Mission  
Impossible style. And I was like,  
"They're coming, it's fine." But  
they weren't coming fast enough.  
Not for Bill. He rolled up his  
shirtsleeves and busted through.

EDEN

Wow.

NICOLE

I know. But he couldn't fit  
through the hatch though. Tried to  
get me to do it. I said no way,  
I'd rather just wait, thanks  
anyway. That ticked him off. Sort  
of. He was faking a bit.  
Flirting, you know.

NICOLE (CONT'D)

That's when he says to me, "I'll worry about rescuing us. You can just focus on all those texts you gotta return."

(beaming at the memory)

I love a good callback. Especially when it's unexpected. Thirteen months later. He can be kind of funny when he's not being an asshole.

(then)

What was that we took again?

EDEN

Valium.

NICOLE

Oh. I do feel better. Lighter.  
Thank you.

EDEN

It's good that you took it with the wine. They compliment each other.

NICOLE

I've never done online dating.

EDEN

We were actually seventy-two percent compatible. Which is very, very high for online profiles.

NICOLE

That's impressive.

EDEN

It is. But it's really only a C- minus when you think about it. Which is barely a passing grade. We laugh about that sometimes.

NICOLE

Oh.

EDEN

That twenty-eight percent still actually matters.

NICOLE

I'm so sorry about that freak-out at dinner.

EDEN

Don't even worry about it.

NICOLE

It's embarrassing.

EDEN

It's a stressful time.

NICOLE

No, it's not right. You invited us over so graciously. You've been so kind to us. And Bill and I have to make a mess of it.

EDEN

Don't worry about it.

NICOLE

And just so you know, I did not think the lettuce was sandy at all.

EDEN

Maybe it was. Who cares?

NICOLE

It wasn't. And lettuce doesn't even grow in sand! It's dirt, first of all! He can be such an idiot. I think I'm kind of drunk. And... *valiumed* - what would you call that?

EDEN

High.

NICOLE

High.

EDEN

Looped.

NICOLE

Looped.

EDEN

Buzzed. Wasted.

NICOLE

I miss my dog. I'm sorry.

EDEN

No, I am.

NICOLE

I am. Fuck.

She sniffles. Eden awkwardly comforts her.

EDEN  
Awwww....

Eden pats her shoulder.

EDEN  
It's okay. It's okay.

Finally puts her arm around Nicole.

EDEN  
It's okay.

Nicole fights back emotion. Then submits to it.

EDEN  
It's... okay.

Nicole recovers. And then finally, with resolve--

NICOLE  
I'm fine.  
(then)  
Can I break something?

Eden hands her an empty wine glass. Nicole throws it on the floor. It smashes. Eden hands her another one. Smash! Then a third glass. Smash! The floor's covered in glass pieces.

NICOLE  
I'll replace those.

Michael enters.

EDEN  
Where's Bill?

MICHAEL  
He went home. Said you should meet him there. We walked for a bit. I think he's cooled off some. Thanked us for dinner. He wanted to lie down. Sleep it off.

NICOLE  
Well, I guess that's my cue.

MICHAEL  
You can stay as long as you like.

NICOLE

No, I should go.

EDEN

Maybe you should drive Nicole home.

NICOLE

I could use the fresh air.

EDEN

Walk her home, honey. It's late.

NICOLE

I'm fine, it's not that far.

She stands. Falters.

MICHAEL

I'll walk you home.

(re: broken glass)

What's happened here?

Nicole looks at Eden.

EDEN

An accident.

MICHAEL

What kind of accident breaks all of  
the wine glasses? Did I miss an  
earthquake?

EDEN

If you must know it was... Jock.  
He came barreling down looking for  
cheese scraps under the couch. His  
giant tail swinging back and forth  
over the coffee table, catapulted  
all of the glasses, like cannon  
balls, just flicked them across the  
room in an instant. He's very  
naughty.

Nicole smiles, plays along.

NICOLE

Very very naughty.

EDEN

Exceedingly naughty.

NICOLE

Seventy-two percent naughty.

...

MICHAEL  
I'll take you home, Nicole.

EDEN  
We took a valium. We're wasted.

NICOLE  
It feels really really good.

---

SCENE FOUR:

Just before dawn. Michael sits on the couch.

A light pops on. Eden's standing at the doorway.

MICHAEL  
Jesus Christ.

EDEN  
What are you doing up?

MICHAEL  
You scared the shit out of me. I  
didn't hear you coming.

EDEN  
I turned over. You were gone.

MICHAEL  
I couldn't sleep.

EDEN  
You have insomnia. I've gathered.

MICHAEL  
Go back to bed.

EDEN  
Why did you never tell me?

MICHAEL  
I'm fine. Go back to bed.

EDEN  
You told Bill. Apparently. Why  
didn't you ever mention your late  
night walks with Bill?

MICHAEL  
I don't know. Didn't seem  
relevant.

EDEN  
How is it not relevant? It's  
completely relevant. And you're  
not sleeping?

MICHAEL  
I don't want to talk about it.

EDEN  
What?

MICHAEL

Nothing.

EDEN

Must be something if you don't want  
to talk about "it." What is "it"?

MICHAEL

Just this thing with the dogs, I  
guess.

EDEN

No. It started before the dogs.  
According to Bill and your late  
night walks. Apparently. This  
insomnia.

MICHAEL

I woke up. I came down for a glass  
of water. It's not a big deal.

EDEN

You're a terrible liar.

MICHAEL

Not like you. You're just  
brilliant at it.

EDEN

At what? What are you talking  
about?

MICHAEL

Lying. You're like a fish in  
water.

EDEN

You're an asshole when you've got  
insomnia.

MICHAEL

Go back to bed then.

EDEN

Like a fish in water?

MICHAEL

"At Baxter's. Down Maple. They  
make designs in the foam. Have you  
ever been to Beans?"

EDEN

I thought we were a team. I was just going with what we'd agreed on.

MICHAEL

And you were magnificent. Really. Award worthy. Don't you see how terrifying that is?

EDEN

I don't know why you're so upset about it.

MICHAEL

I would've believed you. So convincing.

EDEN

Then... mission accomplished.

MICHAEL

If I can't tell when you're lying--

EDEN

Come back to bed.

MICHAEL

Have you lied to me?

EDEN

What are you talking about?

MICHAEL

You can't even answer the question.

EDEN

Why would I lie to you?

MICHAEL

I don't know. I don't know why. But if you did, I'd believe it. Don't you understand how scary that is?

EDEN

I'm afraid I don't.

MICHAEL

Is that the truth?

EDEN

This Socratic interrogation in the middle of the night--

MICHAEL  
Evading equals lying.

EDEN  
I don't make a habit out of lying.  
In general. Not to you. Not to  
anybody.

MICHAEL  
Woke up in a cold sweat. My dog's  
a killer. You're a liar. What  
does that make me, huh? The  
asshole holding the bag? The  
patsy? What does that make me?

EDEN  
I think this thing with Jock is  
messing with your head.

MICHAEL  
They're nice people.

EDEN  
They are.

MICHAEL  
They're nice people. And we're  
liars and killers and conspirators.

EDEN  
That's a bit much.

MICHAEL  
You've never lied to me?

EDEN  
I mean, maybe, over the years.  
Probably little things. I can't  
recall.

MICHAEL  
How politic of you.

EDEN  
What?

MICHAEL  
"I can't recall." It's like you're  
Ronald Reagan in Iran-Contra or  
something.

EDEN  
Well he had Alzheimer's, I don't  
think he actually could recall.

MICHAEL

Do you have Alzheimer's?

EDEN

I feel like I'm being set up here.

MICHAEL

Why won't you marry me?

EDEN

What?

MICHAEL

Why wont you marry me? I got down  
on one knee. I got a ring. Why  
didn't you--

EDEN

Are we having this conversation  
now?

MICHAEL

Yeah.

EDEN

Can we go to bed?

MICHAEL

You can. Go.

EDEN

I don't want to marry anyone. I  
don't believe in normative social  
institutions that set forth some  
kind of pre-ordained road map for  
how we should live our lives. And  
it's heterosexist when my brother  
can't--

MICHAEL

He lives in New York. He can. He  
can. You have to think of a new  
excuse.

EDEN

It's not an excuse.

MICHAEL

In my dream we were walking the  
rocks at the Cape, on the edge of  
the world, by the point. It was  
nighttime.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

But Jock was with us and he had one of those helmet lights that coal miners use, but it was attached to his collar. So we could see a little bit even though the night was pitch black. But we could only see a few feet right in front of us, well right in front of Jock's flashlight. And there was this dense fog. And the fog made the rocks slippery. And you kept slipping. And Jock kept running ahead. And I had to hold onto your arm and I kept calling ahead to him to wait up for us. And then you slipped and hit your head. And a wave came and you were gone, just like that. And you were screaming and Jock leapt in after you. And I could hear you screaming. And I could see the flashlight on his collar bobbing up and down in the water. And I started screaming, "I can't swim. I can't swim. I can't see. I can't see." And that's when I woke up. And there you both were.

EDEN

Did he devour me? In your dream.  
Tear me limb from limb?

MICHAEL

It's not funny.

EDEN

You had a bad dream.

MICHAEL

I've never lied to you. About anything. Ever. Over the years. Never. Not once.

EDEN

Well I'd know if you did. You're so bad at it.

MICHAEL

But not you. You're so good at it.

EDEN

What do you want to know? Ask me. Ask me anything.

MICHAEL

Do you not want to get married to  
me because you think it's a  
bullshit heterosexist institution,  
or can you just... just not imagine  
spending the rest of your life with  
me?

EDEN

I don't know.

MICHAEL

Have you ever cheated on me?

EDEN

No.

MICHAEL

Have you ever wanted to?

EDEN

I've never wanted to.

MICHAEL

Have you thought about it?

EDEN

Yes.

MICHAEL

I haven't.

EDEN

Well you're perfect. What can I  
tell you?

MICHAEL

What about last April?

EDEN

What about it?

MICHAEL

You were on the phone a lot.

EDEN

And your point is?

MICHAEL

You'd close the door when I was in  
earshot.

EDEN

If you want to ask me a direct question--

MICHAEL

You weren't cheating on me?

EDEN

No.

MICHAEL

Something was going on.

EDEN

Yes. Life. Life is always going on.

MICHAEL

You're hedging. What was going on?

EDEN

April is the cruelest month.

MICHAEL

I asked you a question. I asked you a direct question. You said--

EDEN

I thought I was pregnant.

MICHAEL

You thought you were pregnant?

EDEN

I thought I was pregnant.

MICHAEL

You thought we were going to have a child?

EDEN

I thought I was pregnant. I was talking to Victoria.

MICHAEL

Why were talking to Victoria? Why weren't you talking to me?

EDEN

Because you're not my OB-GYN.

MICHAEL

Jesus Christ.

EDEN

Why does it matter?

MICHAEL

Why does it matter? Are you serious? Why does it matter? I could've been there for you. I could've supported you. I'm not some bystander in the scenario.

EDEN

Yeah, well I had to figure it out on my own. You would've turned it into a--

MICHAEL

What?

EDEN

A thing.

MICHAEL

It is a thing.

EDEN

I didn't want it to be a thing. I didn't want to have this conversation then and I don't really want to have it now.

MICHAEL

Wow. You respect me, like, not at all. I love kids. You know that.

EDEN

I do know that. That's why I didn't want to--

MICHAEL

You didn't want to tell me because you thought I'd be happy?

EDEN

I knew you'd want--

MICHAEL

Want what?

EDEN

I wasn't ready. I wasn't ready and I didn't want to have this conversation because--

MICHAEL

You thought you were pregnant and  
you thought you'd like, hide it  
from me for nine months or--

EDEN

You'd just lost your job. I was  
working insane hours. The timing  
sucked.

MICHAEL

You didn't tell me that--

EDEN

We're good. Right now we're good.

MICHAEL

You didn't tell me that you thought  
you were pregnant because--

EDEN

I was. I was pregnant.

MICHAEL

Oh. Right.

It hangs there between them.

EDEN

I love you Michael.

MICHAEL

Uh huh.

EDEN

I love you.

MICHAEL

Saying "I love you," it doesn't  
change-- That's not like a magic  
spell.

EDEN

It's the truth.

MICHAEL

But you only say it when you're  
apologizing for something.

EDEN

I'm sorry.

MICHAEL

In my dream I lost you. And when I woke up and I saw you lying there in bed, Jock at my feet. I should've felt relieved. You were safe. He was safe. I was safe. But I panicked. Why was I so panicked? I hadn't lost you after all. Why did I panic? Because a part of me knew, a part of me must have known that I never really had you in the first place.

Eden notices, for the first time, the pulverized remains of a completely destroyed living room chair.

EDEN

What the hell is this?

MICHAEL

I don't know.

EDEN

Did you see this? Jock did this.

MICHAEL

Probably, yeah.

EDEN

Your mother bought us this chair.  
We'd been eyeing it for six months.

MICHAEL

I never liked it as much as you did.

EDEN

Why? Why did he do this? Why did he kill that dog? Now he's tearing apart the furniture. Michael, there's something wrong with him.

MICHAEL

We don't even know that he did it.

EDEN

How else could this have happened?  
Something in him's changed. Next he's gonna attack a kid or something. And we won't be able to say we didn't see the warning signs... I'm sorry. I'm really sorry. I really am.

MICHAEL

About--

EDEN

April.

MICHAEL

It's really late.

EDEN

Yeah. It is.

From the back yard, there is howling.

EDEN

What's that?

Michael runs off stage. The howling continues as the sun starts to rise. After a beat, Michael re-enters.

EDEN

What is it?

MICHAEL

... Coyotes. A pair of them. They found us, I guess.

SCENE FIVE:

Bill stands in front of Michael and Eden's couch. His calf is bleeding profusely. He holds down the wound with several blood-soaked paper towels. Michael nervously rifles through a First Aid kit.

BILL

You've got blood on your hands.

MICHAEL

What?

BILL

On your hands. Sorry about that.

MICHAEL

Oh. Right. Yes. It's fine. I'm the one who's sorry. I'm mortified.

BILL

Don't even worry about it.

MICHAEL

Oh my God.

BILL

Seriously, it's not a big deal.

MICHAEL

You're gushing blood.

BILL

It's no big deal. It looks worse than it is.

MICHAEL

He got through your skin. Your flesh. You need to go to the hospital.

BILL

I don't need to go--

MICHAEL

You're missing a chunk of--

BILL

I'm fine. I'll be fine. Really. Cost of doing business. Really.

MICHAEL

He's not like this. He's never  
like this. He's such a good little  
guy.

BILL

He was just playing. He didn't  
know any better.

MICHAEL

Here, let me.

Michael gets to work on Bill's leg. Cleaning the wound.

MICHAEL

I feel horribly.

BILL

No, it's my own, it's my own fault.  
I'm so used to Phoenix. His idea  
of rough housing is just-- He's so  
little, I forgot. The bigger the  
dog, the bigger the bite. I wanted  
to get a big dog. Never thought  
I'd wind up with such a tiny-- But  
Nicole wanted him. And then, it's  
like, you can't resist. It's like  
falling in love or something. They  
use their mouths like hands, you  
know.

MICHAEL

Oh.

BILL

It's true.

MICHAEL

Maybe he was just trying to shake  
your hand.

BILL

Ow.

MICHAEL

Sorry.

BILL

No, it's fine. It's totally fine.  
It was all going so well before he--

MICHAEL

He's usually so good.

BILL

Something just, I don't know, set him off. Or scared him.

MICHAEL

I tried to train him when he was a puppy. But he'd do something bad, he'd chew the pillow or something, and I'd yell at him. It was socks mostly, dirty socks. I think he liked the smell. He'd rip holes in them. And I'd take the sock and hold it in front of his face and in my best meanie voice I'd say, "Look what you've done. Bad. Bad dog." He would get so sad and stare at me. Go sulk in a corner like his self-esteem was shattered. Then I'd feel like such an asshole so I'd give him a treat. And then I guess that'd just confuse him.

BILL

Can't give a dog a treat for doin' something bad. That only encourages the behavior. If you give him a treat when he barks at the mailman, next time the mail comes he's gonna bark even louder. You teach him how to be. It's Pablobian.

MICHAEL

Pavlovian?

BILL

Exactly.

MICHAEL

Right. Of course. I know that.

BILL

Dogs just wanna feel useful. Like people. Went dog sledding once. In Colorado. Right at the Continental Divide way up in the mountains. I get to the sled shop, a little cabin in the middle of nowhere. There they were. A hundred and fifty dogs, each one chained to their own barrel, like slaves or something. They see this truck pull up, they all start going nuts barking their heads off.

BILL (CONT'D)

I say to the guide, they all seem so pissed off. They know that seven of 'em are gonna have to drag my ass around for an hour. I figured they're pissed. Exploited or something. The guide says no, they're all barking cuz they all wanna be chosen as one of the seven. They're all barking, "Pick me! Pick me!" Four feet of champagne powder snow and they're all fighting to drag me through it.

MICHAEL

Don't they get cold?

BILL

Cold? They're bred for their coats, you know. They're not cold. They wanna be useful. They wanna be of service. That's what I'm sayin'. A dog's just like a man, you know. Without a job he's nothing. Without a job he's not needed. Everyone just wants to be needed. Even dogs. Especially dogs. They're hungry for jobs, just like the rest of us.

(re: the bandage)

You a nurse or something? That's a pro job you're doing.

MICHAEL

I was a camp counselor. I had to learn First Aid.

BILL

Dogs need to be told how to be useful. They have to be taught. Guide dogs, they're the luckiest dogs in the world. They know they have a job to do. Guide dogs, guard dogs, even lap dogs, they gotta know their usefulness. But a guide dog's different from a guard dog, like a plumber's different from an electrician. It's all about the training. Untrained dog's gonna get confused. Doesn't know whether to help you 'round a corner or attack an intruder. I just think Jock's confused. I don't blame him. It's not his fault.

MICHAEL  
It's my fault.

BILL  
No, that's not what I meant. You sit down to a fancy meal, first time out, it's not your fault if you use the wrong fork for your salad. You gotta be trained. There's instinct and there's training. Skills are just ability plus experience.

MICHAEL  
You're being too understanding.

BILL  
Look, I told you I could work with him and I will.

MICHAEL  
Still?

BILL  
What do you mean "still"? We were making real progress. Got him to sit and stay and lie down. Jock's desperate to be trained. He's like those sled dogs in Colorado, barkin' their heads off. "Pick me! Pick me!" I can come by tomorrow. Maybe you can come with us.

MICHAEL  
I can't let you do that. He bit you.

BILL  
Helen Keller bit that teacher who was trying to help her, right?  
(as Helen Keller)  
"Wa-wa." Remember from that movie?

MICHAEL  
Annie Sullivan?

BILL  
Maybe. I don't know. Point is, she was just scared is all. Confused. What woulda happened if that lady--

MICHAEL  
Annie Sullivan?

BILL

Sure. What woulda happened if she just gave up, huh? Think about that.

MICHAEL

The world would be deprived of God knows how many inspirational quotations.

BILL

Exactly. That woulda been a tragedy, right?

MICHAEL

But what if Jock tore your hand off?

BILL

What do you mean?

MICHAEL

What if he tore your hand off?

BILL

He didn't, he just nipped at my leg.

MICHAEL

But what if he did something worse than that? A lot worse.

BILL

I don't know. That's hard to imagine.

MICHAEL

I've got to tell you something.

BILL

You're a tense guy. You know that, right?

MICHAEL

Last night, when you guys came over for dinner--

BILL

That was really nice of you to, you know, have us over and it's like, we're friends or something. Right?

MICHAEL

Sure.

BILL

I wanna kind of... apologize that things got a little heated between--

MICHAEL

Don't. It's totally fine.

BILL

Between Nic and I. The whole thing with--

MICHAEL

I know. I can only imagine.

BILL

And we went on and on. All through dessert. We were, I was freaked out. It wasn't necessarily my finest--

MICHAEL

Don't apologize.

BILL

But the most incredible thing happened back at our house.

MICHAEL

Yeah?

BILL

We came home separately, but when we got home, and we were together, there was all this crazy heat, right? And normally I would've just taken the dog and left. Let things cool off between us. But there's no dog, so what are we gonna do? No dog to diffuse the-- We're there kinda forced to deal with each other. Without the dog there's nothing between us. Nothing to hide behind. No distraction to avoid-- Without Phoenix--

MICHAEL

I'm so sorry. You need to know the truth about Phoenix.

BILL

The truth is that we didn't cool off. We had a throw down. We let it all out.

BILL (CONT'D)  
I blamed her for losing the dog.  
She blamed me for making us move  
from Michigan in the first place.  
Without the move, he wouldn't have--  
blah, blah, blah. I got so angry I  
threw my fist through a wall. Dry  
wall, but still. She threw a plate  
on the floor super dramatic and it  
smashed into a dozen pieces. And  
she screamed at the top of her  
lungs. And she was crying. At me.  
And I was so pissed. We couldn't  
contain ourselves. We hate-fucked  
each other right there on the  
dining room table.

MICHAEL  
You did?

BILL  
We did. Twice! It was the first  
time since we'd moved here. The  
first, the first and second time in  
three weeks.

MICHAEL  
Wow.

BILL  
And it turns out I really needed  
that. You can't even imagine. I  
had all of this pent up shit.  
(re: his leg)  
Ow, it hurts a little bit when I  
put my weight on it.

Eden enters, suited up from work, surprised to find Michael  
with Bill.

EDEN  
What's going on here?

BILL  
Just took Jock out for his first  
training session.

EDEN  
So that's happening?

MICHAEL  
It did. Yes.

EDEN  
And how did that go?

BILL

Pretty good for the most part.

EDEN

Did you hurt yourself?

MICHAEL

Jock bit him.

BILL

Wasn't his fault though.

EDEN

I'm so sorry.

BILL

Don't be.

EDEN

Michael and I talked about it and I thought we'd agreed that we'd take him to a professional--

BILL

Waste of money. It's fine. I got it covered. I like a little challenge. Jock's a great guy. I was just telling Michael here he just needs to be taught how to be, that's all. Just needs to be trained. Just like a husband.

(to Eden, re: Michael)

He put the seat down?

EDEN

What?

BILL

It's a joke.

EDEN

Any word on Phoenix?

BILL

No. I'm beginning to think--

EDEN

I'm sure someone found him. And they'll take him to a shelter and they'll find the microchip and-- He's probably working his way through the bureaucracy right now.

MICHAEL

I think you have to know the truth.  
It's time he knows the truth.

BILL

What do you mean?

MICHAEL

The truth about what happened to  
Phoenix.

EDEN

What are you talking about?

MICHAEL

Do you want to tell him, or should  
I?

EDEN

I don't think that's appropriate.

BILL

Did you see him?

EDEN

Of course we haven't seen him.  
You'd be the first to--

MICHAEL

We haven't been completely honest  
with you. We haven't been honest  
with you at all.

EDEN

Michael?

MICHAEL

What? It's the truth. I know  
you're allergic to the truth but--

EDEN

That's not nice. That's not very  
nice at--

MICHAEL

I can't take it anymore.

EDEN

Can I talk to you alone for a  
second? In the kitchen?

MICHAEL

We didn't want to tell you the  
truth--

EDEN

Michael!

MICHAEL

Do you want to tell him or should I?

EDEN

We didn't get a lot of sleep last night.

MICHAEL

Do you want to tell him or should I?

EDEN

You're sleep deprived, Honey.

MICHAEL

Nicole didn't leave the front gate open. You have to know the truth.

BILL

What are you talking about?

EDEN

The truth! Okay. You're right, Michael. It's time. I will tell Bill the... truth.

MICHAEL

About Phoenix.

EDEN

The truth about Phoenix is... The truth is this...

Eden takes a deep breath.

EDEN

There are coyotes. In the neighborhood. Over the years there has been some speculation about coyote attacks on... other dogs. Other small dogs. Two. Over the years. A little schnauzer named... Pink. And a, um, flat faced-- what do you call them?

BILL

Pug?

EDEN

Pug named... um... Stink.

BILL  
Pink and Stink?

EDEN  
Unrelated. Strange right?

She looks to Michael--

MICHAEL  
They travel in pairs.

BILL  
Pink and Stink?

MICHAEL  
No, the coyotes. They hunt in  
pairs.

EDEN  
Okay. Fun fact.

MICHAEL  
I Googled it.

BILL  
You really think they could have...

MICHAEL  
They're carnivores.

BILL  
Oh God that's awful. You think  
they ate--

EDEN  
We needn't speculate on gruesome  
details.

BILL  
That's the most awful thing.

EDEN  
It's just a working theory. I'm so  
sorry. And that might not even be  
what happened. But we felt like we  
should tell you. About the  
possibility. We were really just  
so hopeful. We still are.

MICHAEL  
It may not have been coyotes.

EDEN

But it could have been. We saw  
some out in the entrance to the  
woods behind the house. Recently.

BILL

How recently?

EDEN

This morning.

BILL

Right in the back there?

EDEN

Yeah.

BILL

You know someone mentioned  
something about the owls around  
here when we moved. I didn't  
really think about it.

EDEN

Owls?

BILL

Asked if we had cats cuz of the  
owls. But we don't have cats. Oh,  
I feel sick.

Bill fights his emotion.

BILL

Poor little guy. My little tough  
guy. At least if the coyotes got  
him, he woulda gone fast, right?  
Probably a quick snap of the neck.  
He wouldn't have starved to death.  
He wouldn't have gotten hit by a  
car.

EDEN

The cycle of life. The animal  
kingdom... Maybe. What are you  
gonna do?

BILL

I gotta a gun. That's what I'm  
gonna do. If I hear or see, or get  
any kinda whiff of those fucking  
killer coyotes, I'm gonna hunt them  
so hard and shoot 'em with my gun.

BILL (CONT'D)  
Let 'em know what happens to their  
kind in these parts. Bam. Bam.  
You want the animal kingdom? I'll  
show you the animal kingdom! I'm  
the fucking lion.

Bill leaves.

MICHAEL  
Please don't.

EDEN  
What?

MICHAEL  
"I told you so." Please don't.

EDEN  
I wasn't gonna--

MICHAEL  
He was insistent.

EDEN  
I wasn't gonna say "I told you so."

MICHAEL  
He was absolutely insistent.  
Wouldn't take no for an answer.  
Said he was a man of his word. I  
tried to talk him out of it. I  
said you were dead set against it.  
I said Eden doesn't feel  
comfortable with you training him.  
But that just came out sounding  
unnecessarily defensive.

EDEN  
You blamed it on me?

MICHAEL  
You weren't here.

EDEN  
You couldn't have stopped him? You  
had to indict me?

MICHAEL  
Here comes the "I told you so" I  
told you about.

EDEN  
Well it's over now.

MICHAEL

Clearly Jock has problems. I can see that. I get it. I know we need to take him to a professional. I'm not blind.

EDEN

I don't think you're blind.

MICHAEL

I'm not an idiot.

EDEN

I spoke to Ginny's husband Teddy.

MICHAEL

That's not an appropriate name for an adult man.

EDEN

Teddy Roosevelt.

MICHAEL

Ginny and Teddy? Are they children's performers or something?

EDEN

You've met them before. Don't--

MICHAEL

When did I meet them?

EDEN

At that mixer. On the ranch. The fund-raising--

MICHAEL

I can't keep track of all your boarding school friends. Muffy and Buffy and Ginny and Teddy.

EDEN

Teddy didn't go to school with us.

MICHAEL

I know Jock needs help.

EDEN

And there is no Muffy or Buffy by the way. You just made those names up.

MICHAEL

They have dog medicine. Like Xanax  
for dogs.

EDEN

Teddy is a veterinarian.

MICHAEL

That's convenient. Maybe he can  
prescribe something.

EDEN

That's why I called him. I called  
him to talk about...

MICHAEL

What did he say?

EDEN

God, look at all this blood.

MICHAEL

Bill said it wasn't a big deal.

EDEN

Bill is an emotionally abusive  
alcoholic who also just declared  
that he's a lion and vowed to pull  
a shotgun on any roaming coyotes,  
so I'm not sure Bill is the best  
barometer of--

MICHAEL

Maybe it's not such a big deal.

EDEN

It's a big deal.

MICHAEL

What did the guy say? Teddy.

EDEN

Should we go out for dinner? I  
need to get out of this house.

MICHAEL

Did he mention any, you know,  
canine psychopharmaceuticals or  
anything?

EDEN

He said it's too late.

MICHAEL  
Too late for what?

EDEN  
He said if he killed another dog...  
ate another dog... it was only a  
matter of time before he did it  
again. He said the next time he  
could bite a person.

MICHAEL  
Wow. That's prophetic.

EDEN  
Not prophetic, Michael.  
Predictable. Dogs are predictable,  
that's why we like them. Next time  
though, the next time it could be a  
little kid, could tear his whole  
face off. That would be on us.

MICHAEL  
We'll just have to make sure there  
is no next time.

EDEN  
Exactly. That's what I'm trying to  
say.

MICHAEL  
We can get him on medication.  
Tomorrow.

EDEN  
No.

MICHAEL  
I have to say, I prefer it without  
the chair in here.

EDEN  
Michael?

MICHAEL  
I know you liked it a lot. But I  
don't miss it. The space really  
breathes better. It's more feng  
shui.

EDEN  
Michael, are you hearing me?

MICHAEL

Whatever happened to your friend  
Paige?

EDEN

What?

MICHAEL

From boarding school. She was at  
that mixer at the ranch. You used  
to be so tight with her. What  
happened to her?

EDEN

Teddy said that once he's tasted  
blood, once he's developed a taste  
for it, there's no turning back  
from it.

MICHAEL

Teddy's never met Jock. Jock's  
adaptable, you know that. He can  
learn.

EDEN

We have to put him down.

MICHAEL

What about a rehabilitation center?

EDEN

No.

MICHAEL

Or a pasture where outta control  
dogs go to live out their final  
days? We can just send him to a  
place like that.

(then)

What will we tell Bill and Nicole?

EDEN

We'll just say it was because he  
attacked Bill.

MICHAEL

Then Bill will feel responsible.  
We can't tell them that.

EDEN

Okay, we'll think of something to  
tell Bill and Nicole.

MICHAEL

They'll put it together what he did to Phoenix, and that's why we put him down, and then we'll have to live like that. All of us knowing but none of us saying.

EDEN

We'll think of something to tell Bill and Nicole. That's not the point. We have to put him down.

MICHAEL

That's what the vet said?

EDEN

Yes.

MICHAEL

Without even meeting him? What kind of doctor gives a diagnosis like that without even laying eyes on--

EDEN

I know--

MICHAEL

A quack doctor, that's who. I want a second opinion.

EDEN

Then get one. But do something. Jock is dangerous. I don't want it to be that way, it just is.

MICHAEL

According to you and Teddy.

EDEN

According to the world. According to how things actually are in the world. And you can kick and scream and make excuses. And insist upon your pie-in-the-sky ideas like you always do. Notions that have no relationship to reality, mind you.

MICHAEL

What's that supposed to mean?

EDEN

Six months you talked about going to Iceland for Christmas.

MICHAEL

You said you wanted to go.

EDEN

Bought us guide books and  
everything.

MICHAEL

And wasn't that thoughtful of me?

EDEN

And the whole time I'm like,  
there's no way in hell your  
mother's gonna let us out of going  
to Christmas at her house. And you  
were like, I'll talk to her.  
She'll understand. It's the only  
vacation time we have.

MICHAEL

I'm in trouble for wanting to take  
you to the ice hotel in Iceland?  
Doesn't that sound like the coolest  
place ever?

EDEN

The actual world is happening up  
here. And Michael, Michael's world  
is happening somewhere over there.  
And all the while I seem like I'm  
some kind of sourpuss for not  
getting super excited about our  
trip to Iceland. I'm forced to  
scour Kayak and Priceline for  
flights to Reykjavik.

MICHAEL

You're better at shopping for stuff  
online.

EDEN

Because I know we're never going.  
There's no way in hell we're ever  
going to the ice hotel for  
Christmas. And you insist on  
keeping this fantasy alive until  
December fourteenth. And then it's  
like, "Oh God, the ticket prices  
have quadrupled." And so now all  
of a sudden it's kind of my fault  
we're not going to Reykjavik.

MICHAEL

Well, you can't help how the airlines gouge prices.

EDEN

We were never going to Reykjavik. Never. It was never going to happen. And I had to spend three months looking through guide books, and feigning excitement, and getting travel tips from Facebook friends.

MICHAEL

I'm sorry I wanted to take you on a vacation.

EDEN

It would have been awesome, if we'd ever gotten there. But I knew, so you must have known, that was never gonna happen.

MICHAEL

I still want to go to the ice hotel. So maybe it will happen. Maybe it'll happen this Christmas.

EDEN

The ice hotel closed five years ago.

MICHAEL

I didn't know that.

EDEN

I know. That's the point. You didn't know that.

MICHAEL

Why would I have known that?

EDEN

It's not about the ice hotel. You pretend the world is the way you want it to be, or think it should be, or oughta be. And I have to be the adult. Always. The ice hotel is doggie Xanax. Or this mythical land of convalescent homes for violent dogs. Euthanasia is your mother's house at Christmas. The sad, dire inevitability of what must be. Not how we want it to be.

EDEN (CONT'D)

But how it is. And don't get angry  
with me because I'm being an adult.  
It's hard to grow up. I don't want  
to have to put him down. I didn't  
want to go to your mother's house.  
But I made a fucking fruit cake and  
pretended to love the pink memory  
foam house slippers she got me,  
because that's what it means to  
grow up.

---

SCENE SIX:

JOCK, a giant lug of a dog, lies innocently on the couch, chillin'.

[NOTE: THE PLAY MAY BE STAGED WITH OR WITHOUT A LIVE ANIMAL.]

After a little while, Michael enters with a tray of peanut butter balls and stew. He looks at Jock. Jock hangs on his every word.

MICHAEL

Hey Buddy. Hey Buddy. You're my guy. Are you my guy? You're my guy.

Michael forces a smile. Then, over the next few minutes, completely falls apart.

MICHAEL

I made you a special dinner. Your favorite. Beef stew and peanut butter balls. For dessert. Peanut butter balls, you love those don't you? That's what started this whole-- Peanut butter balls. Remember? I was at crazy Kathryn's house. You remember Kathryn, don't you buddy? You'd remember if you smelled her. Patchouli. Patchouli and mutts, Kathryn's signature scent. I wasn't even looking for a pup. Remember?

JOCK

...

MICHAEL

We were living in that one bedroom on Henry street. We didn't have a backyard. I went over to drop off her video camera. I'd borrowed it to film my sister's wedding. Was just gonna drop it off and get outta there before I got sucked into some existential conversation about veganism.

JOCK

...

MICHAEL

I know, right? And you came over to me. So tiny. So skinny.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Remember? You probably don't remember, you were so young. You came over and sat on my foot. I could feel your little warm butt on my toes. "He never comes to anyone," she said. "You don't pick them, they pick you," she said. I scooped you up. And you looked at me with that-- Right there! Right there. That exact face. You just did it again. Dammit! Kathryn is such a, what's the word? She's got a savior complex. We've talked about that before, but it's true. I went home. Went home to that tiny apartment we had and I couldn't sleep. Every time I closed my eyes I saw your face. Eden picked up on it. "You're so distracted! Why are you so distracted? We can't have a dog. Not in this apartment." Let the record show she resisted. But to be fair she hadn't held you. She hadn't felt your butt on her toes. You didn't pick her.

JOCK

...

MICHAEL

I went back to Kathryn's. I didn't even mean to, but I found myself driving in that direction after work one night that week. I hadn't called to tell her I was coming over or anything, it was just this magnetic pull. And when I got to the door she said you'd been waiting for me. Asking about me. I was like "Kathryn, are you just permanently stoned? Dogs don't talk." You can't have a conversation with a dog, right?

JOCK

...

MICHAEL

I said I was just passing through the neighborhood and I thought, I don't know, I was wondering about you. You know your original name was actually Mustardseed.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)  
You probably don't remember. I can't remember anything before I was three. In human years. Mustardseed, god, that's Kathryn for you. I said I was just curious. I said I just wanted to make sure you were okay. She said she was going out of town and she was placing all of her rescues and would I mind watching you for three days. "Just three days. He still hasn't found his forever home. Just three days." That's the trick though, and Kathryn knew it. She probably wasn't even going out of town at all. She tricked me. She tricked me, didn't she? The two of you colluded, didn't you, Buddy?

JOCK

...

MICHAEL

You sat on my lap the whole car ride home. I got you to that apartment. Eden wasn't home yet. There was no food in the house, except for an old tub of Jif extra crunch peanut butter. I scooped out a little on my finger and you just sucked it down. And that was the first time I ever saw your tail wag. And I knew you were happy. And I was happy. And you were safe. And I was safe. And we made a pact to take care of each other always, didn't we? We were a team. We knew in that moment we were a team, you know?

JOCK

...

MICHAEL

Of course you do. Of course you do. And you never got mad at me. About anything. Ever. Even when I forgot to feed you. Or walk you. Or remember that time when my car broke down and you were alone for twenty-four hours by yourself? No food. Anyone else, they woulda been pissed. Not you. Not you, Buddy.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

You were so happy to see me, you didn't ask any questions, you didn't get passive aggressive, you didn't blame me for neglecting you. The opposite. You snuggled that night so close. And I wasn't sure if I was taking care of you or you were taking care of me. You were always taking care of me. Unconditionally. I've never known love like that before. I need you to know that. Do you know that, Buddy?

JOCK

...

MICHAEL

I'll tell you what I know. I know you'd never hurt anyone on purpose. I know that, Buddy. Maybe you got confused, or maybe you were provoked, or maybe you thought you were protecting us. I know that. I know. I understand you. I don't blame you for anything. And we could run away together, don't think I haven't thought of it. You and me and the open road. Would you like that, Buddy? Stick your head out the window, stick your tongue out your mouth, the wind blowing in your panting face down Route 66. Ears flapping in the wind, you and me. Two fugitives. Bonnie and Clyde. What do you think about that, Buddy?

JOCK

...

MICHAEL

Come here. I want you to know I'd have moved house. I'd have gone underground to protect you. You want some stew? You want some beef? Mmmmm. You want some--

Michael feeds Jock chunks of beef. Jock gobble down the whole bowl quickly.

MICHAEL

Slow down, Buddy. Slow down. I wish I had more time. Look at me.

Michael holds Jock's face in his hands.

MICHAEL

I love you. I love you so much.  
I've always loved you. I will love  
you forever. And when I die it'll  
be you and me again, Buddy.  
Tossin' that frisbee over clouds up  
in heaven. And I know you'll be  
waiting for me. So patiently.  
Just like you were at Kathryn's  
house. Paws on the windowsill.  
You'd wait as long as you needed.  
I know you would. You're the most  
loyal guy in the whole fucking  
world. The whole fucking world.

JOCK

...

MICHAEL

I've racked my brain, Buddy. I  
really have. Don't think I haven't  
thought of any way out of this.  
But I won't take you to some  
hospital. I know how much you hate  
needles, huh Bud? Remember when  
you had your surgery? You don't  
remember that, but I do. Won't let  
them stick a needle in you ever  
again. I promised.

JOCK

...

MICHAEL

I need you to know this is the  
hardest, this is the worst thing  
I've ever done in my whole life.  
And you gotta understand it's only  
cuz I love you so much. Does that  
make sense?

JOCK

...

MICHAEL

I gotta ask you... What changed?  
How was it one day everything was  
kisses and cuddles and then... Why  
did you attack that dog? Why did  
you bite Bill? What happened,  
Buddy? How can it all just snap  
like that? What snapped?

JOCK

...

MICHAEL

That's rhetorical, you don't have to answer. Life is just like that sometimes. I get it. Can I ask you though, since you know us better than anyone, Eden and I... Do you think we can recover or did we just, did we just snap? And if we did just snap, can we unsnap? Can we mend? I don't know if I can without you. I don't know that I can do anything without you. I don't know that I want to.

Michael howls. Jock howls back.

MICHAEL

The sun's coming up. It's too soon. I'm not ready. I'm not ready. Come here. I've got you, Buddy. These are special balls of peanut butter. Special treats inside. Gonna make you sleepy. But you love to sleep little guy. You love to sleep.

Michael feeds him one ball of peanut butter.

MICHAEL

I can't do it. I can't. I'm sorry.

But it's too late-- Jock's already devoured the remaining balls of peanut butter.

MICHAEL

You're such a brave little guy. I love you. I'm so sorry. I'm so so sorry. I love you so much, Buddy. You gotta know that. I love you so much. Sleep, Buddy. Sleep.

Jock falls asleep in Michael's arms and begins to die.

SCENE SEVEN:

Michael holds Jock in his arms. Dog vomit and dog shit and clumps of paper towels are all over the floor.

EDEN

What's that stench? What's all this--

MICHAEL

What are you doing up?

EDEN

I smelled this stench. This... Is this vomit and diarrhea? I could smell it all the way in the bedroom. What's happening?

MICHAEL

I've got to handle this before the sun--

EDEN

Handle what?

MICHAEL

He was so brave.

EDEN

What are you talking about? What's wrong with him?

MICHAEL

He hates needles you know that.  
He's terrified of anything sharp.  
You know that.

EDEN

Michael...

MICHAEL

Every time we walk past that Petco on the corner he yanks me to the other side of the sidewalk. We cut his nails there one time, once, two years ago, and he remembers.

Michael presents her with Jock's limp carcass.

EDEN

What did you do?

MICHAEL

He hates needles. Loves peanut butter, hates needles.

EDEN

What did you do?

MICHAEL

Sominex, ibuprofen, Unisom. Right from the drug store. And your Valium. From our medicine cabinet. A cocktail. Read about it online.

EDEN

You murdered our dog?

MICHAEL

You told me to.

EDEN

Um no, I said we had to-- At the vet's--

MICHAEL

I didn't want to traumatize him, I told you--

EDEN

You can't just kill a dog--

MICHAEL

I did.

EDEN

You killed him without me?

MICHAEL

You just said you didn't want to do it.

EDEN

Don't want to do it, doesn't mean I wouldn't. I wanted to be there. I wanted to say goodbye. What is wrong with you? Did he vomit all this?

MICHAEL

Yes.

EDEN

And all this shit?

MICHAEL  
He had a seizure.

EDEN  
You poisoned him.

MICHAEL  
He didn't want to die. His body  
tried to fight it.

EDEN  
You can't just kill Jock in our  
living room. How are we ever  
supposed to lie on the couch and  
read a book again without thinking  
of him? It's insane. And it's  
against the law.

MICHAEL  
Call the cops then.

EDEN  
What about how I feel? What about  
what I needed? You don't think I  
wanted to say goodbye? You don't  
think I wanted to hold his paw?  
You selfish--

MICHAEL  
I didn't want to do it. You didn't  
want to do it. So I did it. For  
both of us. I'm all grown up.  
Whaddya think of the grown up me?

EDEN  
You killed our baby without ever  
consulting me? Without even  
letting me say goodbye?

The accusation hovers there...

EDEN  
Oh, I get it. Are we even Steven  
now? That's your angle? Fuck you.

MICHAEL  
You said we needed to put him down.  
So I did.

Eden goes to Jock.

EDEN  
Sweet, sweet baby. He's still  
warm.

She sticks her nose in his paw.

EDEN  
Still smells like little Fritos.  
Sweet, sweet baby.  
(to Michael)  
I can't forgive you for this. Who will cuddle with me now? Who will lick my face in the morning?

MICHAEL  
First you want to come clean. Then you want to cover up the crime. Then you want to put him down. Now you can't deal with him being dead. You want it all ways. You can't have it all ways.

EDEN  
What do you mean?

MICHAEL  
You have a big mouth. A lotta demands, you know that? A lotta demands but no follow through. That's your problem.

EDEN  
I wanted to be able to change my mind.

MICHAEL  
About him?

EDEN  
I wanted to.

MICHAEL  
You can't commit. You can't commit to anything.

EDEN  
Your rash has come back--

MICHAEL  
I know. It's the stress.

EDEN  
It's all over your neck, on your shoulder.

MICHAEL  
Don't touch me.

EDEN

I can put on that lotion.

MICHAEL

Stop pretending to take care of me.

EDEN

What are you talking about?

MICHAEL

I wanted to take care of you.

EDEN

By killing him?

MICHAEL

You don't get it. You don't need  
me.

EDEN

What?

MICHAEL

I need to be needed.

EDEN

Let me hold him.

MICHAEL

No.

EDEN

Let me hold him.

MICHAEL

Stay away from him.

EDEN

Give me the fucking dog--

She reaches for Jock. Michael and Eden tug of war with  
Jock's carcass.

EDEN

You had no right to do this without  
me. You're sick in the head.

MICHAEL

You didn't want to get your hands  
dirty.

EDEN

Let go.

MICHAEL

No.

EDEN

Let go.

MICHAEL

You have to control everything.  
Always. The number of scoops of  
coffee in the coffee maker.

EDEN

What the fuck are you talking  
about?

MICHAEL

The conversation at dinner.

EDEN

Let go.

MICHAEL

Where to go for dinner. How we get  
there.

EDEN

You're not even making sense.

MICHAEL

"Are you sure you want the yolks?  
All that cholesterol."

EDEN

Let go. You've gone crazy.

MICHAEL

You think I'm stupid.

EDEN

I don't think you're stupid.

MICHAEL

I didn't go to a fancy college.

EDEN

You have elevated cholesterol. I  
didn't say that, your doctor did.  
It's a fact. Sorry I don't want  
you to have a heart attack. Let  
go.

MICHAEL

I wanted to spend my life with you.

EDEN  
Stop it. Let go.

He lets go. Eden whiplashes back - Jock's body flings to one side, landing with a thud.

EDEN  
What are we going to do with him?

MICHAEL  
I have a plan.

EDEN  
Well, your plan's been just genius so far. Was part of the plan going behind my back?

MICHAEL  
You weren't part of the plan.

He grabs Jock and hoists him up. He exits with the body out the back.

EDEN  
Where are you going?

She follows him.

EDEN (O.S.)  
What are you doing? Michael? What are you doing?

He comes back and sits down. She comes back inside.

EDEN  
You're just going to leave him in the backyard? That's your plan?

They sit for a moment in silence.

EDEN  
What now?

MICHAEL  
I don't know. We wait. I guess... You never walked him.

EDEN  
That's not true.

MICHAEL  
You never threw the ball with him.

EDEN

I loved him. I loved that dog  
more than you know. More than you  
give me credit for.

MICHAEL

You had a funny way of showing it.

EDEN

Yeah, well, there are other ways of  
loving besides smothering.

The sound of howling from off. Eden runs off to the noise.

Michael surveys the room. Picks up the dog toys, biscuits,  
bones... puts them in a pile on the dog bed. He goes  
offstage and drags out a giant duffel bag, packed full.

Eden comes back.

EDEN

They're tearing him apart. Was  
that your big plan? Murder Jock on  
the couch and feed him to the  
coyotes? That was your master  
plan? Coyotes. Your convenient  
excuse.

MICHAEL

You told me there weren't any  
coyotes.

EDEN

I didn't say that.

MICHAEL

You said not in these parts. In  
Vermont yes, but no coyotes here.

EDEN

We hadn't seen them here before.  
Obviously there's always a  
possibility--

MICHAEL

Not obviously. No! You were  
wrong.

EDEN

I was misinformed.

MICHAEL

You were wrong.

EDEN  
I didn't have all the facts.

MICHAEL  
Say you were wrong.

EDEN  
I was wrong.

The howling gets louder. More intense--

MICHAEL  
They were always here. Waiting for  
the right time to show their teeth.

EDEN  
I guess so.

MICHAEL  
You should get this rug cleaned.  
Like deep cleaned. Steam cleaned  
or something. Get out the smell.

EDEN  
We can see about renting one of  
those Rug Doctor's from the store  
on Main street. What are you doing  
with that bag? Is that part of  
your plan?

MICHAEL  
Yes. I'm leaving.

EDEN  
Where are you going?

MICHAEL  
I don't know yet. Somewhere not  
here. Somewhere away--

EDEN  
Away from--

MICHAEL  
This.

EDEN  
Wait a minute. You're just--

MICHAEL  
Yes.

EDEN

That's my bag. You can't just take  
my bag.

MICHAEL

Do not undermine this major moment  
in my life by making it about your  
bag. I'll keep the bag. You can  
have--

(re: apartment)  
*Everything else.*

The howling from off reaches a fevered pitch--

MICHAEL

Actually you should probably just  
burn it.

EDEN

What?

MICHAEL

The rug.

EDEN

You're being a baby. You're not  
right in the head.

MICHAEL

I don't think you've ever really  
loved me. At least not completely.  
You always thought it was nice to  
be in love with me. But that's not  
the same thing.

The howls get louder and louder. Are they getting closer?

EDEN

You're not thinking clearly.  
You're making a huge mistake.  
Trust me.

MICHAEL

I know what I'm doing. I'm sure of  
it.

EDEN

You're not sure of anything. Ever.  
Indecisiveness is one of your  
signature character traits--

MICHAEL

I'm one-hundred percent sure.

EDEN

Please don't go. Please stay.

MICHAEL

I can't.

EDEN

I need you. We're a team--

MICHAEL

We're not a team. You're the boss--

EDEN

No, it's not like that-- It's Yin  
and Yang-- We're--

MICHAEL

We're not like dogs, you know. We  
have to rescue ourselves.

BAM! The sound of a gunshot. Then, the sound of only one coyote howling. BAM! BAM! Then, the silence of no coyotes howling. And then--

THE END