

Woof , Daddy

A stageplay by

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CHARACTERS

RICHARD FRANKLIN (ages 60, 44, 40, 30, 28): husband to Claire, father to Julie and Henry, and companion to Sparkles.

HENRY (35, 24, 15, 11, 5, 2): the son of Richard and Claire, a philosophy professor.

JULIE (32, 21, 16, 12, 8, 2): the daughter of Richard and Claire.

CLAIRE (28, 30): their mother, played by the same actor who plays Julie.

SPARKLES (dead, 5, 1), the family's dog, a female Golden Retriever, played by a female actor.

LOCATION

The play occurs in several, often overlapping, dimensions, beginning at dawn:

a) the material world in which characters interact (what some might call "the real");

b) memory-fantasy scenarios, frequently taking the form of flashbacks;

c) the supernatural realm of the dead but not forgotten.

Richard, Henry, and Julie exist in the material world, although Julie usually exists in the memory-fantasies of her own or those of Richard or Henry.

Nearby but out of sight of Henry and Richard, Julie remembers-fantasizes scenarios with Sparkles and past events as she waits for Henry to call her on the phone to tell her when it is appropriate for her to join Henry and Richard.

Richard and Henry also sometimes exist in the memory-fantasies of each other, as well as of Julie, or in some combination.

Sparkles only exists in the memory-fantasies of others, except at the end, when she and Richard may be in a supernatural afterlife dimension, but that afterlife dimension might just be a fantasy of Julie's and/or Henry's.

JULIE
You should have worked in a salon.

SPARKLES
That would have been delightful.

JULIE
My God, Sparkles, you talk.

SPARKLES
Woof. Woof. Woof.

JULIE
But you, just, I thought ... you
don't talk?

(Richard raises his gun to the noisy cadence of ducks flying
overhead.)

RICHARD
Grace be nimble, grace be quick,
grace makes quackery succulent.

(Richard fires into the air.)

RICHARD (cont'd)
(to Henry)
Knock, knock, here nor there, need
not door open. Openings often belie
exits.

(A duck bounces off the ground.)

HENRY
Another deferral. A vanquished
mediator.

RICHARD
Lining up ducks does not put them
in a row, and shooting them down
only gives them somewhere else to
go.

(Responding to the bounce, Sparkles abruptly runs off after
the duck, putting Julie off-balance.)

JULIE
Sparkles, don't leave me.

SPARKLES
(from afar)
I'll be back.

JULIE

What? Did you speak?

SPARKLES

(pausing, looking back)

Woof, woof.

HENRY

(to Richard)

Aren't you going to get your kill,
or do you just wait -- for the
return? Yes, the eternal recurrence
of duck.

RICHARD

Like all that glistens across this
great orb, ducks animate south via
north via south--

HENRY

Can we please get outside of this
ridiculous discourse and
communicate like real people?

(Sparkles reenters carrying a dead duck, looks to Richard,
but brings it to Julie.)

JULIE

(not wanting to touch it)

Oh, where did you find that? Is it
alive? I don't know how to save it.

(Sparkles releases the duck.)

SPARKLES

Woof, woof, woof.

HENRY

(to Richard)

Are you paying attention? ... What
about your duck? ... It seems that
we are merely taking up space
rather than spending time together.

RICHARD

It was nothing, nothing, but
Sparkles, and her gaiety, her
lovely gaiety--

HENRY

Sparkles?

(Sparkles responds to her name, with Julie following and entering the memory. They are back in the ocean.)

SPARKLES
Woof! Woof! Woof! Woof!

JULIE
Help! Daddy! Dad! Over here!
Help me!

(At some point, Julie and Sparkles return to idyllic dry land, and Julie's fantasy.)

HENRY (cont'd)
What is it with you? Why is it always about Sparkles when it's not really about Sparkles? You always try to make Sparkles central to everything, as if she is the common denominator for all meaning in our lives. A dead dog.... I loved her too, but, dad, she was just a dog, right?

RICHARD
Oh, endless just, the infinitesimal and forever, the wee bit and the fair -- never just, never right.

JULIE
(to Sparkles)
I gave up eating duck long ago. Couldn't bear it ... Perhaps we can call a vet?

(Julie takes out her mobile phone, meditating on it; glancing back to Sparkles and the duck, she suddenly paces, staring at the phone, as she moves into the material world, becoming 32.

In this dimension, Sparkles can no longer see her. She dials a number on the mobile phone.

Henry's mobile phone begins to ring. Richard observes curiously but mostly indifferently.)

HENRY
(answering phone, turning away from Richard)
Hi. Why are you calling?

JULIE
Can I come now?

HENRY

Not yet. I'll call you. I'll call you when. Okay?

JULIE

But I just--

HENRY

I'm working on it. I'll call.

JULIE

I want to come soon. I can't stand this much longer.

HENRY

I'll call soon.

JULIE

Fine... Okay... Bye...

(Julie and Henry put their phones away. Circling back the way she came, Julie returns to Sparkles on the idyllic landscape.

Richard hums "The Long Island Song.")

SPARKLES

I missed you. Duck?

JULIE

The problem is you. (Pause.) I already told you I don't eat duck.

SPARKLES

Sorry. (Pause.) I didn't choose to be born.

JULIE

What the hell did Henry need a dog for?

SPARKLES

He lost his mom.

JULIE

I lost my mom.

SPARKLES

Yes, but you were two. Henry was five.

JULIE

Yeah, then why did he wait ten years to get a dog.

SPARKLES

He did wait, but not because he wanted to. Richie wasn't ready.

JULIE

Who?

SPARKLES

Richie.

JULIE

Who's that?

SPARKLES

Your father.

JULIE

Don't call him that. Nobody calls him that.

SPARKLES

It's not up to you to decide.

JULIE

He's my dad.

SPARKLES

That's not enough.

(Sparkles moves to return to the ocean; Julie follows.)

HENRY

(breaking the silence)

Sorry, you know, business. Don't need to be a big businessman, like you, to get interrupted; a call can count as an interruption for me too.... If we all have our course, whether imposed or imposing, even the philosophy professor can find himself in a lacuna of sorts, something unexpected, an imposition -- right dad?

(Richard looks around, sensing something, and moves about.

Sparkles and Julie are in the ocean.)

SPARKLES
To not leave you alone.

(Some silence.)

JULIE
Why didn't Henry take you along to college with him? It's not like there was no room: dad bought him a goddamn house.

SPARKLES
Don't know.

JULIE
Or, was that the deal.

SPARKLES
Could have been.

JULIE
A house for a dog?... It's not like you were sucking his dick.

SPARKLES
Never did; never wanted to. I prefer other dogs for sex.

JULIE
Then what did you see in my dad? He's a cold-hearted monster.

SPARKLES
Not to me. Richie was my best friend. It was chemistry.

JULIE
Didn't he and I have chemistry? I thought he was my best friend too.

SPARKLES
I think you did. That's why...

JULIE
Why what?

(A pause.)

SPARKLES
I'm going to pee.

JULIE

Me too.

(They both go somewhere to pee.

Henry carries a dead duck.)

HENRY

Got it. A big one too. Completely
dead. You haven't lost your touch.

(Henry puts the duck where they go.)

RICHARD

Hear the rustle of the brush, and
wonder what they long for. Listen
to your own symphony, and notice
the unplayed instruments.

HENRY

(sarcastically)
Sure, how about tomorrow?

RICHARD

If you recently forgot something,
what would it be?

HENRY

Could this be true -- you asked me
a question? It's been a long time
since you cared what I thought.

RICHARD

But questions without answers are
like riding on the wings of angels.
People are only as interesting as
the questions they ask.

HENRY

They are only interested to the
extent that they ask questions.

(A pause.)

HENRY (cont'd)

Yeah, well, why I organized this
meeting seems to have slipped away
in your dribble.

RICHARD

One creature's puddle is another's ocean, and an ocean to some is someone else's watering hole.

(A pause.)

HENRY

Do you think that the word "coincidence" is just a euphemism for lack of information, the result of unreasonable probability, rather than the occupation of the same relative position in space? That's why we're here. (Pause.) Perhaps.

RICHARD

A baby's wisdom defies knowledge insofar as smiles are the only truths.

HENRY

Do you see any smiles around here? Smiles cannot exist independent of people.

RICHARD

And what is your most current memory?

HENRY

Another question. How nice. What an esoteric fuckhead you are, which reminds me of why I am here. Surprised?

RICHARD

There are only ever surprises, as all things, including the wind itself, are merely dust in the wind.

(Together, playfully, Richard and Henry sing some of "The Long Island Song" as they dance around together, laughing like they did when Henry was a child.)

Surprise is the lifeblood to all there is.

JULIE

(to Sparkles)
Could you always talk?

SPARKLES

No. But I've been able to for a long time. I used to practice privately so that no one would see me. When home alone, I would call stores and counseling services to practice. I even called phone sex lines sometimes -- for variety.

JULIE

Wow. That is amazing Sparkles.

SPARKLES

One time one of the guys told--

JULIE

You called guys?

SPARKLES

Yeah, I'm hetero.

JULIE

But canine.

SPARKLES

Yep. And that's why this one guy got so excited. I made dog sounds -- I mean really convincing dog sounds -- and the guy started howling. It was such a turn-on.

JULIE

That's nice.

SPARKLES

I guess it's pretty different from--

JULIE

You're a pervert dog.

SPARKLES

Talking dogs -- you never know -- might be more common than we think.

JULIE

Have you ever met another?

SPARKLES

Not that I know of.

JULIE

Did my dad know? You must have talked with him. I can only imagine the conversations -- about the ways one can cook duck, about the stock market, baseball, and the beauty of dust--

SPARKLES

No. Nope. Never.

JULIE

Not even after I was gone.

SPARKLES

No. I thought it would freak him out too much. Verbal communication is way overrated, anyway. (yawning) So tiresome.

(Sparkles lies down for a nap, humming briefly "The Long Island Song." Julie paces pensively, finding her way back to the ocean.

Richard and Henry continue jumping and dancing around with greater enthusiasm and silliness.

They continue singing "The Long Island Song" -- until out of breath.)

HENRY

Wow, dad, we have not acted like this since, well, I don't know when. This is a classic instance of regression, perhaps to ward off some duress or panic.

(Faint quacks can be heard.)

RICHARD

Hear them, they are near; but never fear, you got your gun; so raise it son, and let's put another quacker on the chopping block.

HENRY

Or, are chronology and development simply inappropriate terms in which to discuss experience?

RICHARD

Knock, knock, one must, before the
doors will open. Break them down,
and no one will be around. Your
gun, boy, your gun.

(Richard raises his gun and fires. Henry reluctantly raises his.)

On Richard's gunshot, Sparkles awakens and searches for Julie; upon finding her, they are back in the ocean.)

SPARKLES

Woof! Woof! Woof! Woof!

JULIE

Daddy! Dad! Help me! I'm over here! Save me!

(As the cries of Julie and Sparkles fade out, a duck bounces off the ground. Julie and Sparkles return to the idyllic dry land of Julie's fantasy. Henry lowers his gun.)

HENRY

Do you think that your allegories
are only ever allegories of
allegories, metaphors of metaphors;
in other words, they are endless
deferrals?

RICHARD

Deferral is never the tactic of a
squirrel, nor is it to run away so
as to fight another day; but rather
to scurry and be happy. I am not a
squirrel.

HENRY

Nor am I. I came here wanting to
spend the day with you, because, as
you may know, I have something to
ask you. There is something I need
to know. Do you understand?

RICHARD

Walk this way, and the way may
yield elucidation, or one may find
himself in a rut.

(Richard starts walking and Henry follows close behind.)

At this moment, Julie and Sparkles occupy more of Henry's memory-fantasy than Richard's)

JULIE

Henry knew that I returned, you know -- that I was no longer gone.

SPARKLES

What do you mean? You were gone.

JULIE

To my dad. But to Henry I returned at your funeral.

SPARKLES

At my funeral. That's low. "Dead dog resurrects lost girl." I never got to know.

JULIE

I watched from a distance, like in the movies -- the minister's eyes -- perfunctorily eulogizing, dad sobbing, others confused; and then I surprised Henry as he returned to his car.

2

SCENE 2: OPSIMATHY: LONG ISLAND SEASHORE

2

(Julie (21) and Henry (24) come together for the following flashback.)

JULIE

Henry. Henry Franklin.

HENRY

Yeah -- Christ! Who the fuck are you? Who are you?

JULIE

It's me -- Jules.

HENRY

No. No. It's not ... My God, Jules, is it you? Really you?

JULIE

Yes, Henry.

HENRY

How the fuck can it be you? Who are you?

JULIE

I can explain, but it will take
some time--

HENRY

No. Goodbye. Go away.

(Henry starts to depart. Julie moves in front of him.)

JULIE

Please, Henry, please. Don't go.
Please. It's really me. I am Julie,
Jules, your sister.

HENRY

You come today -- to Sparkles's
funeral. You return today? How
fucking romantic. How is this
possible? Where have you been?
Where the fuck have you been?!

(Sparkles's query pulls them out of the flashback.)

SPARKLES

How could you have done that? You
usurped my funeral.

(Henry resumes following Richard. Julie resumes conversation
with Sparkles.)

JULIE

Please, you usurped my life.

SPARKLES

That's bullshit. I'm just a dog who
tried to survive in your world, who
died of one of your diseases.
(Pause.) What did the minister say
about me?

JULIE

I don't know. I don't read lips.

HENRY

(to Richard)
Can we stop now?

RICHARD

(still humming)

Weak lungs make for limp tongues:
it is air that carries our
thoughts, even after our hearts
stop singing.

HENRY

No, tyranny quiets tongues and, I
think, it might very well have been
the case that your smoking, your
unrelenting, disgusting cigar
smoking, was responsible for my
mother's death, and then the death
of Sparkles. How do you fancy that
in your pretentious, histrionic
relationship to the world?

RICHARD

On what pretense is pretentiousness
designated, and what philosopher
can identify bacteria on his own
body without believing himself to
be a hypochondriac? ... Oh, so
sorry, my boy, did the businessman
surprise the philosophy professor?

HENRY

This is all too creepy, like a
father-son moment of blurring
personalities, or a recognition of
the inevitable parental attachment.

RICHARD

(at the same time as Henry)
...like a father-son moment of
blurring personalities, or a
recognition of the inevitable
parental attachment.

HENRY

Answer my question: How do you
explain that both mom and Sparkles
died of lung cancer?

(Richard looks up, sensing something in the sky. He raises
his gun, but then puts it down, impulsively, burning a hole
through a thought that becomes a gateway to a forboding
memory:

Julie becomes CLAIRE (28). Richard (28) and Claire are on the side of a highway, next to their car. Henry (2) is asleep inside the car.)

CLAIRE

Come on Richard. Henry's fast asleep. The moment is perfect -- I can tell.

RICHARD

You can tell?

CLAIRE

Not exactly of course, but I know I'm ovulating. I feel it. Some fluid came out earlier--

RICHARD

Stop, Claire, please, no talk of fluid. Not that fluid.

CLAIRE

Let's just do it. Come on. Quick. Henry's going to wake up in five minutes.

RICHARD

You can tell that too?

CLAIRE

Yes, of course. I'm his mother. Now come on. (flirtatiously) Pleeese?

RICHARD

Right here -- on the side of the road?

CLAIRE

The cars are going too fast to notice, anyway. Come on, we can't wait another month because, remember, her birthdate determines when she starts school; if we wait, she'll develop ahead of the rest of her grade, and think what a problem that might be: she'll get boobs sooner; the boys will be lusting--

RICHARD

Enough.... But if we wait, and it's a boy, and he starts a year later, he will have the edge for sports.

(MORE)

RICHARD (cont'd)

Advanced development is good for boys; he could be the fastest, strongest athlete in his grade -- the very best on the baseball team.

CLAIRE

Yes, but it's going to be a beautiful girl.

RICHARD

You can tell?

CLAIRE

Yes. Now let's get on with it.

(Claire undoes Richard's pants, preps him briefly, and then leads him down to the ground, and mounts him. They make love very lovingly, despite the rush.)

Henry flashes back to life at six years old.)

HENRY

Dad. Daddy. I had a dream. Mom was in my dream.... Dad, wake up. Wake up, please.

(Richard rises into this moment. At some point, Julie and Sparkles come together, and Sparkles pets Julie.)

RICHARD

Yes, yes, Henry -- not so loud, you will wake your sister.

HENRY

But dad, mom came to me in my dream. She did; she really did. She looked so beautiful, like she did before the cancer. Remember mommy before the cancer?

RICHARD

Yes. She was very beautiful -- the most beautiful woman in the world.

HENRY

And she was my mom, and I loved her, and you loved her, and we were so happy. She used to play The Beatles for us. Remember? We would all dance around the kitchen. You would put soda and peanut butter on our icecream.

(MORE)

HENRY (cont'd)

She loved icecream more than anything: Haagen-Dazs vanilla with chocolate covered almonds.

RICHARD

Yes, she sure did. Henry, why are we up, again? And please keep your voice down. If Jules wakes up -- I've got to meet with the board of directors tomorrow, and--

HENRY

Mom came to me, and she said, "Henry, get dad to buy you a dog. You would love to have a dog. We planned on getting a dog for you."

CLAIRE

(at the same time as Henry)
Henry, get dad to buy you a dog. You would love to have a dog. We planned on getting a dog for you.

(A pause.)

RICHARD

We did ... But, let's discuss it tomorrow, son. Okay?

HENRY

But, but, I can have a dog, right? Mom said so.

RICHARD

Sure you can.

HENRY

I can? We can get it this weekend -- on Friday, before we go out to the Island. It could be a hunting dog, too, so when I get older I can--

RICHARD

Sure, sure, Henry, but you need to lower your voice and go back to bed. (sings "The Long Island Song" as a lullaby to Henry) "Great Neck to Montauk, the dunes entice us, the ocean invites us;..."

(Richard flashes back. Julie (16) and Sparkles (5) are already in the boat off the Long Island seashore. Richard (44) joins them.)

RICHARD (cont'd)
(continues singing "The
Long Island Song" in
boat)

"...Fishermen, sailors, hunters,
and lovers, all dance to the tune;
Grandmas, babies, and dog paws, all
give applause to Long Island."

SPARKLES
(to the tune)
Woof, woof, woof.

JULIE
Sparkles wants some fish.

RICHARD
You can tell?

JULIE
Yes, of course, I know Sparkles.
She's tired of duck. Aren't you
Sparkles?

(Sparkles rubs her head against Julie.)

RICHARD
Sparkles, my girl, should fish be
on the menu tonight?

(Sparkles looks indifferent.)

JULIE
Yeah, Sparkles, speak up. You can.

SPARKLES
(wanting to please Julie)
Woof, woof, woof.

RICHARD
Alright then. Fish it is.

JULIE
Yay.

RICHARD
But with that storm coming in,
we've got to be quick.

JULIE

We don't have to go out too far.
Just beyond the lighthouse.

RICHARD

It could get a little rough. So one
hour, fish or no fish, and we're
coming back. Agreed?

JULIE

Yes. Yes. Let's go.

(Julie and Sparkles are back in the ocean.)

JULIE (cont'd)

Dad! Daddy! Save me, daddy!
Over here!

SPARKLES

Woof! Woof! Woof! Woof!

(Julie's and Sparkle's cries fade, and the material world
pulls Julie away.)

Julie (32) walks off, putting her phone to her ear. As
Henry's mobile phone rings.

Richard joins Sparkles, and lights a cigar for himself, and
then one for Sparkles. They smoke together like old pals.)

HENRY

Yeah?

JULIE

Henry, I can't stand this. I keep
expecting one of you to shoot me.
Can you not shoot any more guns?

HENRY

You've got to relax. I am making
serious progress.

JULIE

Great. No more shooting.

HENRY

Sure. We killed plenty already.

JULIE

That never matters. Never did.

HENRY

It did too.

JULIE

Did not.

HENRY

Look, I'll call when the time is
right. Really soon. I promise.

JULIE

Okay.

(As Henry and Julie put away their phones, Richard and Sparkles do a dance together like Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers.)

Richard sings "The Long Island Song," with dog accompaniment from Sparkles.)

RICHARD

"The summer sun knows no shores
richer than Long Island.

The summer sun knows no shores
richer than Long Island.

From bay to ocean to inlet,
everything is true;
For the well-to-do, the old, the
new, to me and you;
There's no breeze more delightful,
no splash more refreshing.

The summer sun knows no shores
richer than Long Island.

Great Neck to Montauk, the dunes
entice us, the ocean invites us;
Fishermen, sailors, hunters, and
lovers, all dance to the tune;
Grandmas, babies, and dog paws, all
give applause to Long Island.

The summer sun knows no shores
richer than Long Island."

(Julie and Henry join in, becoming children again (8 & 11), playing with dad on the beach. This can explode into a big musical theater number.)

RICHARD/JULIE/HENRY

"Me, you, everyone smiles, everyone
enjoys, because --

(MORE)

RICHARD/JULIE/HENRY (cont'd)

The summer sun knows no shores
richer than Long Island;
The summer sun knows no shores
richer than Long Island;

From bay to ocean to inlet,
everything is true;
For the well-to-do, the old, the
new, to me and you;
There's no breeze more delightful,
no splash more refreshing.

The summer sun knows no shores
richer than Long Island.

Great Neck to Montauk, the dunes
entice us, the ocean invites us;
Fishermen, sailors, hunters, and
lovers, all dance to the tune;
Grandmas, babies, and dog paws, all
give applause to Long Island.

The summer sun knows no shores
richer than Long Island."

(They all laugh and cheer. Julie gets distracted.)

JULIE

Look at those waves. (to Richard)
Can I go out on the boogie board?
Pleeeese?

RICHARD

(assessing the waves)
Yes, you may. But be careful.

JULIE

Thanks.

(Julie runs off.)

RICHARD

(to Henry)
Will you go keep an eye on her?

HENRY

Do I have to? I wanted to give
Sparkles a bath.

(Hearing this, Sparkles hides behind Richard.)

RICHARD
Yes, you have to. Now, please.

HENRY
Yes sir.

(Henry runs off after Julie.)

RICHARD
(to Sparkles)
What do you say we go to the club
for a cold drink?

SPARKLES
(enthusiastically)
Woof, woof, woof.

(Julie becomes Claire (30) in a flashback to her deathbed.
Richard goes to her.)

Scene is lit and underscored so that this is obviously
Richard's over-the-top fantasy of an idealized wife saying
goodbye to her family and giving her husband permission to
live happily-ever-after after her departure.

After some silence.)

CLAIRE
Richard, you must be strong, always
strong.

RICHARD
I know. I know. But, I just don't
know--

CLAIRE
No buts. You have a wonderful
family. You are a very lucky man.

RICHARD
I don't feel very lucky right now.

CLAIRE
And you must remember to comb your
hair.

RICHARD
I will. Didn't I comb it today?

(Richard checks his hair with his hand.)

CLAIRE

Luck has always been with you,
Richard, and your own ingenuity and
perseverance has always paid off.
And one day you--

RICHARD

Is this the part when you tell me
that I will meet someone else and
be--

CLAIRE

Yes. Shush. ... One day you will
meet someone else, someone who
appreciates you, and loves--

RICHARD

No. There will be no one else for
me. Claire, you are the love of my
life.

CLAIRE

But let's say you meet someone like
me.

RICHARD

There is no one else like you.

CLAIRE

But let's say you meet someone just
like me. I want you to promise to
love her.

RICHARD

But she may not love me. This is
crazy.

CLAIRE

Nothing crazy about it. If she is
like me, she will love you.

RICHARD

I don't understand this. But if you
want me to say that I'll love
someone who is just like you, who
would basically be you, then fine,
I will.

CLAIRE

Thank you.

RICHARD
Henry is waiting impatiently
outside. Can I bring him in now?

CLAIRE
Yes.

RICHARD
(calling out)
Henry. Henry!

(Henry (5) walks in apprehensively, then runs into his mom's arms. We are now in his memory-fantasy combined with Richard's.)

HENRY
Mom, please. Please mom. Don't
leave us.

RICHARD
Be gentle Henry.

CLAIRE
I would never leave you. I'm just
not going to be around in the same
ways. That's all.

HENRY
You mean you will still be here?

CLAIRE
Always. Whenever you think of me, I
will be here, with you. And when
you don't, and you are just doing
your own thing, doing your school
work, I will be here then, too. I
will always be with you, watching
over you. Please never worry about
this.

HENRY
But I want to see you everyday. I
love you mom.

CLAIRE
I love you too. Some people get to
see the people they want to see
every day, and others do not. We
cannot always control this.

HENRY
Why not?

CLAIRE

I don't know. Perhaps you will be able to figure that one out someday. You are an extraordinarily smart, gifted, and generous child. A mother could not be prouder of her son.

(Henry cries.)

HENRY

I am going to make you even prouder.

CLAIRE

I know you will. But I am proud of you enough already. So don't fret about that. Just be sure to help your father around the house, and it is especially important that you help him take care of Julie. You are very lucky to have a baby sister.

HENRY

I know. I know. I will take good care of her. Don't you worry mom.

CLAIRE

I'm not worried. Now Henry, can you wait outside for your dad? Just for a moment, and then he'll come out.

HENRY

Okay. I love you.

CLAIRE

I love you Henry.

(Henry walks out.)

RICHARD

He's such a good boy.

CLAIRE

Yes, he is. Please tell Julie all about me. Show her photos. Read her baby book to her. I have written to her inside it.

(MORE)

CLAIRE (cont'd)

Give her my letters on her 16th and 25th birthdays, the ones for her highschool and college graduations, and the one for when she gets married, and for when she has her first baby. The letters are in my drawer.

RICHARD

I will.

(Richard starts to cry.)

CLAIRE

I am going to go to sleep now, and I am not going to wake up.

RICHARD

What are you saying? How do you know this?

CLAIRE

I can tell.

RICHARD

I love you more than anything, Claire. I love you so much.

CLAIRE

I love you. I love you. I love you.

(They hug and kiss.)

As if because of a nightmare, Henry cries out.)

HENRY

Mom! Mom! Come back. Please mom.
Please come back!

(Henry's cries are eclipsed and fade out as Julie and Sparkles cry out from the ocean.)

SPARKLES

Woof! Woof! Woof! Woof!

JULIE

Daddy! Dad! Help me, please!
I'm over here! Here!

(Their cries fade as Henry and Richard walk forward, carrying their shotguns. Julie and Sparkles stay in the ocean, waddling, while Henry confronts Richard.)

RICHARD

Ducks come and ducks go, but never does a duck duck to dodge a bullet. To dodge what one cannot see would seem dodgy, but one that ducks not gets shot.

HENRY

Because no one saw what happened but you, you think there is no accountability. Everyone knew smoking caused lung cancer before studies proved it. Do you presume that something is not true without repetition to show for it, without there being a discernible, verifiable pattern?

RICHARD

There is no force of nature more subversive than repetition, since repetition causes entropy, and if it does not, evolution is on her knees.

(A pause.)

HENRY

I am so sick of this. Dad, what the fuck happened in the boat? I want to know exactly what happened, and I want to know right now.

RICHARD

Remember, the one that demands the Golden Goose gets goosed.

HENRY

Are you kidding? You've got to be kidding.

3 SCENE 3: HULLABALOO: LONG ISLAND SEASHORE

3

(Julie and Sparkles cry out from the ocean.)

JULIE

Dad! Help me! Over here!
Please! Daddy!

SPARKLES

Woof! Woof! Richie! Help me!
Richie!

HENRY

I need you to tell me now. What happened?

(Overwhelmed, Richard recoils, perhaps sits in front of Julie and Sparkles. Julie and Sparkles cry out from the ocean.)

JULIE

Dad! Help me! Over here!
Please! Daddy!

SPARKLES

Woof! Woof! Richie! Help me!
Richie!

HENRY (cont'd)

(at the same time,
silencing them)

No. No. Talk to me. Talk to me.

(At some point, Julie and Sparkles return to the idyllic dry land of Julie's fantasy.)

JULIE

(to Sparkles)
Why didn't you shut up? Why did you do that?

SPARKLES

I wanted to live.

JULIE

But I am his daughter. You jumped in to save me.

SPARKLES

Why does that make you more valuable? Why privilege human family members over pets?

JULIE

Really, why privilege dogs, then? You said you only want to have sex with other dogs.

SPARKLES

Yes, but sex is not most important. Privileging other dogs for a little roll in the hay is like preferring rum raisin icecream over pistachio.

JULIE

No it's not.

SPARKLES

Isn't it our friendships that are most important.

JULIE

Sure, but not when between a human and a dog, rather than between humans, let alone family.

SPARKLES

Why not? How do you determine value? Children are seen as more valuable than adults, and babies even more so, and they are hardly people. Why are smaller animals deemed cuter and thus more valuable than bigger ones, but you would feel worse about running over a dog than a squirrel?

JULIE

This is ridiculous. You sound like Henry.

SPARKLES

Running over bigger animals is worse because the bigger the animal the more consciousness humans imagine them to have, and the more consciousness, the more thoughts and feelings, and thus, it is assumed, the more potential for intimate relationships with humans.

JULIE

Now, this is tiresome. I need a break. Besides, people don't call elephants their best friends.

SPARKLES

Exactly. Potential is one thing. Reciprocity is another.

(Richard abruptly stands, raising his gun, and shoots into the sky. No duck falls.)

HENRY

(to Richard)
What was that for?

(Richard lowers the gun and stares at Henry.)

RICHARD

(to Henry, very sober)
I told her we could only go out for a short while, because the storm was coming in. Not a big storm, but one persistent enough to shift the tide away from shore. You know how she was, so persistent herself, a lovely storm in her own right. She wanted so much for us to catch some fish for dinner. No more duck for her. Or for Sparkles. Not tonight. Sparkles was to have fish, and so was she.

HENRY

Sparkles never really liked fish.

RICHARD

No, that's right, she ate it for Jules. She was so marvelously selfless, always wanting to please--

HENRY

Yes, like all dogs--

RICHARD

No, not like all dogs--

HENRY

What happened dad? Just tell me what happened.

RICHARD

The waves got bigger and more erratic by the minute, and no fish were willing to sacrifice themselves for the mission, nor were they to be sizzled on the skillet--

HENRY

What happened?

RICHARD

The boat was suddenly turned to one side and then back the other direction. I was holding the wheel, but poor Jules was in the middle of the boat, casting her line. It was going to be her last attempt.

(MORE)

RICHARD (cont'd)

"Just one more try daddy, and then we can go back," she pleaded.

JULIE

(at the same time as Richard)

Just one more try daddy, and then we can go back.

RICHARD

In an instant, she was thrown overboard, and before I could react, Sparkles jumped in to save her, not realizing the severity of the current and the improbability of return.

(Richard pauses, recoiling.)

HENRY

Then what? What happened next?

(Starring at each other, Julie and Sparkles yell at each other, remaining, this time, on the idyllic dry land of Julie's fantasy.)

JULIE

Daddy! Dad! Over here! Help me! Help me! Over here!

SPARKLES

Woof! Richie! Help me! Over here! Richie!

RICHARD

It was so difficult ... the waves kept coming. Claire was crying out. Our engine wasn't strong--

HENRY

Claire? You mean Julie. Jules.

(Pause.)

RICHARD

Our engine wasn't strong enough to maneuver ... I could not go in two directions at once...

HENRY

You couldn't do what? What couldn't you do?

(Pause.)

HENRY (cont'd)
What did you do? What happened to Julie?

RICHARD
I didn't see her any more. My God, I didn't see her any more. I couldn't see her. She was nowhere in sight.

(Richard cries. Henry follows.)

RICHARD (cont'd)
But Sparkles was right there. Right there, in the fishing net. I had her in the fishing net. She was there. Oh Sparkles.

HENRY
And Julie? Didn't you look for her? What did you do?... What the fuck did you do, dad, to save my sister?

RICHARD
I, I, I, didn't see, see what.... Everything was dark blue and light grey, and the rain -- the rain became a willowy field separating each moment, the present quickly becoming the past. No where, but in the boat, did there seem to be a living soul--

HENRY
You gave up on her.

RICHARD
We hugged each other for what seemed timeless, until the urgency of the storm wrestled me back to the wheel. Full throttle we fought the current, the waves, the rain, the stubbornness, until we were unexpectedly, as if given birth by mother ocean herself, jettied into a flow that pulled us over the break, allowing us to reach the shore.

HENRY
Hugging? You and Sparkles were hugging? Where was Jules?!

RICHARD

I don't know.

HENRY

You do know. She was in the fucking ocean.

RICHARD

Yes. In the ocean.

HENRY

You said you could only go in one direction?

RICHARD

What do you mean?

HENRY

You said you could not go in two directions at once. Why did you say that?

RICHARD

Say what?

HENRY

Goddamnit. You bastard. You said you could only go in one direction -
- either in the direction of Sparkles or in the direction of Julie. You chose one. Which did you choose?

RICHARD

I chose Sparkles!

HENRY

You killed Julie.

RICHARD

I let Julie go.

HENRY

Die.... You chose to save the life of a dog over the life of your daughter. You let my sister die for a dog.... Say it, you let my sister, your daughter, die!

RICHARD

Yes. I let her die.

4 SCENE 4: SOCKDOLAGER: LONG ISLAND SEASHORE

4

(Richard and Henry separate. Richard is in his world. Henry calls Julie on his mobile phone.)

Julie's phone rings. She looks at it nervously.)

JULIE
(answering the phone)
Henry?

HENRY
He did do it. You were right. I just can't believe he did it. How could he? How could anyone?

JULIE
I'm coming.

(They put their phones away. Julie goes to Henry. They hug. Julie walks toward her father, getting his attention.)

RICHARD
My God! Jesus Christ! You've come back -- to me. How is this possible? You've come to me.

(Unconsciously Richard checks his hair with his hand.)

JULIE
Yes. I swam to safety.

RICHARD
Claire. My darling Claire. My God, Claire!

JULIE
Claire?

RICHARD
Claire. My love, you're here--

JULIE
I am not Claire. I am Julie. Dad, it's me, Jules.

RICHARD
What? Who?

JULIE
Daddy. I am Jules. Your daughter.

(Obviously disillusioned and disappointed, Richard backs off.)

JULIE (cont'd)
It's me. Your daughter. Look at me.
Look at me!

HENRY
She's your daughter.

JULIE
I saw you. I saw you in the boat. I
saw you see me. You looked right
into my eyes. I saw you look at
Sparkles. I saw the whole thing.
You made a decision. I saw you. You
let me drown. You chose that dog
over me. Why did you do that?
Didn't you love me, daddy? I loved
you more than anything.
Say something! I survived. Don't
you care?!

(Julie turns and walks the other direction, looking away from Richard. Henry watches Julie.)

Sparkles fetches Richard's gun and gives it to him.

Without acknowledging Sparkles, Richard receives the shotgun and kneels. He places the butt of the gun on the ground and the barrel into his mouth. He puts his finger on the trigger. Shifting his focus away from Julie, Henry notices.)

HENRY
Dad. No! No!!!

(Richard pulls the trigger and the back of his head is blown out.)

The instant of his death is also the instant of his reunion with Sparkles.

Sparkles gracefully lifts his body up into a different dimension. They dance.)

JULIE
Daddy!!!

HENRY
My fucking God!

(Julie falls to the ground. She sobs. Henry tries to comfort her.)

JULIE
Daddy.

HENRY
How could he do this?

JULIE
Daddy. Daddy. Daddy.

HENRY
I could have stopped him.

(Richard and Sparkles dance, possibly a tango, to the score of "The Long Island Song.")

JULIE
How horrible! Daddy. Why? Daddy.

HENRY
(repeating, fading)
Daddy.

JULIE
(repeating, fading)
Daddy.

(Sparkles and Richard eventually conclude their lovely dance.)

(THE END.)