

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.

(We hear a duck bounce 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 and 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

JULIE

Woof! Woof! Woof! Woof!

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
circles Richard and Henry. 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.

Henry and Richard stand there in awkward silence.

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;
(MORE)

HENRY (cont'd)
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. He reloads his gun,
and moves about.

Sparkles and Julie are in the ocean.)

JULIE SPARKLES
Dad. Daddy! Help me. Save me! Woof! Woof! Woof! Woof!
I'm over here!

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

HENRY (cont'd)
Are you listening to me?

(Ducks can be heard. Richard raises his gun and shoots.
Sparkles and Julie resume sitting together in quandary. A
duck is heard bouncing off the ground. Sparkles looks eagerly
in the direction of the bounce, but remains with Julie.)

HENRY (cont'd)
Are you going to fetch it? That is
retrievable, you know, in some
form. Have you ever considered
irretrievability as an organizing
principle -- to your life?

RICHARD
A snake in the grass slithers, but
the grass simply stands tall. Stay
out of the grass, and you will not
bother the snake.... Nothing
returns, unless as something else.

HENRY
I'll get it. We'll have duck for
supper.

(Henry exits. Richard does a little dance with his shotgun,
humming "The Long Island Song.")

RICHARD

(sings)

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

JULIE

(to Sparkles)

Why did you stay?

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 reenters with a dead duck in hand.)

HENRY

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

(Henry puts the duck in the sac.)

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.

(MORE)

RICHARD (cont'd)
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. Surprise is the lifeblood to
all there is.

(Richard runs and skips around like wind and the dust that it
is, humming "The Long Island Song.")

As Henry watches him, he slowly begins to laugh.)

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 continues jumping around with greater enthusiasm and
Henry, laughing loudly, joins him in the silliness.

They skip and dance, laughing, with Richard still humming
"The Long Island Song" -- until out of breath.)

HENRY

Wow, dad, we have not acted like
this since, well, I don't know
when.

(MORE)

HENRY(cont'd)
This is a classic instance of regression, perhaps to ward off some duress or panic.

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 the allegory itself, like the ones you propagate, was only ever an allegory of an allegory: Plato's cave essentially a negative dialectic?

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. 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 -- 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;

(MORE)

CLAIRE (cont'd)
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.
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 on top of her, as she hikes up her skirt. They
make love very lovingly, despite the rush.)

Henry walks over to Sparkles and pets her. After some time,
he rises. 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. 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."

(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.

(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)

(singing "The Long Island
Song")

"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."

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)

SPARKLES

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

(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.
They do a dance together like Fred Astaire and Ginger
Rogers.)

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, Sparkles slows down and begins to hum, with assorted dog sounds, "The Long Island Song." Richard begins to sing, with dog accompaniment from Sparkles. As Julie and Henry watch and listen, they get pulled into the past.)

RICHARD

"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."

(Julie and Henry join in, becoming children again (8 & 11),
playing with dad on the beach.)

RICHARD/JULIE/HENRY

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

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

The summer sun knows no shores
richer than Long Island.
The summer sun knows no shores
richer than 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?
Pleeese?

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.)

Claire is lit 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. 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	SPARKLES
Dad! Help me! Over here!	Woof! Woof! Richie! Help me!
Please! Daddy!	Richie!

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

HENRY
I need you to tell me now. What
happened?

(Overwhelmed, Richard recoils, perhaps sits.)

HENRY (cont'd)
No. No. Talk to me.

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. Sparkles and Julie stare at each other. This goes on for a while.)

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.

(MORE)

RICHARD (cont'd)
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. "Just one more try daddy, and then we can go back," she pleaded. 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?

(A long 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. Richard has his back to them.

Julie walks to the side of her father, and just as she is about to speak, sensing her presence, he turns towards her.)

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 disilluisioned and disappointed, Richard backs off.)

JULIE (cont'd)

It's me. Your daughter. Look at me.
Look at me!

(A pause. Richard will not look at her, but glances at Henry.)

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.

(Richard walks a few steps away, keeping his back to Julie and Henry.)

JULIE (cont'd)

Say something! I survived. Don't
you care?!

(Julie turns and walks the other direction, looking away from Richard. Henry watches Julie. Richard kneels. He places the butt of his shotgun 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.

With bloodied head and body he approaches Sparkles, who runs and jumps joyously into his arms. Together they frolic on the idyllic dry land that may be a supernatural afterlife dimension or a fantasy realm of Julie and/or Henry.)

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 together as Julie continues to sob.)

JULIE

How horrible! Daddy. Why? Daddy.
Why?

(While dancing, Richard sings some of the Long Island Song... Lights fade to black.)

RICHARD

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.

(MORE)

RICHARD (cont'd)
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.

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

The summer sun knows no shores
richer than Long Island.

(THE END.)