

A Dog's Life

by Michael Olsen

Characters: KEITH
REBECCA
DIANE

Lights come up on an empty stage. Stage right there is a screen or high pile of boxes. Rebecca enters stage right with a half naked man—Keith—on a leash, half crawling and half scurrying along the ground. Rebecca is well dressed and holding a handbag. Diane enters stage left with an apple in one hand and a leash in the other. There should be something familiar yet odd about the two women, whether in their make-up, demeanour, or costume.

DIANE: Morning Rebecca.

REBECCA: Diane!

They air kiss.

DIANE: Taking Keithy out for a walk?

REBECCA: Yes. Needs the fresh air, you know. (*indicating the apple*) Is that for Graeme?

DIANE: Yes. Helps to keep him nice and regular. You know what they're like when their pipes get blocked.

Rebecca pats Keith on the head. Keith, in turn, rubs his head against Rebecca's leg.

DIANE: He's looking wonderfully pale, isn't he?

REBECCA: Well it is the fashion you know, especially in the city, but the vet told me to let him get some sun.

DIANE: Really? As you know I don't let Graeme outside at all these days.

REBECCA: I've found that a bit of sun does wonders for his mood.

DIANE: If I let Graeme outside he gets the idea into his head that he can do what he likes, and once he's off the lead, well who knows what might happen?

REBECCA: Keith's very good without his lead, aren't you Keith?

Keith is now stroking Rebecca's leg.

DIANE: Isn't that sweet. He really likes you. He's so devoted. I wish my Graeme was like that.

REBECCA: How did things go with the operation?

DIANE: He was a bit funny for a while, but you know what they're like. They think the world of their little doodles, but once you get rid of it, they adjust, don't they Keithy?

Diane pats Keith, who looks startled, and checks in his jocks.

REBECCA: But didn't Graeme go through a bit of a personality change after that?

DIANE: All for the better, I'd say. They reach a certain age where their urges can't keep up with their bodies, so what do you do? Whip it off, I say. Snippity snip.

Keith looks shocked. He looks up at Rebecca. She looks down, and again rubs his head.

REBECCA: Maybe next year.

Keith looks up at Rebecca as if to say "Next year!?"

DIANE: Look, it's almost as if he knows what we're talking about! You don't need that silly willy now do you Keithy baby? Oh, he looks almost human, doesn't he?

REBECCA: I know, sickening really.

DIANE: Sickening? No. It's rather endearing I would have thought.

REBECCA: Endearing? The next thing you know—

Keith has now grabbed Rebecca by the leg and is licking her leg in long slow licks.

REBECCA: There we go. I don't know why he keeps doing that. I think I should take him to the vet, get him some shots or something.

DIANE: I believe it's just a phase they go through. Their brains are not as developed as ours, so what can you expect? How did the obedience training go last week?

REBECCA: I don't think he learnt a thing. He still chews the paper before he lets me read it. He still buries things in the backyard even though I've told him time and time again not to. My petunias have put up a brave struggle, but there's only so much they can do.

Rebecca takes some food out of her pocket and gives it to Keith to eat.

DIANE: Graeme's the same. It's like he lives in his own little world, but what can you do? *(Pause)* Are you still adamant you won't put him in any shows? I think he'd do extremely well. Look at that hair! Look at those eyes!

Diane squats down to tickle Keith under the chin.

REBECCA: *(smiling)* Maybe next year. But don't you find it a bit degrading? They're not just pets you know, they're part of the family.

DIANE: Yes, I know what you mean. If only we could talk to them! I wonder what they'd say? "You look beautiful today, my dear" or "What a wonderful day for cocktails by the sea."

REBECCA: Probably something very sophisticated like "Give us the remote, darl"
Rebecca rubs Keith's head again.

DIANE: *(laughs, then sighs)* Still, what's a woman to do? They have to know their place. *(Keith sarcastically shakes his head back and forth.)* There's just no excuse for urinating on the carpet or shredding the curtains or leaving a messy bowl.

REBECCA: You're so right.

DIANE: Well, I better be on my way. Graeme's probably missing me. See you.

REBECCA: 'Bye.

Rebecca and Keith both watch Diane walk off SR. Once Diane is gone:

KEITH: So next year I'm gonna have my privates ripped off!

REBECCA: Shhh. I had to say something.

KEITH: Why not have a nice day? Or how's your father? Or why not just fuck off?

REBECCA: We've been over this before, Keith. If anyone knew that you could talk you'd be whooshed away for scientific experiments. I mean, a man who could talk, let alone hold a conversation!