

Bark Park

Life from both ends of the lead

A Comedy from Two Perspectives
By Jim Dalglish

Bark Park is a collection of two one-act plays. Both are set in a dog run in New York's Central Park.

The first play is called "Mia" and it concerns an ambitious young woman who is new to the City and the issues she is having with her rambunctious border collie puppy. Is Mia having problems with her puppy or is it the other way around?

"Truman" follows the exploits of two dog park denizens as they try to come to terms with their true natures. Sure, fetch can be fun and nothing beats having your food served to you on a tray. But what wild new world awaits on the other side of the dog run fence?

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Production History

Cotuit Center for the Arts (Both Acts – “Mia” & “Truman”)

Bark Park: August 2014

Mia – Anna Botsford; Mike/Jimmy – Elliot Sicard; Truman – Tony Travostino; Director – Jim Dalglish

Provincetown Theater (Second Act – “Truman”)

Truman: May, 2012

Truman – Ian Ryan; Jimmy – Brian Sheppard; Director – Susan Grill

Recognition

Cape Cod Times

Favorite Play of 2014

Reviews

"That Dalglish can touch on such universal themes is a testament to his talent. “Bark Park” is an entertaining, insightful, and deeply moving theatrical experience."

- Paul Babin, *Cape Cod Times*

"Jim Dalglish's wonderful two-act play explored the complex relationship between people and their dogs from both the human and canine perspectives."

Kathi Scrizzi Driscoll, *Cape Cod Times*

"The play is poignant and touching and holds together as an endearing piece."

- John Watters, *Barnstable Patriot*.

Production Concept

Bark Park consists of two plays that are thematically related – the lives of human and canines in a New York City dog park. The first play is from the human perspective. The second is from the canine. There are elements that connect the two plays, however the humans in the first half are not the owners of the dogs in the second – although they are referred to in the action of the play.

The play can be cast with as few as two actors. If two actors are chosen, the playwright recommends that they be male and female and that the female playing Mia in the first play, perform the role of Jimmy in the second. The original production cast three actors – two males and one female. The actor playing Mike also played Jimmy.

Roles:

Mia – Female human

Mike – Male human

Truman – Male dog

Jimmy – Male dog

Mia

(Part One)

Characters

Mia – Beautiful, ambitious woman in her late twenties, early thirties. She has come to New York on a mission.

Mike – The “Mayor” of the dog run near Strawberry Fields in Central Park. A man who has lived in New York for 20 years. Though quite gregarious with strangers, he keeps his personal problems to himself.

Setting

Place

A dog run in Central Park. Not too far from Strawberry Fields. Other Locales: A clearing on top of a rocky outcropping in The Ramble; a field next to the statue of Balto, the sled dog; and Mike’s 6-story walk-up in Hells Kitchen.

Time

Winter, Spring and Summer of this year.

Scenic Elements

No Set. An open stage with subtle lighting cues will suffice.

Synopsis

Mia has a problem with her new border collie. Or is it the other way around?

Scene 1

(The sound of a dog run in New York's Central Park.

Sound effects note: Except for this establishing effect, the dog sound effects can be minimal. The audience "hears" the dogs barking and fighting by watching the actor's reactions.

Lights up.

Mike – a man who you might assume is average in almost every way, until you look closer – stands center stage. Winter is in full force, yet his winter jacket is a little threadbare. He is engaged in a conversation with someone we can't see.)

MIKE

Hey, Pete. Happy holidays. ... Yeah, winter's hitting us early this year.

(Mia enters. Despite the weather and the Burberry trench coat she wears, it's obvious that she knows how to dress for work in a tasteful way that still shows off her considerable assets. She wears absurdly high heels. She gazes at Mike with a smile. She is invisible to him.)

Not too bad. How's it going for you?

MIA

(To the audience:) That's him.

MIKE

(Continuing to talk to the unseen Pete:) Good.

MIA

This is the way I remember him.

MIKE

Hmmm?

MIA

This is where we met.

MIKE

Yeah. It's been awhile, about a month.

MIA

A dog run in Central Park.

MIKE

You heard? ... She told you.... Yeah, that's the reason. Haven't felt like getting out much lately. But today, thought I'd come back, see what all her doggy pals are up to. Kinda strange not having her here with me. You know?

MIA

This is the day we met.

MIKE

Thanks. I appreciate it. I miss her.

MIA

A day like any other. But it wasn't. It took me awhile to figure that out.

MIKE

No. It was my decision. It just got to be time. I think we both knew. I could see it in her eyes. ... Hardest thing I've ever had to do. ... Furry bits of heartache.

MIA

This is a love story.

MIKE

Another one? I need a little more time before I get a new dog.

MIA

Forget I said that. About it being a love story.

MIKE

Truman's looking good. Guarding the whole park like usual. Where's Brian?

MIA

I hate love stories.

MIKE

Oh. That... that sucks. Maybe he'll....

MIA

I don't know what kind of story this is.

MIKE

But you guys were together, how many years?

MIA

I guess I'm still trying to figure it out.

MIKE

Ten years. Huh.

MIA

I came to New York to conquer. I had a lot of expectations when I landed at JFK. Doesn't everyone think they know New York before they actually get here? Most evaporated within a few weeks.

MIKE

Sorry, Pete.

MIA

Why am I telling you this? To a room of complete strangers?

MIKE

That's rough.

MIA

That's what we are. Right?

MIKE

Yeah. People. You let them get close and then...

MIA

You may have come here with the person next to you.

MIKE

You can't count on them.

MIA

But look to the other side... or behind.

MIKE

They're not like dogs.

MIA

Strangers.

MIKE

Dogs are different.

MIA

By the end of the story we'll be something else.

MIKE

Dogs you can trust.

MIA

You'll have to trust me.

MIKE

Sorry, Pete.

MIA

A lot of shit comes back to me when I think about my life in New York. And I mean shit, because that's how most of it makes me feel most of the time. But not this part. Not him. Look at him. (She smiles.)

(Mike looks at something off stage.)

MIKE

New border collie?

MIA

He's seeing her for the first time. My dog.

MIKE

Whoa. Wow. Look at her go.

(He laughs – getting a kick out of the spirit of the unseen dog.)

Now, that one is a handful.

MIA

Putting it mildly.

(Mike “hears” the sound of a slightly hysterical dachshund attacking the hyperactive collie.)

MIKE

That's it, Jimmy. Go get that collie!

(He laughs.)

MIA

The dachshund's owner freaks.

MIKE

Calm down, Stella.

MIA

Stella weights 300 pounds if she weighs an ounce.

MIKE

Jimmy's going to be fine. The collie just has him a little worked up.

MIA

Big girl has strapped reindeer antlers on her dog for the holidays.

MIKE

(Back to the unseen Pete:) Who owns the collie?

(Mike looks over to a spot a little ways from him stage left.)

MIA

I see none of this because I have more important things to do.

(Mia takes out a smart phone and begins to text angrily. She steps into the stage left spot. She has entered the scene.)

Shit. Shit. Shit.

MIKE

(To Pete:) She's coming back around. Better get Truman.

(Mike winces at something he has just seen. Probably Pete's German shepherd snarling, lunging and biting at and the border collie.)

Oh... ouch... Stella, you might want to pick up Jimmy.

MIA

(Still texting:) Goddam it...

MIKE

(To Mia:) Um... Miss? Miss?

MIA

What?

MIKE

Your dog?

MIA

Yeah?

MIKE

The collie, right?

MIA

What about her?

MIKE

Do you see what's going on out there?

MIA

What about it?

MIKE

Are you kidding?

MIA

She's a puppy. That's how they play.

MIKE

The other dogs don't like it.

MIA

It's a dog park. She's a dog.

MIKE

You don't know how this works. Do you?

MIA

What? I need to buy a special pass...?

MIKE

...Your first time here...?

MIA

... take a test...? Doesn't say that on the sign.

MIKE

Control your dog.

(There is a stand off. Mia puts her phone in her Gucci bag.)

MIA

(Yelling offstage:) Sarah Jessica. Sarah Jessica. Come. Come here. Sarah Jessica.

MIKE

That worked.

MIA

Come, girl. Sarah Jessica, you come here right this minute.

MIKE

How long have you had her?

MIA

Picked her up yesterday.

MIKE

From a breeder?

MIA

It's the only way you know what you're getting. Sarah Jessica!

MIKE

You just got her, she probably doesn't know her...

MIA

I told those people her name a month ago.

MIKE

Looks like they didn't tell her.

MIA

She was supposed to come trained.

MIKE

Really? Huh.

MIA

Sarah Jessica!

MIKE

Your first dog?

MIA

Yeah. Come! Now!

MIKE

Why don't you...?

MIA

In these heels?

(Mike tracks the collie across the stage and is suddenly concerned.)

MIKE

That pit bull is not going to like that.

MIA

Sarah Jessica! No! No! No!

MIKE

Give me the lead.

(Mike takes the invisible lead draped around Mia's neck.

He exits stage right.)

MIKE'S VOICE

Come here, girl. Come on, girl.

MIA

Sarah Jessica! Do as he says!

MIKE'S VOICE

He doesn't like that. He doesn't play that way. Paul, could you grab your dog?

MIA

Get your vicious pit bull away from my dog! Sarah Jessica!

(Her eyes widen as she "sees" the pit bull attack her dog.)

Sarah Jessica!

(She calms down as Mike re-enters. He appears to be carrying a squirming border collie. He grips her muzzle with one hand. His other hand and wrist are bleeding.)

Is she okay?

MIKE

She'll live.

(Mia's phone rings from inside her purse. The ring tone is the theme song from "Sex in the City." She hurriedly removes it from the bag.)

MIA

(Into the phone:) It's Mia.

(Mike glares at Mia. She sees him.)

I'll call you right back.

(She hangs up and puts the phone back in her purse. Mike crouches as if to put the dog down, but continues to hold her muzzle.)

You're bleeding.

MIKE

She nailed me. Nailed me good.

MIA

You grabbed her. A strange man she doesn't know.

MIKE

I saved her from getting her throat ripped open.

MIA

They shouldn't allow pit bulls in public parks.

MIKE

You got a fear biter here. When she gets upset, she bites.

MIA

You going to let go of her mouth?

MIKE

After she calms down.

MIA

(To off-stage.) They should keep those vicious animals in the fighting ring where they belong. I know you guys. Your dog fight for you? That the deal? Need a little extra for child support? Work for it, you unemployed, over-inked, under-endowed asshole.

(Mike laughs.)

What's so funny?

MIKE

That's a rescue dog. (To Paul offstage:) Is Hugo okay, Paul? ... Yeah. He held back. You're making progress. ... This one? She's fine. (To the dog he holds:) Hey. Now, now, now. Settle down. (Back to Paul:) I'll be okay. Don't worry.

MIA

You going to let her go?

MIKE

Is she lead trained?

MIA

What do you mean?

MIKE

Guess not.

(Mike lets the dog go. He holds the invisible lead. From Mike's gestures it looks like the dog is fighting the lead.)

Settle down, girl. Settle down. Stella? Do you have a liver snap you and Jimmy could spare?

(He mimes catching the liver snap and breaks it in two with his mouth.)

Thanks.

(He holds up the invisible liver snap for the dog to see.)

Look what I have. Yeah. You smell it, don't you. Licking your lips like that. You want it, girl? You gotta come here and get it. Come on. I'm not going to hurt you. Come on, girl.

(He mimes feeding the snap to the dog and gathering in the lead.)

That's it. That's my girl. That's my girl.

(From his gestures it looks like the dog is fighting the lead again.)

No. No. No. Want another treat? Huh? Come on. That's it. That's my... Sarah Jessica... Nice and calm.

(He pets the collie.)

You don't mean to be bad. You just get excited. That's all.

MIA

You're getting blood on her fur.

MIKE

Here you go.

MIA

(He tries to hand her the lead.)

What am I supposed to...?

(Instead of taking the offered lead, she rummages through her purse.)

Let me get you a... Kleenex?

(He takes the Kleenex and wipes the blood off his hand. Mike has calmed the dog down a little, but through the next lines she tugs at the lead occasionally.)

MIKE

Thanks.

MIA

Which one is yours? Your dog?

MIKE

None of them.

MIA

Oh.

MIKE

I had to put mine down last month. You have a ball or a toy or something she can play with?

MIA

No. So you just come here to...?

MIKE

Where did you get her?

MIA

Upstate. Her father is a national specialty winner....

MIKE

...Four months old?

MIA

About.

MIKE

This is a big change for her. All the cars and people and noises and smells and all the dogs in every shape and size. A lot to take in.

(He pats his thighs. The dog jumps up on them. He pets her.)

(To the dog:) Even for such a smart girl like you. And you are a smart girl. I can see it in your eyes. (To Mia:) Don't take her off the lead until she's ready.

MIA

Great.

MIKE

How often do you walk her?

MIA

Before and after work. I'm crate training her.

MIKE

She needs more exercise than that.

(Her phone rings again. She answers it.)

MIA

It's Mia. ... Status? ... When? ... That's unacceptable, Kimberly. ... No. I want it tonight. ... That's unacceptable, Kimberly. Unacceptable. (Pause while she thinks.)

Okay. Save whatever you have to Basecamp. Then pack all your stuff in a box and put your pass-card on my desk... Yes. That's exactly what I'm doing.

(She hangs up.)

MIKE

Impressive.

MIA

You just hang around dog parks. That your thing?

MIKE

I guess so.

MIA

I'll take my dog back now.

(She takes the lead from Mike. From Mia's gestures it looks like the dog is going nuts.)

Stop. Sit. Sit. Sarah Jessica! Calm down, dammit!

(Mike crouches and calls to the dog.)

MIKE

Come here, girl. That's it. Good, girl. That's my girl. (To Mia:) You sure this is a good idea?

MIA

What?

MIKE

How committed are you to owning a dog?

MIA

I gave up Pilates for this.

MIKE

Two 15-minute walks a day isn't cutting it.

MIA

I work.

MIKE

(To offstage right:) Jake? Wait up a second. (To the dog:) Stay, girl. Good girl.

(Mike exits stage right.)

MIKE'S VOICE

You have a card on you?

MIA

(Speaking into her phone:) Siri, find me a licensed dog-walker nearby.

(Mike re-enters with “card.”)

MIKE

Jake’s a great guy. He’s been doing this for...

(Mia holds up her phone.)

SIRI’S VOICE

I found 42 places matching “Dog Walker” that are nearby.

MIKE

Okay.

(Mia’s distracted by the dog.)

MIA

Good, girl. That’s my girl. See? Wasn’t that fun? Outside. Outside. That’s what Outside is for. What you just did there. Now we can go home.

MIKE

Not a good idea.

MIA

Why?

MIKE

If she knows she goes home after she does her business, she’ll hold it as long as possible just so she can play a little longer.

MIA

Really.

MIKE

She’s a smart girl. I can tell.

MIA

Then she’ll figure out how to live with me. On my terms.

(Mia begins to exit.)

MIKE

Uh... You better. Ummm...

MIA

What?

MIKE

Clean up after your dog.

(Another stand off.)

It’s on the sign.

MIA

You still have that Kleenex?

MIKE

(To offstage:) Stella, can you and Jimmy spare a baggie?

(He crosses a short distance away and mimes grabbing a baggie. She crosses to where the dog relieved herself and mimes scooping the excrement up with the baggie. He ties it closed and hands it off to Mia. She is repulsed.)

Better get used to it. Nice meeting you, Sarah Jessica. Maybe we we'll run into each other again soon. Keep an eye out for her. She needs your help.

MIA

You talking to me or my dog?

(He laughs.)

MIKE

There's a garbage bin over there.

(She exits. Then comes back.)

MIA

This is all new to me. New town. New dog.

MIKE

Takes getting used to.

MIA

You going to be okay?

MIKE

Just a scratch.

MIA

Are you sure?

MIKE

I'll live.

MIA

I'm sorry.

MIKE

She didn't mean it. Just got carried away. Sometimes that happens. You find yourself in a stressful situation and you do something you don't mean.

MIA

Thanks.

MIKE

My name's Mike.

MIA

Thanks... Mike.

MIKE

You're welcome... Mia.

(She looks at him a little surprised. He mimes answering a phone.)

It's Mia.

(As she exits, she speed-dials her phone.)

MIA

Kyle... Could you call Kimberly and do a little damage control. I think I just fired her.

(Exits.)

MIKE

Hey, Pete. You see that? (Laughs.) Pretty bitch... Which one? Both.

(Lighting transition.

Mia to the audience.)

MIA

I walked her home. My dog. Across Central Park West. Down 71st. Past our Russian doorman. Into the elevator. Up to the 26th floor. Down the hall and into my apartment. Without incident. I collapsed on the couch and fell asleep with the TV on. I woke at dawn to find my purse ripped to shreds – bits of Kleenex littered all over the floor – the heels of half of my pumps gnawed off and she had torn the handle off the hallway door. By the time the super got the hinges off and let us out, she had done her business in the middle of my bed.

(Lights out.)

Scene 2

(Lights up.

Mike stands center stage. Same coat, but this time he wears worn out leather gloves.

He is talking to the unseen Stella.)

MIKE

Stella. Haven't seen you around in a while. ... Aruba. That would explain the tan. Happy Valentines Day. And to Jimmy too.

(Mia enters being tugged by her dog.)

MIA

Sarah!

(Mike crouches to play with Stella's dachshund.)

MIKE

That's quite the sweater you got going there, little guy. Ah ... You are a lover. You think Jimmy likes these deely-bobs on his head, Stella?

MIA

Sarah Jessica!

MIKE

There he goes!

MIA

Heal! Dammit!

MIKE

Jimmy still hasn't warmed up to that collie, has he?

MIA

I said, heal!

(Mike slaps his thighs. He mimes petting the border collie as her front legs stand on his thighs.)

MIKE

Hey, girl. How's it going today?

MIA

You're here.

MIKE

You too.

MIA

During the day.

MIKE

Yep.

MIA

Haven't seen you in the evenings.

MIKE

Changed my schedule. Breaks up my day better. How's my girl doing?

MIA

She's excited to see you.

MIKE

Sit, girl. Sit. That's my girl.

MIA

How'd you...? No. Seriously... how did you...?

MIKE

We've been practicing.

MIA

Oh?

MIKE

A few times. When I happened to be here.

MIA

When I wasn't around.

MIKE

I guess.

MIA

You know that's creepy. Right?

MIKE

I haven't see you in a while, girl. (To Mia:) Take the day off?

MIA

My walker did. Permanent holiday.

MIKE

Sorry to hear that.

MIA

Third one. I don't get it. She's a dog. They're dog walkers. If you can't hack your job you shouldn't do it.

MIKE

That's one way to look at it.

MIA

Plus... they all have three or four dogs going at once. She wasn't getting the special attention she needs. What? You think that's funny? Okay.

(Mia wants to move on, but her dog won't let her.)

Come, Sarah Jessica. Come. Now.

MIKE

Go on, girl.

(Mia walks the collie a short distance away from Mike.)

MIA

Oh... Is this one of your new friends? What a sweet doggy. He wants to be your buddy.

MIKE

Um... Mia?

MIA

See? You can be a nice girl when you want to be.

MIKE

She's flagging.

MIA

What a sweetheart. Good girl! Oh, look. More friends.

MIKE

You don't want that to happen.

MIA

Oh... this one's getting frisky. Don't fight, boys. She can play with all of you.

MIKE

Her... business end...

MIA

So she's having her period.

MIKE

You know it's different for dogs, right?

MIA

Okay, boys. Settle down!

MIKE

You want a litter on the ground in 63 days?

MIA

What do you mean?

MIKE

She's in a full-standing heat.

MIA

Heat? Oh, Jesus. Why didn't you say so! Stop it! She doesn't want that.

MIKE

That's not what her body's saying.

MIA

Get off her! Knock it off!

(Trying to get the dogs of the collie is obviously too much for Mia.)

Help me. Please?

MIKE

(He crosses toward Mia.)

(To offstage:) Guys?! Come and get your dogs. Kevin? That one's yours, right?

(He separates the dogs from the collie. He has to threaten to kick the last one to get him off.)

Get away, fellas. This is one of those times where yes means *no*. Go on. Get!

MIA

Now what?

MIKE

Get her out of the run.

MIA

She hasn't done her business...

MIKE

I know a place that's more secluded.

(She is suspicious.)

What? Don't worry, I'll keep the dogs off her.

(Lighting transition.)

Mia steps into her spot and speaks to the audience.)

MIA

We walked over a bridge. Around the pond and through a section of the park I'd never seen before. The Rambles. We came out on the top of a rock outcropping. Steep cliffs on three sides with a clearing on the top. Grass. Or what would be grass if spring were ever to come again.

(Lighting transition.)

MIKE

I'll make sure she doesn't go back down the path.

MIA

Who knew this was here. You can't even hear the traffic.

(He mimes throwing a ball for the dog.)

MIKE

Go get it girl. Come. Stop. Drop it.

(He mimes catching the ball.)

What? MIA

Good girl! MIKE

How did you...? MIA

She's a smart girl. MIKE

She won't even chase the ball for me. MIA

Do you enjoy it? MIKE

What? MIA

Playing fetch. MIKE

Not particularly. MIA

She knows that. MIKE

And this is your idea of a good time? MIA

Look how happy it makes her. MIKE

She likes you. MIA

I'm kind of fond of her. MIKE

She hates me. MIA

I don't think so... MIKE

MIA
You know how many duvet covers I've gone through? How many tubes of lipstick?
I'm not sleeping because she wines whenever I put her in her crate. I let her out
and... She came this close to electrocuting herself last night – power cord to my

laptop. I'm developing tendinitis in my shoulder from her lunging at squirrels, postmen, women wearing hats, construction workers, ambulances, black people. I think she's a racist.

(Her phone buzzes. She reads it and begins to text.)

I want this to work. But it is killing me.

(Her dog has jumped on her.)

Knock it off. Down. And this. She won't let me text in peace. I take out my phone and she goes ape-shit.

MIKE

Why the dog?

MIA

What?

MIKE

Why the dog?

MIA

I saw a program on PBS. Dogs in Scotland who herd sheep... like across a river valley. Their owners on one side... with binoculars. Whistling. And the dogs would... They were so smart. The dogs on the show. But this one.

MIKE

She's smarter than you think.

MIA

She won't do anything I say.

MIKE

She will never understand all your words. But her senses are 100 times more powerful than yours. She reads the tone of your voice, your body language. She understands how you're feeling just by the way you smell. She knows you in ways you will never know yourself. And this one... A border collie? She's like a Ferrari. You ready for a Ferrari?

(This brings her up short.)

Why the dog?

MIA

For a city so huge... so many people... so much going on. It can be little.... My business partner... my boyfriend, actually... Kyle... is on the West Coast setting up our production lines. I'm here to put the deal together so we can cash out. That was the plan. It's just taking me a little longer than anticipated. In the meantime, my life is

pretty much defined by my 16-hour workdays, my empty co-op on the park and my office over on Lex and 59th.

MIKE

She needs someone she can trust. Who will look out for her. Who will try to understand her as hard as she is trying to understand you. She will meet you more than half way. But you gotta start.

(He offers her the “ball.” She takes it and throws it.)

MIA

Fetch!!!

(The dog has obviously not moved. Mike crosses off stage. He with a chastising look.)

MIKE

Try it again.

(She throws the ball again.)

MIA

Go get it, girl! That’s it. Bring it back. Stop. Drop. (Genuinely:) That was fun. Who knew?

(Her phone rings. It’s a text.)

Shit.

(She dials.)

Kimberly. What did I say before I left the office? ... AT&T? ... Sprint? ... Reschedule. ... That’s not good enough. ... No. That’s unacceptable. If you can’t set something up by the end of the week....

(She looks at her dog. Then to Mike. Then back to her dog.)

Kimberly... I know you’re trying. This has been tough. I got a little intense there. Didn’t I? I’ll be back in the office in 30 minutes and we can strategize together how to get those two sons of bitches in the same room. Okay? Now go out and grab some lunch. Take the company card. Great.

(She hangs up the phone. Mike has knelt next to the dog.)

MIKE

What’s the thing on her collar?

MIA

A prototype of my product. *Stick it and it sticks to you.*

MIKE

Ok.

MIA

It's a tag that lets you track your stuff.

MIKE

I think I've seen something like that....

MIA

Not like this. It's made from materials that naturally reflect 4-G signals. No power source. No batteries. Kind of like a bicycle reflector. Each has a unique, track-able code. Kyle's figuring out how to refine them, practically to the point of invisibility. Not that we'd go to market with transparent ones. I'm insisting that they can be seen by the naked eye and clearly branded. Privacy issues.

MIKE

Think it will sell?

MIA

Obviously. (Thinks:) Why? You don't think so?

(He shrugs.)

Think of all your valuable things. Don't you want to know where they are?

MIKE

I don't have a lot of stuff.

MIA

Still... you must have something in your life that's important. Imagine if you lost it.

MIKE

When things disappear there's usually a reason.

MIA

Of course.

MIKE

What if it doesn't want to come back? Will your tag be able to tell me why?

MIA

I don't think you're getting the product.

MIKE

(Reading the tag:) Flector?

MIA

Company name. We call them Flectors. Don't laugh.

MIKE

IPO?

MIA

Right now it works on home networks. But If I can get the major carriers to agree on a detection protocol, we'll be able to track nation wide. Unfortunately those bozos are too busy trying to use us to screw each other over. It's all macho gamesmanship. You New Yorkers... tough crowd.

MIKE

Been here 20 years and still don't consider myself a New Yorker.

MIA

Where are you from?

MIKE

Omaha.

MIA

A square state.

MIKE

Ummm... It's not exactly a....

MIA

I've flown over it four times in the past five weeks. Is anyone in this town really from here?

MIKE

Where did you grow up?

MIA

Sonoma. But I consider myself from Palo Alto. It's where I got my MBA.

MIA & MIKE (IN UNISON)

Stanford.

MIA

Yeah. 20 years in New York?

MIKE

Yep.

MIA

Where's your place?

MIKE

Hells Kitchen.

(She's a little surprised.)

Blue liked the run up here better than the parks closer to home.

MIA

Your...?

MIKE

Dog,

MIA

Nice name.

MIKE

She had blue eyes.

MIA

Pretty.

MIKE

She had her own look.

MIA

What breed?

MIKE

Hines 57

MIA

Never heard of it.

MIKE

I got her from the pound.

MIA

What do you do? For work?

MIKE

I freelance.

MIA

Where?

MIKE

I work out of my place.

MIA

What field?

MIKE

Publishing. Books mostly.

MIA

That's tough.

MIKE

Yep.

MIA

Talk about an industry in a free fall. May as well be music.

MIKE

It's what I know.

MIA

Rent or own?

MIKE

Rent.

MIA

Rent controlled?

MIKE

Um... Yeah.

(She begins to rummage through her bag as she speaks.)

MIA

Married?

MIKE

No.

MIA

Seeing someone?

MIKE

I guess I'm better with dogs.

MIA

You could use a little extra money. Couldn't you?

MIKE

A lot of questions.

(She hands him an apartment key. He takes it. A little confused.)

MIA

I try to get to know all my employees.

(Lighting transition.

Mia steps into her spot.)

That's how he became my dog walker. And that's when I felt the first connection to this city. A stranger you meet in a park. You hire him to walk your dog. And a place filled with 2 million aggressive, driven, neurotic egomaniacs, becomes a little more human. And with that little connection, you begin to see a way to be a little more human yourself.

Work was... challenging. The IPO wasn't going to fly without the four major players cooperating. Our funding was running out and Kyle was getting impatient.

Impatience spread across a three-thousand-mile phone connection can start to seem

like disappointment, anger and distrust. And when we managed to be together – when I'd fly back to the Valley - those feelings bloomed too easily into hostility and recriminations. He had the patents. I had the ideas. I was running out of those.

In the middle of all that. When I couldn't face the latest shit storm at work, I'd walk to the park when I knew he would be there. With my girl.

(Lighting transition.

Mike center stage. Mia still at her spot speaking to the audience.)

MIKE

Hey, Pete. Truman come home?

MIA

It was like he was the mayor of the Strawberry Fields Dog Run.

MIKE

Yeah, I've been looking.

MIA

Everyone liked him.

MIKE

Yesterday we headed up into the Rambles calling his name...

MIA

The friendliest guy, but how well did they know him? His last name? Where he lived? Did they know anything about his personal life?

MIKE

Nothing.

MIA

I started to notice things. Maybe I was developing a few new senses I never knew I had before.

MIKE

He's a good dog.

MIA

Things obviously were not going well for him professionally. But there was something else. Something inside. A hurt. I couldn't put my finger on it.

MIKE

Truman's just sewing his wild oats.

MIA

I'd bring him a sandwich. Or maybe a new stocking cap. One time, a pair of leather gloves. But I couldn't figure out how to find the deeper part. The part on the other side of the halfway point where we met. That's a skill I hadn't learned yet.

MIKE

He'll come back.

(Mia enters the scene.)

It's Mia.

MIA

Hey, girl. Yes. That's my girl. Good girl. (To Mike:) Thanks for picking up my dry cleaning.

MIKE

No problem.

(She hands him an envelope.)

What's this?

MIA

Turandot. Two tickets. You like opera. That's what you said.

MIKE

I do. Dress Circle. Center. Wow.

MIA

You said you hadn't been in a while. Right?

MIKE

That's.... Incredible. How'd you...? Two tickets?

MIA

I thought... if there was someone you'd like to take...

MIKE

Oh... Um... Do you want to come along?

MIA

Opera's not my thing.

MIKE

Okay. Uh.... Here... give this one to someone who you think would...

MIA

You sure?

(He nods.)

You'll go. Right?

MIKE

Sure.

MIA

Okay. Come here, girl.

(Mia kneels down and mimes holding her dog. She closes her eyes tightly and exhales.)

MIKE

Work?

MIA

How'd you guess? How about you? Pick up a new project?

MIKE

I'm hanging out with Teddy Roosevelt today.

MIA

Is he a good companion?

MIKE

According to this book, fascinating. But a little self-destructive toward the end. Lost sight of who he was. Kind of sad.

MIA

Do you like your work?

MIKE

Um... Yeah. I do.

MIA

Why?

MIKE

Every book takes you somewhere. Paris in the 20s. The moonshot in '69. A whole new place.

MIA

Far away from your studio apartment in Hells Kitchen?

MIKE

Sometimes that's better than actually walking out the door.

MIA

The dog park?

MIKE

Well... that's different. You know how dogs are...

MIA

And how people are when they're around them.

MIKE

Kyle coming out this weekend?

MIA

Cancelled.

MIKE

If you want to fly out, she can stay with me again.

MIA

We decided that I needed to stay here and work.

MIKE

I gotta show you something. Come on, girl. Show Mia what you can do. One... two... three... Jump. Jump. Jump.

MIA

It's like she's a bouncing lamb!

MIKE

That's it. That's my girl! Try it. Go on girl. Listen to Mia.

MIA

Sarah Jessica. One... two... three... Jump. Jump. Jump. Come here, girl. Good, girl!

MIKE

She likes you.

MIA

I'm kind of fond of her.

MIKE

Beautiful day.

MIA

Spring. Finally.

(Lighting transition.

Mia steps to her spot and talks to the audience.)

There's a tree in Central Park. I don't know what kind it is, because I've never paid any attention to that sort of thing. Maybe it was always there... since before the Indians traded the Island for trinkets. Maybe it was hand-planted on land cleared when they built the park. I don't know. But it's on a hill. Not too far from the sculpture of Balto – the sled dog that rescued some Alaskan town from diphtheria or something. It's not the tallest tree in the park. But its limbs reach up and out, into a perfect.... A perfect... I don't know what... but it's... perfect. And in the spring it has the most gorgeous light pink blossoms. Once Mike could trust her off a lead, that's where he started taking her.

(Lighting transition

Mike is seen setting up a row of cones. They are invisible to the audience.)

Hey. MIKE

Where are you today? MIA

Venice. With Ruskin. MIKE

That's good news. Cones? MIA

Yeah. Blue and I use to play with these. Agility exercises. I thought I'd see how she takes to it. MIKE

Sounds good. MIA

Let's try something new, Girl! MIKE

(Lighting transition.

Mia at her spot.

In the background, Mike can be seen "training" the dog to go through the cones.)

MIA
When you walk down the street in New York, you pass tens of thousands of people every day. People you don't know. Will probably never see again. And without knowing it, you've negotiated a deal with every one of those people.

Go. Right, girl. Go right. MIKE

Right there on the sidewalk. MIA

Left. MIKE

Left. MIA

Right. MIKE

Right. MIA

MIKE

Stop.

MIA

Stop.

MIKE

Go.

MIA

Go. Kind of like the murmurations of starlings in the evening sky. Murmuration... isn't that the term? You've seen the videos, right? The constantly shifting, pulsing patterns of thousands of starlings as they try to find a place to settle for the night. It's mesmerizing. In New York, the worse thing you can do on the sidewalk is look someone in the eye. You have to look past them. Your gaze indicating where you will be going. And like the starlings, you feel where they are gazing too. And instinctually you are part of a large throbbing mass of complete strangers.

(Lighting transition.

Mike is training the collie.

Mia enters.)

MIKE

Make the turn, girl. Now come back.

MIA

Hey, Mike.

MIKE

Hey, Mia.

MIA

Where are you today?

MIKE

Mexico. I'm afraid Trotsky doesn't have long to live.

MIA

She's doing great. With the cones.

MIKE

It's in her blood.

MIA

I've been thinking. Amazon has these agility kits... obstacles... hoops... a bizarre kind of tunnel thing. What do you think?

MIKE

Um... where would we...?

MIA

We can store it at my place. God knows there's enough room. Most of them collapse into a bag anyway. We wouldn't have to lug it far.

MIKE

I think she'd like that.

MIA

Good. I'll see what I can do.

MIKE

How's work?

MIA

I'm here. What does that usually mean?

(Lighting transition.

Mia steps to her spot.)

MIA

Then there are the incomplete strangers. Those are the ones who smile and chat with you as they sell you your coffee everyday at the corner bodega. The security people you say good morning to as you flash your work badge to before you hit the elevator. Or the ones you give your key to. Who you let into your home unsupervised, so they can walk your dog, drop off your laundry. A bad batch of coffee. A lunatic at work with a gun. A thief who rips off everything of value in your home. These incomplete strangers you see every day... You are trusting them with your life.

(Lighting transition.

Mia back in the scene.)

MIA

Where are you today?

MIKE

Hells Kitchen I'm afraid. (To the dog:) Around the last cone, girl. Now through the hoop. Ignore the squirrel. No! Let it go. Say goodbye to the squirrel. That's it! Through the hoop.

(Lighting transition.

Mia at her spot, but she is watching Mike work with her dog.)

MIA

But that's not how my girl sees it. She knows everyone. Instantly. She meets them and one sniff is all it takes. Since Mike. She wags her tail and looks up into their eyes. And... And people love it. They love her. No one is a stranger. There is no halfway point you have to negotiate. How does she do that?

(Lighting transition.)

Over the bar. Keep going. **MIKE**

Hey, Mike. **MIA**

It's Mia! **MIKE**

She's looking great. **MIA**

Through the tunnel. Nope. You can do it. **MIKE**

Come on girl! **MIA**

She's afraid of that tunnel. I can't get her to go through it. **MIKE**

It's okay, girl. **MIA**

Okay. Come back, girl. **MIKE**

She'll get it. **MIA**

(Mike notices that Mia is wearing flats.)

No heels. **MIKE**

Today's the day you show me how to do this. **MIA**

It's easy. You start in front of the first pole and weave to the left... **MIKE**

You know what I mean. **MIA**

You have an hour to kill? **MIKE**

I got all afternoon. **MIA**

Everything okay? **MIKE**

MIA

No. But this... this is.

(Lighting transition.)

Things were happening at work. Back in California. Things I wasn't supposed to be aware of. The bills for our New York operations were hitting us hard and we needed cash. Kyle was supposed to fly out for meetings with some new angels I had found. He didn't get on the plane. I looked like an ass. We didn't get the money.

(Lighting transition.)

Mike mimes opening a door.)

MIA

Sorry. I don't mean to barge in. I tried leaving a message...

MIKE

Problems with my phone.

(He reaches down to pet the Mia's dog.)

Hey, girl.

MIA

I rang the buzzer, but...

MIKE

It's broken.

MIA

So I followed someone in. I was going to slip this under your door. But since you're here...

(Awkward pause.)

I need someone to take Sarah for a few days. Meeting in DC with the FCC. Hail Mary pass of sorts. I hope I'm using that correctly. That term. It's football. Isn't it?

(Awkward pause.)

I've got to leave first thing tomorrow. Can you help me out?

MIKE

Sure.

MIA

Six floors. Quite a hike.

MIKE

Can I get you a... glass of... something?

MIA

Sure.

It was an old building. One I would refer to as a tenement. I'm not sure what New Yorkers would call it. Pre-war? It was a few blocks and more than a 150 years off Times Square.

Mike, you don't have to...

MIKE

Just have to wash the glass.

MIA

Two rooms... The main room and an alcove barely large enough to fit a twin bed. The larger room had a sink, metal cabinets, a microwave and a loud refrigerator. The window faced a brick wall... A window fan was blowing air in or out.

MIKE

Let's see what we have.

MIA

I saw what I thought was a closet until I noticed the toilet bowl through the half-opened door.

MIKE

Water?

MIA

Sure. The walls were horsehair plaster with moldings that betrayed a former doorway here... a walled-up window there. A medallion that no longer sported a light fixture bloomed like an empty flower from the middle of the ceiling. Mike tried to fill my glass from a water filter he kept in the refrigerator, but it was empty.

MIKE

Is tap okay?

MIA

It's fine.

Two bowls on the floor – one filled with water – and a dog bed nearly as large as the twin in the alcove. Sarah settled onto the bed and rolled over extravagantly onto her back.

(He hands her a glass of water.)

MIA

Where are you today? Someplace special?

MIKE

Hells Kitchen.

MIA

Oh.

MIKE

Looks like I'll be here for a while.

MIA

Not a bad place.

MIKE

Can I get you some.... Crackers... chips...?

MIA

A bookcase crammed with manuscripts, envelopes and hardcover books filled the length of the wall opposite the... kitchen? A photo of a black dog with blue eyes. Blue?

(He nods.)

She was a character. I can tell.

As he looked through his cupboards I found another photo... sticking out from under some papers. Sarah Jessica. Looking into the camera. The same shade of blue. On the other side, written in his hand, was my name... Mia... Mia... Mia...

MIKE

Saltines?

(As he returns, she quickly puts the photo back.)

MIA

I'm fine. Are these your books? The ones you've edited?

MIKE

Yes.

MIA

Impressive. Can I look?

MIKE

Sure.

MIA

All the worlds you've been. Contained in one room.

(To audience:) One small, dingy, airless room. It made me shiver.

(Awkward pause.)

Can I leave her here tonight?

MIKE

That's fine.

MIA

I don't mean to intrude.

MIKE

Not a problem.

MIA

Let me know if you need help.

(Awkward pause.)

With your phone... situation. Okay?

MIKE

Might be nice living off the grid for a little while.

MIA

Are you kidding?

MIKE

It would kill you, wouldn't it?

MIA

In a minute.

(Lighting transition.)

What did it mean? Any of it. All of it. There was something so good there. So kind and decent. But that half-way point? That was not the way I wanted to go. That direction scared the hell out of me. My other half-way point? Between New York and Palo Alto? (She reacts.) Kyle. Three days without a word. No texts. No email. I couldn't get him on the phone. Kyle. My boyfriend. My business partner. My biggest mistake.

(Lighting transition.)

Mike at the park playing with Sarah.)

MIKE

Here, girl!

(Mia enters. She looks like she is in shock.)

Mia?

(She doesn't answer. Instead, she goes to the dog and clutches her for dear life. She doesn't mind that the dog licks her face. She hardly notices.)

Mia?

(She won't let the dog go.)

You okay?

MIA

It's over.

MIKE

What?

MIA

Everything. It's over. The company. He pulled the plug.

MIKE

Kyle?

MIA

He sold his patents to the military.

MIKE

Without your permission?

MIA

The rat.

MIKE

Didn't you have to agree....?

MIA

They were his property. The son of a bitch. Why couldn't I see what he really was?
A rat.

MIKE

How much did he get?

MIA

An obscene amount.

MIKE

How much for you?

MIA

That? I don't want that. It's the department of defense. You don't think the CIA, FBI and NSA won't get their hands on it? The whole idea was that it was going to be open source. You controlled what you wanted tracked. You know what the military will do with it? You think the NSA's digital surveillance is bad? Just wait. They get their hands on the science and they will embed it in the fibers of clothes, forge jewelry with it, cars, shoes, luggage, anything they can get their hands on. They will be able to track every person and piece of property on the planet. And no one will have a clue. Because it will all be invisible.

(She mimes ripping the tag off the dog's collar.)

What Kyle got for this? It's blood money.

MIKE

He didn't ask you?

MIA

He knew he wouldn't get the answer he wanted.

MIKE

Lawsuit?

MIA

(Sarcastic:) You think?

MIKE

I'm sorry.

MIA

I need to block that rat. He wants war, I'll give him fucking war.

MIKE

Do you want me to take Sarah for a few days?

MIA

Five years. I've wasted five years... He had nothing. Nothing but a few carbonized crystals that reflected digital pulses. Sure... he knew molecules, but he couldn't find his ass with both hands. Not till I came along. I was the idea person.

MIKE

When did you find out?

MIA

This morning. I'm meeting with some idiots from AT&T and three lawyers and their goons barge into the conference room with a cease and desist, inform me that the company has been dissolved, that my staff was dismissed and we all must vacate immediately. Those goons searched me before I could walk out the door. They wouldn't even let me take my laptop. And now they are giving me 5 days to get out of my co-op. They are probably there right now trashing the place.

MIKE

I can help.

MIA

Are you kidding? How?

MIKE

I can go back to your place with you.

MIA

What in the fuck am I going to do? It's over. Everything. In five minutes. My company. My boyfriend. My life. Over. I am a failure. A total and complete failure.

MIKE

No, you're not.

MIA

This is epic.

MIKE

You may have failed, but you are not a failure.

MIA

This is supposed to make me feel better?

MIKE

This is something I know about.

MIA

Really?

MIKE

When I graduated from high school, my grandfather came up to me at the reception and said, "Mike, you are going to fail." My mother nearly fell off her chair. "What do you mean he's going to fail? This is his graduation day, for Christ sakes." But my grandfather held his ground and explained that I would know what he meant and that it is a good thing.

MIA

What the hell am I supposed to do with that?

MIKE

He was right. I failed. A lot of times. At a lot of things. Practically everything. No. Everything.

MIA

This isn't working.

MIKE

By telling me that. Like it was a given. I didn't fear it so much. And I could go on when it happened.

MIA

Go on? To what?

MIKE

What do you want?

MIA

I've banked everything I have on this. My career. My life. There is nothing left. Nothing. Do you know how terrifying that is?

MIKE

Yes.

MIA

That helps.

MIKE

What's your worse-case scenario?

MIA

This!

MIKE

It's not.

MIA

It is.

MIKE

What are you the most afraid of. If you tell me what it is. If you get it out, you won't be so afraid. Trust me.

MIA

What am I afraid of? That by the time I turn 40, I will end up with some low-paying job in some nearly extinct industry, barely able to feed and cloth myself, accepting table scraps from people I barely know and living alone in some overheated, 6-floor, one-room walk up in Hells Kitchen. And that's all I will have... Where I will be trapped... for the rest of my sad, miserable, pathetic life. Until I die. That's my worse case. That's what I'm afraid of.

(Mike reaches into his pocket and removes a key. He hands it to Mia. He then turns and begins to walk away.)

Mike... don't... I didn't mean it... Mike...

(The dog breaks away from her embrace and runs after Mike.)

Sarah Stop. Stop. Come. Come girl. Please?

(Mike puts his hand up for the dog to stop and then gestures toward Mia. The dog returns to Mia. He exits.)

That's my girl. My beautiful girl.

Mike?

(Lights out.)

Scene 3

(Lights up.

Mia is seen working with her dog.

Mike enters half way through. Mia doesn't see him.)

MIA

Through the hoop. Turn. Through the cones. Over the bar. Jump. Cross the plank. That's it, girl. Through the tunnel. You can do it. Don't be afraid. Do it, girl. Do it! That's my girl. Come. Come, girl.

MIKE

Impressive.

MIA

She went through the tunnel. Did you see? She did it for me. My girl. That's my girl!

(The dog runs up to Mike. She jumps on his thighs. He pets her.)

MIKE

Hey, Sarah.

MIA

You got the note... that I slipped under your door. My email bounced. You'll have to fix that. Thanks for coming.

(Mia gestures to a spot upstage.)

See? Whole spread. Fried chicken, coleslaw, potato salad. From Zabars. Glass of wine? From my family's vineyard. It's not bad.

MIKE

I don't drink.

MIA

Oh. You'd think I'd know that.

(Awkward pause.)

About last week. What I said...

MIKE

Hey, any time you need a worse case scenario, I'm happy to oblige.

MIA

It was inexcusable.

MIKE

But it seemed to have worked. Back on your feet. Smile on your face.

MIA

Join me. Us. A picnic. Under the tree. You can see him. Balto. Right over there.

MIKE

I can't stay.

MIA

Please?

MIKE

I've got... something. I came only to say goodbye.

MIA

There is so much about the time I spent in this town that I will hate. Will hate for the rest of my life. But not you.

MIKE

I guess that's something.

MIA

That first time we met. In the dog park. "Nice bitch."

MIKE

You heard that?

MIA

Oh yeah.

MIKE

Sorry.

MIA

It's okay.

MIKE

"She's having her period, so what?"

MIA

Where would I be now?

MIKE

A dozen little Sarah Jessicas running around.

(They laugh.)

What's next for you?

MIA

Back to Sonoma. My parents place. To think things through.

MIKE

Have any ideas?

MIA

I have a few options. But I've decided to let none of them scare me. Thanks to you.

MIKE

Glad I could help.

(Awkward pause.)

I better...um...

MIA

Goodbye, Mike. My friend.

MIKE

Happy trails, Mia.

(He kneels and pets Sarah.)

Sarah Jessica. You got to do me a favor, okay? Ignore those squirrels. They're no good for you. Mostly fur... may as well be rats and you are not a terrier. You are a herder. A natural born leader. That's your job. Give up the rats. You are better than that. You are a smart girl. The smartest girl I've ever met. And so pretty. You don't even know it. How pretty you are. And kind. Maybe not the first day we met... back when you were a fear biter. But once we got to know each other. We became pretty good friends. Now... you're going to be heading to a new place. I know you don't like change. It's in the countryside and you have turned into a big city girl. At first it's going to seem like a step backward. But it's a lot like going back home. Where you were born. So it won't be so scary. Okay? Now you've got to promise me something. When you meet other dogs. Most of them aren't going to be as smart as you. Or as talented. Or as beautiful. You may be afraid that some of them will try to hurt you. But you got to remember to give everyone a chance. Think about everything you have done for me... so many things. You brought me back from a dark place. You didn't know that. Did you? You did. And now I'm not afraid to take my own advice and not be afraid of what's next. There's a whole, big beautiful world out there. I guess I needed someone to kick me in the ass to realize it. And I thank you for that. You have a generous and beautiful heart. Don't be afraid to share it. Okay? Good girl.

(He kisses the dog.)

Furry bits of heartache.

(He gets up and turns away. He can't look Mia in the eye.)

Lighting transition.

Mia narrates the action.)

MIA

He walked away from the tree. Sarah tried to follow. But he sent her back.

(Mike exits.)

Like I said before, this is a love story. He loved her. She loved everyone. And I...I loved... Loving was something I was still working on.

(Lighting transition.

Mike reenters. He is his old self.)

MIKE

Paul! How's Hugo doing?

MIA

My Sarah?

MIKE

He's looking good.

MIA

She lived another 14 years.

MIKE

Playing with everyone. Having fun.

MIA

Whenever I would take her for a run and she'd jump like a lamb, I'd think of him.

MIKE

From the fighting cage to this.

MIA

And I would smile.

MIKE

Damn good job

MIA

So... Why am I standing here now? Telling you this?

MIKE

Me? Another dog?

MIA

To a room full of complete strangers?

MIKE

You know... Yeah. I think it's time.

MIA

Maybe I'm hoping that by sitting there and listening to my story, we'll all be something else.

MIKE

Maybe I'll hit the pound tomorrow.

MIA

If we all just try to go half way.

MIKE

Wanna come with me? Help me pick her out?

(Mike freezes.)

MIA

That last part. With him in the park? Talking to his friend about getting a dog? It's nice. Isn't it? That's what I want to imagine. That he was telling the truth about starting over. Getting out of his shell. That he's happy. Because he deserves it. More than anyone. But I don't know. How he's doing. Because that day... as he walked off... back through the park. Away from us. Sarah barking after him. He walked beyond the half-way point between us. And no matter how hard I tried... to get ahold of him. That day in the park was the last time I ever saw him... my incomplete stranger.

(Back out.

End of Part One.)

Truman

(Part Two)

Characters

Truman – Played by a tall, well-built actor with a quiet, watchful demeanor and deep soulful eyes. Stoic.

Jimmy – Smaller and thinner than Truman. An actor who is sharp, quick and tenacious, yet has a sense of humor.

Setting

Place

A dog run in Central Park. Not too far from “Strawberry Fields.” Other Locales: The northern section of Central Park – in the “Loch” area and the “North Woods.” The east bank of the Hudson River along the railroad tracks 90 miles north of New York City. Deep in the Taconic / Berkshire Mountains.

Time

Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall of this year.

Scenic Elements

No Set. An open stage with subtle lighting cues will suffice.

Synopsis

Life has to be better than two daily trips to the dog walk park. Sure, fetch can be fun and nothing beats having your food served to you on a tray. But what wild new world waits just on the other side of the dog run fence?

Playwright’s Note

This play is dedicated to Carl Pritzkat and Tony Travostino – two of the best friends anyone could ever have. (And, of course, to their eternally faithful companion, Truman.)

Scene 1

(Lights up.

Truman stands facing the audience. A tall, darkly attractive man with soulful eyes, he wears a silver chain around his neck. It looks rather like a choke chain.)

TRUMAN

There are things I need to tell you. There have always been things I've needed to say. You've needed to hear. But from the very start, it didn't work out that way. I didn't bother you. You were happy with it that way. As long as I did what you told me, that was enough for you. And you thought that should be enough for me as well.

It wasn't.

And that's why I did what I did.

I'm not blaming you. It's not your fault. Not mine either. But let's face it. You always called the shots. I followed every step of the way.

But did you ever think about me? What I wanted? Did you care? Sure. I didn't say anything. But the signs were there.

If I could tell you... If I could unlock everything in my mind and come up with a way to tell you... I can't... but if I could... If I could find you again and if by some miracle I could tell you. This is what I'd say...

You weren't enough.

(Jimmy, enters from stage right. Though he is smaller than Truman, there is something very alert and tenacious about him.)

JIMMY

That's a little harsh

TRUMAN

It's the truth.

JIMMY

He took care of you for five years.

TRUMAN

I didn't ask him to do that.

JIMMY

Still.

TRUMAN

Did I have a choice?

JIMMY

Do any of us?

TRUMAN

You're supposed to come in later.

JIMMY

I'm tired of waiting.

TRUMAN

I told you your cue.

JIMMY

You're stalling. They're getting impatient.

TRUMAN

Grrrrrrr....

(Jimmy's eyes get big. He quickly walks off stage right.)

(Continuing:) You weren't enough. Everything you gave me... provided... The time you spent with me... The trips we took together... It wasn't enough.

I know... You probably thought that I was happy. I can wag my tail with the best of them. But that's because my expectations were so low. I'd take anything you would give me. That's how it was since the first day you met me so long ago that I barely remember.

(Jimmy returns to the stage from stage right. He wears a little Christmas sweater and reindeer antlers. He wears a collar that is attached to a long retractable lead. The other end of the lead is off-stage. We hear it unwind as he crosses to Truman. It snaps to taut abruptly. Jimmy chokes for a second. Truman sees him.)

You're cue is...

JIMMY

"It all began that day in the dog park last Christmas Eve..."

TRUMAN

So...

JIMMY

So I just said it. And here I am.

(Truman sighs and crosses upstage toward Jimmy.)

Hi.

TRUMAN

Nice horns.

Yeah. JIMMY

It makes you look real tough. TRUMAN

Your ass smells weird. JIMMY

Science Diet. TRUMAN

That stuff sucks. JIMMY

Yeah. Well, what am I supposed to do? TRUMAN

Toss it back up on the floor. He'll get the message. JIMMY

I don't do that. TRUMAN

You're whipped. JIMMY

At least I'm not wearing a reindeer hat. TRUMAN

Better than the bunny ears for Easter. JIMMY

Merry Christmas. TRUMAN

And Happy Chanukah. JIMMY

(Truman is distracted by something in the distance downstage left.)

What's up? TRUMAN

Those kids. JIMMY

Ones running around? TRUMAN

They should be quiet and standing in a line. JIMMY

Shepherd?

German. TRUMAN

That explains it. JIMMY

What? TRUMAN

Nothing. JIMMY

(Truman examines Jimmy with a discerning eye.)

What? TRUMAN

Terrier? JIMMY

(Offended:) Miniature wire-haired dachshund. TRUMAN

Oh. JIMMY

Purebred. TRUMAN

Of course. JIMMY

Twelve generations. Certificate's at home. My aunt showed at the Garden. No, wait... (Proudly:) Actually, she's my aunt, sister *and* grandmother. TRUMAN

It happens in the best of families. JIMMY

Can you believe that crazy-assed border collie? Where the hell did she come from? TRUMAN

She's just a kid. JIMMY

She needs to back off!

(Jimmy snarls and lunges forward. Then hears something and looks offstage left.)

He wants you. JIMMY

TRUMAN

He can wait.

JIMMY

He's got a ball.

(Truman looks offstage left quickly. He is excited for a second before he regains his cool.)

TRUMAN

He can wait.

JIMMY

Okay.

TRUMAN

You always on a lead?

JIMMY

Yeah.

TRUMAN

Discipline problem?

JIMMY

It keeps her from running off.

TRUMAN

Funny.

(Truman looks closely at the tag on Jimmy's collar.)

What's it say?

JIMMY

"James Dean."

TRUMAN

Okay.

JIMMY

But she calls me "Jimmy." You?

TRUMAN

Truman.

(A tennis ball rolls across the stage in front of them from left stage to offstage right. There is a tense pause.)

JIMMY

You better...

TRUMAN

Gotta go.

(Lights change.

Jimmy exits.)

(Back to the audience:) And, of course, I grab the ball and run back to you. And you throw it and I chase it down...

“Get the ball, Truman! Get the ball! Where’s the ball? Get the ball. Come on, boy! Bring me the ball!”

And I did. Over and over. Till the lights came on and it was time to go home. Just like every other day.

(Lights change.

Jimmy enters. He wears a pink sweater with little doggy cupids stenciled on it and a headband that has two long, bobbing springs with red hearts attached to the ends. As before, he wears a collar with a retractable lead. We hear it unwind. It snaps to taut abruptly. He chokes for a second.)

Haven’t seen you in a while.

JIMMY

She went to Aruba. I went to camp.

TRUMAN

Is that what you call it?

JIMMY

That’s what *she* calls it. Less guilt.

TRUMAN

Lucky you didn’t come back with the croup. I got a buddy...

JIMMY

This was a nice place.

TRUMAN

If you like living in a 3 by 5 foot cage.

(Truman points to the bobbing hearts.)

Nice... um....

JIMMY

Shut up.

(Truman laughs. Jimmy doesn’t.)

TRUMAN

(Under his breath:) Whipped.

JIMMY

What did you say?

TRUMAN

Nothing.

JIMMY

God I wish she'd get a boyfriend. Give her someone else to fuss over. This morning. She looked at the calendar. Burst into tears. Since then, one box of chocolates after another...

TRUMAN

Shit's poison.

JIMMY

Boy do I hate this day. What'd your guy get you?

TRUMAN

Heart-shaped biscuit.

(Jimmy looks offstage for a second.)

JIMMY

Hey... I got an idea. Your guy... Big momma... Maybe we could figure out a way...

TRUMAN

Won't work.

JIMMY

Why?

TRUMAN

He doesn't chase after her scent.

JIMMY

Not even during a full moon?

TRUMAN

No bitches for him.

JIMMY

He runs with the big dogs.

TRUMAN

They run to him.

(Jimmy looks offstage appraisingly.)

JIMMY

I can see that.

TRUMAN

Lately, two or three times a week.

JIMMY

Sounds dangerous.

TRUMAN

I keep an eye on them. One of my jobs.

JIMMY

Maybe he can do her hair. I mean, look at it.

TRUMAN

No way.

JIMMY

She never gets anyone sniffing around.

TRUMAN

Not his thing.

(Truman is distracted by something off stage. He snaps to attention.)

JIMMY

What's up?

TRUMAN

Birds.

JIMMY

What about them?

TRUMAN

They may attack.

JIMMY

He's got you on high alert, doesn't he?

TRUMAN

What do you mean? Least I could do for him.

JIMMY

What? For feeding you science diet? Blechhhh!

(Jimmy's lead is tugged. It yanks him back and he sputters a little.)

TRUMAN

Big girl ever let you off that thing?

JIMMY

She's high strung.

TRUMAN

She must have her reasons. She must. It's not like you can get over the fence.

Can you? JIMMY

Oh, yeah. TRUMAN

Why don't you? JIMMY

Why doesn't she take you off the lead? TRUMAN

I get carried away. JIMMY

How? TRUMAN

You know how many squirrels and chipmunks and moles and rabbits and mice... JIMMY

...and rats... TRUMAN

... and hedgehogs frequent this park? JIMMY

Yeah. TRUMAN

Some are right here in holes they've burrowed right under our noses. I smell them. Right here. JIMMY

Okay. TRUMAN

That tree over there? You can't tell me you don't smell them. JIMMY

Three mice, two squirrels, four gophers... TRUMAN

...two snakes in mud around the back and one domesticated pot-bellied pig. JIMMY

I can't believe they let that sun-of-a-bitch in here. TRUMAN

It's a DOG PARK, PEOPLE! JIMMY

(Jimmy's lead is tugged. It yanks him back and he sputters a little.)

(To offstage:) HEY! (Back to Truman:) And that's just what we can sniff out since that big snow three days ago. Trees... Where the roots are?

TRUMAN

Yeah?

JIMMY

Heaven.

TRUMAN

For a dachshund.

JIMMY

Yeah.

TRUMAN

So you got a thing for fur.

JIMMY

It's more than that.

TRUMAN

More than a good sniff?

JIMMY

I want them. I need them. I gotta have them. I know exactly where they are and I wanna dig and dig and dig and grab those furry little shits and...

TRUMAN

What?

JIMMY

RIP THEM TO SHREDS!

(Jimmy begins to scratch at the stage with his feet.)

DIG DIG DIG DIG!

(The lead pulls again. Jimmy stops abruptly and chokes. Truman laughs.)

What's so funny?

TRUMAN

I can just see you tangling with a New York City rat.

JIMMY

I would.

TRUMAN

Bigger than cats.

JIMMY

So?

TRUMAN

They fight dirty.

JIMMY

I can take em.

TRUMAN

You'd be scared shitless.

JIMMY

Doesn't mean I wouldn't take em on.

TRUMAN

Yeah?

JIMMY

Having courage doesn't mean you're not afraid.

TRUMAN

Hmmm...

JIMMY

It's like something comes over me. Like it's hardwired. GET THE RAT. GET THE RAT.

(He scratches with his feet and mimes the actions.)

CATCH THE RAT. SHAKE THE RAT. SHAKE THE RAT. SLAM. SLAM. SLAM. SLAM. RIP. RIP. RIP. RIP!

(He's pulled back again. He chokes for a second.)

Not that I've ever actually done it.

(He notices that Truman has started sniffing the air and is looking intently off stage.)

What?

TRUMAN

Smell that?

JIMMY

That border collie in heat? She's pretty ripe for the plucking...

TRUMAN

... no...

JIMMY

...not that I'd care.

(He glances down at Truman's haunches.)

Oh. You still got em. Nice set. How'd you manage that?

TRUMAN

No. *Smell.*

(They sniff. Jimmy's eyes get big.)

JIMMY

What the hell?

TRUMAN

Smell it?

JIMMY

Where is it coming from?

TRUMAN

There.

JIMMY

Where?

TRUMAN

There.

JIMMY

Lay off. It's not like I'm a sight hound.

TRUMAN

Far side. Outside the fence. In those shrubs.

JIMMY

Geez. Where the hell...?

TRUMAN

How'd he get...?

JIMMY

Anyone else notice?

TRUMAN

We're the only ones.

JIMMY

What's he doing?

TRUMAN

Staring at us. Check out his coat.

JIMMY

I can smell it from here. What does he want?

TRUMAN

I don't know.

JIMMY

He looks just like us.

(Truman gives him a “what are you crazy?” look.)

Well. Like *you*.

TRUMAN

Wild.

JIMMY

What does he want?

TRUMAN

We gotta find out.

JIMMY

WE GOTTA.

TRUMAN

WILD.

JIMMY

WE GOTTA. WE GOTTA. WE GOTTA.

(Jimmy’s lead is tugged again. He stops.

The ball rolls across the stage.)

The ball.

TRUMAN

I see it.

JIMMY

Gotta get the ball. He wants you to get the ball.

TRUMAN

Shut up.

JIMMY

He’s calling you. GET THE BALL!

TRUMAN

SHUT UP!

JIMMY

The fence. What you said before...

TRUMAN

What about?

JIMMY

Jumping it. I don’t believe you.

TRUMAN

Yeah?

JIMMY

He's calling you. (Taunting:) Get the ball. Come on, Truman. GET THE BALL, BOY!

TRUMAN

What does he want? Where is he from? Wild. Gotta find out. GOTTA. GOTTA. GOTTA. GOTTA!

JIMMY

The fence? PROVE IT!

TRUMAN

JUMP IT! JUMP IT! JUMP IT! JUMP IT! JUMP IT!!

(Truman runs off stage. Jimmy jumps up and down excitedly.)

JIMMY

GO. GO. JUUUUUUUMP... YEAH!

(He jumps high and is pulled by the lead at the same time. He falls over and coughs, but he is ecstatic.)

GO, TRUMAN!

(Lights out.)

Scene 2

(Lights up.)

Jimmy stands center stage. He wears bunny ears, a lavender sweater and the ever-present collar and retractable lead.

Truman enters. He crosses to Jimmy slowly. He is embarrassed by the large cone-shaped medical collar he wears.)

JIMMY

Hey.

TRUMAN

Hey.

JIMMY

Haven't seen you in a while. Nice collar.

TRUMAN

Nice sweater.

JIMMY

She doesn't get it. I have FUR. I don't need this ugly thing. Why the...

(He looks down at Truman's haunches and winces.)

Oh. Hey, man. I'm sorry. Shame.

TRUMAN

Hmph.

JIMMY

Come on. It's not too bad. Kinda takes the edge off things, but you get used to it.

TRUMAN

Right.

JIMMY

Why'd he do it?

TRUMAN

I thought we had a deal.

JIMMY

Yeah?

TRUMAN

I take care of security, he let's me keep my boys.

JIMMY

Why'd he...?

TRUMAN

You screw up once. That's all it takes.

JIMMY

Wha'd you...

TRUMAN

You were there. I abandoned my post.

JIMMY

The fence?

TRUMAN

Gone all night.

JIMMY

Oh, boy...

TRUMAN

Running wild.

No!

JIMMY

All night.

TRUMAN

He must have freaked. Where you go?

JIMMY

Out... There... Far side of the park. Past the reservoir. Running wild. All night. With him.

TRUMAN

Him?

JIMMY

He led. I followed.

TRUMAN

The wild one?

JIMMY

Yeah.

TRUMAN

Woooooow! You ran free?

JIMMY

Yeah.

TRUMAN

What's his name?

JIMMY

No names.

TRUMAN

What?

JIMMY

They just *are*.

TRUMAN

They?

JIMMY

There's three of them.

TRUMAN

Geezes! Where are they from?

JIMMY

TRUMAN

Up North.

JIMMY

How'd they...?

TRUMAN

Followed the river.

JIMMY

Why here?

TRUMAN

They go wherever they want. Whenever they want. They don't take shit from anyone.

JIMMY

And they let you...

TRUMAN

He led me to them.

JIMMY

What are they like?

TRUMAN

They don't talk much.

JIMMY

Yeah?

TRUMAN

They don't have to.

JIMMY

Wild.

TRUMAN

Exactly.

JIMMY

Where'd you go? Wha'd you do? What are they like?

TRUMAN

You know what happens at night?

JIMMY

Yeah. Big momma drops off with the TV on and I'm supposed to lie still at the foot of the bed.

TRUMAN

Do you know what really happens at night?

(Jimmy shrugs.)

Everything.

(Jimmy's eyes get big.)

All day... when the sun is out and you think you see everything, cause that's the only time *they* do?

JIMMY

Yeah?

TRUMAN

It's nothing compared to when it gets dark and they come out of hiding.

JIMMY

TELL ME. TELL ME. TELL ME!

(Jimmy's lead is pulled.)

TRUMAN

Calm down or she'll yank your head off. The moon comes up and the black and white world of the sun turns gray and blue and indigo and turquoise.

JIMMY

I've seen it.

TRUMAN

Not under the streetlights and neon where they take us. You haven't seen anything like this.

JIMMY

Where?

TRUMAN

Other side of the reservoir.

JIMMY

The dangerous part.

TRUMAN

Every shade of blue you can imagine and you look up and you see...

JIMMY

The moon...?

TRUMAN

And stars.

JIMMY

Wow! And the wild ones?

TRUMAN

They rule the night. They report to no one. They don't need *them*. They eat what they find or catch or kill...

And they let you join them?
JIMMY

We're all brothers.
TRUMAN

How?
JIMMY

I know it doesn't look like it. Especially when I look at you...
TRUMAN

Hey!
JIMMY

But we... all of us... are from the same pack. It's just that they've always lived free.
TRUMAN

They escaped?
JIMMY

Never were taken... taken from their mothers or fathers.
TRUMAN

They know their fathers?!
JIMMY

And they all run together.
TRUMAN

Do they dig?
JIMMY

Dig?
TRUMAN

You know... DIG!
JIMMY

Whenever they want.
TRUMAN

And they don't have to worry about tracking inside?
JIMMY

There's no inside.
TRUMAN

No crate or kennel or camp?
JIMMY

No "Get the ball!" or "Stay!" or "Roll over!" or "Sit!"
TRUMAN

You're kidding!

JIMMY

They don't even have words for it.

TRUMAN

And you ran with them...

JIMMY

All night long.

TRUMAN

What did you...?

JIMMY

I caught a rabbit

TRUMAN

A furry one?

JIMMY

They taught me how.

TRUMAN

Did you...?

JIMMY

(Jimmy's mimes shaking the rabbit with his mouth, ripping into it and eating it.

Truman stares at Jimmy's bunny ears and starts to drool. Jimmy notices and grabs his bunny ears.)

Knock it off. It's a *costume* for Christ sakes!

TRUMAN

And those garbage bins... do you know what's inside? Meat and blood and shit and grease and...

JIMMY

... they always smell so good...

TRUMAN

...and when you tip them over and it spills out you can eat it and smell it and roll in it until the scent is smeared over every inch of your coat.

(Jimmy is in ecstasy.)

And they fight.

JIMMY

Did you get hurt?

TRUMAN

No teeth, no claws and no one to tug on your lead. It's the way they play.

JIMMY

I wanna play. I WANNA PLAY! I WANNA PLAY!

(Tug.)

TRUMAN

The sun came up and we went into the rocks. A deep cleft in the hill. Near the stream. In between the boulders. Where the sun couldn't reach the soft moss that covers the ground. We laid down together to keep warm. And we slept. Until I heard his voice.

JIMMY

Who?

TRUMAN

Calling me. My name.

JIMMY

You didn't...

TRUMAN

And he sounded like...

JIMMY

Like what?

TRUMAN

Like after Brian left.

JIMMY

Brian?

TRUMAN

We were together. The three of us. And then he left and didn't come back and things were really rough for a while and that's what he sounded like when he called me. But instead of Brian, it was *my* name. And something inside me... I had to go to him. Protect him. I had to make everything all right for him. That's my job. Don't you see?

JIMMY

(Pointing to the medical collar and Truman's haunches:) And this is what he did to you?

TRUMAN

(Disgusted:) We had a deal.

JIMMY

I'm so sick of this. I mean... look at me! I look ridiculous.

TRUMAN

It's not so bad.

JIMMY

Are you kidding? A bunny? It's what I should be ripping to shreds! This is humiliating. I mean... smell me. Go on.

(Truman sniffs him.)

Are we supposed to smell like this? Do you know how many times a month she has me plucked and bathed?

TRUMAN

He just brushes me. It feels kinda nice.

JIMMY

Hurts like hell and trimming our claws?

(They both shudder.)

If fatso would just let me dig, they wouldn't need to be trimmed. Look at us... Here. When all of that is out *there!* What the hell are we thinking? I want it, Truman. I want what you had out there. I want it. I want to be wild!

(The ball rolls across the stage floor. They see it. Truman begins to get mad. Jimmy eggs him on.)

He's calling you. Get the ball, Truman. Get the ball. See the ball? Get the ball!

TRUMAN

Asshole.

JIMMY

He's waiting.

TRUMAN

I can't! Not with this fucking thing around my neck!

JIMMY

Idiot!

TRUMAN

(Changing his mind and defending him:) He's not...

JIMMY

Look at you. What he did to you. We gotta get out of here. WE GOTTA. WE GOTTA!

(Severe tug of the lead.)

TRUMAN

She's going to kill you!

JIMMY

I can't take it anymore! Attack me!

TRUMAN

What?

JIMMY

Attack me and she'll drop the lead.

(Jimmy starts to snarl at Truman. Truman snarls back and lunges at him. Jimmy growls and rolls over on his back. Truman pretends to attack Jimmy. But the collar gets in the way of it looking too frightening. Jimmy is pulled to safety across the stage by the lead. She didn't drop it.)

It didn't work.

TRUMAN

Help me get this thing off.

JIMMY

How?

TRUMAN

Pretend it has fur on it.

(Jimmy lunges at Truman and begins to tear the collar with his teeth. It's working.)

That's it. Go for the throat!

JIMMY

She's screaming!

TRUMAN

Ignore her and get it off me!

(The cone comes off.)

JIMMY

It's off.

TRUMAN

Uh-oh, here he comes.

JIMMY

He's running.

TRUMAN

I've got her. Going to scare her good.

JIMMY

Don't hurt her. She bleeds real easy.

(Truman runs off stage in the direction of the lead. He returns in a second.)

TRUMAN

Bitch won't drop it! Get on your back!

JIMMY

Hurry! He's coming!

TRUMAN

Scream like I'm killing you.

(Jimmy flops on his back and screams. Truman starts biting through the collar.)

Almost... Almost...

JIMMY

What are you doing?

TRUMAN

There!

(Truman has bitten all the way through the collar. The lead retracts rapidly offstage.)

JIMMY

It worked!

TRUMAN

Run!

JIMMY

Where?

TRUMAN

The fence on the far side.

JIMMY

I can't jump over it!

TRUMAN

You can dig can't you?

JIMMY

I get to dig?

TRUMAN

If you want to be free.

(They run furiously.)

JIMMY
RUN! RUN! RUN! RUN! RUN! RUN!

TRUMAN
RUN! RUN! RUN! RUN!

JIMMY
They're running this way!
(They get to the "fence.")

TRUMAN
DIG!
(He begins to dig.)

JIMMY
DIG! DIG! DIG! What about you?

TRUMAN
I'll jump over when you get through. HURRY!

JIMMY
DIG! DIG! DIG!

TRUMAN
They're almost here!

JIMMY
DIG! DIG! DIG!

TRUMAN
It's not going to work!

JIMMY
It's got to work!

TRUMAN
Hold on...

JIMMY
What are you doing?

TRUMAN
Hang on!
(Truman picks Jimmy up.)

JIMMY
Ahhhhhhhhh!

TRUMAN
When you hit, ROLL!

(Truman throws Jimmy over the “fence.”)

JIMMY

ROLL!

(Jimmy flies through the air, lands on the ground and rolls.”)

TRUMAN

That’s it!

JIMMY

Truman! He’s going to catch you!

TRUMAN

I’m coming! JUMP JUMP JUMP JUUUUUUMP!

(Truman jumps over the “fence.”)

JIMMY

You did it!

TRUMAN

We’re free!

JIMMY

RUN! RUN! RUN!

(They run off stage.

Light transition.

Truman returns and speaks to the audience.)

TRUMAN

And so we ran.

JIMMY

Ran.

TRUMAN

Ran.

JIMMY

North past the reservoir.

TRUMAN

Around the hotdog stands...

JIMMY

(Sniffing:) Heaven.

TRUMAN

...between the swing sets...

JIMMY

... beyond the fountain...

TRUMAN

... and the pavement...

JIMMY

...and benches...

TRUMAN

... and streetlights...

JIMMY

The part of the park where the people don't go.

TRUMAN

To the cleft in the rocks.

JIMMY

But they weren't there.

TRUMAN

The wild ones.

JIMMY

Our brothers.

TRUMAN

So we hid.

JIMMY

Until night.

TRUMAN

When it was safe to come out.

(Light transition.)

JIMMY

(Looking around:) Blue. So many glorious shades of blue.

TRUMAN

We've got to find them. They will teach us.

JIMMY

I'm hungry.

TRUMAN

Yeah? So?

JIMMY

Really hungry.

Do it. TRUMAN

What? JIMMY

What you do. TRUMAN

You mean...? JIMMY

What are you waiting for? There's a tree over there. It smells good. TRUMAN

Real good. JIMMY

I'm going to hunt that trash can over there. TRUMAN

Anything good? JIMMY

Something at the bottom. TRUMAN

(Jimmy begins to sniff at the ground. Then he starts to dig...)

Yeah. Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah! Dig. Dig. Dig! DIG! DIG! There's something. FUR!
FUR! FUR! RAT! RAT! RAT! JIMMY

Rat?! TRUMAN

I got it! JIMMY

Big as a cat! TRUMAN

(Jimmy mimes grabbing a rat by the neck and shaking it and slamming it on the ground until the rat's neck snaps. Truman is surprised at Jimmy's prowess.)

I got it. I got it! JIMMY

You did it. TRUMAN

JIMMY

Oh, boy! Oh, boy!

TRUMAN

I can't believe it.

JIMMY

Never done that before.

TRUMAN

You're kidding?

JIMMY

Something came over me.

TRUMAN

Weren't you afraid?

JIMMY

Of course!

TRUMAN

Wow. Smells good.

JIMMY

Real good. What do I do now?

TRUMAN

Eat it.

JIMMY

How?

(Truman mimes ripping into the rat with his claws and mouth. He swallows a piece of meat.)

TRUMAN

There.

(Jimmy swallows a piece too.)

JIMMY

Tastes different.

TRUMAN

Better than Science Diet.

JIMMY

If only it came to you in a bowl all chopped up.

TRUMAN

Yeah.

JIMMY

But this is fine. Not complaining. Nothing wrong with it. It's good. At least it's fresh.

TRUMAN

We're free.

JIMMY

No more leash choking me to death.

TRUMAN

No more sentry duty.

JIMMY

No more dress up.

TRUMAN

Free.

JIMMY

Wild.

(They smile at each other as they chew.)

JIMMY

Now what?

TRUMAN

Find them.

JIMMY

How?

TRUMAN

Their scent.

(Lighting transition.

Truman speaks to the audience.)

We headed north. Out of the park. Along the streets. As fast as we could. Before you could find us and call out my name. We ran away from my bowl and my bed. Away from you. To the river bank. The steel rails where the one eyed machine runs. We walked north along the river. Following the scent they left when they returned to their summer hunting grounds deep in the woods. We walked for days... weeks. And then the trail split off from the river and we entered the woods. The world was our home now.

JIMMY

I'm tired.

TRUMAN

We have two more hours before sunrise.

And hungry.

JIMMY

You know what to do.

TRUMAN

It's a lot of work.

JIMMY

No free lunch anymore.

TRUMAN

Where next?

JIMMY

Up that ridge.

TRUMAN

Way up there?

JIMMY

Scent is fresh. We're catching up. Less than a day away.

TRUMAN

Really?

JIMMY

Up on that ridge.

TRUMAN

You think they'll like me? The wild ones?

JIMMY

Why not?

TRUMAN

I'm not... you know... I kinda look like what they usually... you know... eat.

(Truman has never thought of this before. He's a little alarmed, but he decides not to scare Jimmy.)

TRUMAN

You're braver than anyone.

JIMMY

Yeah?

TRUMAN

Yeah. They'll have... They'll respect you... You just gotta show them you're tough.

(Jimmy is relieved. They sit and look around the forest.)

JIMMY

It's nice here.

TRUMAN

Wild.

JIMMY

Home.

(They smile at each other.

Suddenly they both smell something. They become alarmed.)

Do you?

TRUMAN

Yeah.

JIMMY

What the hell?

TRUMAN

RUN!

JIMMY

What is it?

TRUMAN

BEAR!

JIMMY

Fur?

TRUMAN

RUN!

JIMMY

Look at that! LOOK AT THAT! LOOK AT THAT!

TRUMAN

RUN!

JIMMY

RUN! RUN! RUN! RUN! RUN!

(Jimmy runs offstage in the direction of the bear.)

TRUMAN

THE OTHER WAY!

JIMMY

I GOT YOU! I GOT YOU! I GOT YOU!

TRUMAN

JIMMY!!!

(Jimmy lets out an off-stage yelp. Truman runs offstage.)

LEAVE HIM ALONE! LEAVE HIM ALONE! LEAVE HIM ALONE!

(A moment of silence.

Then we see Truman dragging Jimmy back on stage. Jimmy can't walk.)

JIMMY

(A little weakly:) I got him. I got him. Did you see that?

TRUMAN

You got him all right.

JIMMY

Where'd he go?

TRUMAN

You mean after he picked you up by the ass and threw you into that boulder?

JIMMY

I had him!

TRUMAN

I chased him off.

JIMMY

Why'd you do that?

TRUMAN

Are you nuts?

JIMMY

Let me at him.

TRUMAN

Okay.

(Jimmy tries to get up, but can't.)

JIMMY

Ahhhhhhh....

TRUMAN

Go ahead.

(He tries again, but he can't. He stops trying.)

JIMMY

(Changing the subject:) Did you see that?

TRUMAN

You bit his tale.

I had to jump for it. JIMMY

You got him mad. TRUMAN

I didn't let go. JIMMY

Nearly ripped it off. TRUMAN

Tasted great. JIMMY

(They laugh.)

You going to be okay? TRUMAN

Just need to rest. JIMMY

That tree over there. TRUMAN

Yeah? JIMMY

Can you stand? TRUMAN

I'll be fine. JIMMY

(Truman drags Jimmy further on stage. Truman notices the blood on Jimmy's leg.)

Let's sit here under the tree for a while and listen. See that? TRUMAN

What? JIMMY

Stars. TRUMAN

Moon. JIMMY

Hear the owl in that tree. TRUMAN

JIMMY

Bet he has a mouse. Think he'd share?

(Truman sniffs.)

TRUMAN

Fresh water.

JIMMY

Where?

(Truman points off stage.)

TRUMAN

Just down the hill.

(He hears something and he turns around.)

JIMMY

What is it?

TRUMAN

Doe.

JIMMY

Baby one.

(Truman starts to get up to go hunting. Jimmy stops him.)

No.

TRUMAN

What?

JIMMY

Let her be.

TRUMAN

You're hungry.

JIMMY

Let her be.

TRUMAN

Why?

JIMMY

She's so beautiful. Let's just watch.

(They mime watching the doe as it crosses the stage. Then Truman sees something. He sits up.)

Where'd she go? What's that?!

TRUMAN

WILD ONES!

JIMMY

They're after her?

TRUMAN

All three.

JIMMY

Look at them run.

TRUMAN

Flying.

JIMMY

Ever seen anything like that?

TRUMAN

They got her.

JIMMY

Bringing her down.

TRUMAN

They got her.

JIMMY

So quick. Just walking... gently through the moonlight. To the drinking hole...

TRUMAN

And out of nowhere. It's over.

JIMMY

Did they see us? Wild ones?

TRUMAN

Here he comes.

JIMMY

So big. Bigger than the rest. Truman, I'm scared.

TRUMAN

Sure you are. We're all scared. Remember?

JIMMY

No.

TRUMAN

But we have courage. That's what you taught me. I'll be right back.

(Truman crosses off stage. Jimmy is alone on the stage for a few beats.
He is frightened and getting weaker from his injuries.)

JIMMY

What did he say?

TRUMAN

They're done with her. Now they're moving back up the hill.

JIMMY

Are you...

TRUMAN

... I can stay.

JIMMY

Don't worry. I'll find you.

TRUMAN

How?

JIMMY

I have a nose, don't I?

(They laugh for a moment. Then they both become anxious.)

Up on that ridge?

TRUMAN

Yeah.

JIMMY

Bet the view is beautiful up there.

TRUMAN

See all the way to the river.

JIMMY

I'll find you.

TRUMAN

You get hungry, use your front legs and dig. That's why I dragged you to the tree.

JIMMY

You remembered.

TRUMAN

Of course.

JIMMY

I'll be fine.

TRUMAN

Nothing's going to harm you. I made sure of that.

JIMMY

How?

TRUMAN

I made them promise.

JIMMY

You did?

TRUMAN

Of course.

JIMMY

Beautiful tree. Smells so good. I think there's a chipmunk... a nice juicy, fur ball of a chipmunk right here. Under my nose.

(Lighting transition.

Lights come up.

Jimmy is gone.

Truman speaks to the audience.)

TRUMAN

I never saw Jimmy again. As I was led away, I looked back. He lay there. Sniffing the dirt under the tree. Gently scratching the ground with his one good leg. They kept their promise.

I ran with the wild ones. They let me in and I ran. The four of us. We owned the forest and the rivers and the lakes and the streams. Running wild and free, we ruled the night.

But the night doesn't last forever. One-by-one they fell. Poisoned meat. Turkey farmer with a shotgun. The wild one? A broken leg that wouldn't mend.

I'm old now. And on a cold winter night... when I'm spent from the chase of a hunter... too tired to dig for the scraps of food hidden beneath three feet of ice and snow. I think about your home in the city. My bed. My blanket. My bowl. The warmth of sofa as I lay with my head in your lap. How easy it all was.

I think back to the first time we met. You came to the box and lifted me up... away from the heat of my mother. You held me up to your face and we touched. My nose to your nose and we smelled each other for the first time. I remember that scent. And I miss it.

I have my battle scars. My limp. You probably wouldn't even recognize me if you saw me... driving up the parkway on your way into the hills. There I'd be. Beside the road. Eating from a spilled garbage can. Maybe you'd see me in your rearview mirror as you drove away. But if you were to recognize me. If you were to stop the car. Get out and call my name, I would not come running to you.

No matter how hard you try to bend us. Get into our minds. Break our wills. Breed out the things you despise or fear. You will only be fooling yourselves.

We will always be strangers in your world.

(Black out.

End of play.)