



A DOG'S HOUSE

BY MICAH SCHRAFT



DRAMATISTS
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For Colonel Frog

The world premiere of A DOG’S HOUSE was presented by IAMA Theatre Company (Stefanie Black, Christian Durso, Katie Lowes, Artistic Directors) at the Elephant Theatre, Los Angeles, California, on March 27, 2015. It was directed by Trip Cullman; the set design was by Rachel Myers; the lighting design was by Josh Epstein; the costume design was by EB Brooks; the sound design was by Jeff Gardner; the producer was Cymbre Walk; and the stage manager was Lara Myrene. The cast was as follows:

EDEN Christine Woods
MICHAEL Graham Sibley
NICOLE Katie Lowes/Amy Rosoff
BILL Dean Chekvala

Special thanks to Mickey Berman, John Hill, Eduardo Machado, Joe Mantello, and Rachel Viola.

CHARACTERS

EDEN

MICHAEL

NICOLE

BILL

JOCK (a dog)

A NOTE ABOUT THE DOG

The play may be staged with or without a live dog in the role of Jock. In rehearsing our premiere production we decided to not use an actual animal, and instead opted to manifest Jock another way. We had the living room revolve. The couch started stage left for Scene 1, was moved upstage center for Scenes 2 and 3, stage right for Scenes 4 and 5, downstage for Scene 6, and back to stage left for Scene 7. The positioning of the rest of the furniture rotated accordingly, so the audience understood that it was the same room in the same configuration, viewed from different vantage points throughout the play. This encouraged the audience to, quite literally, look at the human relationships from all sides. Practically, it allowed Michael's monologue in Scene 6 to be performed towards the dog on the couch, with the back of the sofa facing the audience. A remote speaker was placed in the cushions, and our sound designer created a voice for Jock with carefully timed whimpers and howls. This focused the emotion on Michael's story and allowed the audience to imagine their own pets in Jock's place.

A DOG'S HOUSE

Scene 1

The modest suburban starter-home of maturing hipsters. Michael, breathless, is covered in grime and sweat. Eden stands in her jacket, just home from work, keys still in her hand. Mid-crisis —

EDEN. Pull it together.

MICHAEL. I'm pulled together.

EDEN. Change your shirt.

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

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

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

EDEN. What's to think about?

MICHAEL. Our options.

EDEN. Okay. What are our options?

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

EDEN. Or?

MICHAEL. I don't know what.

EDEN. Well don't tell me we need to weigh our options —

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

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

MICHAEL. I don't have all the answers.

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

MICHAEL. He didn't know what he was doing.

EDEN. Who?

MICHAEL. Jock.

EDEN. Don't —

MICHAEL. It was an instinct.

EDEN. Don't defend him.

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

EDEN. So? So what? How does that change anything?

MICHAEL. I'm just saying he's scared.

EDEN. He's scared? Felix is dead.

MICHAEL. Phoenix. His name is Phoenix, not Felix.

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

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

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

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

EDEN. — Dogs don't have motives.

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

EDEN. Against a toy poodle?

MICHAEL. I don't know.

EDEN. Where is he? (*Michael points to a crate covered in a blanket that we may or may not have noticed. The door is facing upstage, so the dog, Jock, is not visible.*)

MICHAEL. In his crate. Sulking.

EDEN. Not Jock. Fuck Jock. Phoenix.

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

EDEN. Let me see him. Phoenix.

MICHAEL. He ... he doesn't look good.

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

MICHAEL. Sort of.

EDEN. What do you mean sort of?

MICHAEL. He's kind of ... in pieces.

EDEN. How many pieces?

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

EDEN. Jock ate him?

MICHAEL. Not all of him.

EDEN. Jesus Christ.

MICHAEL. Yeah.

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

MICHAEL. So it's my fault?

EDEN. It's not your fault. It's not your fault, but it is your responsibility. *(The doorbell rings. Michael looks through the peep-hole.)*

MICHAEL. Fuck. I think it's her.

EDEN. Jesus Christ.

MICHAEL. Shit. Hide.

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

MICHAEL. Stand perfectly still. *(Finally, Eden opens the door to reveal Nicole: sweet, emotional, distraught. She carries a folder.)*

NICOLE. Hey, um, I'm sorry to bother you —

MICHAEL. It's no bother.

NICOLE. I'm Nicole. I'm —

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

NICOLE. Right. We haven't officially —

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

MICHAEL. You're Nicole. That's such a great house. Have you been enjoying it? The gazebo the last owners put in is the envy of the neighborhood. We're all jealous. We covet it. We covet your gazebo. *(Re: his appearance.)* I've been gardening.

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

EDEN. I just got home a few minutes ago. Michael?

MICHAEL. Yes?

EDEN. Have you seen their dog?

MICHAEL. Hmmmm. Let me think.

NICOLE. Black. Poodle. Bedazzled collar.

EDEN. Michael?

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

NICOLE. He's only been missing a few hours. I made these fliers. Going door-to-door, so if you see him ... *(Hands them a flier with the dog's photo on it.)*

EDEN. *(Re: the photo.)* What a sweetheart.

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

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

MICHAEL. Did you call the police?

NICOLE. No. Do you think I should?

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

NICOLE. He's micro-chipped. And he's got that collar, which is so distinctive. I'll find him. I'm sure I saw him. I'm sure of it. Playing in the front yard. It's got a fence. *(She starts to lose it.)* I'm sorry. I should go. I'm sorry.

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

NICOLE. You think so?

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

EDEN. What are you talking about?

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

NICOLE. I checked all the closets.

EDEN. You never know with these things.

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

NICOLE. God, I hope he turns up before all that. *(Hands him a stack.)*

EDEN. He's really cute.

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

EDEN. I hadn't heard that before.

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

EDEN. He's really adorable.

NICOLE. He is. *(She finds Jock, in his crate. We still don't see him.)*

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

MICHAEL. J . . . Jock.

NICOLE. He's so pretty. What kind of —

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

NICOLE. *(Leans down, sticking her face in the crate.)* Aw, Jock. Aren't you a good boy. Thank you for all the kisses. *(Stands up.)* I should go keep pounding the pavement. Our phone number's at the bottom there. If you hear anything. Or see anything. Anything at all. Thank you. *(She leaves. Eden looks to Michael.)*

EDEN. "He'll turn up"?

MICHAEL. Am I still hopping in the shower and changing my shirt?

EDEN. Jesus Christ.

MICHAEL. What was I supposed to say?

EDEN. Now we're like, accomplices or something.

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

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

MICHAEL. Oh that's convenient, now.

EDEN. That woman —

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

EDEN. It's the same thing.

MICHAEL. Withholding information is not the same thing as lying.

EDEN. We are responsible.

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

EDEN. And then what do we do about Jock?

MICHAEL. No TV for a week.

EDEN. I'm serious.

MICHAEL. What do you mean?

EDEN. He's dangerous. (*Then.*) He's dangerous.

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

EDEN. (*Goes towards the door of the crate. To Jock.*) What's your fucking problem? Sweet baby. Sweet dumbass piece of shit. What's your fucking problem. (*To Michael.*) Jesus, it's impossible to get mad at him.

MICHAEL. He thought he was protecting me. I reached over the gate to pet the poodle and —

EDEN. Michael?

MICHAEL. What?

EDEN. I want to see the pieces.

MICHAEL. It's not good. Trust me.

EDEN. I get that.

MICHAEL. It's really upsetting.

EDEN. They're gonna ask for the pieces.

MICHAEL. We can't give them the pieces.

A DOG'S HOUSE

by Micah Schraft

2M, 2W

On the surface, Michael and Eden are a solid pair with a bright future. When their beloved Rottweiler, Jock, grows unexpectedly violent — killing the neighbors' toy poodle, and then taking a bite out of the neighbor — Michael and Eden must confront darker truths in their relationship that have been ignored for too long.

“Micah Schraft’s engaging play explores the reality checks that force lovers to look past their romantic illusions. ... With hip, snappy dialogue and contemporary sensibilities, Schraft’s narrative efficiency drops us in medias res into Michael and Eden’s quandary ... as defenses roll over and self-deceptions get banished to the doghouse.” —**The Los Angeles Times**

“Schraft’s play is brilliantly crafted, kicking off with a tantalizing predicament ... [and during] descent into the moral quagmire, plenty of interesting topics bubble to the sulfuric surface. A DOG’S HOUSE is a powerful play by an insightful playwright that puts his characters, and us, through an extreme scenario until you cannot help but check in with your own moral compass.” —**StageRaw.com**

“Schraft’s witty, intelligent, entertainingly thought-provoking script flows fluidly ... And the ending! Powerfully. Unexpectedly. Perfect!” —**BroadwayWorld.com**

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