

A Dog's Life

A Comedy in Two Acts

by

Diane Grant

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Diane Grant

16513 Sunset Blvd. #5
Pacific Palisades, CA 90272
tel/fax (310) 454-6806
diane@dianegrant.com
www.dianegrant.com

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CHARACTERS:

WOMEN

Hildy	the stage manager
Margo	the business manager
Pookie	the musician
Rowena	the new girl

MEN

George	the director
Tom	the playwright
Brian Boffin	the artist
Billy	the Method actor
Yevgeni Platov	the landlord

TIME: The present

SETTING:

Inside the Mercer Theater: home to an impoverished repertory company.

The theater is in the basement of a factory that makes paper flowers. The machines are on the floor above. We can hear but not see them.

There is an upper level platform behind which there is a door to the paper factory. An open chute in the ceiling, center stage, lets paper flowers fall from time to time.

Ropes hang from the flies. There is a prop box on stage and a hat tree with different hats on it.

Stairs stage left lead to the theater office on an upper level.

Below, off left, an area has a counter and stools which are used in the main stage action but become the *Lone Star Saloon* in different scenes. A door, stage right, opens on to inside stairs that lead to the upper level dressing rooms. They open onto balcony.

A prominent poster says, *Coming Soon, A Dog's Life*, by Tom Cameron. *Watch for It!*

A back door opens on to an alley.

MUSIC:

The incidental music in *A Dog's Life* is played by Pookie, the musician, who uses a keyboard and guitar.

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

AT RISE: HILDY is up a ladder, whistling.

(She comes down, still whistling, and looks up at the lights. She spots a brown lunch bag on the stage, opens it up, takes out a salami sandwich, throws away the lettuce, and eats the rest. GEORGE, in plaid bedroom slippers, comes in.)

GEORGE

Morning, Hildy.

(looking up)

Good lights. Are those new Fresnels?

(Hildy nods.)

Where did'ya get them?

HILDY

I swapped 'em for my car radio.

GEORGE

Your Telefunken?

HILDY

Blaupunkt. Mein blaupunkt ist kaput.

(places the tree on stage.)

Would've been stolen anyway.

(Hildy picks up the ladder and leaves. Tom rushes in, waving script pages.)

TOM

George, George, I finished the Act One finale for *A Dog's Life*! Scene Five. It builds and builds and builds to BOOM, the Big Surprise, and then Blackout. Intermission.

(George takes the pages.)

GEORGE

Let me see them.

(reads, while Tom, in an agony of expectation, watches him.)
Occupy Wall Street. Brilliant. It's now. The crowd in the square, the full throated protests, the protest signs...

TOM

...the food vendors...

GEORGE

(chuckling)
...the food vendors. You've really got something here, Tom. This is the one. *A Dog's Life* – the Mercer Theatre breakthrough. Our signature piece.

TOM

Awesome! I'm glad you like it.

GEORGE

We'll work on it this afternoon.
(Hildy reenters with a prop tree, which she puts on the stage. She looks up at the lights.)
Let's begin. Where is everybody?
(He blows his whistle, shouts)
Dogs. Do I have dogs?

(Hildy throws a switch at the back and the stage goes to BLACK.)

HILDY

(in black)
Rats!

GEORGE

(in black)
What happened to the lights? Hildy?!

HILDY

Keep your shirt on.

(In black, we barking and howling. The lights come up. TOM, BILLY and POOKIE, in dog hats, are grouped together, center stage.)

GEORGE

Where is Christy?

TOM

She hasn't come in yet.

GEORGE

Punctuality is a Cardinal Rule of the theater.

(sighs)

I'll fill in. Pookie!

(Pookie strikes a chord, then Billy, Pookie, Tom and George sing the *Kennel Quartet*, a barbershop quartet made up of dog sounds. The factory door opens. PLATOV, the Russian born landlord, rushes on to the platform, waving a check.)

PLATOV

Aaaaah!

GEORGE

Platov, we're rehearsing here.

PLATOV

(comes down the stairs)

You bloody guy.

GEORGE

Nobody interrupts rehearsal. That's a Cardinal Rule.

PLATOV

I don't care your Cardinal's rules. You be Pope for all it is to me.

(waves the check in George's face)

What is this?

GEORGE

I don't care what it is, you Philistine.

PLATOV

I am not Philistine. I am Russian. Now, you explain to me what is this.

GEORGE

I don't care what is it. I'm rehearsing here.

PLATOV

I tell you what is it. Is bum check.

(He races up the stairs to the office.)

GEORGE

You're the bum, Platov.

PLATOV

We see who's bum.

(He takes out a paper, which he waves at George, races into the office, re-enters. To George)

You in big trouble, now.

(He exits.)

MARGO

(offstage)

Aaaaah!

(Margo comes out of the office, waving the paper.)

George!!!

GEORGE

I am trying to rehearse here.

(Margo comes down the stairs.)

MARGO

If you don't listen to me, you may never rehearse again.

GEORGE

Save your theatrics for the stage, madam.

MARGO

That's it.

(She starts up the aisle.)

GEORGE

Where are you going?

MARGO

I'm leaving you, George.

GEORGE

Margo!

(She exits, still carrying the paper.)

Will you be back for lunch?

(An offstage door slams.)

O.K., everybody. Take a break.

(Billy stays in his dog character. He stands beside George and barks. He absent-mindedly sniffs at George's armpit.)

Margo sits on one stool, nursing a pink drink. She looks at the paper in her hand, in despair. BRIAN BOFFIN sits on another stool, also nursing a pink drink. He's about fifty, wearing a suit that's good but old. He speaks with a posh English accent and has an impressive manner.

BRIAN

Aha. Another fan of the delectable Cosmo.

MARGO

What's that?

BRIAN

Your Cosmopolitan, dear lady. Vodka, triple sec, and just a touch of cranberry.

MARGO

Afraid not. This is plain old cranberry juice.

BRIAN

What a waste of a glass.

MARGO

It is...

(looks at her phone)

...only 10:35 in the morning.

BRIAN

(chuckles)

Somewhere in the world, the sun is over the yard arm.

MARGO

Excuse me?

BRIAN

A nautical term. Do you sail?

MARGO

No.

BRIAN

Neither do I.

(lifts his glass in a toast)

Chin, chin.

MARGO

(lifting her glass)
Chin, chin.

BRIAN
(offering his hand)
Brian Boffin, of the Royal Theatre, London.

MARGO
(in further despair, shakes his hand)
You're an actor.

BRIAN
One of the finest. Perhaps you saw my Baron Braggadocio?
(Margo shakes her head.)
The Baron's Revenge?

MARGO
I'm sorry....I...

BRIAN
It was an execrable production but I was superb.

MARGO
(laughing)
I'm sure you were.

(Brian's phone rings. He lifts a finger to Margo and answers it.)

BRIAN
No, darling, no.
(turning away from Margo)
I said I was good for it. How many times do I have to repeat myself? I'll have it for you Monday. Not this Monday, Monday next. Patience, dear heart, please, and do stop calling me at work.
(He hangs up, slumps, recovers, and then raises his glass to Margo.)
To better days.

MARGO
(lifting her glass)
I'll drink to that.

(They drink.)

LIGHTS DOWN ON THE SALOON AREA. LIGHTS UP ON CENTER STAGE.

(ROWENA enters through the back door. She is wearing high-heeled boots and is carrying a script. She trips and holds on to the tree to steady herself.)

ROWENA

(behind tree)

Whoops!

(George looks up from his pages and Rowena timidly peers around the tree. Margo reenters angrily and Rowena retreats again.)

MARGO

Next time you're a dead man.

GEORGE

Honey bear.

MARGO

(waving the paper at him)

Do you know what this is?

GEORGE

If it's another review by that moron, Melvin Bernheimer, I don't want to see it. Have I ever had anything but a pan from that pompous parasite? Do you know what he said about *Corporate Cowboys*? I'll tell you what he said. "Mercer is so untalented and lacking in theatrical technique, he couldn't even pull off a failsafe crowd pleaser like *The Baron's Revenge*. What did he say?

(grabs the paper)

This is an eviction notice.

MARGO

We have to pay the rent.

GEORGE

Didn't we just pay it?

MARGO

We paid it three months ago, George. Platov is throwing us out of here.

GEORGE

He can't do that!

MARGO

He can.

GEORGE

We can't afford to go anywhere else. It would be the death of our company. Margo, don't let the dream die.

MARGO

George, there's a way. I want to call Arnie Rabbitt.

GEORGE

Arnie who?

MARGO

Cousin Emily's uncle. Arnie Rabbitt. He's an investor and he's hooked on the romance of the theatre.

GEORGE

Never!

MARGO

He's looking for a company!

GEORGE

An outside investor is a man with money and a man with money has ideas. He wants to tell you his ideas and he wants you to use his ideas and then he gets more ideas and his ideas stink and before you know it, you are up to your armpits in stinking ideas.

MARGO

Put this in your armpit! We have three days to pay or quit.

GEORGE

There you are. We have three days. You'll come up with something.

MARGO

Don't you love me anymore?

GEORGE

I always love you. Maybe, you mean you don't love me.

MARGO

I do love you. I just hate my life.

GEORGE

Sweetie pie.

MARGO

I've been living on the brink too long. I'm worn out.

GEORGE

You look fresh as a spring flower.

MARGO

I'm no spring chicken, George. And I don't want to spend the rest of my life trying to make the rent.

GEORGE

Ah, my little duck.

MARGO

Don't you want health insurance, George?

GEORGE

I feel fine.

MARGO

I don't. I'm afraid to open the mail. I'm afraid of the first of the month. I pee my pants going into the bank.

GEORGE

Pigeon.

MARGO

Nobody drives a Cadillac anymore. The only time we went on vacation, the engine fell out.

GEORGE

We had fun, didn't we?

MARGO

Would you just talk to him?

GEORGE

That's all? Just talk to him?

MARGO

Could you do this one little thing for me? Just this once?

GEORGE

If I say, "Yes," will you let me rehearse in peace?

(The tree falls and reveals Rowena.)

ROWENA

Hello.

GEORGE

You're wearing boots! Nobody wears boots on my stage. That's a Cardinal Rule!

(Rowena begins to struggle out of her boots.)

MARGO

You don't have to be so rude. What do you want?

ROWENA

I want to audition.

MARGO

Come back later.

GEORGE

Why should she? I need another actor. I don't need another actress.

MARGO

Oh, yes, you do.

GEORGE

I've got Christy.

(looks at Margo)

I don't have Christy?

MARGO

She got a bit in *Fatal Secrets IV*.

GEORGE

That bimbo! I made her what she is today.

MARGO

Broke.

GEORGE

This is terrible. Who's going on tonight in *Doctors of Shame*?

MARGO

I am.

GEORGE

(weakly)

Good.

MARGO

I thought you'd be pleased.

GEORGE

Do you think the costume'll fit, honey bunny?

(Margo and George exit. Tom and Billy enter. Rowena is kneeling with her boots in her hand. Tom falls in love at first sight.)

TOM

Doth an actress bootless kneel?

(The heel of Rowena's boot comes off in her hand.)

ROWENA

Hath an actress heel-less boot?

(Tom gives Rowena a pair of dance slippers and she puts them on.)

TOM

What's your name?

ROWENA

Rowena.

TOM

Mine's Tom. I like your feet.

(George enters.)

GEORGE

(to Rowena)

That's better.

(Pookie and Billy enter. Billy has George's coffee and his blueberry Danish in a bag in his mouth. George takes it and pats Billy's head.)

So, you want to be an actress.

ROWENA

Oh, yes.

GEORGE

Well. We're a revolutionary troupe, here, Rowena, dedicated to new pieces about the exploitation of the little man.

ROWENA

I've seen *Doctors of Shame* four times. I know every word by heart. I don't care what that Melvin Bernheimer said. It has guts, it has balls. Oh, excuse me.

GEORGE

That's all right. What did he say?

ROWENA

Well...

GEORGE

Don't tell me. He's a moron. Let me tell you about us. We're caring, we're committed and we work for the minimum wage. How do you feel about that?

ROWENA

I think that's splendid.

GEORGE

Some of us invest some of our salary in the company and become a living part of the project. Although, we don't require that. It's entirely voluntary.

ROWENA

Fine.

GEORGE

(quickly)

And we work sixty hours a week.

ROWENA

Fine.

GEORGE

Hildy! Lights!

(Hildy hits Rowena with a spotlight.)

ROWENA

Oh. Oh. Oh.

(rushing it out)

I know you don't do the classics but this is my best piece. Actually, it's my only piece. I shall perform the balcony scene from *The Baron's Revenge* by Farquhar and Mellors.

TOM

(taking the script from her hand)

Go for it!

LADY TERESA (ROWENA)

It will soon be noon.
The bells will toll
And the brave, the bold
The dearest...
(almost breaks down)

My dearest
...doomed Delvecchio will die.
Oh, Dio, I faint with fear.
I would rather endure
The rapacious embrace of
Brutal soldiers,
The snarling attack of curs,
Rather lie babbling in
The abode of all demons,
Rather die banished, cursed and alone
Than bring my body to this beast.
My soul recoils at the thought
Of the Baron's kiss.

(Rowena has played Lady Teresa brilliantly, giving life to Farquhar
and Mellors's tired, old words. Tom, Pookie and Billy applaud.)

GEORGE

What did you say your name was?

ROWENA

Rowena.

GEORGE

Rowena, we don't want you to waste your time.
(to the company)
What is the historical drama?

ALL

History!

ROWENA

What does he mean?

BILLY

He means that *The Baron's Revenge* is old-fashioned, conservative crap.

ROWENA

But it's a classic.

BILLY

Exactly.

(Margo enters, wearing a very tight nurse's outfit.)

MARGO

I look pretty good, don't you think?

(George looks at her, appalled.)

GEORGE

Let's show Rowena what we do here, shall we?

(blows his whistle)

A Dog's Life. Act One, Scene Two.

BILLY

We can't do that, George. We need another guy for the Attack Dog scene.

GEORGE

Pookie can double.

POOKIE

Man, I hate playing the human. I want to be a dog.

BILLY

Why can't we get another actor?

GEORGE

I'm still fighting Equity on that, Billy.

BILLY

What?

GEORGE

Randy filed a complaint and we can't hire some one else until it's cleared up.

BILLY

He filed a complaint?

GEORGE

Right after he got out of the hospital.

BILLY

And he calls himself an actor.

(A THUMP, THUMP from the machinery up above starts. Paper flowers float from the ceiling. Rowena catches the flowers as they fall.)

GEORGE

Platov!

(thump, thump, thump)

Platov!

(Platov enters from the factory.)

PLATOV

I can't talk to you now. Something is wrong with machines.

GEORGE

You promised to put a screen on that vent.

PLATOV

I put screen on vent.

GEORGE

Then where are the paper flowers coming from?

PLATOV

There's hole in screen.

GEORGE

You can't do this to me.

PLATOV

I do anything I want. Three days I throw you out on ear.

GEORGE

You're hard and unfeeling, Platov.

PLATOV

Business is business, buster.

(He exits.)

GEORGE

Business?! This is my life's blood!

(George starts up the stairs. The thumping continues.)

George, what about Rowena? TOM

Who? GEORGE

Rowena. Can she stay? TOM

What? GEORGE

Can she stay? TOM

(George and Tom look at Margo.)

MARGO
(sings and dances)
We're dressed in white,
We're fly by night,
We're *Doctors of Shame*.

GEORGE
Can she go on tonight in *Doctors of Shame*?

TOM
Yes.

GEORGE
Fine!

(Spotlight on Margo dancing.)

TO BLACK

SCENE THREE

LIGHTS UP

TIME: A few days later.

AT RISE: Hildy enters from the back door, wearing a quilted jacket and a fox mask, and carrying two swords and a prop rifle.

HILDY

Keep moving, keep moving. Breathe out!

(Tom, Pookie, Billy and Rowena enter, carrying an old sofa. They put the sofa on stage. Hildy puts the swords, rifle, and fox mask into the prop box. Billy, Tom, Rowena and Pookie change into slippers. Rowena is wearing a wreath of paper flowers.)

TOM

I like your hat.

(Rowena takes off the wreath, puts on her dog hat. Tom puts on his.)
She's got beautiful eyes, hasn't she, Pook?

POOKIE

They're OK, I guess.

TOM

And she's talented, too. I'm glad you're here, Rowena.

ROWENA

So am I, Tom.

(They exit. Pookie puts her hands over Billy's eyes.)

POOKIE

What color are my eyes, Billy?

BILLY

Blue? Brown? Hazel? Green? Red?

POOKIE

Aaargh!

(Pookie picks up a rifle and shoots it in the air.)

Got one.

(Billy howls like a dog. Pookie hits a key on the keyboard. Sound of something falling from the sky.)

Let's go get it, boy.

(In character as hunter and dog, they race off. Hildy pulls a rope and lowers a large cardboard moon. She takes a banana out of Pookie's lunch bag, and exits, peeling it. Margo enters through the backdoor with ARNIE RABBITT, a man of fifty-five or so. He is dressed in expensive slacks and a cashmere sweater.)

MARGO

This is it. The "Stage".

ARNIE

The "Stage". Very nice, very nice. Hoo boy, it kinda makes you want to do something dramatic, doesn't it?

MARGO

Go ahead.

ARNIE

I couldn't.

MARGO

I bet you could.

ARNIE

Hasta la vista, baby.

MARGO

You're a natural, Arnie.

(Margo and Arnie sit on the sofa.)

It's kind of magic, isn't it? All empty and hushed.

(George enters and blows his whistle.)

GEORGE

Dogs. Do I have dogs?

(Tom, Rowena, Pookie, and Billy rush on. Billy has a rubber chicken in his mouth.)

A Dog's Life. Act One, Scene Two.

POOKIE

Hot Dog!

GEORGE

Hildy! Lights!

(Hildy hits the LIGHTS, and the stage changes into night. The moon is illuminated. The actors grab dog collars from the prop box. Pookie changes hats and turns into a dog. SFX: sirens and an eerie recorded voice over saying, "*Private Property, Private Property, Trespassers Will Be Eaten.*")

MARGO

George!

(As the announcement begins to die down, Tom howls and the rest follow him vocally. They bay and howl, lifting their heads to the moon. Tom pulls at Arnie's pant leg, growling.)

ARNIE

Get away! Get off!

MARGO

Stop that. Stop that.

(Arnie beats Tom off with his loafer. Tom comes at him and Arnie leaps up and stands on the sofa, still flailing away.)

ARNIE

Back, back. Get away from me!

(Tom barks. George pulls a prop marked *The Electronic Trainer* from the propbox. It has a big dial on it. George turns it up to FULL. It BUZZES. Tom's collar LIGHTS UP. He grabs at his throat, whirls and screams, backflips and writhes on the floor.)

MARGO

(to George)

What do you think you're doing?

(Billy follows her, growling.)

GEORGE

I'm rehearsing the Attack Dog scene. Get off the stage!

(Billy paws at Margo. Pookie suddenly leaps at Arnie, who falls over the back of the sofa and disappears.)

MARGO

Oh, oh, oh.

(George blows his whistle. Everything stops. Pookie and Tom and Rowena transform back into actors and help Arnie up.)

This man is my guest.

GEORGE

No visitors at rehearsals. It's a Cardinal Rule!

POOKIE

You were great, man. Handy with your shoe.

ARNIE

Hoo boy, you really had me fooled. I thought I was a goner.

(Pookie gives him back his loafer.)

TOM

Terrific. I hope you're going to join us.

MARGO

Are you all right?

ARNIE

Fine, fine.

MARGO

George lives in the moment.

(Billy, still in character, pulls at Margo's pant leg. To Billy)

Get away from me, you sicko.

(to everybody)

This is a very shabby way to treat an angel.

ALL

An angel?

(Billy howls with delight. He offers Arnie his paw.)

TOM

Pat his head.

(Arnie pats his head. Billy pants.

He's Method.

MARGO

(to the company)

Mr. Rabbitt is a developer and he's developing a building complex downtown and he has indicated an interest in installing our company - our company! - as its resident theater.

POOKIE

Dude.

BILLY

Our company?

Downtown?
TOM

I adore downtown.
ROWENA

Downtown!!!?
(blows his whistle)
Break!
GEORGE

(to Arnie)
Can I get you something, sir?
BILLY

(George glares at Billy. Billy, Tom and Rowena exit.)

(looks in his bag)
Has anybody seen my banana?
POOKIE

Out!
(Pookie exits, leaving the backdoor open.)
And close that door!
(Pookie closes the door.)
I can't stand natural light.
GEORGE

He's an artist.
MARGO

A genius. Hoo boy, this is fun! I was swept away.
ARNIE

I'd like you to meet Arnie Rabbitt.
MARGO

Mr. Rabbitt.
GEORGE

Arnie...
ARNIE

Arnie, I promised my wife we'd talk, so let's talk.
GEORGE

ARNIE

George, here it is in a nutshell - a simple partnership - your talent, my money.

GEORGE

There's always a catch, isn't there, Arnie?

ARNIE

Always. But I'd never try to put one past you, George. You're too fast. No, here it is - when my theatre's built, your company moves in, rent free.

GEORGE

Downtown?

ARNIE

Downtown.

GEORGE

There it is, the catch. Arnie, our little company is dedicated to alerting John Q. Public to the dangers of the corporate world and downtown is the hub of that world.

MARGO

George.

GEORGE

You see, Arnie, the struggle of the twenty first century is not between capitalism and communism. It's between corporatism and democracy.

MARGO

George, not now.

GEORGE

Corporations have corrupted and co-opted the democratic system. Duped us with their propaganda. Sold us their guns and their tobacco and their men's cologne. Destroyed our ideals and divided the country into "us" and "them". Bought all our politicians and put them in the pockets of their CEO's. All in the name of money and power! In this humble place, this basement, if you will, we're poor but pure, unsung but unsullied.

ARNIE

Hoo boy, that was beautiful.

GEORGE

It was?

ARNIE

You betcha. I'm no corporation, George. Just one small businessman with a dream, a dream I'd like to share with you.

GEORGE

I'm touched, Arn. But no can do.
(Margo bursts into tears.)
Tears will not move me this time, Madam.

(Margo continues to cry. Platov enters through the backdoor, carrying large chains and a padlock.)

PLATOV

I have rent money by five o'clock or... I put chains on doors.

GEORGE

You can't do that.

PLATOV

That's what happens to dudbeats.

MARGO

Deadbeats.

GEORGE

How dare you talk to me like that? I am an artist.

ARNIE

A genius.

(Platov turns on Arnie.)

PLATOV

Who cares for genius? Does genius pay the rent?

GEORGE

I'll tell you who pays the rent.
(a sudden inspiration)
My partner, Mr. Arnie Rabbitt, pays the rent.

ARNIE

He does?

GEORGE

This time and this time only. *Doctors of Shame* is going to sell out.

PLATOV

Is Arnie Rabbitt? I am looking at Arnie Rabbitt, celebrated oligarch?

GEORGE

Oligarch?

PLATOV

Mr. Rabbitt, you are hero of mine. My card.

ARNIE

(reading)

Bowers of flowers. Ask us discounts?

PLATOV

I am Yevgeni Platov, maker of the paper flowers and slum landlord. What you doing with this dudbeat?

GEORGE

Deadbeat.

ARNIE

How much do you need, Mr. Platov?

PLATOV

Four thousand, five hundred big ones.

ARNIE

Done!

(He takes out his checkbook and pen.)

GEORGE

Done? Just like that?

(He grabs Arnie's hand.)

ARNIE

Well, you're right. We should keep it businesslike, shouldn't we? I think I brought a contract.

(Arnie pats himself. Takes a legal document from his jacket. George takes it.)

GEORGE

Where do I sign?

ARNIE

Shouldn't you read it first?

GEORGE

Screw that.

(signs)

What's the worst that can happen?

(gives the paper to Arnie)

We're leaving you, Platov.

(George gives Arnie the signed contract. Arnie writes a check.)

PLATOV

Da-svi-da-niya (Dasvidania)

ARNIE

I thought you had an accent.

PLATOV

I am Russian.

ARNIE

Gee, were you a communist?

PLATOV

Is old hat, communism. I am entrepreneur.

ARNIE

Aha.

PLATOV

Is saying, "Communism is exploitation of man by man." Capitalism is just the opposite.

(Arnie gives Platov the check. Platov goes up the stairs and exits.)

GEORGE

(to Arnie)

How do you feel about a coffee and a danish?

ARNIE

It's on me. I insist.

MARGO

Arnie, you are a prince.

(Margo exits.)

GEORGE

Partner, I owe you one.

ARNIE

Don't even think about it.

(Arnie exits, then reenters.)

There is just one small thing.

GEORGE

Oh?

ARNIE

(calling off)

Come on in, sweetheart.

(MIMI enters, wearing a leather jacket, and very high heels, carrying a cellphone and an Evian bottle.)

This is my daughter, Mimi. She's a really talented little gal.

MIMI

This is a terrible neighborhood isn't it?

GEORGE

What kind of talent do you have, Mimi?

MIMI

I'm an actress.

ARNIE

Isn't that swell?

TO BLACK.

SCENE FOUR

AT RISE: Tom and Pookie are on the stage alone. Pookie is listening to her earphones. Tom is reading a book. They're wearing their dog hats and have added tails.

TOM

What are you listening to?

POOKIE

(taking off her earphones)

I'm working on the last song. It's not bad.

TOM
What are you calling it?

POOKIE
A Dog's Life. What ya reading?

TOM
Thrilling Stories About Dogs.
(Tom reads, Pookie puts on earphones, sings a few bars of the song she's writing.)
Wow. Bassets have been known to hold a permanent grudge.

POOKIE
Like drummers.
(She plays a soft and romantic piece on the guitar.)

TOM
Oh, Pook, she smells so good.

POOKIE
Bassets smell good?

TOM
Rowena! Have you ever smelled her, Pookie?

POOKIE
Nope.

TOM
Have you listened to her voice?

POOKIE
Nope.

TOM
Have you looked at her legs?

POOKIE
Tom, have you ever looked at me? I'm a girl.

TOM
I know that, Pook. You look great.

POOKIE
Right.

TOM

I want to talk with her and laugh with her. I want to wake up with her. I want to hold her hand and walk through the morning fog.

POOKIE

So, tell her.

TOM

I don't know what to say.

POOKIE

Why don't you sing it?

TOM

Yes! I'll write the lyrics. You'll write the music.

POOKIE

I will?

TOM

Thanks, Pook. You the man.

(He hugs Pookie. George enters and blows his whistle.)

GEORGE

Dogs! Do I have dogs?

(Rowena, and Billy run on, also in dog hats.)

Colleagues, I have Great News. Today...

(a drum roll from Pookie)

The Mercer theatre is expanding its operation to incorporate its first and only intern.

ALL

Wow! Great. Wonderful.

BILLY

Woof.

GEORGE

She starts today.

BILLY

We don't need an actress.

TOM

We need an actor.

GEORGE

Tom, write a part for her. Bring in some new pages.

TOM

I can't write a new part just like that!

GEORGE

You can do anything, Tom.

(Tom swells with pride. George points at Pookie. A drum roll. Mimi enters through the backdoor.)

MIMI

Thank you. Thank you so much. Am I late?

(Margo and Arnie enter.)

MARGO

This is Mimi, everybody. George.

GEORGE

I'd like all of you to welcome Mimi, our first student. She will be simply a member of the team with no special privileges or favors, only the very best instruction and advice we can offer. She understands that we are all equals here.

(Arnie takes a picture of George and Mimi with his phone.)

As everybody knows, Mimi, I expect nothing short of a lifetime commitment to the work.

MIMI

I am committed and I feel so humble and so proud to be here. I even bought the right shoes.

(She is wearing new slippers in gold lame. Billy sniffs her. Arnie takes another picture. George blows the whistle.)

GEORGE

Just a word about this play, Mimi. This is a simple allegory told in an amusing and skillful fashion by our resident playwright, Tom Cameron, about how the rich and powerful few at the top of the heap silence the protests of the many despairing poor at the bottom with ever more cruel and sophisticated electronic instruments. It ends, of course, with rioting in the streets. Is that about right, Tom?

TOM

You could call it, Us and Them, I suppose, because of the ever widening gap between the...

MIMI

Oh, how deep.

(George blows his whistle.)

GEORGE

Dogs! Do I have dogs?

(The actors gather around, ready to work.)

ARNIE

(whispering to Mimi)

This is much more fun than sitting around at home, isn't it?

(He takes another picture.)

MIMI

Dadd-ee.

TOM

Daddy?

(George blows his whistle. Margo and Arnie exit.)

GEORGE

A Dog's Life. Act One, Scene Three. Dance of the Dogs Who Meet In the Park.

(LIGHT change. MUSIC from Pookie on the keyboard. Billy blows on a bird whistle.)

MIMI

Goodie.

(Rowena leans away from Tom, poised on one foot. They dance sensually together. Then, music from Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov* suddenly blares from the factory. Pookie stops playing.)

GEORGE

Platov! Turn that down!

(Rowena loses her balance and falls. Platov opens the factory door.)

What is that!?

PLATOV

Is Boris Godunov.

POOKIE

What Boris?

PLATOV

You don't know *Boris Godunov*, Mr. Musician? It's most beautiful opera in the world.
By Mussorgsky.

GEORGE

I'll give you good enough.
(turns to the actors)
Break!

(He exits into the factory. There is some more yelling and some
thumping and then an abrupt silence.)

MIMI

Ooo. I'm having so much fun already. This is just magical.

ROWENA

I can't believe I fell down.

MIMI

Do you fall down a lot?

TOM

Everybody falls down at first.

(Hildy enters. She looks at Mimi's jacket.)

HILDY

Leather?

MIMI

What else?

HILDY

Feel this. It's pure down. I got it off a dumpster at Sixth and Georgina.

ROWENA

That's where we got the sofa.

MIMI

You wear trash?

HILDY

Who steals my coat, steals trash; 'Tis something, nothing;
'Twas mine, 'tis his and has been Slave to thousands...

(A rimshot from Pookie. Hildy exits.)

MIMI

She wears trash?

(Tom turns into a dog and chases Rowena off. Pookie plays *Old Dog Blue* on her guitar. Mimi sits on the sofa. Billy jumps up beside her.)

BILLY

I'm Billy. I'm Method.

MIMI

Ooh, how deep.

BILLY

I can teach it to you.

MIMI

Cool.

BILLY

Would you like me to cry for you?

MIMI

Why?

BILLY

It's Method.

MIMI

Golly, I'd love it.

BILLY

O.K. I reach back into my memory and I remember something so sad, like when my grandma died.

MIMI

Your grandma died?

BILLY

I feel that sadness all over again and I cry.

(He weeps and Mimi, moved, weeps with him.)

MIMI

This is even better than therapy. You must be the best actor in the whole company.

BILLY

We're all equally talented.

(look around, lowers his voice)

But I'm the most dedicated.

MIMI

And the best! You can't fool me.

BILLY

Thanks....Mimsi.

(He covers his face with his paws.)

MIMI

Are you getting something for break....Billsy?

BILLY

Do you want something?

MIMI

I'd love a Rocky Road sundae and a chai latte.

BILLY

The diner only takes cash.

MIMI

(shocked)

Cash?

(pats her pockets)

Who has cash?

(Rowena and Tom enter, still in costume. Rowena, carrying her purse.)

Can you lend me a couple of bucks?

ROWENA

(taking her money out of her purse)

I've got only five dollars to my name.

MIMI

Terrific. Thanks.

(Mimi takes the five dollars.)

TOM

Hey!

(Billy and Mimi exit.)

ROWENA

Tom?

TOM

Yes?

ROWENA

I'm not sure what my dog feels about your dog. It is a class thing? Are they fighting because she's the thoroughbred and he's the mutt?

TOM

A dog doesn't know about class differences. Or racial or ethnic. Things that people worry about don't bother dogs at all. They're just dogs.

ROWENA

You can't just be a dog, Tom. You can be a Lab or a Pit Bull or a Pomeranian. They're all different.

TOM

I never thought of that.

ROWENA

I had a collie and he always knew what I was feeling. When I was happy, he'd jump up and kiss me. When I was sad, he'd peer into my face with big, round eyes.

(She peers into Tom's face. Tom peers back.)

TOM

(breathless)

Like this?

(Rowena, laughing, breaks away.)

ROWENA

Uh huh.

TOM

I wanted a dog more than anything else in the world.

ROWENA

You never had a dog?

TOM

My mom loved her off-white velour sleeper sofa more than she loved me.

ROWENA

That's awful.

TOM

I had an imaginary dog named *Benny*. He loved me but he was afraid to come inside.

ROWENA

You've suffered.

TOM

I have.

ROWENA

That's why you're a great artist.

TOM

I wouldn't say *great*.

ROWENA

I would. You're a wonderful writer.

(Tom pulls two apples from his pocket.)

TOM

Like one?

ROWENA

Thanks.

(Rowena and Tom take bites from their apples. Look at each other with longing. Pookie looks into her brown paper bag.)

TOM

Rowena?

ROWENA

Tom?

(They move together and might have kissed but Pookie stops them with a scream.)

POOKIE

AAAArgh! Has anybody seen my banana?

TO BLACK

SCENE FOUR

AT RISE: Rowena, Billy, and Pookie are in their hats and tails as in Scene Three. George picks up a hoop and Rowena somersaults through it.

GEORGE

Good girl. Good girl.

(George throws Rowena a biscuit.)

Keep that silky feel. We want more wiggle in that pup, Billy.

(Tom enters with a sheaf of papers, which he gives to the actors and to George.)

TOM

The rewrite!

GEORGE

Good man!

(Hildy enters.)

HILDY

Actors! New props. Come and get 'em.

(Hildy, Rowena, Billy, and Pookie exit.)

TOM

(as George reads)

What do you think of the Protest March?

(Rowena, Billy, and Pookie enter, carrying sticks with placards on them. They say, BARK. WOOF. GROWL.)

GEORGE

(looks at them)

Good. Good.

(reading)

We've added a human? Who's going to play him?

MARGO

(entering)

I am.

(She's carrying a sign that says, FAT CATS DROOL, DOGS RULE.)

TOM

Isn't that great?

GEORGE

(faintly)

Great.

(looks around)

Where's Mimi?

TOM

Getting ready.

GEORGE

Does she have the rewrite?

TOM

Yep.

(Mimi enters, wearing a large paper lampshade collar around her neck.)

MIMI

Why do I have to wear this horrible thing?

BILLY

(looking at his papers)

So you won't bite your back.

(looks at Tom)

She was wounded in the police raid? Fantastic.

MIMI

I feel so stupid.

BILLY

You'll be all right. Just reach back into your past, way back. Remember your favorite doggie.

MIMI

I didn't have a doggie. I had a grandma.

GEORGE

May we begin, please!

(to Mimi)

Watch what the others do and follow their lead.

MIMI

I can't see.

GEORGE

Sit!

(Billy, Tom and Rowena get down on all fours. Tom pulls Mimi down with them.)

MIMI

(to Tom)

You're hurting my knees!

(Billy growls at him.)

This floor is so filthy!

(George blows his whistle.)

GEORGE

Helicopters overhead. Hide.

(Tom, Pookie, and Rowena scatter and hide in various places on the stage, where they remain whimpering. Billy goes behind the tree. Mimi sits center stage, frozen.)

MIMI

Hello? Hello?

(Billy looks around the tree and whispers to her.)

BILLY

Mimi, I'm over here behind the tree. Come on.

MIMI

(wails)

No, no, no. I'm not going to do it!

GEORGE

Get moving, Missy.

MIMI

I won't, I won't, I won't!

(stamps her feet. George blows his whistle.)

I hate this doggie thing!

GEORGE

Break!

MIMI

Oh, goodie.

GEORGE

Everybody out.

(Tom, Pookie, Billy and Rowena exit. To Margo)

You, too, Madam.

(Margo exits. To Mimi)

Not you.

MIMI

Mr. Mercer, I'm supposed to be in a real play and have a real part, not a dog or anything animal like that.

GEORGE

You're in the company and you'll play the part you're given.

MIMI

I'm going to tell Daddy. He'll find me another company that's not hazardous to my health.

GEORGE

Your Daddy doesn't scare me. I'm Top Dog here.

MIMI

What do you know about anything? You work in a basement.

GEORGE

(George exits, calling)

Margo!

MIMI

(takes out her cell, calls, into phone)

Daddy! Daddy! Where were you? No, I am not having a good time. I hate this play! I want a real one, like the one we saw at the La Mirada Dinner Theater. How do I know what it was called? Find out!!! O.K. then. I'm not going to be an actress. I'll just stay home. With you!

BLACKOUT

SCENE FIVE

LIGHTS UP

SETTING: The Lone Star Saloon.

TIME: The next day. Morning – 11:30

Margo and Arnie sit at the bar, sipping. Margo has her cranberry juice. Arnie has a scotch.

MARGO

Does it have to be *The Baron's Revenge*?

ARNIE

Mimi saw it at the La Mirada Dinner Theater and it was swell. Have you had their prime rib?

MARGO

The thing is...the thing is...*The Baron's Revenge* isn't something that our company could do really well. It's wonderful but it has....

(searches for the words)

It has...so many words.

(in pain)

Especially the Baron. He just talks and talks.

ARNIE

I wouldn't have asked you if it wasn't really important. I mean she loves this acting stuff. You could get addicted to it, couldn't you, and work at it twenty-four hours a day?

MARGO

I'm addicted.

ARNIE

I hope she will be, too. It would be so good for both of us. The only thing she ever really liked was just staying home. I mean it isn't that she isn't busy.

MARGO

Swell.

ARNIE

Dr. Frankel thinks she's very special. It's just that I've been a parent for twenty-seven years. I'd like to try something else.

MARGO

George is adamant.

ARNIE

Well then, I'm going to have to withdraw my offer.

MARGO

Don't say that yet! I have one little idea.

(Platov enters, carrying a big beautiful bouquet of paper flowers.)

PLATOV

(sees her)

Mrs. Mercer!

MARGO

Ah. Here he is.

(Platov sees Arnie.)

PLATOV

Mr. Rabbit.

(shakes his hand)

So good to see you.

(gives the flowers to Margo)

For you.

MARGO

Thank you. They're gorgeous.

PLATOV

Mr. Rabbit....

ARNIE

Arnie...

PLATOV

Yevgeni.

ARNIE

Yevgeni.

PLATOV

Mrs. Mercer says to me that you are very big in Special Events industry.

ARNIE

Pretty big.

PLATOV

Is doing well?

ARNIE

I can't complain.

PLATOV

I make it better. I make for you bunting, banners, table dresses...

MARGO

Skirts.

PLATOV

Skirts, flags, paper flowers...

(points to bouquet)

Is beautiful, no?

ARNIE

(nods)

Do you have a price list?

PLATOV

(pulls a paper out of his pocket)

I show you.

(He gives it to Arnie, who looks at it.)

ARNIE

We could talk.

MARGO

Mr. Platov, I'd like to talk first. If Arnie does something for you, can you do something for us?

PLATOV

I do everything you want.

MARGO

I want you to raise the rent.

What? PLATOV

A lot. MARGO

But you are leaving. PLATOV

I'd like to go, but Mr. Mercer would like to stay. MARGO

That bloody guy. I raise it to sky. PLATOV

Thank you. MARGO

You want more? PLATOV

No. MARGO

PLATOV
(expansive, to Arnie)
Then, I buy you lunch.
(as they exit)
How do you feel about Prime Rib?

(Margo sips her drink, still in despair.)

MARGO
(shaking her head, to herself)
Oh my God. *The Baron's Revenge?*

(Brian Boffin enters.)

BRIAN
What ho? The Lady with the Juice.
(looks at his cellphone)
At 11:45 in the morning.

MARGO

(delighted, pats the seat beside her)

I think that somewhere, the sun just went over the yardarm.

(He sits beside her as we go to...)

BLACKOUT.

TIME: a bit later

SETTING: The stage

SCENE SIX

AT RISE: Billy, in costume, is alone onstage. He spots George's slippers, grabs one in his mouth and plays with it. He flings it with his mouth and it goes under the sofa. He sniffs under the sofa, then reaches under and pulls. He hears a RIP, brings the slipper out. The upper is ripped away from the lower. He jumps up on the sofa and buries the slipper under a pillow. He exits.

George enters from the backdoor, takes off his shoes and puts the one slipper on. Margo enters, putting her cell phone in her pocket.)

GEORGE

Where have you been?

MARGO

Out.

GEORGE

(Arnie enters.)

What's he doing here?

MARGO

He's hoping you've reconsidered.

GEORGE

Hope away. I will never do *The Baron's Revenge*.

MARGO

It's a tiny change in the program, that's all.

GEORGE

"Aside from that, Mrs. Lincoln, how did you enjoy the play?"

MARGO

Nobody's being assassinated here, George.

GEORGE

What about the death of artistic integrity?

ARNIE

Hoo boy, "death".

MARGO

It's just for the opening, Georgie. We'll do *A Dog's Life* later in the season.

GEORGE

(looking)

Where's my other slipper?

(Platov enters from the front door and steps on the stage.)

Platov, keep off my stage.

PLATOV

You are leaving. Is my stage.

MARGO

Mr. Platov. We're not moving downtown. We're staying here.

PLATOV

You don't move. I raise the rent.

GEORGE

What?

PLATOV

Next month. Three hundred more.

(Margo gives him a signal. More.)

GEORGE

Extortionist!

PLATOV

For that, five hundred.

(looks at Margo)

Six.

GEORGE

I'm not paying one more penny for this rat hole.

PLATOV

Then I throw you out. Everybody in world of stage knows I have rat hole. Already *Vagabonds* telephone. I ask twice what you pay.

GEORGE

You are beyond contempt.

PLATOV

You are so low you are on floor.

GEORGE

You unprincipled pissant!

PLATOV

I spit on that.

(George rushes at Platov, with a menacing shoe. Arnie holds him back. Platov rushes at George. Margo holds him back.)

GEORGE

I don't need you.

PLATOV

You need stage!

GEORGE

You can take your stage and shove it.

ARNIE

Do you meant that?

GEORGE

You'd have to kill me to keep me here.

ARNIE

You'll move the company downtown?

GEORGE

Whatever it takes!

ARNIE

You'll do *The Baron's Revenge*?

GEORGE

Anything!

ARNIE

Do I have your word on that?

GEORGE

Yes!

(Arnie lets go of Platov. Margo lets George go.)

PLATOV

(to George)

Dasvidania again.

(to Arnie)

Come up. I show you factory.

(Platov exits.)

ARNIE

Hoo boy, isn't this great?

(Arnie follows Platov out.)

GEORGE

What have I done?

MARGO

You've made the right decision. I'm so proud of you.

GEORGE

We can't do *The Baron's Revenge*. None of my guys has the technique to play the Baron.

MARGO

Georgie, I met a wonderful English actor named Brian Boffin, from the Royal Theatre, in London.

GEORGE

(wincing)

You mean he's classically trained?

MARGO

He's played the Baron a dozen times. Shall I call him?

GEORGE

I can't do this to the kid. What am I going to tell him?

MARGO

Why don't you tell him the truth?

GEORGE

Tell him I'm throwing out his play because the daughter of the angel doesn't want to do it?

MARGO

You can't tell him that.

GEORGE

He'd kill himself.

(Tom enters from the dressing room, in his dog costume.)

MARGO

(taking out her phone)

I'll call Brian.

(She exits.)

GEORGE

Tom!

TOM

Is something wrong?

GEORGE

I'd like to talk about the play a bit.

TOM

Great. Shoot.

GEORGE

It's not ready.

TOM

You said it was a beautiful piece.

GEORGE

And it is. But...

TOM

But...?

GEORGE

I can't quite put my finger on it...there's something...it's the dialogue.

It doesn't have dialogue.

TOM

That's it.

GEORGE

Dogs don't talk. That's the point.

TOM

That's the problem!

GEORGE

But I thought, I thought you thought, I thought we thought, I mean, we've been working on this for months and you've smiled and laughed and encouraged me and now, you rip the arm off my baby and drive this dagger through my heart. I'll kill myself.

TOM

Tom, listen to me, it's *passee*.

GEORGE

It was your idea!

TOM

It was?

GEORGE

(suddenly seeing)

TOM

I get it. You're throwing it out because of her!

GEORGE

Her? What her? Why would I do a thing like that?

TOM

You know why.

GEORGE

Why?

TOM

Because she's no good as a dog!

GEORGE

That's it!

She's awful.

TOM

She stinks.

GEORGE

She'd ruin it.

TOM

I won't let her do that!

GEORGE

Thank you! Oh, God. You are so good. Thank you.

TOM

We'll break her in with something less demanding and special. Then, she'll be ready for the dogs.

GEORGE

Right. Right. Thank you.

TOM

(George sits on the sofa pillow, jumps up, reaches under it and finds the slipper.)

GEORGE

Aaaaah!

(He blows his whistle. Billy and Pookie enter. Pookie's carrying a score.)

BILLY

(to Pookie)

What are you reading?

POOKIE

Puccini.

(Billy gives her the thumbs up, then sees the slipper in George's hand and covers his face with his paws in shame. George raises the slipper as if to hit him. Billy peeks.)

GEORGE

Shame!

(Billy crouches on the floor in shame. He whimpers. George takes off the other slipper and is in stocking feet.)

Bad boy.

(Billy puts a paw on his knee.)

GEORGE (con't)

All right, I forgive you.

(Billy yelps with pleasure and grabs the other slipper.)

Give me that.

(Billy runs away with the slipper.)

I'm not acting, now. I mean it. Give me that.

(Billy crouches over the slipper, growling.)

Will you give me that?!

(He tries to take the slipper from Billy, who hangs on to it.

The upper comes away from the lower. Billy howls.)

Sit!

(Billy sits.)

Where is Rowena?

TOM

Hildy sent her out for props.

GEORGE

And Mimi?

(Tom shrugs.)

What does she do every morning? We won't wait. I have some Good News and some Bad News. First, the Bad. Tom and I have talked it over and we've decided that *A Dog's Life* won't be ready to open the new Mercer Theater.

(Billy whines in pain. Tom pats his head.)

POOKIE

What are we going to do?

(George takes a sword out of the prop box and throws it to Tom.)

GEORGE

How's your Italian dialect?

TOM

It'sa good.

(George throws Billy a sword.)

GEORGE

How's the footwork? Is it good enough to play the swift and flamboyant Giorgio?

(Tom and Billy square off. Touch swords.)

TOM

Guido Sarducci!

BILLY

Emilio Pucci!!

(They fight, not an easy thing to do in dog suits. Pookie follows them, refereeing. Tom touches Billy on the chest with his sword. Billy shows his throat.)

POOKIE

Touche. Tom wins.

GEORGE

Tom! Giorgio!

BILLY

What about me?

GEORGE

You'll get something.

POOKIE

In what? What are we going to do?

GEORGE

I almost forgot the Good News. I've found that extra actor you've been looking for.

BILLY

At last! Someone for the Attack Dog scene.

TOM

What's his name?

GEORGE

Mr. Brian Boffin of The Royal Theater, London, England.

BILLY

An English actor? English actors have no heart, no inner fire. And they think they're so smart.

GEORGE

He's a quick study and he'll be ready for the opening.

BILLY

I can be ready. No problem.

GEORGE

It isn't easy for you to slide from one character to another. You know that.

BILLY

Never! What show? When?

POOKIE

Boffin. I know that guy. I met him at the Lone Star Saloon a while back. He could talk real good, even after two triple vodkas.

(Brian enters through the backdoor.)

GEORGE

Mr. Boffin. Right on time. George Mercer.

BRIAN

Charmed.

POOKIE

Boff! How goes it?

BRIAN

Have we met?

POOKIE

At the Lone Star Saloon, man. Remember?

BRIAN

Surely, you jest.

(Pookie hands Brian a pair of slippers. Brian holds them from his nose.)

How many feet have preceded mine?

(He puts the slippers on.)

BILLY

But he's so old. He must be forty!

BRIAN

What, you insolent puppy, is forty? It is a *soupcou* of character, an acquired reputation, rooms in the gentlemen's club of one's choice and a shot at tea with the Queen.

BILLY

But...

BRIAN

And what is twenty? An unfortunate, jejune, callow, pimply-faced, bumptious, boring, though thank God, brief state of being.

BILLY

All I meant was, well, we're on the cutting edge of hip here, and forty is part of the past.

BRIAN

The cutting edge of hip"? How mysterious, dear boy. What is that? Is the cutting edge like the slice of Sheffield steel? Is "hip" what the cutting edge cuts into? Painful, I should think. And when it cuts away with its hip, or indeed, cuts away at this "hip", what does it have when it's finished? Something present?

I present it to you. Am I not present? You call, "Boffin, Boffin", and do I not reply, "Present?" Is this flesh I pinch not present flesh? Is this air I breathe not present air? Fetid, without doubt, but present? Doesn't anybody in this wretched place smoke?

(George blows his whistle.)

GEORGE

The Grand Tour for Mr. Boffin.

BRIAN

Too kind.

(Brian, Pookie, Billy and Tom start offstage.)

Who plays the leads in this company?

BILLY

There are no leads. We're all equal, here.

BRIAN

How devastatingly American of you.

(They exit.)

GEORGE

Margo!

(Margo enters.)

What kind of actor is that?

MARGO

He's here?

GEORGE

He's as stiff as a board.

MARGO

He's wearing a back brace.

GEORGE

You want me to hire an actor who's incapacitated?

MARGO

It's temporary. He was playing Cyrano and he tripped over his sword.

GEORGE

You want me to hire an incapacitated actor who's accident prone!

MARGO

His diction is terrific. Authentic British diction.

(Tom enters.)

TOM

How can this guy do the Attack Dog scene? He's as stiff as a board.

MARGO

He's wearing a back brace.

TOM

Can we try him out?

(George smiles at him.)

MARGO

George!

(Brian, Pookie and Billy enter.)

POOKIE

You sure you've never been to the Lone Star?

(George blows his whistle.)

GEORGE

Sniff the wind. What do you smell?

TOM

Feline?

No. GEORGE

Ferret? ROWENA

No. GEORGE

Pheasant? BILLY

No! Fox! GEORGE

Yes! ALL THE ACTORS

No! MARGO

(The actors, as dogs, advance on Brian, growling.)

No, no, no. BRIAN

(Brian hides behind Margo, then races to the backdoor. He can't get it open. The dogs chase him into corner, where he huddles, panting and terrified.)

Good start, Mr. Boffin. Break! GEORGE

LIGHTS DOWN

END OF ACT ONE