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Dex & Abby
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WHERE ALL GOOD RABBITS GO

By Karina Cochran

Synopsis: During the Age of the Rabbit, no one died. That is to say no one died in the typical way we now view death (the mystical removal of life from the body). Instead people became rabbits. This could happen very suddenly, or gradually over a long period of time. But sooner or later everyone became a rabbit. When hard working young farmer Walter suddenly sprouts a fluffy tail, his journey to where all good rabbits go begins, and there is no turning back.

Cast Size: 1 Female, 2 Males, 5 Chorus

DEX & ABBY

By Allan Baker

SAMPLE ONLY

“Dex & Abby” was first produced by the Ground Floor Theatre in Austin, Texas in 2019. It was directed by Robert Tolaro and the cast was as follows:

Jason Graf as Dex
Cassidy Timms as Abby
Jacob Bernelle as Corey
Will Douglas as Sean
Danielle Grisko as Katy

Set design by Ia Enstera, lighting by Miriam Alexander, costume design by Pam Fletcher-Friday, sound design by Lowell Bartholomee, prop design by Caroline Bobbitt. Production stage manager was Kelsey Moringy.

Developed with support from ScriptWorks Seed Support Fund.

CHARACTERS

DEX

Male. Dog. 13. Played by a male human, 30s.

ABBY

Female. Dog. 5. Played by a female human, mid 20s.

COREY

Male. Human. Late 20s.

SEAN

Male. Human. Late 20s.

KATY

Female. Human. Late 20s.

DEX & ABBY

ACT ONE

SCENE 1:

(The family room of a comfortable home in a developing neighborhood. Slightly center stage right there is a sofa, with tasteful throws and pillows, facing the audience. There is a coffee table in front of the sofa. This sofa may convert to a bed in the primary bedroom in the third and fourth scenes of the second act. Alternatively, a bed may be rolled in from the backstage for those two scenes. Upstage right is the entrance to a hallway, with an unseen closet leading to the front door. There is a nice chair, downstage right. Upstage center there is a counter/bar with three barstools. Behind the bar is the door to the unseen dine-in kitchen and utility room. Upstage left is a curtain and, in front of it, a potted plant with drooping fronds, which will grow larger during the play to denote the passage of time. A bit downstage left is the entrance to an unseen hallway leading to the study, guest room and primary bedroom. The hallway will also have unseen French doors leading to the back yard. Upstage left will be two large dog beds. The downstage "fourth wall" to the audience will represent a window into the rear garden, stage right and media wall, stage left. No special "dog costumes" required. The actors playing the dogs wear casual monochrome workout clothing. Kneepads may be used for these actors, but they do not actually have to be on all fours all that much and will move on two feet most of the time. We will depend on the expressive skill of the actors and generous imagination of the audience. The stage is in darkness, except for one spot on DEX, stage left.)

DEX: *(As a bark.)* Ruff! *(Pause.)* I'm supposed to be sleeping. *(Pause.)* I'm guarding. Mine. Over there *(Indicates.)* In the dark. Sleeping. It's what I must

do. What I've always done. *(Pause.)* This new place has new smells to understand. I must learn them. That is my duty. And I must be alert to these new sounds. Listen for them. Know which to ignore. Know which to worry about. Investigate. *Attack.* *(Pause.)* Soon I patrol again. Sniff everything. Stop. Be still. Listen. *(Pause.)* This place is smaller than the one before. But it is unfamiliar. So, the patrol must be done with *care*. And I am *careful*. For *Mine*. As he sleeps. As I have always been. Nothing will hurt him. *Nothing*. I will... *destroy*... anything that tries. So, I will *watch*. Nothing will escape me. Nothing will hurt *Mine*. He can sleep safely. I can sleep tomorrow.

(Lights go out on DEX. After a moment, lights come up to full. ABBY sits, stage right, in front of the sofa, watching DEX, stage left, at the curtain. DEX, on all fours, faces the audience, with the lower edge of the upstage curtain covering his head. He creeps, very slowly, forward and the lower edge of the curtain slides over his head and back over his body as DEX, intent, focused, moves forward toward the downstage runner of the curtain. He noses into the curtain. He moves slowly, intently forward, as the curtain first covers his face, then, as the other curtain had done, slides over his head and back. DEX moves toward the audience until he is clear of the curtain, his eyes fixed. He stops, seems to awaken and shakes his head. His fantasy done, he looks toward ABBY, then toward the sofa. He stands and saunters to the sofa, where he looks, first right, then left and casually sits. He yelps loudly and immediately stands and turns to ABBY, who has calmly observed the scene.)

DEX: What the fuck?!

ABBY: The shocker thing. I watched Yours turn it on before he left.

DEX: What the fuck?!

ABBY: We're not supposed to be on the new sofa unless they invite us. You know that.

DEX: Why didn't you say something?

ABBY: *(Smiling.)* You should have remembered, old man. *(Pause.)* You were doing it again.

DEX: Doing what?

ABBY: The thing. The creeping thing.

DEX: I don't know what you're talking about.

ABBY: Creeping through the curtains.

DEX: I did not.

ABBY: Yes, you did. You're really weird, you know.

DEX: Did not. Am not.

ABBY: You always do it. Yesterday, on walkies...

DEX: *(Excited.)* ...walkies!

ABBY: Mine took us down to the lake, in the reeds and the nice, beautiful muddy part with water and I smelled the duck shit and looked back and there you were... creeping through the reeds, like some... I don't know what... some kind of *hunter*. You were *gone*, old man. *Lost*. Then you came out of it, shook your head and took off and you missed the duck. Which I could have got. Except for the leash. And your weirdness. Mine puts up with a lot taking you on walkies. How did you not smell the duck! Some hunter you are.

(DEX lurches into ABBY and pins her down with his body.)

DEX: I'm a good hunter. Better than you, silly airhead.

(ABBY rolls away from him, teasing, a distance away.)

ABBY: Faster than you, old man! I...

(ABBY is distracted by something she sees under the sofa. She bends to look more closely.)

No!

(She paws under the sofa and retrieves a colorful piece of a stuffed animal. It's part of a dog toy that has been chewed apart.)

No! My rabbit! My pink rabbit! My little friend!
My precious little friend!

(She cuddles the piece, pets it and is clearly distraught.)

You bastard! You did this! You! *(Crying.)* You
killed my friend. My little one!

DEX: Oh, please. It's a toy.

ABBY: I loved him!

DEX: A chew toy. *Chew toy. Made to be chewed.
Chewed.*

ABBY: It kept me...

DEX: *(Interrupting.)* So I did.

ABBY: *(Continuing.)* ...company! When I was lonely.
During the days before Mine brought me here. My
baby!

DEX: You can't have babies.

ABBY: And you can't make them, ball-less.

DEX: Get over it. You never had babies. Never will.

ABBY: Shut up, monster. You don't know anything.

DEX: I know you're a pain in the ass and I'm sorry you're here.

ABBY: I'm sorry I'm here. I'm sorry we came here. This place smells funny. And not in a good way. And where are my babies? My little friends? They should be everywhere! It's you! You destroyed them all! They're gone! And I'm...

DEX: *(Interrupting.)* They're in a basket in the top of the hall closet...

ABBY: ...lonely. They kept me...

DEX: *(Interrupting.)* ...and talk about smelling funny.

ABBY: ...company. When I was alone.

DEX: They smell weird. I can smell them from here. They need *chewing!*

(DEX galumphs to the doorway leading to the hall, stops, seemingly perplexed. He has forgotten what he was going to do. Scratches his neck. Thinks.)

Where are they? The boys?

ABBY: Probably out buying you more food. You eat like a horse. You crap like a horse

DEX: And what do you know about horses? Mine has two. He rides them. Does yours have horses?

ABBY: If Yours rides horses, why doesn't he ever smell like horse?

DEX: Oh. Well. There *were* horses... before. Before... I don't remember when it was. But I used to run with them! It was fun!

ABBY: You made that all up. (*Glancing at the downstage window.*) Oh, look! There's a squirrel!

DEX: Squirrel! Squirrel!

(*DEX runs toward the window, excited.*)

ABBY: Stupid old man. There's no squirrel. There's no trees around here. Where would they live? Our old place had squirrels to chase.

DEX: (*Chagrined.*) So did ours. The one before this one. (*Reasserting his dignity, walking stiffly back upstage.*) And there *are* trees in the park, by the lake. *Some trees.*

ABBY: But no damn squirrels. I hate this place.

DEX: *They* like it.

ABBY: (*Sighs, rubs her back against the arm of the sofa. After a moment.*) What was your place before like?

DEX: Big. Cold. Cold floors. That was at the end. But before...warm and always people coming in and going out and good smells and good food and noise and people to pet me and I slept in their bedroom with the fireplace, and it was... It was... (*Stops.*)

ABBY: It was...?

DEX: Then they didn't sleep in the same room and no one came and there were no smells and his other one was never there and Mine was really, really sad. For a long time. Mine hugged me a lot. But it was a sad hug. I cried.

ABBY: Oh. *(Pause.)* Oh. For a long time?

DEX: For a long time. But then he was *happy!* And he would come back late at night smelling like *Yours*. And...

ABBY: And?

DEX: ...and we came here. And Yours came here. And *you*. *(Shivers and shakes his head.)*

ABBY: They're here.

DEX: What?

ABBY: You're losing your hearing, old man.

DEX: My hearing is... *(Pause.)* Oh, yes! And I'll bet they have food! Yay!

(DEX and ABBY run to the entrance to the hallway and wait expectantly. Offstage there is the sound of the front door opening and we hear SEAN and COREY entering and talking, but we can't make out what they are saying. They enter. SEAN has several grocery bags and COREY is carrying two large bags of dry dog food. One is clearly marked for older dogs.)

SEAN: Doggies!

COREY: Doggies! Dexto!

SEAN: Abby-dog!

(Both SEAN and COREY hug and pet DEX and ABBY and the dogs respond affectionately and excitedly.)

COREY: Such good doggies!

SEAN: You guys been having a good time?

COREY: Yeah, they've been having a good time. Doggies always have a good time, don't you Dexto?
(Hugging DEX.)

SEAN: *(Hugging ABBY)* My sweet girl!

COREY: *(Going back to the groceries.)* OK, I'll get this stuff put up and you get out the cheese and crackers and start a salad. I'll get the water going for the pasta and start heating up the sauce.

SEAN: Mexican martini!

COREY: Don't you wanna wait for Katy?

SEAN: Hell, *no*. Who knows how long that wait would be? Now, sir. *Now*.

(COREY and SEAN take the shopping bags into the kitchen, then return and COREY begins making drinks. ABBY watches for a moment, then retrieves the part of the stuffed toy she had found under the sofa and, with a sniffle and sad face, holds it out to SEAN.)

What, Abby girl? What've you got? *(SEAN takes the toy part and looks at it.)*

COREY: What's that?

SEAN: The pink rabbit. I thought we had all that stuff cleaned up. *(He takes the part and shows it to DEX.)*
Dex! Bad dog, bad dog!

DEX: *(To ABBY.)* What's he saying?

ABBY: That you're a bad dog. And you *are*. You killed my rabbit.

DEX: It's not a rabbit and it wasn't alive and I didn't kill it. It's a chew toy. Or was.

COREY: Bad dog, Dex. Leave Abby's stuff alone.

ABBY: What's he saying?

DEX: That I'm a great dog and he loves me and I'm going to get two treats tonight!

ABBY: You're full of shit, old man. *(Pause.)* I'll race you to the couch!

(ABBY starts toward the sofa, followed by DEX. ABBY stops. DEX lands on the sofa, then jumps back up at the shock.)

DEX: Fuck!

SEAN: Damn, let's get rid of that thing. The sofa will survive.

(SEAN goes to the sofa, puts the toy part on the arm of the sofa and turns off and removes the shocking pad.)

One day we're going to forget and...

COREY: *(Interrupting.)* Forget? Shocking thought.

(SEAN smiles and pretends to throw the pad at COREY, who ducks, playfully.)

ABBY: She's here.

DEX: Who?

ABBY: My friend! It's her car. My friend!

(ABBY races to the entrance to the hallway, then produces short, clipped, yelps. Here as in later instances, these are barks.)

Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes!

(The front doorbell rings. DEX races to the entrance to the hallway to join ABBY in a circling, excited frenzy.)

DEX: Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes!

SEAN: It's Katy.

COREY: She's early. *(Calling offstage.)* Come in!
Don't mind the barking dogs! *(To SEAN)* I'll get on the Mexican martinis.

(KATY enters, with a small grocery bag. She's wearing a blouse and a long, nice, casual summer skirt. She hugs ABBY, who is very excited. DEX watches.)

KATY: Abby, girl! I've missed you so much! How have you been, my favorite doggie!

SEAN: Don't I get a hug?

(KATY hugs SEAN, tightly.)

KATY: Hey, Sean! Love you! And I have dessert! Gelato!

COREY: And me?

(KATY hugs COREY, though less enthusiastically and a bit awkwardly.)

KATY: Hey, guy. How've you been?

(DEX has moved a bit closer to the group, expectantly.)

Hey, Dexter. Good dog, Dexter.

(KATY sets her bag on the counter, then looks around the room.)

Nice! Everything's coming together, I see. Looks good. Like I always say, with a gay couple, who needs a decorator?

SEAN: We've done a bit of work since you and Sara helped me move in. Thanks again, for that.

KATY: Not a problem. What are best friends for?

COREY: Yeah, really. Much thanks.

KATY: And I've been swinging by your old house. Looks like your renters are all moved in, now. Even got their rainbow flag up.

SEAN: Keeping it in the family. I just hope they pay their rent on time.

KATY: One of the challenges of being a landlord. Still sure you don't want to sell it?

SEAN: This isn't the right market for a sale. I'm fine with leasing it for the moment.

COREY: Actually, thanks to gentrification, the market in that area...

SEAN: *(Interrupting.)* And Sara couldn't come? That's too bad.

KATY: Yeah, she's in Dallas for a presentation that wasn't supposed to happen 'til next week. Sucks.

COREY: I'm really looking forward to meeting her. Now that things are settled here, we need to get together with you guys. Next week, why don't we all...

(During the last three lines, ABBY has retrieved the toy part and now holds it out to KATY, as she had done to SEAN moments earlier.)

KATY: *(Interrupting COREY, addressing ABBY.)* What's this? *(Takes the part.)* Oh, no! Your rabbit! What happened to it?

SEAN: Dex happened to it. *(Takes the toy part.)*

COREY: He thought it was a chew toy. *(To DEX.)* Bad boy, Dex!

ABBY: What'd he say?

DEX: He said your friend likes me.

SEAN: Yeah, I should have thought about that. But I've got the rest of them in a basket in the closet.

KATY: Abby loved those toys. When I'd come to walk her in the afternoon at your old place, she would always bring me one to show when I let myself in. And the rest were all piled up on the bed in her room. *(Pause.)* Is the yellow frog OK?!

SEAN: Yeah, your Christmas present is quite safe.

KATY: That's her favorite and the one she usually brought me. It would be sad if Dexter got that one. Does she miss it?

COREY: Dex won't get it. And now she has another dog to keep her company all day. They have fun. *(To the dogs.)* Don't you, guys?

(The dogs don't respond at all.)

KATY: I miss walking Abby every day. When you were at work. We got tight, after a year and a half of that.

SEAN: You can come over any day you want and walk the doggies. They'd like it.

KATY: It's not seven minutes away, now. And anyway, I'm not sure about trying to walk Dexter. He's a pretty big dog.

COREY: *(Working on the drinks.)* Dex is a sweetheart. *(To DEX.)* Aren't you, Dex? You're a sweetheart!

ABBY: *(To DEX.)* What'd he say?

DEX: He says I'm a sweetheart.

(COREY has finished and poured the martinis and hands them out to SEAN and KATY.)

COREY: *(Raising his glass.)* To friends!

SEAN: Friends!

KATY: And doggies!

(They lift their glasses and take a drink.)

This is good. You're a damn good bartender, Corey.

SEAN: *(Hugging COREY.)* That's why I love him. Or one of the many, many reasons.

KATY: *(Sits on the bar stool.)* Now what kind of dog is Dexter?

COREY: I'm not sure. English Pointer, mostly, with some Boxer, maybe some Lab and just a bit of Pit Bull. He's a genetic gumbo. *(To DEX.)* Aren't you, guy? You're a genetic gumbo!

ABBY: What'd he say?

DEX: He said I'm a genetic gumbo.

ABBY: What is a...?

DEX: I have no idea.

KATY: Is he aggressive?

COREY: Oh, no. He's just a big, goofy clown. *(To DEX.)* That's why I love you, Dex. You're just a big, goofy, constantly entertaining, lovable clown, aren't you, boy?

ABBY: What'd he say?

DEX: That I'm a big scary, ferocious hunter and guard and that's why he loves me.

ABBY: Yeah, well. You go tell that to the ducks down at the lake, old man. They'll laugh.

KATY: And how old is he?

COREY: Thirteen years. He was a pound rescue. Got him in Houston when he was a puppy.

KATY: That's old. In dog years, that's...

COREY: ...really old. But, he's gonna live forever. Aren't you, Dex?

(DEX does not respond.)

KATY: So, you and Dex have been together since...

COREY: I was in high school.

KATY: All of his life. And such a big part of yours.
(Pause.) I'll bet he'd have some great stories to tell about you, if he could talk.

COREY: (To DEX.) You'd never tell my secrets, would you, guy? If you could talk?

ABBY: (To DEX.) What'd he say?

DEX: Nothing.

ABBY: But...

KATY: (Changing the subject.) Sean, did I tell you I found out what Abby is? What kind of dog?

SEAN: They didn't know at the animal shelter. So, do tell. What is she?

KATY: I was running on the trail last weekend. Stopped for water at the off-leash dog play area. And I saw Abby's perfect double. Except she was twice as big as Abby.

SEAN: Oh?

KATY: Yeah. So, I asked the guy what kind of dog it was and he said a Rhodesian Ridgeback.

COREY: But, Abby doesn't have...

SEAN: ...a ridge.

KATY: Neither did this one, until you looked really, really close. Then you could barely see it. So, he said, that was the original breed and they selected for the

ridge and now they all have ridges. Almost. But sometimes one of the ridgeless ones pops up. It's rare.

SEAN: I've never seen one.

KATY: They don't allow them to breed. Breeders hate the imperfection. Need to "protect the breed". So, they...

COREY: Spay them.

KATY: No. Too expensive. And who'd want a ridgeless Ridgeback? No market. So, they... *(Hesitates.)* ... uhm... get rid of them.

COREY: What?

KATY: Suffocation. Drowning. *(Pause.)* Time honored breeder's methods.

SEAN: *(Grimaces.)* You're kidding!

COREY: That's cruel!

SEAN: Yeah. It is. They are. *(Pause, changing mood.)* So, my Abby's a throwback runt. *(To ABBY.)* But I do so love my throwback runt! I love me my Abby! You're perfect just as you are, girl. Hear me, perfect!

DEX: What did he say?

ABBY: He said I'm perfect.

DEX: Yeah, sure.

COREY: So, why don't we get together next week for dinner and then visit some bars? It'd be a chance for me to finally meet Sara.

KATY: Dinner would be nice. Not sure about a bar tour.
Do you do a lot of that?

COREY: Only on weekends, usually, and we always
Uber home after.

SEAN: It'll be fun! And I happen to know from personal
experience how much *you* like hitting the bars, my
friend! Your birthday pub crawl last year, for
example.

KATY: Don't remind me! (*Laughs.*) But Sara may not
be so ready for that.

COREY: Whatever she's comfortable with will be fine
with us. Just let us know.

KATY: Will do. (*Looking around the room, then, to
COREY.*) So, do you like your new neighborhood?
Not exactly elegant Old Enfield, is it?

COREY: This is a great neighborhood. Younger. Lots of
energy. Why I like it.

KATY: But a smaller house, I assume.

COREY: Much. But it's *my* place. Or, *our* place. Now
that Sean's here. With lots of potential. Why I bought
it, in fact. For what I... *we*... could do with it now.

SEAN: I *really* like it. And the dogs *love* it. Don't you
Abby? You guys really love your new home!

DEX: What'd he say?

ABBY: He says we love our new home.

(*DEX shakes his head "no" and glares at ABBY, who also
shakes her head "no" and glares at DEX.*)

COREY: I've got some ideas for landscaping and maybe a deck and water feature.

SEAN: And our ensuite bath.

COREY: *And* our ensuite bath.

KATY: Well, Sean is definitely the guy you need. *(To SEAN.)* You put a hell of a lot of work into the re-do at your old place. Which turned out *fabulous*. You are a born interior designer, my friend.

SEAN: Just a function of my gay gene, I guess. I love challenges! I love fabulous! After the bath we'll do the study... and the guest room and, oh I don't know... *everything!*

COREY: I'm not sure we can...

SEAN: *(Interrupting.)* Of course we can! My new job is great!

(DEX looks idly around the room, then notices KATY's long, flowing skirt, and goes up to it.)

COREY: There should be enough in the budget for some indulgences. But let's be careful. *(Pause.)* Over time?

(As he had with the curtains earlier, DEX tucks his head under the hem of the dress.)

SEAN: You are such a downer, Corey.

KATY: Let me know if you need any referrals. I know several good home and landscape contractors.

COREY: Reasonable, with good references, I hope.

KATY: Uh, yes...

(DEX, pushing slightly against KATY, allows the edge of the skirt to flow up and over his head as he creeps forward on all fours.)

SEAN: Fabulous! So, what night would work for a gays and lesbians night out next week? I'm so up for it!

KATY: I'll check with Sara when she gets back. We had... *(Notices DEX.)* What is he doing?

(DEX emerges from beneath the dress, pauses, then shakes his head.)

COREY: *(Smiles.)* It's a fantasy game he plays. The "great hunter, creeping through the swamp, stalking his prey. Alert and relentless." He has to have something that brushes over his head. Swamp grass, bushes, the willows down by the lake, the curtains. Never seen him do it with a skirt, though. That's funny. I don't think he even realizes he's doing it.

(DEX is now through with his fantasy and moves off, avoiding ABBY, to sniff the sofa suspiciously.)

KATY: Dexter, you are weird.

SEAN: We love him, though. He's a big, old sweetheart doggie.

KATY: How does Abby get along with him?

SEAN: You mean, except for his chewing up her stuffed animals? What you get when you name your dog after a serial killer.

COREY: They're great together. And he was a very *nice* serial killer.

SEAN: *(Smiling.)* Sure. *(To KATY.)* They don't fight, just sort of scuffle. I think it's a territorial thing. This was Dex's place.

KATY: Then Abby arrived and...

COREY: They'll work it out. And if I love Abby, then Dex has to love Abby. *(To ABBY.)* And, I love you Abby!

ABBY: *(To DEX.)* What'd he say?

DEX: That you're smelly. And need a bath.

ABBY: *(Concerned.)* A bath? A bath?

(ABBY looks around in panic, then jumps behind the sofa.)

COREY: Anyone ready for another one?

KATY: Twist my arm!

SEAN: Yeah! Mas tequila! Mucho mas!

BLACKOUT
END OF SCENE

SCENE TWO:

(Later that evening. SEAN and COREY are on the sofa, each with their backs to one of the arms, facing each other, their legs intertwined. They are ready for bed, wearing t-shirts and sweatpants. They each have smart phones, with which they are intently absorbed. ABBY is dozing on the floor in front of the sofa. DEX is on the floor, gazing intently at COREY and will continue to do so throughout the scene. There is a long quiet moment to begin the scene.)

COREY: *(Reading his smartphone.)* Cousin Rick and his boyfriend are getting married next month.

SEAN: Your family's other black sheep, or "lavender lamb"? Granny will be so happy. Where?

COREY: Wichita.

SEAN: Whoa! Why Kansas?

COREY: Where Jeff's from. His family insisted.

SEAN: His Cowtown family?

COREY: Yup. *(Smiles.)*

SEAN: So, Rick and Jeff will be "jes' a' moseying into Cowtown for the shindig" from San Francisco...

COREY: ...in boots, of course...

SEAN: ...lavender boots, of course. *(Smiles.)*

COREY: *(COREY give's SEAN a gentle kick.)* Stop it. *(Long pause.)* What are you reading?

SEAN: Article from the New York Review Katy sent me... about quantum physics and the theory of multi-verses. Did you know that one of the basic issues of quantum physics can be resolved using the theory of multi-verses?

COREY: Stop. No more physics, *please!* It's way too late for that and I've had way too much to drink. (*Long pause.*) So, do you think she had fun?

SEAN: Of course. She loves your Mexican martinis and my *fabulous* spaghetti.

COREY: It *was* a pretty nice night. Not like our first dinner, over at her place. Before she and Sara got together. Remember that?

SEAN: Sure. She's such a great cook. Always brings out the good wines.

COREY: No, I mean the dinner table. She was on one side and we were on the other. I felt like I was at a job interview. Or an audition.

SEAN: You were, sir. Indeed, you were. And you were great.

COREY: Still, it was awkward. And I thought there was some more of that tonight. So, was tonight my "callback"?

SEAN: (*Puts down his phone.*) She's my best friend. She's always looked out for me. She had to check you out.

COREY: She still checking me out?

SEAN: No. You totally charmed her tonight. Didn't you see that?

COREY: With my skills as a bartender?

SEAN: And with all the stories about your family. *And when you got her talking about Sara. (Pause.) Swept her off her feet, my dear sir.*

COREY: Yeah, she did get a bit huggy at the end. I thought it was the drinks.

SEAN: Actually, do you want to know what she said?

COREY: Sure.

(SEAN works with his phone for a moment, to find his texts.)

SEAN: Got this text ten minutes ago. “This is the one. The one I’d always hoped you’d find. Congrats, my friend. Love, Katy.” Looks like you got the part. *(SEAN nudges COREY with his foot.)*

COREY: Then she *is* your best friend.

(There is a long, comfortable moment.)

SEAN: *(Looking toward DEX.)* Dex adores you.

COREY: What?

SEAN: *(Indicating DEX.)* He always does that. Watches you. Like there’s nothing else in the whole world he would hold in his gaze but you. *(Pause.)* Dex adores you.

COREY: *(Returns DEX’s gaze for a long moment.)* Yeah. I know. *(Pause.)* Dogs adore. That’s what they do. With those big eyes, watching... so *aware*. I look back and... *(Hesitates.)*

SEAN: And?

COREY: There's a *person*. Who knows me. Loves me. Totally. *(Pause.)* Dex makes me feel safe. Always has.

SEAN: Abby's sweet and loves to cuddle with me and always needs to be close. But, it's like she's *worried* all the time. That makes me want to protect her. Soothe her. Convince her she's *safe* and whatever she's afraid of can't get near her anymore. I love being able to do that. *(Pause.)* I haven't had her nearly as long as you and Dex have been together. Maybe in thirteen years...

COREY: When we're old and gay...

SEAN: She'll look at me like that. Like Dex looks at you.

COREY: *(Changing tone, More serious.)* I will. Look at you like that. Now. *(Long pause as he gazes at SEAN.)* Have you ever thought about getting married?

SEAN: Are you proposing, sir?

COREY: *(Smiles.)* Without asking your father first? That just *so* isn't *done*, sir.

SEAN: *(Laughs.)* My father might shoot you. I know my mother would throw her bible at you.

COREY: Kentucky, born and bred they are.

SEAN: *(SEAN is careful.)* I'm not totally sure what I think about gay *marriage*. Isn't that sorta like sleeping with the enemy? Adopting their values?

COREY: Or stealing one of their weapons?

SEAN: *(Smiles.)* You have a point, there. So, to answer your question... which doesn't seem to have been a proposal, I assume: it's something I'd like to think about for a while and consider. Maybe get Katy to send me opinion pieces from the Times about it. She's good at that.

COREY: *(Smiles.)* Did you notice how when she talked about Sara? How she got?

SEAN: You mean the whole, glowing, happy, misty-eyed, melting sorta giddy, babbling schoolgirl thingy? Nope, didn't notice it at all.

COREY: *(Smiling.)* You shit. She ever done that before?

SEAN: Uh... no, actually. Not. But...

COREY: *(Interrupting.)* My guess is that she'll be sending out invitations to her P-town wedding before you get any opinion pieces from the New York Times, my boy. That woman's in love. And *so* ready to commit.

SEAN: You're *good*. *(Long, thoughtful pause.)* Commit? That's a big step. You have to be *sure*...

COREY: How sure?

SEAN: Major sure.

COREY: But, can't...

SEAN: *(Interrupting and changing the subject.)* Well, then it had better be a summer wedding. Winter in Massachusetts is a bitch. I need warm.

(After a moment, COREY begins to lightly rub his foot against SEAN's leg, upper thigh and into his crotch.)

COREY: Things are getting warmer already, feels like to me.

SEAN: Hmm. *(Smiles.)* Now I think your changing the subject, sir.

COREY: You noticed. As I can tell. *(Rubbing SEAN's crotch with his foot.)*

SEAN: *(Putting down his phone.)* Bedtime, doggies! Abby-dog, bed!

COREY: Night, night, Dex. Bedtime, big boy.

(COREY shuts down his phone as the dogs rouse themselves and stretch. COREY and SEAN leave the sofa, hug the dogs and lead them each to their respective beds and settle them in.)

SEAN: Sweet dreams, Abby girl. I love you!

(SEAN and COREY exit to their bedroom.)

DEX: What'd he say?

ABBY: That you stink a lot. So, I can sleep on the sofa!

(ABBY gives DEX a smug look and heads for the sofa to sleep.)

BLACKOUT
END OF SCENE

SCENE 3:

(Later that evening. A single light, with a blue hue, illuminates the sofa. Abby, stretched on the sofa and SEAN, dressed only in boxers, is on the sofa, petting her.)

SEAN: So, Abby girl, do you like it here?

ABBY: It smells strange and the old dog is annoying and stupid, and I miss my little friends. But there's more to do and look into here, during the day, when you're gone. I used to get lonely.

SEAN: I know what you mean. I'm sorry you were lonely. But Katy was nice, wasn't she?

ABBY: I love your friend! She took me for walks! And we chased squirrels. Or, I chased squirrels. She never liked chasing squirrels, I think. And we played every day. But it was only for a little while. Then I was lonely again. Until you came home.

SEAN: So, now you have something to do all day! Isn't that better?

ABBY: Yes. Except for the big, stupid one.

SEAN: And what do you think of Corey?

ABBY: He pets me. I like that. And he's good at walkies. I think he'd chase squirrels, if there *were* any squirrels. He won't let me close enough to the ducks, though. And he needs to get a better dog.

SEAN: He loves Dex like I love you. And they've been together longer than we have. Much longer.

ABBY: Do you like him? Not the stupid one. The one who pets me.

SEAN: A lot. A whole lot. With him I'm not lonely.
Like you're not lonely now.

ABBY: You were lonely? I was there.

SEAN: Oh yes you were, girl. My beautiful girl. And I
loved that. But...

ABBY: But?

SEAN: I was afraid. To be *not* lonely. That's the
loneliest there can be.

ABBY: That's confusing.

SEAN: For me, too, Abby. *(Pause.)* Lonely is a place to
hide. From being hurt.

ABBY: You were afraid of being hurt?

SEAN: Oh, yes. Always. *(Pause.)*

ABBY: I understand that.

SEAN: Then, quicker than I would ever have thought and
too fast to be afraid... *he* was there. And quicker than
I would ever have thought possible, we were *here*.
Together. *(Pause.)* Amazing.

ABBY: Oh, I guess. *(Pause.)* Will we stay here? Or go
back to the other place?

SEAN: We won't go back to the other place. We'll stay
here. I think we'll stay here a long time.

ABBY: Can you get some squirrels?

SEAN: *(Laughs.)* There'll be squirrels. In time. When
there are more trees and they get bigger.

ABBY: Can I come get in bed with you?

SEAN: Nah, you and I have to stay asleep. In the morning, after you guys pee, you can both come get in bed with us for a while.

ABBY: I like that. That always feels nice. And smells nice.

SEAN: It does. It really does. *(Pause.)* Sweet dreams, Abby.

BLACKOUT
END OF SCENE

SAMPLE ONLY

SCENE 4:

(Later that evening. A single light, with a blue hue, illuminates DEX's dog bed. DEX is in his bed and COREY, dressed only in boxers, sits on the floor behind the bed, petting him.)

COREY: So, is this the one, Dex? The one who'll stay with me?

DEX: Does the runt bitch have to stay, too?

COREY: *(Smiles.)* You're going to love Abby, old guy. You've just never had another dog around all the time.

DEX: I wish I'd chewed up all her "little friends". She doesn't like me.

COREY: She will. Everyone *loves* you. I love you. *(Hugging DEX.)*

DEX: Do you love this one? I mean him... not the little runt.

COREY: Oh, yes. Oh, very much so. He makes me laugh. And he's the sweetest person I've ever met. The most interesting and surprising, wildest and the very kindest.

DEX: What about the one before?

COREY: I was young. He wasn't. I didn't understand what he wanted. When I was older, it wasn't me. That hurt. That hurt a lot.

DEX: He was... *dark*. I couldn't *see* him. When I looked... I couldn't... *(Stops, confused.)* He was hiding. Behind something. *(Pause.)* I wanted to bite him.

DEX: You did?

DEX: Yes. Or something. I don't know. I'm stupid.

COREY: You were smarter than I was.

DEX: He hurt you. And I didn't protect you. So, I'm *bad*. I should have bit him while I could.

COREY: (*Hugs DEX.*) Oh my brave watcher dog! Some things even you can't protect me from. But I know you'll always try.

DEX: I will always watch. Always.

COREY: Then make this one stay with me, Dex. Don't let him leave. He's always been unattached and on his own and I'm afraid of that in him. And I'm afraid to let him know that I'm afraid of that. I love him so much and I want to protect him and be there for him and never leave, but...

DEX: But?

COREY: Will that frighten him? Will he understand? Will he run away? (*Pause.*) This really, really sucks, you know.

DEX: He won't leave you. This one won't leave you because he knows *you* and he wants to be with you. The other one didn't know you and didn't care. He never *really* looked at you. This one does. He always does. And this one... (*Long pause.*) I can *see* this one.

COREY: You can? (*Pause.*) Please be right, Dex. I'm young and I'm stupid. I miss things.

DEX: I will watch *for* you. Always.

COREY: I love you, Dex. You make me safe. You've always made me safe.

(There is a long, comfortable silence.)

DEX: We did have horses, didn't we?

COREY: Yes. On the ranch in West Texas. Just after college. You liked to run with them.

DEX: I *knew* I remembered that! Sometimes I forget things, though. Why is that?

COREY: Because the more things you have to remember, the more there is to get lost in the crowd. It's good to have lots to remember, though.

DEX: I guess. If you say it. *(Pause.)* Can I get in the bed?

COREY: No. We're asleep. In the morning, when we wake up, we'll all be together in bed. Our family.

DEX: Miss Priss might just get crowded off the bed again, though.

COREY: Be kind, Dex. *(Hugging him.)* Sweet dreams, tough guy.

BLACKOUT
END OF SCENE

SCENE 5:

(A month later. DEX is by the sofa and ABBY is hiding behind it. Only ABBY's voice is heard until she comes out from behind the sofa.)

DEX: You can't stay there forever. You'll be in the way.

ABBY: I can't come out. Maybe I can go crawl under the sink.

DEX: You'd get stuck again. And you *really* can't crawl under the sink now.

ABBY: And whose fault is this?

DEX: I'm sorry I bit your ear. *(Pause, quietly.)* Sorta.

ABBY: It hurt. And it bled.

DEX: You were eating my food.

ABBY: I was hungry.

DEX: And I wasn't? Besides, you said Yours told you, you were too fat.

ABBY: You misremembered again, old man. I would never say that. *He* would never say that about me.

DEX: Sure. If you say so. And I thought you didn't even like my food?

ABBY: I don't. But it was there.

DEX: And so was I. Big mistake. *(Pause.)* You have to come out. You'll get stepped on.

ABBY: As if you care.

(Slowly, on all fours, rear first, ABBY comes from behind the sofa. She turns and crawls, still on all fours, to center stage. She is wearing a protective cone around her neck that extends beyond her head. One ear is bandaged. She stands, then looks accusingly at DEX.)

DEX: If you didn't scratch your ear, you wouldn't need that. You were getting blood everywhere.

ABBY: It itches. Have *you* ever *not* scratched an itch?

DEX: Yes.

ABBY: *(Dubious.)* Hmmph. Well.

DEX: They're here.

ABBY: They are?

DEX: *(Smiling.)* Some hearing you have, old girl.

(DEX runs to the hallway leading to the front door.)

ABBY: You just try. *(Stops.)* they are!

(ABBY runs to join DEX. COREY and SEAN enter to DEX's circling, frenzied greeting.)

COREY: Dex! Abby! Doggies!

SEAN: Hey, guys! You been having fun?

(They both pet DEX, who responds appreciatively, then turn to ABBY, who has been hanging back, head down. Each awkwardly tries to pet ABBY, but it is difficult with the cone.)

COREY: Think we can take the cone off now?

SEAN: Yeah, her ear has probably healed enough.

(SEAN unsnaps the cone and ABBY responds happily, excitedly running a circle around the sofa, then lands in the chair.)

Now, don't scratch your ear, Abby. Or we'll have to put the cone back on you and you don't want that again.

DEX: What'd he say?

ABBY: He said I'm a sweet dog and the thing looks lovely on me, but he'd really like to see what you look like in it!

(As SEAN goes by DEX to put the cone away, DEX misunderstands and runs behind the sofa. SEAN does not notice and takes the cone through the door, then quickly returns. COREY has noticed DEX.)

COREY: Dex?

SEAN: *(Returning.)* So, you're wearing boots?

COREY: I always wear boots. You know that.

SEAN: With a tux? That's a bit...

COREY: ...me. Totally me, in fact. And boots with a tux are perfectly fine here. Like jeans to a nice restaurant. Like, who really cares in this town?

SEAN: I don't have boots.

COREY: You don't have a tux, either, mister.

SEAN: Not a problem. I'll go to Nordie's and get something incredible!

COREY: You'll look fabulous.

SEAN: Well, of course! But no boots. I can't possibly do boots.

(DEX comes out from behind the sofa. He and ABBY watch the other two.)

COREY: OK. You get a pass on the boots.

SEAN: We'll be a completely knockout couple on the red carpet! *(Turning to ABBY.)* So, Abby girl! I'm going to buy a wonderful new tux and be absolutely fabulous on a really incredible evening! Everyone will say so!

DEX: What he'd say?

ABBY: That he's going to buy me a wonderful new collar and I'll look absolutely fabulous! Everyone will say so!

DEX: You can't do fabulous. You'll never do fabulous. *(Pause.)* You do silly quite well, though.

ABBY: Shut up.

SEAN: So, we're going to be an "and" for this thing. Our first outing as an "and". Major.

COREY: "HRC Black Tie Gala. Sponsored by, among others, Corey O'Neill and Sean Garret"!

(Absently, ABBY raises her hand as if to scratch her ear, but SEAN notices.)

SEAN: Abby, don't scratch!

(ABBY looks abashed and lowers her hand. DEX had noticed and smiles maliciously at her.)

This is gonna be my first big time gay social function. You may have to coach me on what to do.

COREY: Just smile, be your sexy, charming, gracious self... and hit the bar early.

SEAN: I will follow your lead there. You may have to hold my hand, though. I could get nervous.

COREY: Not a problem. The first time I went, I was so nervous that, after we got there, I hid in the restroom for fifteen minutes. Bill thought I'd fallen in, or something.

SEAN: Oh, yeah?

COREY: *My first big gay event. My first tux. That's when I learned the "hit the bar early" rule.*

SEAN: How many of these tux and boots events have you been to?

COREY: This will be my sixth.

SEAN: And so, you and Bill were always "ands"?

COREY: Me and Bill? We were never "ands". Even later, when I could afford to be an "and". He didn't want to share the spotlight. Always their biggest non-corporate sponsor. I think I was always considered an "asterisk". Not "William Atkinson and Corey O'Neill". It was "William Atkinson, asterisk".

(ABBY begins to raise her hand toward her ear, glances toward DEX, who is watching her. DEX smiles. ABBY lowers her hand.)

SEAN: That was pretty sucky. Will he be at the black tie?

COREY: I don't know. Probably. I haven't thought about it.

(There is a long silence.)

SEAN: Do you...? Do you ever think about him?

COREY: No. *(Pause.)* I haven't thought about him in forever.

SEAN: Because that was...

COREY: ...another life. And not a good one.

SEAN: One we don't talk about.

COREY: Because it *was* another life. And it's over.

SEAN: But five years, though? Sometimes...

COREY: *(Sharply.)* It's over.

(There is a long, uncomfortable silence. COREY regrets his sharpness and tries to lighten the mood.)

And now we're going to be an "and"! At this year's Black-Tie Gala! Looking amazing!

SEAN: In my new tux.

COREY: And my old tux and boots.

SEAN: We're going to look so hot, guy!

COREY: Just remember the rule.

SEAN: "Hit the bar early!"

(They laugh.)

COREY: *(To the dogs.)* So, doggies! Walkies!

SEAN: Yeah! Walkies!

(ABBY and DEX are excited. They run to COREY and SEAN.)

ABBY: Walkies! The lake! I'll chase a duck! I'll chase... anything!

DEX: Oh, please. You couldn't catch a cold, let alone a duck.

ABBY: You're full of shit, old man.

(DEX, ABBY, COREY and SEAN disappear into the hall to the front of the house. A moment later, from offstage, we hear SEAN's voice.)

SEAN: Abby! Don't scratch!

BLACKOUT
END OF SCENE

SAMPLE ONLY