

Characters

DOG, a young male. Human by birth, dog by choice. His dog behavior is minimal and subtle. When he barks, as indicated, he does not make barking sounds; he shouts the word "bark."

VERA, gray-haired woman.

Scene

In a post-apocalyptic future, Dog and Vera have re-met by chance in the ruins of the "university tribe" they both came from. He is a young man who lives humbly as a dog in repentance for his past, which he is now terrified Vera will reveal. She is older, a sooth-sayer and survivor, determined to force Dog to take her side in an approaching fight.

VERA. Strange, isn't it? It must be perfectly surreal, not to say nightmarish, for you, finding yourself here again, after so long. It's strange enough for me. Quite numbingly painful, even for me, at first.

DOG. I don't. I don't know what. What you.

VERA. It's possible, I grant, that you don't remember me. You were young. Still of an age to find most adults interchangeable. I slept on the far side of the, what did we call it? The campus. I think it was over there, my tower. Though it's curiously difficult to get my bearings. It's so much altered. The place where we both were born. Where I grew up, worked, made plans. Till the sky fell and everything ended.

DOG. I've never. Been here. Never seen. You. Or this. Place.

VERA. Do you not remember who I am? Now, I mean to say, who I am now. I cannot lie. I tell only the truth. Not the whole truth, but nothing but the truth. You may not remember me. But I know you. I know what you did, boy.

(Slight pause.)

DOG. Are you going to kill me?

VERA. Is that what you want?

DOG. It doesn't matter.

VERA. Are you inviting me to pity you?

DOG. No.

VERA. How did it happen, precisely? I've so often wondered.

Am I not entitled to know?

DOG. I wanted to know. What was outside the walls. Everyone said terrible things. But I knew that grown-ups didn't always tell the truth. I didn't believe them. I wanted to know. So I slipped away. I went to the South Gate. I knew the watchman that time and day was my uncle Fig. I knew he got sleepy after lunch. I waited till he dozed off and I opened the gate. I only meant to look. But there was that little ridge, that I couldn't see over. I found I had to just see what was on the other side. And there were woods, and there was something through the trees, and I found I just had to go see what that was. It was a stream, running off down a slope, and I followed it. After I'd walked for a while I got tired, and I lay among some ferns to rest. And I fell asleep. When I woke up it was nearly dark. I was worried. I'd have been missed by then. How would I explain? I followed the stream back, and went through the little woods, and climbed up the ridge. I began to hear a noise. I came to the top of the ridge.

VERA. You'd left the gate open.

DOG. I'd left the gate open.

How did you survive?

VERA. Some of the women they didn't kill.

I often, later, wondered what became of you.

DOG. I became a dog.

My mother. Was she.

VERA. She fought too valiantly to be captured. An arrow pierced her brain, through an eye.

DOG. Didn't you fight too?

VERA. Oh, no. I surrendered instantly. By the end of the first day's captivity I was the slave of the head-man. At the end of a week, he was mine. I wasn't beautiful, mind you.

DOG. I know what you were.

VERA. Are you judging me?

DOG. No.

VERA. Surely it isn't necessary to remind you.

DOG. No.

VERA. It is strange, being here again. If I didn't know better, I would say there's a feeling here of unquiet ghosts. Do you feel that? Restless spirits of the betrayed and unavenged.

DOG. They. They wouldn't have wanted.

VERA. Wouldn't have wanted revenge? They were a gentle people. But they were most ungently served. No doubt you imagine that your own suffering, your voluntary demotion from humanity, your assumption of canine humility are sufficient to shield you from your own past deeds. It doesn't work that way, dear boy, as you ought to know. It is a matter of consequences. Not a moral question at all. There are things that forgiveness cannot touch. There are things that once done cannot be undone. Do you understand me? Feeling any amount of guilt or anguish, performing any little rites of expiation, all that is quite beside the point, because it isn't a sin, a personal moral drama—it is an historical fact. A miniature civilization lies here in ruins and decay. Because of you. I stand here as the sole survivor of your act of thoughtlessness and selfishness. The sole surviving member of your own tribe. Your only kin in this world, and your victim. Can you look at me and deny me anything? Can you look at me and not know that you belong to me, body and, for what it's worth, soul?

DOG. No.

VERA. That's right.

I'm glad we've had this chance to talk. I'm sure it's a relief to you, in a way. You've come home. All you need do now is remember where your allegiance lies. I won't ask anything else from you. Do you understand me, Dog?

DOG. Yes.

TO KNOW KNOW KNOW ME

by Courtney Baron

Characters

PHILLIP

EMILY

Scene

Emily, an insecure girl desperate to be noticed, has just told her boyfriend, Phillip, that she is going to be on *American Idol*.

Author Note

When dialogue appears in brackets, feel free to update the cultural reference.

PHILLIP. Shut up. Shut up. Shut up.

EMILY. No it's true.

PHILLIP. That's sick.

EMILY. I know.

PHILLIP. Sick!

EMILY. I know.

PHILLIP. Does your mom know?

EMILY. No.

PHILLIP. You should call her.

EMILY. She'll be pissed.

PHILLIP. You think she'll be pissed?

EMILY. Yes.

PHILLIP. Naw.

EMILY. She will.

PHILLIP. She's going to be proud.

EMILY. I skipped school.

PHILLIP. Good cause, you know, good cause.

EMILY. I don't know.