

Dog Sees God

Character: CB

Description: Charlie Brown as a teenager

CB: My dog died. He got rabies. They, um, had to put him under. I looked up rabies on the Internet. It's an acute viral infection. It's transmitted through infected saliva. I guess he must have been bitten by something that had it. Maybe a fox or a raccoon. Bats can have it too. It travels from the bite to the spinal cord and the brain. Then the victim gets a really high fever and uncontrollable excitement, then spasms of the throat muscles. That's what causes them to salivate. They can't swallow water. Another word for the infection is "hydrophobia," which of course means "fear of water." Can you imagine not being able to swallow? That must suck. It's weird. We had him vaccinated when he was a puppy. I guess it doesn't always work. We had a funeral for him. Well, my sister and me did. I think I was supposed to say something, but I couldn't think of anything to say. I just stood there, frozen, like an idiot. My brain went numb and that's never happened to me before. I mean, there's always something going on up there, right? Even in the subconscious. People meditate to clear their minds. I don't get that. I don't ever want to have a clear mind again. I guess I was thinking, by burying him, that I'd have some closure or feel his presence there or something and I didn't and that just freaked me out, so I don't know. I mean, have you ever had someone close to you die and you can't stop thinking about them and what's happened to them? It's like you're stuck in this morbid place and there's so much death that you feel like your head is going to explode and it makes you think that you're not even there. That maybe you're dead, too.

THE BOYS NEXT DOOR

Begin

ACT I

SUMMER. The apartment. Arnold Wiggins is sitting. On the floor are four supermarket bags. The contents are undisclosed.

Arnold is a very nervous man in his forties. He wears nondescript summer clothing.

ARNOLD. *(Directly to the audience.)* My name is Arnold Wiggins. I'm basically a nervous person. People call me Arnold because I don't have a nickname. So I pretend that Arnold is my nickname so that when people call me Arnold, I pretend that they are close personal friends who know me by my nickname: Arnold. I live here at the Stonehenge Villa apartment complex in a group apartment with three other guys. Did I mention I'm a nervous person? Well, frankly, I am. Today I went to the market at the end of the street to get some Wheaties. But I couldn't remember whether I wanted one box or more boxes, so I asked the manager how many boxes I should get. "For just you?" he said. "Yes, sir," I said. "Seventeen," he said. "Thank you," I said. But, and this is what I want to emphasize by nervous, I could only find nine boxes. So what could I do? *(Pause.)* I got nine boxes of Wheaties. *(He removes various sized boxes of Wheaties from the bags.)* And seven heads of lettuce. *(He removes the lettuce, studies the situation.)* That made sixteen. *(Pulls out a bag of charcoal.)* And one bag of charcoal briquets. That made seventeen. *(He takes out the milk.)* And a quart of milk. You know, for the Wheaties. But the more I thought about it, the more I thought I didn't get enough . . . what? Was it (A) lettuce? (B) Wheaties? (C) charcoal briquets? This concerned me. So I asked a girl in line what she thought. I forget what she said, but it was pretty thorough. And then I came home. *(Pause.)*

7

Do you think I did the right thing? *(Lucien enters from his bedroom. He carries a stack of library books. Lucien P. Smith is a large black man of about fifty. He is quite slow. He dresses simply. He sees the lettuce; Wheaties, et al.)* **End**

~~LUCIEN. Where's the bunny?~~

~~ARNOLD. *(Defensively.)* Just stuff I got at the market. We were running a little low. *(Lucien puts down the books and pulls from his pocket a worn library card.)*~~

~~LUCIEN. I got this. See it.~~

~~ARNOLD. It's your library card. It's nice.~~

~~LUCIEN. It says my name.~~

~~ARNOLD. Lucien Smith. I see it right there.~~

~~LUCIEN. It be green.~~

~~ARNOLD. It's nice.~~

~~LUCIEN. Lucien P. Smith.~~

~~ARNOLD. Libraries have that funny smell.~~

~~LUCIEN. It smells like books.~~

~~ARNOLD. That's it. Books. They smell like books.~~

~~LUCIEN. *(Examining the lettuce.)* Bunnies like lettuce.~~

~~ARNOLD. Yes, they constantly do. *(With suspicion.)* Do you have a bunny?~~

~~LUCIEN. You got a bunny hid?~~

~~ARNOLD. No, really, Lucien, you never mentioned a bunny before. This concerns me a little. I mean, we're friends and all, and you've never said nothing about a bunny.~~

~~LUCIEN. It's got my name. Lucien P. Smith. *(Indicating the books.)* You read them.~~

~~ARNOLD. Sure. But I repeat, I have not forgot the bunny. *(Reading the spines of the books.)* Department of Agriculture Yearbook—1947.~~

~~LUCIEN. Lucien P. Smith like hard books. It's hard.~~

~~ARNOLD. Department of Agriculture Yearbook—1948.~~

~~Department of Agriculture Yearbook—1950.~~

~~LUCIEN. It be a set.~~

~~ARNOLD. Department of Agriculture Yearbook—1951.~~

~~Department of Agriculture Yearbook—1952.~~

~~Department of Agriculture Yearbook—1949.~~

~~LUCIEN. Hard, hard, hard.~~

~~ARNOLD. Department of Agriculture Yearbook—1955.~~

~~LUCIEN. Pretty good, huh? Where's the bunny hid?~~

8

Two Rooms

Character: Michael

Description: An American being held hostage in Beirut by terrorists

MICHAEL: Mathison had a gun. Under his jacket. A little automatic pistol or something – I’d never seen it before. Silver. I remember it gleamed in the sunlight when he pulled it out. It was just as they were forcing us both into the car – just as he put one hand on the roof of the car. He was right in front of me, there was nowhere I could go. And suddenly this shining little fantasy pistol appeared. Can you imagine? I taught for two years with the guy and never knew he carried it. As though that was supposed to save us. As though that pitiful gun – that absurd, miniscule tribute to one man’s utter lack of realism...I mean, he had to know what the world can do – if it just feels like it – to a man. To any man. And to carry a gun? The size of a cigarette case? In Beirut? He didn’t even know what to do once he pulled it out. I think he really believed all those kidnappers would take one look at this mighty weapon of the West, drop their AK-47’s and flee. “Run! It’s a trap! He’s got a tiny gun!” *(Starts to laugh)* Lainie, I love you. I wish this was a real letter. *(A beat.)* What Mathison forgot was these people have been taking hostages for thousands of years. They know how to do it. He yelled, “I am armed!” I remember, and that same instant one of them shot it out of his hand, along with some of his fingers, and they slammed us into the car, blindfolded us and drove us...wherever this is. No one spoke. The only sound was Mathison weeping. I wasn’t paying that much attention. I was busy counting my own fingers.

I wear a blindfold. I can take it off, but if I do they beat me. Or if they come in and it looks re-tied, they beat me. Sometimes it doesn’t look like I’ve taken it off, but since I’m American they’re sure I must have, and they beat me anyway. Their voices are so young. I’m sure it’s a delusion, but sometimes I think I’ve had one or two of them in my class. Now I’m in theirs.