

ANDREA RESCUED. An Act of faith

By Harry Kondoleon

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SETTING: The kitchen in the afternoon, broken dishes everywhere.

CHARACTERS:

ANDREA RESCUED, an intimate

PLAIN BLAME, a TV wife.

CHUCK BLAME, a feckless marriage counselor

BRINK HEARTACHE, a ferocious dog

ANDREA

Do you know what I do every night? I ask myself each night what it is I wish for.

PLAIN

I believe my husband is here with you.

ANDREA

He is. I wish for inner peace, happiness, and love. Love, inner peace, and happiness. Are these incompatible? In the evening I go out to walk my dog Brink and I see couples sprawled across benches and park lawns. Brink growls and I growl too. Why am I leashed to this dog, I ask myself. It's the dog that walks me. When will my enslavement end and my happiness begin I ask myself each evening.

PLAIN

Just what is it you want with my husband?

ANDREA

I admit your husband is not the greatest source of happiness but for now he's all I've got. You need a watchdog? Take Brink.

PLAIN

Mr. Blame is my husband! He has a wife, a family, a home!

ANDREA

I realize and understand these things and they punish me.

PLAIN

Think then what you're doing, what you're asking of me, what you're asking of my husband!

ANDREA

I think of all the women who are satisfied by their husbands, women whose husbands earn salaries, take them on vacations and make an effort in bed--- I think of all these women and I get jealous. Until your husband- came along I was an unsatisfied woman living with a dog.

PLAIN

I'd like to speak to my husband now. Would you please call him? Chuck! Chuck! Call my husband please. Where is he? Chuck!

(The dog barks very loudly in the next room.)

Do you have Chuck in there with that dog?

(PLAIN opens the kitchen door. The dog barks loudly. PLAIN lets out a startled cry and slams the door.)

He just tried to bite me! That dog just tried to bite me!

ANDREA

It's a mistake to call him a dog to his face and believe you'll go unpunished.

(The dog is pounding against the door, scraping and growling.)

PLAIN

He's trying to get in!

ANDREA

He won't. He knows he'd cut his paws. I deliberately broke the dishes to keep Brink out of the kitchen.

PLAIN

You keep a dog like that?

ANDREA

What can I do? He's mine.

PLAIN

Why is he making that awful sound? Is he hungry or sick?

ANDREA

I have something extraordinary to tell you. That dog in there is my husband.

PLAIN

What?

ANDREA

Yes, it's true.

PLAIN

Are you telling me you married a dog?

ANDREA

He wasn't a dog when I married him -- he became one.

PLAIN

You don't say.

ANDREA

The transformation was not slow. I'd be sleeping and suddenly I would awake with the sensation of paws on my shoulders and hot dog breath in my face. All my nightgowns got ripped. He barked at me all the time, demanded more and more red meat and stopped going to work. Then his nose and mouth got much bigger and he started sniffing at everything and tried to bite me.

PLAIN

This is utter nonsense.

ANDREA

You see these marks? These are dog marks. For years I've been mauled and bitten by that dog.

PLAIN

I don't believe any of this.

ANDREA

You don't see the marks?! My marriage, dear friend, has been a degradation!

PLAIN

I'm not your friend and I'm not interested in any of this craziness. This is either some sick joke or you're -- not sane. Either way, I know that what you've done is commandeered my husband for your own purposes.

ANDREA

I suppose I have.

PLAIN

And I want him here now!

ANDREA

Chuck! Chuck!

(CHUCK ENTERS. The plates clatter under his careful footsteps. HE is undressed.)

CHUCK

Plain, what are you doing here?

PLAIN

What are you doing here? And why aren't you dressed? What are you doing standing naked in this woman's kitchen?

ANDREA

(Handing him a towel.)

Here, use this.

CHUCK

I'm working. You know my work. A strange event has occurred in this house. This woman's husband has become an animal.

PLAIN

Chuck, do you really believe that that dog in there is this woman's husband? Chuck, have you lost your mind? Can't you see this woman's tricked you?

CHUCK

I haven't been tricked.

PLAIN

Are you willing to stay here as her pet? Your daughters have more sense than you do! Don't you miss your daughters? For days they've been wondering where their father has disappeared to. For days I've had to make up stories. But now that I see you -- and I came here meaning to take you home with me -- I don't know if you're fit to raise two small girls! You think this is fit behavior for a father? On what planet?

CHUCK

You know that my work leads me down strange alleys. You know that every marital crisis has its own symptoms and remedies. I'm here only to solve this woman's problems.

PLAIN

Chuck, this woman is obviously in need of clinical therapy -- not a marriage counselor! If she believes, as you say, that that dog in there is her husband, then what are you doing here?

CHUCK

Can't you see that I'm like a jeweler and that each job I have is a delicate operation, that the machinery of reconciliation is dependent on time and care? Don't I always come home after I've finished a job?

PLAIN

I don't want you to come home anymore!

ANDREA

If you shout, Brink will start barking again.

PLAIN

Let him bark! You must think you're unique but you're only one of hundreds of estranged women my husband visits each year. Do you have any idea how many stories of unhappy women I've heard via my husband? Women whose husbands disappeared in the middle of dinner -- unpaid loans and gigantic debts appearing before breakfast -- love letters and sex diaries in their sock drawers. You're just one of many freakish letters Chuck gets each week. And I have all your mail, Chuck -- it's quite a little pile. I have a letter here from a woman who says her husband's been beating her with the top of their garbage can and that the landlord has threatened to throw them out of the building if she doesn't stop screaming. That's a good one, isn't it? She deserves at least a few days of your time, doesn't she, Chuck? Oh and here's one from a gal who says her husband doesn't talk to her anymore, wants to know if night school will make her more interesting.

CHUCK

That's enough.

PLAIN

(Throwing the letters down.)

There's plenty -- twelve in all, that's an average of two a day, must be some sort of record for you, Chuck. Perhaps they've sniffed out your own marital discord. I'll have all future mail redirected to your new address -- I'll scratch out the old one and scribble in Dog Patch. How's that?

CHUCK

I can't talk to you when you get like this.

ANDREA

Leave her alone.

PLAIN

Chuck, you know I'm glad this dog-woman came along. She's made me see how discontent I've been. She thinks she's married to a dog? I think I'm married to a fish: a depressing little sea animal swimming from one rocky marriage to the next. It stinks to me! Take it all. Live with this dog-woman for the rest of time -- I no longer care. I'm telling your daughters you fell in the river.

ANDREA

Chuck, go upstairs. Go upstairs and I'll call you later. I want to talk to Plain alone. Go on, Chuck, you don't have to say goodbye, just go.

(CHUCK exits. The dog barks for a moment.)

Let me talk honestly with you, Mrs. Blame. I don't want to hurt you. Ideally I'd rather Chuck was not your husband. It isn't as though I didn't look for an alternative husband. I did. I went to all the nightspots and it was painstaking work. I found that my usual comfortable clothes wouldn't do and that I had to dress a certain way. I became very self-conscious and made a fool of myself. Everyone was much younger than I was or else I thought they were.

PLAIN

How can you expect my husband to replace the man in broken marriages -- think of it -- to keep him here, bribing his little ego!

ANDREA

This isn't exactly a romance but we have something here. When I wrote to your husband my only intention was for counseling.

PLAIN

I have your letter here, would you like me to read it to you?

ANDREA

I admit I made some mention of perhaps a match with an abandoned or runaway husband if it could be arranged. I'm not ashamed of it. What shame can I have? I certainly didn't expect Chuck to turn that dog in there back into a man.

PLAIN

That dog in there is not your husband!

ANDREA
Is he yours?

PLAIN
Why don't you admit you're an emotionally disturbed woman -- that you probably need to cut yourself on these plates in order to feel anything!

ANDREA
Run along, Mrs. Blame. I'm not interested in talking to people who don't want to understand. I tried to be sympathetic but you repel it. I sympathize with the loss of your husband, Mrs. Blame, because every night before Chuck I would put my head on the pillow and face nothing. If I knew something was coming, that there was something to hope for, it would be bearable. But the years have been like so many blank pillows with my head on them.

PLAIN
Then you admit that that dog in there isn't your husband and that you've trapped my husband, here out of loneliness?

ANDREA
Mrs. Blame, I tell you with all my heart: my husband is a dog. There is no greater truth to speak of.

PLAIN
I tell you, from my heart, that what you have now in his stead is a snail. A thin-shelled little snail with its antennas tuned to broken marriage.

ANDREA
I offered you Brink.

PLAIN
Personally I would rather have a man than a dog. I think I can speak for my daughters too when I say they would be as ill-served by a dog as they would by a snail-like father. I leave you to your needs.

ANDREA
Goodbye, take care of yourself.

(PLAIN EXITS. The dog barks. The sound of a car pulling out.)

Chuck! Chuck! You can come in again. Come on. She's gone.

(CHUCK ENTERS.)

CHUCK
She doesn't understand my work. She wants to see it as less. She won't see me as a reconciliation engineer.

(ANDREA takes off her dress and lies down on the floor.)

What are you doing?

ANDREA

I'm taking my dress off. I want to do it here in the kitchen.

CHUCK

Here?

ANDREA

That's right, come on. Lie down next to me. Come on Chuck. You can drop that silly dish towel, your wife's gone. Come on, Brink won't come in here. Lie down.

CHUCK

But the plates.

ANDREA

Never mind the plates. I'm lying on them, aren't I?

CHUCK

They'll cut us.

ANDREA

Come on, lie down.

(CHUCK lies down next to ANDREA. Plates crackle.)

That's right, right next to me. Now hold me. Hold me closer and in that voice, that voice I explained to you, tell me that you love me. Come on, tighter, Chuck. Kiss me. While you're kissing me hold your hands around my neck. Like this. Tighter. Like a dog collar. A dog collar with small nails in it. Growl for me. Say that you'll love me forever. Come on, growl you love me and that you'll never run away ever ever.

(The dog can be heard hungrily sniffing and pawing at the door. making sporadic and increasingly loud barks. BRINK ENTERS. BRINK looks like a German shepherd dog with a fur covered body and a tail.)

BRINK

(On one knee as if to propose.)

I've been looking so long and so far for a person like you arf arf. Your smooth skin is the skin I want to climb in. Your secret hair is the hair I want to solve in bed on pillows with the radio on and our feet tangled and the same foods on our breath and the same appointments to keep later that evening in forever. Oh I've been looking so hard and so long and colors so often don't have it for me and the doorknobs to things disappear and I have to sit in this colorless entranced life for days until I think of you. If we memorize each other like telephone numbers will we always connect and be busy with one another operating? Love, love, I can't propose often enough, I'm swearing off everything and swearing on you, bow-wow.

ANDREA

Brink, you can talk again!

BRINK

You stupid moron of course I can talk. There was never a day I couldn't talk.

(Enter PLAIN bloody.)

PLAIN

My car crashed. I think I'm dead.

BRINK

You are dead.

ANDREA

Those things you just said to me Brink, that you loved me so and wanted to hold me, were they true?

BRINK

Of course not, idiot.

PLAIN

Now that I'm dead I see life was futile and bloody and since my death proves to me there is neither God nor heaven I regret all the candles I ever lit.

BRINK

Are you so simple as to deal only with facts and realities?

ANDREA

Brink, it's been so long. Do you want to try again?

BRINK

You don't know what I feel inside, how it eats at me and makes me see all things bitten and dog-fetched. I'm a dog! And I'll always be a dog. I've pretended now and then to be a man just to fool people, just to change my pace, get around a bit, but I've always gone back to being a dog.

PLAIN

Why don't you go back now?

BRINK

Because I want to teach you a lesson.

PLAIN

But I'm dead, there's no lesson I can learn now.

BRINK

Oh no?

(HE bites PLAIN's leg. SHE screams.)

ANDREA

All my life I've only wanted to feel whole, walking with my feet touching the ground without exaggerated hopes or untouchable dreams.

PLAIN

Me too!

ANDREA

Why should things become so tricked and twisted? All those nights being a dog's wife, feeding you, taking you on long walks in the park so you could do your business, and then home to chew on my slippers and piss on everything I value.

BRINK

Drop dead!

PLAIN

What am I supposed to do now that I'm dead? I can't go home and raise my children.

BRINK

Why not, you think they'd notice?

PLAIN

A hairy thing with a tail standing here talking to us like this – Chuck, say something! Chuck!

CHUCK

I believe anything, given the will, can be looked at with logic and optimism. Yes. When things seem the most warped, it is a sure sign good things are just around the corner.

BRINK

Oh yeah?

(BRINK, more wolf than dog, viciously attacks CHUCK and leaves him bloody and killed on the floor. PLAIN screams.)

ANDREA

My poor weak Chuck.

PLAIN

You killed him! Is he going to come back to life like me?

BRINK

(Kicking HER aside.)

I don't give a shit!

ANDREA

What you need, Brink Heartache, is simple discipline. First, your leash.

(BRINK barks.)

That's right, your leash.

(SHE puts the leash on BRINK. HE barks.)

Brink! Brink! Listen to me! Come! Brink, come! Come!

(BRINK barks and goes up to HER.)

Now sit! Sit, dog! Sit.

(BRINK sits.)

That's a good Brink. Good Brink. Okay, beg! Beg, that's right, that's a good doggie. That's a good Brink. Lie down, lie down.

(BRINK lies down.)

Good dog.

PLAIN

(madly kicking BRINK, SHE shouts hysterically until she is crying uncontrollably. BRINK whimpers and. cries like an abused animal.)

This is a bad dog! Bad dog! Bad! Bad! I hate this dog! You've ruined everything for me! Everything! I don't know where to turn! I don't know what to do! This is the worst day of my life!

(SHE collapses to her knees in tears.)

CHUCK

(Rising from the dead.)

I have been naked and ridiculous for so long because I have not known what else to be. In places I did not know what to touch or rearrange I have pretended to be a surgeon. Using my mind, which has been a dog dish, I have tried to feed the starving heart. I have been naked and ridiculous offering tenderness the shape of a bone and replacing one flea collar for another.

(BRINK lets out a long low howl.)

ANDREA

Everyone must believe me when I say that when I married my husband there was no inkling in his demeanor which would betray the fact that later he would become a canine. The hideous display just witnessed convinces me that rather than a dog I married a demon. That such a thing could have happened in the name of love I have no explanation other than to say I can no longer pretend to understand the things of this world. On top of this, Chuck and Plain's deaths, or rather non-deaths, have proven to me there is really neither release nor relaxation in not being alive. I think when everything becomes too close, too painful, unmanageable and senseless in our lives we must become puppets in order to cope.

(Each actor removes from his and her pocket a hand puppet. Though crude, these puppets look very much like the characters who manipulate them. A crude puppet stage, a facsimile of the kitchen set, descends from the ceiling.

Each puppet takes turns barking, chasing the other three back and forth while they shout, "Oh no!" repeatedly until they are limp and out of breath.

The following speeches are to be divided up among the actors and spoken frontface as if the puppets manipulated the actors and gave them the power to speak. It should not sound like preaching.)

Do you think yourself a particular mask which does not coincide with what privately you think you are and what you feel? Does this discrepancy make you sick or dizzy and make you want to not talk or talk always without pause?

Sometimes we are so greedy for the world to give us things and give us things and sometimes we even lead ourselves into suffering thinking suffering itself will give us more things, give us beauty and expansiveness.

I have such a big want. Arf! Can you help me please? I'm looking for 3D and completion of character. I want meaning, purpose, and direction. Meow. Can you suggest a path plan pursuit? Tweet-tweet. I need something that won't fly away, scratch me, or get boring. Bow-wow. Ruff!

And we become so bored, so bored and frustrated and there doesn't seem to be anywhere to go/to be/to do. I want to know how many times you can. change your sheets, make your bed, check your checkbook, make ends meet, sleep with strangers, lovers, husbands, wives, use the telephone, call your mother, call your father, visit their graves?

Why sometimes is our life a weapon turned against us and why when the weapon strikes do we turn to food or drink or drugs to cover the pain? Why do so few things make sense?

Madness and misfortune are one kind of medicine, one way of achieving surgery, one way of killing the lies. Are you tired of all the lies, aren't you tired of them? And ready to kill them and shove them into cement coffins and bury them in Death Valley or the Gobi? Don't you feel a lot older today than you did the day before yesterday -- I'm speaking personally to you - don't you feel a lot older, older and without the key, not closer, not near, just more far gone? Report now to the pea-green barracks of your soul and don't laugh at the untidiness or punish yourself or make yourself promise to change because nothing changes. We just try harder and try harder and everything aches as if our muscles were being stretched but we stay the same, fat, skinny, fat, skinny, and the ache maintains its weight each week confessing to no one the incurable hunger, the rampant churning, the pitiful diet of small kisses, handshakes, and telephone calls.

Everything that was never in a play for you is here now here in this space fill it in. All the time your idea/feeling/remark was left out fill it in here. All the time you felt empty and out in the rain, all the time you were the one to play out-field feeling you were every year missing more and more of the bases, fill in here the short stop, pitching yourself into yourself and winning, riding shoulders and confetti. Everything left out, everything that keeps you away, bring it here, put it in. Everything and everything and like a Sufi dancer turn it over and over around your heart spin it until you forget your feet your seat. This is the minute when we are all to acknowledge that the government does not represent us -- yes, unfortunately it's true. Aren't you tired of voting for nothing? Aren't you tired of going to the supermarket to get robbed or getting your car repaired over and over and over? Aren't you tired of fake movies with fake happiness and fake unhappiness and the stars and the stars and the stars mocking you with their huge hands and faces reaching for props and touching the walls of sets which cost more than the places they facsimilate? Aren't you tired of sitting in the dark, of trying to drown out the nervousness of the week in someone else's life? And the nulling of everything unable to open or close the door or cabinet, unable to pick up the covers and remove your body which lately has been a traitor to you -- aging oddly, quirkish with sudden pains and low energy -- remove the body from the bed, scrub it and take it to the office. Aren't you

tired of interiors, of interiors, of the slow preparation for the casket, the lid slamming shut on the giant go-wrongs, the life, the life -- where did it go? This is the place to fill in the new laws, this is the place to become our own presidents and congress, to pass our own bills and come out on top. Elect now to stop dying. Elect now to stop using your life as a way to die/as ways to stop being/as ways to cancel out, to make-go-away/as ways to being by not being by being less and less until we can disappear. The pendulum goes bad-good -- good-bad -- bad-bad -- break the pendulum! Break the clock, all clocks! Stop here because of non-realistic.

(The puppets have been set on fire and slowly burn. Music. The actors sing.)

When everything is stolen from you
When everything is stolen from you
Look for the medicine
When everything is stolen from you
Look for the medicine
Look for the medicine

THE END