

DOG
by Marla Porter

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DOG

CHARACTERS

CLARE	28
TOMMY	30, Clare's husband of two months
AMY	8, Clare's daughter

SETTING

The family living room

TIME

Present day, Saturday afternoon

(The family's well-worn, plainly furnished living room. Tommy is sitting on the sofa watching the game and drinking a beer. Clare and Amy enter from the front door. Amy is carrying a dachshund, snuggling it to her face.)

TOMMY

C'MON Parker! Get it, get it!

CLARE

Hey Babe! We're back.

TOMMY

That's it Tony! Christ, *finally*...

AMY

(crawls on the couch right up to Tommy)

Hi Tommy! Kiss Zipper, kiss Zipper, kiss Zipper!

TOMMY

(pets zipper)

Well hello there Zipper my man...hey Amy, hey Babe.

AMY

Don't pet him, kiss him!

CLARE

Amy honey, take Zipper back down the hall to your room.

AMY

No, please Mom....Zipper wants to stay out here and watch the game with Tommy, doncha Zip?

TOMMY
(sideways hugging Amy)

Yeah, let 'em stay! Us Spurs fans gotta stick together!

CLARE
(to Amy)

Maybe in a little while Sweetie, but right now I need to talk to Tommy.

AMY
(getting up from the couch)

Oh, okaaaayyyy. Mom? Can I try making the peach cobbler all by myself tonight? Pleeeeeease??

CLARE

Sure thing, jellybean! Go on now and take Zipper.

AMY

Mom....?

CLARE

It's okay, baby. I promise everything will be okay.

AMY

(kissing Zipper's head as she walks down the hall)

Okay! C'mon Zip....

CLARE

Gimme a kiss! How's the game?

TOMMY

(perfunctorily kisses her)

Better now that Parker got outta bed!

CLARE

Cool! So, listen...

TOMMY

(barely listening)

What's up?

CLARE

Could you pause that a second.

TOMMY
(getting annoyed)

What's up?

CLARE
Well....it's our two-month wedding anniversary today! I was thinking I'd make your favorite.

TOMMY
Whiskey, neat?

CLARE
Chicken parm! And Amy wants to make cobbler with those stonewall peaches I got yesterday.

TOMMY
(resumes game)
Great. Sounds good, Babe.

CLARE
Wait, wait... So....I was thinking...

TOMMY
(immersed)
Yup.

CLARE

I was thinking I could take Carla's Saturday afternoon shift once her new kiddo is born in a couple a weeks. Saturday afternoon tips are *great*.

TOMMY
(still immersed, getting annoyed)

Un-kay...

CLARE

AND...You and Amy can spend more time together too.

TOMMY
(picks up the clue phone...pauses game again)

Wait. What?

CLARE

I wanna take Carla's Saturday shift.

TOMMY

You want to work Saturday? Why?

CLARE

We need the money.

TOMMY

We always need money, but I want you home on the weekends.

CLARE

I know, but don't you think it would be good for you and Amy to have some alone time? Go eat pizza, have some fun. I know she's comfortable with you since we dated a year and everything, but us being married and living together as a whole family is different. She's still adjusting to having a new dad.

TOMMY

But I want you home. I hardly see you during the week since I started working that split shift and I really miss you.

CLARE

I miss you too, but...

TOMMY

But what?

CLARE
(finally lays it on him)

Look, I know money is tight and all, and I know how hard we both work already... But, we really need the money for Zipper.

TOMMY

Zipper?

CLARE

The vet told us this morning he has this thing called Cushions or Cushing's or something like that.

TOMMY

The dog is sick?

CLARE

No! Not *sick* or anything. He just has this *thing*. He just needs a little medicine.

TOMMY

Jesus, so the vet today and now medicine *too*? And how much extra is this medicine gonna be?

CLARE

Look, I know it seems like a lot...but we can manage it. I swear! It's just a hundred dollars.

TOMMY

(interrupting her)

A hundred dollars?

CLARE

...a month...

TOMMY

A hundred dollars a *month*???

CLARE

That's why it's *perfect* that I take Carla's shift.

TOMMY

I'm less than a year away from puttin' a down payment on Jimmy Kovak's old bike so we can both *finally* have transportation and you want to spend a hundred bucks a month on a dog? One car between us is just too hard. You'd be home by 4:30 instead of 6:00 if you didn't have to take that stupid bus.

CLARE

But I don't *mind* taking the bus. We've managed so far. Besides, he's not *just* a dog. Amy's had Zipper since Patrick died. I love Zipper too.

TOMMY

We can't afford a hundred dollars a month. We don't have it.

CLARE

He's part of our family. Look, I know your family didn't have inside dogs and they were just dogs....

TOMMY

(interrupting her)

Honey, we can't afford it.

CLARE

(gently, but over him)

Well, we could if I worked Saturdays.... Or, if you really don't want me working Saturdays, we could always use the motorcycle money.

TOMMY

You're *kidding* me, right?

CLARE

OR....I could work Carla's shift. We might even get a little *extra* money that we could put toward your motorcycle...you could get it even sooner maybe.

TOMMY

No. We both work too much as it is. And right now we just can't afford it.

CLARE

(gently, but over him)

We *have* to afford it. You know how hard it was on us, especially on Amy, when Patrick died. Dad said we should get her a dog, so we went to the pound and found Zipper. The *second* we brought him home and told her she was Zipper's new mom and Zipper needed lots of love....well, it was like magic. She was her old self literally that night. She and Zipper have been inseparable ever since. Tommy, we *have* to afford it.

TOMMY

Sweetie, I love you. I love Amy. You are the two most important things in the world to me. But life isn't always easy or fair. My sister has MS and that sucks. Your dad can barely walk. SUCKS!Wait! Maybe your *dad* could take Zipper? Maybe Zipper could cheer him up and then Amy could visit them?

CLARE

Dad is on disability now. He can't afford Zipper's medicine. I swear I don't mind taking the bus! I don't mind working Saturdays. It's worth it.

TOMMY

What about the pound? Or don't they have those no kill shelters now? Out in Hays County or someplace?

CLARE

The pound? Are you kidding me? They'd just kill him! They wouldn't give him to a new family with this cushion thing. And a no kill shelter is not going to pay for his medicine either.

TOMMY

We can't keep him.

CLARE

Tommy, she loves him.

TOMMY

Maybe we can find a family to take him. Maybe one of Amy's teachers could afford his medicine? Give him to someone nearby so Amy could even visit.

CLARE

She loves him.

TOMMY

We CAN'T *afford* it!

CLARE

I love him. *We love* him.

TOMMY

We'll find him a home. We will!

CLARE

You think *anybody* is gonna pay for his medicine? He's been Amy's dog almost his whole life...loved, petted, sleeps on her bed on a warm blanket. I told you I don't mind taking the bus. I don't. I'll take the damn bus for the next ten years if that's what it takes.

(Clare and Tommy have a silent moment...they stare...)

TOMMY

(calling down the hall)

AMY, come out here please and bring Zipper. Amy!

CLARE

(warning him)

Tommy.....

AMY

(enters carrying Zipper)

Am I in trouble or something?

CLARE

Oh, no, Baby, no! Go back to your room.

TOMMY

Amy, sit right here, sweetie.

(Amy sits beside him on the couch.)

CLARE

Tommy...

TOMMY
(gently)

Now, you know that life isn't always fair, right?

AMY

Mom?

CLARE

Tommy! Amy, just go back to your room sweetie...

TOMMY
(over her)

...sometimes we have to say good-bye. People get sick and die. Pets get sick.

CLARE
(gently picks Amy and Zipper up and puts them behind her)

Amy, go on back to your room...

TOMMY
(talking to Amy who is now behind Clare's legs)

My dad had this hunting dog once, Sport. Well Sport got hit by a car. Broke its leg and smashed its jaw. Now, my dad...he just went and got one of his guns...

CLARE
(over him)

Tommy!

TOMMY
..and shot Sport right there in the street. Put him out of his misery.

CLARE
Stop it!

TOMMY
But we would NEVER do that. And Zipper didn't get hit by a car, so we can find him a nice home.

AMY
NO! You can't have him. He's MY dog. You can't have him!

TOMMY

Maybe even find him a home nearby....maybe with a family that would let you visit him.

AMY

(crying...stands and buries her face in Zipper's neck)

Mom! You promised. You *promised!*

CLARE

Amy, Zipper's not going ANYwhere! Take him back to your room. Let me take care of this.

(Amy leaves and Clare looks down the hall until Amy's door shuts)

What in the hell are you *doing?!*

TOMMY

Being realistic.

CLARE

No! You just scared the hell outta my kid!

TOMMY

Don't you mean *our* kid? Isn't that what you keep telling me? Right? *Our* kid? Well, *our* kid needs to learn *our* lessons. That life *isn't always fair?* Everybody needs to learn that.

CLARE

What are you *talking* about? She KNOWS that! Her dad died when she was five years old. Believe me she *knows* .

(quietly, almost in tears)

Just don't you *ever* scare her like that again.

(renewed resolve)

Zipper stays RIGHT. HERE.

TOMMY

Babe, please....just think...

CLARE

THINK? About what? There is nothing to think about. It's real real simple. We LOVE Zipper. I CAN work Saturdays. We are KEEPING him. SEE how simple that is???

TOMMY

WE?? WE can't do anything unless WE spend time together. I hardly see you as it is and now you want to work Saturdays?! WE will get her another dog once WE can afford it.

CLARE

Omigod. You don't get it. I just can't believe you don't get it....

TOMMY

Babe! It'll be okay. She'll get over it.

CLARE

Get over it? NO....You just don't *just get over something like that*. She's already lost Patrick. We are NOT taking Zipper away from her. We are NOT.

TOMMY
(pleading)

We'll get her another dog. A puppy. As soon as I'm done paying for the bike.

(Clare and Tommy have another silent moment.)

CLARE

You know what? I'm gonna take Amy and Zipper and go stay with Dad a little while.

TOMMY

No. *Why?!*

CLARE

I need to think.

TOMMY

Clare!

CLARE

You know, Katrina hit when Patrick and I first got married and we were living with Dad in New Orleans. Anyhow, we all went down to get on one of those big buses that were taking people away. You know lots of people wouldn't leave their pets. Did you know that? That a bunch of people died cos they wouldn't leave their pets? I remember there was this story about this old army guy who wouldn't leave his German Shepard. They found 'em both dead up in the attic. Remember that? Anyways, we were on the bus waiting to leave and there was this line of people outside in the rain waitin' to get on. There was this woman with her little boy, I dunno, maybe eight or nine. Anyway, he was holding this little white dog and the bus driver was out there fussing and telling the mom that they couldn't bring the dog on the bus. And she kept saying how it was her little boy's dog and couldn't he please make an exception just this once and the bus driver says no, no exceptions. So the mom takes the little dog out of her kid's arms and sets it on the ground and drags the kid screaming and crying onto our bus. Screaming and crying so hard he threw up in the aisle. Actually vomitted. So I looked out the window and saw that little dog go frantically from person to person out in the rain...lookin for that kid. Sometimes I wonder if anybody picked it up, took it home, helped it. It just looked so scared. See, I would *never* have gotten on that bus. See what I mean? Never *ever*. I don't know, Tommy. I love you Babe, but see, I'm just kinda figuring out that I'm that old army guy and Amy is that old army guy. And I'm that little boy and Amy is that little boy.

(quietly, to herself, really realizing)

But you're that bus driver and you're that mom.

(long pause, then directly to Tommy: sadly, but firmly)

You're that bus driver and you're that mom.

END OF PLAY