A Dog’s Life

A full-length play

By Rachel Thompson

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You’ve probably come here to question me about that ex-convicts story in that damned yellow sheet down there in Wilkes county – That stuff about getting Pellagra in here – Jimmy, hand me that sample menu!

She’s not a reporter.

Aw. – What is your business, young lady?

I understand there’s a vacancy here. Mr. McBurney, my landlady’s brother-in-law, told her that you were needing a new stenographer and I’m sure that I can qualify for the position. I’m a college graduate, Mr. Whalen, I’ve had three years of business experience – references with me – but, oh – I’ve – I’ve had such abominable luck these last six months. – the last place I worked – the business recession set in they had to cut down on their sales-force – they gave me a wonderful letter – I’ve got in with me.

She opens her purse and spills contents on floor.

Anybody outside?

Yes. That woman.

What woman?

The one from Wisconsin. She’s still waiting –

I told you I don’t want to see her. (talking into phone)

How’s the track, Bert? Fast? Okay.

Sailor Jack’s mother, MRS. BRISTOL, has quietly entered. She carries a blanket.

I beg your pardon, I – You see I’m Jack Bristol’s mother, and I’ve been wanting to have a talk with you so long about – about my boy!
Dawn. Same as Scene Two, the dividing line of forest and plain. The nearest tree trunks are dimly revealed but the forest behind them is still a mass of glooming shadow. The tom-tom seems on the very spot, so loud and continuously vibrating are its beats. LEM enters from the left, followed by a small squad of his soldiers, and by the Cockney trader, SMITHERS. LEM is a heavy-set, ape-faced old savage of the extreme African type, dressed only in a loin cloth. A revolver and cartridge belt are about his waist. His soldiers are in different degrees of rag-concealed nakedness. All wear broad palm leaf hats. Each one carries a rifle. SMITHERS is the same as in Scene One. One of the soldiers, evidently a tracker, is peering about keenly on the ground. He grunts and points to the spot where JONES entered the forest. LEM and SMITHERS come to look.

SMITHERS  
(after a glance, turns away in disgust)  
That’s where ‘e went in right enough. Much good it’ll do yer. ‘E’s miles off by this an’ safe to the Coast damn ‘S ‘ide! I tole yer yer’d lose ‘im, didn’t I?—wastin’ the ‘ole bloomin’ night beatin’ yer bloody drum and castin’ yer silly spells! Gawd blimey, wot a pack!

LEM  
(gutturally)  
We cotch him. You see.

(He makes a motion to his soldiers who squat down on their haunches in a semi-circle.)