

Jake
copyright Matthew Eberz

Jake

By

Matthew Eberz

Matthew Eberz
PO Box 1576
Highlands, NC 28741
Ph: 828 526 2909
Email: mreberz@yahoo.com
Website: matteberz.com

CHARACTERS

- Harley Harley is dog. He was abandoned at birth and was "adopted" by Jake, an old dog that lived in the park. Jake taught Harley how to be a dog, about life and about humans. Harley would be considered an average sized dog, 50-60 pounds, he's a "mutt" of no certain breed but the strength of a Husky, and the gentleness of a Golden Retriever, and the courage of a Sheppard are all part of Harley. He is now, between 11 and 12 years old; he has slowed down and lost interest in life.
- Sam Sam is a 35-year-old man, professional white-collar, average man. He has been married to Mary for seven years. He is a pleasant man, not overbearing, he has a sense of humor and loves his wife. He found Harley two years before he met Mary and has a strong bond with the dog. He is former military having spent four years in the army and it is where he met his friend Farrel. He wants children but they have been unsuccessful.
- Mary Mary is happily married to Sam; she is a professional, above average intelligence and strong personality but not overbearing. After putting her desire for children on hold for six years to establish her career she decided to start having children, but unfortunately they remain childless. She likes animals and Harley, but the dog messing in the house and his gas problems have driven her to distraction.
- Farrel Farrel is a veterinarian; he is married to Jan and is Sam's friend. He is older than Sam, is former Navy. Although he met Sam while in the service he really didn't know him until he moved to town. After being reacquainted with Sam, they became best friends. Despite his military background he would be characterized as gentle soul whose idea of a great night is a good book, a glass of wine and an occasional visit with friends.
- Chips Chips is a young dog, just one to two years old, abandoned and totally unaware of humans and their relationships to dogs.
- Jan Jan is married to Farrel; she is a strong willed, good hearted woman who speaks her mind no matter what it sounds like. She is a good person, likes Sam, is very fond of Mary, and can barely tolerate dogs.
- Florence Florence is an older woman who performs housekeeping for Sam and Mary two days a week. Her husband died several years ago, since his death she is bitter, alone, and generally hates life.
- Target New puppy introduced to Chips at the end of the play.

Synopsis

This is a story of an old dog who teaches a young dog how to be a dog, how to care for his human pets and in doing so teaches all of us some valuable lessons on life, friendship and love. Harley is an old dog who lives with Sam and Mary; a childless married couple. Sam got Harley when the dog was one or two years

Jake
copyright Matthew Eberz

old and before Sam met and married Mary. One afternoon Sam was in the park when a large German Sheppard attacked him. Young Harley, who was living in the park, drove off the much larger German Sheppard and was slightly injured in doing so. In gratitude Sam returned to the park everyday to feed the dog and he soon became very fond of this unkept and dirty dog. Eventually the independent and worldly Harley became accepting of Sam and he followed Sam home and they stayed together. Sam's friend Farrel, who is a veterinarian, treated Harley and determined his age at around two.

Mary and Sam have been married seven years and now Harley is twelve years old. He is without energy and has started to lose control of himself and often messes in the house. Farrel suggests a puppy might bring new life to Harley, and thus enters Chips. After a shaky beginning, Harley teaches Chips how to both be a dog and a human caretaker. Harley later dies and the young Chips takes his place in the household. Time passes, Chips gets older and the cycle completes when a new puppy, Target, is brought into the family, and the dog training / human pet training cycle begins again.

The Setting

Apartment with the main entry door stage center rear, with a hat/coat rack by the door. Stage center is the living room with a sofa and two chairs, stage right is bedroom with bed, two nightstands. Stage left rear there is another door that leads to the kitchen.

- Living room: A couch, rug, 2 easy chairs, tall plant suitable for dog peeing, bar area with wine, a photograph of the family including dog. In Act one the photo is of Sam and Mary and one dog, Harley. In Act 2 the photo also includes Chips. A ship's clock that chimes (Chimes on queue from off stage) is mounted predominately on the wall.
- Bedroom has bed, 2 nightstands with lamp.

Time

The play starts ten (10) years before "today" and ends in the current timeframe.

Communications

The dogs and human pets both speak but they cannot speak in English to each other. Just as in life, the people understand each other and the dogs understand certain English language commands. In exchanges when the humans and dogs are together, and the humans are the focus, the dogs can only understand commands, such as sit, go, up, and down. When the dogs are the focus then the dogs speak in English and the human pets speak gibberish with the exception of clearly speaking dog commands. For example: Sam would say to Mary. "I think I will take the dog and go for a walk." The dog would hear, "Gibber, gibber, gibber **GO** gibber **Walk**." In the script the dog commands are marked with brackets [] to show the actors where these key words are.

Twice-played Scene

There are a few scenes in the play that are repeated; once as the humans hear things and once as the dogs hear them. These "Twice-played" scenes are essential scenes that show how each sees each other. They are acted once in English for the humans, and immediately repeated, as the dogs would hear them. In the script they are marked for clarity (MARK X indicates the scene.)

Beginning of the screen that will be repeated: "Twice-played – MARK A – human begins"

End of the scene: "Twice-played – MARK A – human ends"

Beginning of the repeated screen: "Twice-played – DUAL MARK A – dog begins"

End of the repeated scene: "Twice-played – DUAL MARK A – dog ends"

Special Wardrobe

The dogs should have a "fur jacket" and a tail at a minimum. A collar is a must for the walking scenes.

Author's Notes on the Characters

There are four leading roles, Sam, Mary, Chips and Harley, but Harley is the key role. Harley must "act" like a dog; he must have the mannerisms, bark, and behave like a dog to convince the audience that he is an animal. He must also "act" like a worldly, yet intelligent "person" capable of passing on great knowledge. The script de-emphasizes the dog's movement such as limiting their walking around a lot on stage and concentrates their movement on petting, howling, sleeping, and dog-like actions without clumsy walking or running actions. They do not walk upright like people even when they are on stage alone.

Harley is old but loves Sam and Sam loves him in return. Mary tolerates Harley; he has been Sam's dog, she understands the connection her husband has with, and for the dog, and loves him for it. But the dog's lack of bladder control has pushed her to the edge. Sam and Mary are "married lovers" who get along perfectly, except for the dog. They put off having children, and now they finding they cannot have them Mary has unknowingly put her disappointment onto the dog in the form of resentment and impatience. Sam and Harley have had a good run and he knows Harley days are now coming to a close. He does not want to lose Harley but he does not want him to suffer, and he certainly does not want Mary to make him suffer from Harley's lack of control. Sam has been covering for Harley for a long while but he knows that must soon end and he is torn up about the prospect of putting Harley down.

Harley is a wise old dog that was a strong, "ladies-man" and "manly man" if human terms can be used to describe a dog's life and personality. Once he accepted Sam as his "human pet" he took the responsibility of protecting him and trying to teach him very seriously. Harley has long since accepted the fact that human pets, although they mean well, just don't have the intelligence to live a happy life, but he does everything he can to improve his human pets life

Jake
copyright Matthew Eberz

nevertheless. Harley is getting old, he is lethargic, and the best part of the day is finding the sunbeam that comes to his house in the afternoon and then lying in it.

Chips is a young puppy with no experience and all the enthusiasm of a young dog. He comes to the home of Harley's human pets having been mistreated by humans and expecting the same. He becomes a son to Harley and later a father to a new puppy in the same manner Harley fathered him.

Farrel and Jan are the good friends. They are a Ying and Yang of life if ever there was, he is quite and reserved, she outspoken and in your face. They love each other in their own way and are good friends to Sam and Mary. Farrel loves animals and Jan loves to eat them. We only see Jan as matter-of-fact, in your face and even quite caustic until Act Two Scene Six when Farrel tells Jan the story of the ship's clock whereupon Jan's feelings for Sam change for the better.

Florence is an older woman who once was a happy person but life and the loss of her husband has beaten her down. She takes her frustration out on Harley until one day Harley shows her the love she has lost.

Author's Notes on the Key Statements

There are lines in the script that are key to the meaning of the play. These lines are marked **Key Statement** to allow the director and actor to provide the proper announcement.

Author's Notes on the Ship's Bell

The ship's bell serves several purposes. First, it is a significant part of Sam's life and a connection to a lost friend. It serves to establish Sam as an emotional and thoughtful man. Second, the bell ringing serves as a means to inform the audience of the time, which is important as many scenes need to have the time of day known to set the stage for the action.

ACT ONE

Scene One - The audience meets Harley Sam and Mary. The scene establishes that Harley is getting old and having problems—not the dog he used to be. There is the first of the “marked scenes, which are repeated exactly as they occurred. The first time with people talking and the second time from the dogs view. TWICE PLAYED SCENE A with Sam and Mary coming home and Harley reacting to their arrival home.

Scene Two - Sam meets with Farrel, a veterinarian, who suggests getting a puppy as a stimulus for Harley. Sam and Mary discuss the situation but Sam decides, with Mary’s encouragement that he need’s to put Harley down. In an emotional scene, Sam talks with Harley and tells him what has to happen.

Scene Three - Sam allows Farrel to bring a puppy into Sam’s home and Harley is not happy, neither is Mary. Mary and Sam exit and dogs are alone on stage. The dogs meet and talk to each other.

Scene Four - Sam and Mary leave for the day and Harley realizes that the new dog is staying. TWICE PLAYED SCENE B - The scene is one where Sam announces they are going out and huge confusion arrives when Sam and Mary are going out but the dogs think Sam and Mary are talking to the dogs about going out.

Scene Five - Harley takes Chips in and begins to teach him about his human pets. The scene establishes the line, “My name is Jake, and this is how things are in my home.”

Scene Six - Mary and Sam name the new dog and have a discussion about having children.

ACT TWO

Scene One - Harley is now very active with new life. Harley teaches Chips to fight and about sex.

Scene Two - Social talk between both couples and Chips wanting to learn about puppy making.

Scene Three - Sam and Farrel both tired from sex TWICE PLAYED SCENE C Sam and Farrel are having a conversation and unknowingly are driving the dogs crazy.

Scene Four - Harley getting tired more often. Harley teaches Chips begging, sees his training has been successful and quietly Harley dies.

Scene Five - Sam finds Harley dead.

Scene Six - Ten years have gone by. Jan and Farrel talk about Sam, how time has passed and how Chips has become just like old Harley. Mary brings new dog into the house.

Scene Seven - Chips gives “the talk: to the new dog.

End of Act II - End of Play

Jake
copyright Matthew Eberz

ACT ONE
Scene One

SETTING: Before curtain rises the music is sad - *Dreams Yiruma*
At curtain rise the spotlight is on sleeping "dog" by the bedroom door. The living room area is lit. Florence in the kitchen, Mary and Sam are due home.

SETTING: Spot on Harley then full lights up

Harley

(Sleeping on the rug, lies quietly for a time, then yelps like a sleeping dog. He raises his head as if he hears something, barks once weakly then goes back to sleep.)

FLORENCE

(Florence enters the room from the kitchen and sees Harley)
"You mangy dog. You still alive? (Picks up dishes from the table to carry into the kitchen) "Why don't you do this family and the world a favor and just die?"

Harley

(Sees her and growls)

FLORENCE

"Growl at me will ya. If I had my way I'd beat you with a broom. All you're good for is making a mess in the house; you peeing everywhere and that odor. Oh saints preserve us. Yes sir. If I had my way I'd club you on the head and throw you in the river."

Harley

(Gets up and moves further away from her. Watches her intently.)

FLORENCE

(Goes to the kitchen drops off the dishes and returns. Gets her coat from the coat rack, while putting it on she talks to Harley) "I've been here an hour cleaning and you haven't moved." (pause) "You are a useless old bag of bones. (Stares and glares at Harley).

Harley

(Gets up and goes stage left on the other side of the couch and not visible from the door and goes immediately to sleep.)

FLORENCE

(Looks menacing at the bedroom door. Gets ready to yell more distasteful things to Harley.)

"Well, Harley (pause and front door opens and its Sam and Mary. Florence changes to a sweet old lady.) "You're home early. I just finished."

SAM

(Surprised to see Florence) "Oh perfect timing, hello Florence. Everything go okay? Any problems with Harley?"

FLORENCE

(Very sweetly) "Not a one. He's a dear. See you next time." (exits front door.)

SETTING: Sam closes the door behind Florence, takes Mary's coat and hangs it on the door, then hangs his. They talk and look for Harley from the door.

SAM

"Oh, I'm glad to be home."

MARY

"Me too. But I had a good time though didn't you?"

Jake
copyright Matthew Eberz

SAM

"If you consider Barbara's glue food and listening to Alan talk about himself all night fun, then I had fun."

MARY

"Glue food?"

SAM

"It glued my throat shut."

Mary

(Gives Sam an evil look.)

SAM

"Where's the dog?"

MARY

"Some watchdog he is. Thieves could come in and he'd sleep through it. No, no, no ...they would come in, the dog would lie there like a rug and they would trip over him, break a leg and then sue us—AND win."

SAM

"Mary you are too hard on Harley, he's just getting ... seasoned."

MARY

"Seasoned?"

SAM

"Yeah. Like fine wine, he's just reaching his peak."

MARY

"Honey, if Harley is just reaching his peak then the climb beat the hell out of him."

SETTING: Twice-played scene — DUAL MARK A - human begins
Ship's Clock sounds 9 pm (three bells)

SAM

(Checks his watch) "21 hundred hours, 9 pm, perfect time." Puts hat on hat rack
"Where is that dog?"

SAM

(Reacts to smell) "Never mind I found him."

MARY

(Reacts to smell) "Oh Sam, he's rotting from the inside. We have got to do something."

SAM

"HARLEY!"

Mary

(Goes to the bedroom, stands in the doorway and point at Harley. Then disappears from view inside the room)

Harley

(Wakes up, sees Sam and wags his tail.)

SAM

(Walks around to Harley) "Harley, what is it with you?"

Jake
copyright Matthew Eberz

Harley
(Makes one weak bark then quietly makes little noises.)

SAM
"Why couldn't you do that [**outside**]?" (Sam walks to the coat rack to get the leash.)

HARLEY
Barks excited.

SAM
(He returns with leash and hooks up Harley.) "Okay, lets [**go boy**]."

HARLEY
"Barks"
(Sam and Harley exit the front door and the lights dim)

SETTING: Twice-played scene – DUAL MARK A – human ends.
Lights go dim and the actors return to Twice-played scene – DUAL MARK A – dog begins.

Ship's Clock sounds 9 pm (three bells)

SAM
(Sam checks his watch, Puts hat on hat rack) "Gibber Gibber?" (Reacts to smell)

SAM
"Gibber Gibber"

MARY
(Reacts to smell.) "Gibber Gibber."

SAM
"**HARLEY!**"

Mary
(Goes into the bedroom, stands in the doorway and points at Harley. Then disappears from view inside the room)

Harley
Wakes up, sees Sam and wags his tail.

SAM
(Walks around to Harley.) "**Harley**, Gibber Gibber?"

HARLEY
"Hey buddy. Good to see you boy. Want to scratch my head? Damn I love a good scratch. You've been gone long? Hell I can't tell if it was five minutes or five hours—it's the whole relative time thing. But damn man its good to have you home."

SAM
"Gibber Gibber **Outside**?" (Sam walks to closet to gets leash.)

HARLEY
"I heard that! **OUTSIDE**. Let's go maybe there's some cute bitches out there."

SAM
(Sam returns with leash and hooks Harley.) "Gibber Gibber, **go boy**."

HARLEY
"Outside. Go Boy. I really need to teach you human pets some more vocabulary."

Jake
copyright Matthew Eberz

(Sam and Harley exit the main door)

SETTING: Twice-played scene – DUAL MARK A - Dog ends.

MARY

(Mary comes from the bedroom to the chair closest to where Harley was and starts to read, then reacts to the smell.) "Oh God Harley, you're still here."
(Mary rises and moves to the furthest seat.)

(Starts to read Tenth Man. Reacts again.) "It's following me."

MARY

(Stands looks at the door and then picks up photo of Sam and the Harley, then gets herself ready as if talking to Sam.) "Now Sam. I know you love Harley but sometimes we have to do things for those we love that are really hard for us but it's best for them. I know you've had Harley for ten years and he's like a bother or best friend to you."

(She pauses and looks back at where Harley was laying.) "A really good friend that has gas that could kill an elephant."

(She looks back to where she was, refocuses and continues.) "There comes a time when we need to do what's best for Harley and I think, no, no, we both think it's time for Harley to...."

(She struggles for the word.) "Move on. No. Take the next step. No. It's time for Harley to take his last nap. His last nap?"

(She gets frustrated with herself.) "Sam, it's time to put the dog down."

(Mary puts the photo down and exits to the bedroom.)

SETTING: Lights Dim, Time passes
Lights up and spot light on front door.

Sam and Harley re-enter room, Sam unhooks the dog and put up the leash. Harley sits beside him looking bored.

SAM

(Petting dog.) "Twenty minutes walking around and no pee, no poop. You best not go in the house. Mary will have my head, and your ass."

MARY

(Dressed in a bathrobe and from bedroom.) "Is that you Sam?"

SAM

"No, Its George Clooney and I'm here to ravage you while your husband is out with the dog."

MARY

(From the bedroom.) "Excellent! Come on in and ravage away."

SAM

"Wish I could but we only have TWO minutes before he returns."

MARY

"Well, that's TWICE what I normally get."

SAM

(Walks to bedroom door.) "Not cool Mary, not cool. I'm getting some juice and I'll be right in. You want something?"

MARY

"I thought I just made *that* clear."

Jake
copyright Matthew Eberz

Sam

(Sam goes through the kitchen door.)

Harley

(Walks over to the plant, lifts leg and pees then walks over to rug and lies down.)

Sam

(exits the bedroom after Harley has already peed.)

Sam

(Returns with juice and sees pee.) "Damn it!"

MARY

(From the bedroom.) "Everything all right?"

SAM

"Yes, I just spilt my juice. I'll clean it up and be right in." (Sam runs through the kitchen door comes back with a towel, cleans up pee. Runs towel back to kitchen door then to the bedroom door. Straightens his hair and calmly walks in.)

SETTING: Mary in bed with book, Tenth Man, Sam walks in.

MARY

"Did Harley go?"

SAM

"What's that?" (Sam pretends he doesn't understand she's asking about Harley.)

MARY

"Did Harley do his business?"

SAM

(Starts to get ready for bed) "Oh yeah. Peed like a race horse."

MARY

"Good. I've got to tell you I am getting tired of his peeing in the house. I swear I don't have a good rug left in this place."

SAM

"My fault, I need to make sure he gets out more."

MARY

(She tells him caringly, tenderly.) "It's not that, and you know it. Harley has been a good dog. But he's getting old. He *is* old. He's having problems; peeing on the floor—he never did that before. And that gas, oh God, I want to gag. He sleeps all the time, he barely walks, and his eating is off. Sometimes he doesn't touch his bowl for days. When he does go out he just sits there. You know what the vet said... it may be time."

SAM

"Time for what?"

MARY

"Time to think about alternatives. What Farrel our vet, your friend, said. It is the quality of life not the quantity of life."

SAM

"That was obviously said by some young fellow, certainly not one whose *quantity* was running out."

MARY

(She says tenderly) "Hun."

Jake
copyright Matthew Eberz

SAM

"Harley is fine. We had a nice walk tonight."

MARY

"Did he go?"

SAM

"I told you, yes"

MARY

"I mean outside."

SAM

(He lies.) "Of course."

MARY

"Don't lie to me. If you do I'll ask Barb and Alan to come over for dinner."

SAM

Instantly responds. "Harley peed on your fichus plant."

Harley

(Walks into the bedroom and tries to jump up on the bed.)

Mary

(Shakes her head as Harley walks in, comes up to the bed and tries but can't get up on the bed.)

Harley

(Gives up and goes to the foot of the bed and curls up on the floor.)

MARY

"See what I mean, he can't even jump up on the bed. That just breaks my heart."

SETTING: Harley passes gas and Sam and Mary react.

SAM

(He sadly says.) "I'll talk to the Farrel again... about the gas."

MARY

"Pleash!" Mary puts pillow over face.

Lights dim Fade to Black.
Music begins: *Dreams Pia Yiru Ma*
End ACT ONE Scene One.