

NATURAL ENEMIES

**A 10-minute play
by Tom Baum**

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Characters

FLETCHER. White male, light-haired. (Golden Retriever)

OLGA. White female, blonde, Russian accent. (Samoyed)

DUKE. African-American male. (Pit Bull)

DASH. Male, ethnicity optional, thin, nervous, scatterbrained.
(Greyhound)

ROLF. White male, burly, German accent. (German Shepherd)

SUZIE. Female, ethnicity optional. (Mutt)

OFFSTAGE VOICE. Gender optional.

All the action takes place in a dog park. Minimal settings. One prop: a tennis ball.

(Lights up on FLETCHER and OLGA. FLETCHER is blond and handsome. OLGA is white-haired, gorgeous, and has a Russian accent.)

FLETCHER: Do you come here often?

OLGA: When not rehearsing. You?

FLETCHER: Oh all the time. I enjoy it. You can always get a drink.

OLGA: Fountain works?

FLETCHER: Fountain works fine, and the water's cold. Ground's nice and soft. They keep the leaves off. Always looking out for us.

OLGA: But I wish to be at home. I must prepare.

FLETCHER: For a movie?

OLGA: *Nyet!* A show.

FLETCHER: That's a lot of pressure, isn't it.

OLGA: Pressure is unbelievable. Alaskan, he win last year and year before.

FLETCHER: You didn't get Best in Show? That's incredible.

OLGA: Not even Best in Group. I am so angry, I pee on judge's shoe.

FLETCHER: It will all blow over, believe me.

OLGA: Maybe I breed instead. I am always wanting to be mother.

FLETCHER: *(uneasily)* It's a worthy ambition.

OLGA: *(flirting)* You are happy to help when time comes?

FLETCHER: How? Oh. But we're not...we're not... the same.

OLGA: To hell with purity. I want children. Clock is ticking. Pickings are slim. Look at all this *svoloch*.

FLETCHER: *Svoloch?*

OLGA: Rabble. Riffraff. There, for instance.

FLETCHER: Where?

OLGA: The *africanskii*.

(DUKE, *black, has entered, followed by ROLF, burly with a German accent, and DASH, skinny, nervous, and scatterbrained.*)

FLETCHER: That's Duke. Keep your distance, is my advice.

OLGA: I know his type, always looking to fight. The German, too. Also lowlife. Who is small-headed one? He looks nervous.

FLETCHER: That's Dash. He's having a difficult retirement.

OLGA: Retirement from what?

FLETCHER: Professional runner.

OLGA: I know this sport. For dummies only. Small head, small brain. (*flirting*) I prefer motherhood.

(*A tennis ball rolls onto the stage. An offstage voice calls out a command:*)

OFFSTAGE VOICE: Come on, Fletcher! Bring it here!

(*FLETCHER picks up the ball, contemplates it.*)

OFFSTAGE VOICE: That's it! Bring it here, boy!

FLETCHER: If you'll excuse me?

OLGA: *Da*. See you soon, handsome.

(*FLETCHER hurries off stage with the ball, past DUKE and DASH and ROLF.*)

ROLF: —So my boss, this Mafioso, he brings this babe back to the mansion. You know, with the big lips and the bolt-on breasts? Feature dancer at a strip club, up for anything. Weirder the better.

DUKE: Details, dude.

ROLF: It involved a can of beef-scented body spray, and that's all I want to say.

DUKE: What a perv. And you went along with this?

ROLF: I couldn't risk losing my job. I had a friend from school, a Seeing Eye. He got rough with his trainer, now he's on Death Row.

DASH: I'm in jail too.

DUKE: Uh-oh, when was the "blessed event"?

DASH: (*thinks*) Two weeks ago? She carries it around like a papoose. Thinks my breath is a germ cloud. They built a pen in the backyard, they feed me through a slot. I'm starting to miss the track. (*to ROLF*) At least you still have a job.

ROLF: *Ach*, some job. I'm patrolling the gate, rain or shine.

DUKE: Watch out for a Texas Hot Dog.

ROLF: *Was ist das?*

DUKE: You're cold, you're hungry, the hit man slips you a piece of meat laced with strychnine. Game over for you and the goombah.

ROLF: *Huch*. I need some R&R. With my own species.

DUKE: (*re OLGA*) Well, check out the platinum blonde.

ROLF: You're dreaming. Russian aristos? Total snobs.

DASH: She's so beautiful.

ROLF: Seen her with her summer haircut? She looks like she's from another planet.

OLGA: I hear all you say! I can't help summer look. I wasn't made for desert climate.

DASH: You were made to pull a sled.

OLGA: Please. I never pulled sled. Any more than you ever caught real rabbit.

DASH: I never caught a metal one either.

OLGA: And still you chase it, every time they ring bell. This is definition of insanity.

(FLETCHER *enters, without the ball.*)

DUKE: Hey, it's Fletcher the Fetcher. How are they hanging, Golden Boy?

FLETCHER: Stay out of my fur, Duke. Don't you have anything better to do?

DUKE: Than what? Chasing after a moldy tennis ball?

FLETCHER: It's a small price to pay.

DUKE: For what?

FLETCHER: Food. Shelter. Love.

DUKE: Yeah, they love you. So long as you love them back.

ROLF: Needy bastards.

DUKE: Didn't have to be this way. We used to be wolves. We avoided them, now we lick their faces. We eat in front of them, we piss in front of them, we travel thousands of miles just to be in their stupid presence. Makes me sick to think about it.

FLETCHER: Do you never feel love for your master?

DUKE: Yeah, when he picks up my shit. Whoa, check this out.

OLGA: What?

DUKE: That breaks my heart. *(to OLGA, lightly)* If I had a heart.

(SUZIE has entered. She looks bedraggled.)

DASH: Poor Suzie.

ROLF: You know her?

DASH: Who?

ROLF: Suzie.

DASH: Where? Oh right. There she is. Yes, Suzie lives down the street from me. Her owner comes here to pick up girls. He acts all loving toward Suzie, which is supposed to impress them. Then I hear her howling all day and night.

(SUZIE is scratching herself furiously.)

DUKE: Honey, you've got a bad case of mange. You've gotta get that treated.

SUZIE: That's not going to happen. He's out of work. Won't spend a dime on me.

ROLF: Dash hears you crying. Does he hurt you?

SUZIE: Oh yes.

DUKE: "Stop child abuse. Kick your pet."

SUZIE: His last girlfriend wouldn't have me in the house. I had to sleep in the yard, under a tree.

DUKE: Say no more. You gotta ditch this douchebag.

FLETCHER: Don't listen to him! Do you know the statistics on street survival? And you can forget about Animal Control. With your skin condition, nobody will take you home. They'll throw you in a dumpster, along with a bunch of other whimpering creatures, and pump in the carbon monoxide.

DUKE: You finished with your tale of woe? 'Cause that's exactly what's not gonna happen. Rolf, go signal your minder it's time to leave. She looks pretty tired of that guy who's hitting on her.

SUZIE: He's my owner.

DUKE: I know he is. So Rolf, when you get inside the hatch area, the minute she opens the outer gate, you turn around and unlatch the inner gate. Think you can you manage that?

ROLF: *Ein kinderspiel*. Piece of cake.

FLETCHER: This is madness. Don't do it, Rolf.

DUKE: We'll need a diversion. Dash, as soon as both gates are open, you hit it out of here as fast your little legs will carry you. Rolf, you ready? Go.

(ROLF exits. *The others watch.*)

DUKE: OK, Dash? Do your thing.

(DASH runs off. A sound of human commotion builds. DUKE, OLGA, and FLETCHER revolve in a rapid circle, as the [unseen] DASH races around the perimeter of the dog park.)

DUKE: Yo, check it out. He doesn't need the rabbit and he hasn't lost a step. Awesome-tastic, dude! *(looks)* OK, gate's open. Suzie? Good luck, sweetheart.

(SUZIE starts off. FLETCHER tries to bar her way.)

FLETCHER: Don't listen to this rabble-rouser. You'll regret it.

(DUKE steps between them.)

DUKE: Butt out, ball-boy. Go, Suzie.

SUZIE: How can I ever thank you?

DUKE: Your freedom is thanks enough. Keep in touch, sweetheart.

(DUKE restrains FLETCHER as SUZIE hurries off.)

DUKE: Now. Yeah! Attagirl!

(DASH enters from the other direction, panting.)

DASH: There she goes! So long...*(thinks)*...Suzie!

FLETCHER: *(to DUKE)* This is criminal, what you've done.

DUKE: If I'm a criminal, so was Abe Lincoln.

(A sudden screech of brakes and a sickening thud.)

OLGA: *O nyet!*

(Human commotion.)

DASH: What happened?

DUKE: Suzie?!

FLETCHER: I knew it. Ohmigod.

ROLF: Is she moving? I can't see.

DASH: No. She's...she's gone.

OLGA: She didn't look where she was going.

DUKE: No, that's a crosswalk! That idiot ran her down.

FLETCHER: Yeah, blame anybody but yourself.

ROLF: At least she was spared the gas chamber.

FLETCHER: Let's have a moment of silent contemplation. So we never make the same mistake again.

(They all bow their heads and fall silent. FLETCHER breaks the silence.)

FLETCHER: *(head bowed)* I should have tried harder to stop you.

DUKE: Spare me, all right? I told her to go and I should have gone with her. That's the mistake I won't repeat. We started out as pack animals, and that's what we have to be again. Who's with me?

DASH: What have I got to lose? I'm a pariah in my own house.

DUKE: Rolf?

ROLF: Well...you know...I have a job.

DUKE: Guarding a gangster...servicing a porn star.

ROLF: *Ja*, you're right. My life is a moral cesspool. Count me in.

DUKE: Dash?

DASH: I'm with you, Duke.

DUKE: *(to OLGA)* What about you, you gorgeous, stuck-up, Russky bitch? You coming with us, or you sticking with Fletcher?

OLGA: Fletcher is right. You are menace to society.

DUKE: *(to ROLF and DASH)* Wait for me. You know the drill.

(ROLF *and* DASH *exit*.)

DUKE: (*to* OLGA) Look, I get it. You want to have Fletcher's babies.

OLGA: And why I should not?

DUKE: Just one problem, right, Fletch? You owe it to Olga to explain.

OLGA: Explain what? What is he saying? Are you...no...are you *sterilnyi*?

(OLGA *peers at* FLETCHER's *crotch*.)

OLGA: But you still have your *yaitsa*.

DUKE: I'm betting they're duds. Yes or no, Fletch?

FLETCHER: I refuse to discuss this.

DUKE: He was zinc-neutered.

OLGA: I never hear of this.

DUKE: They injected a drug into his balls. Quick recovery, zero side effects, right Fletch?

OLGA: Fletcher? I insist for you to tell me.

FLETCHER: (*pause*) Yes. It's true. For the good of our species.

OLGA: How is this good? (*to* DUKE) And how do you know so much?

FLETCHER: Maybe from experience.

DUKE: Sorry, bro.

OLGA: They don't fix you?

DUKE: Nope. The little girl, bless her heart, she wouldn't let the family go through with it.

(OLGA *cozies up to* DUKE.)

OLGA: Well. That puts different face on things.

FLETCHER: No! Not with him!

OLGA: Why not with him?

FLETCHER: Because....because he's—

OLGA: *Africanski?* Yes! That is it! You're *rasistski!*

FLETCHER: I am not a racist! I'm thinking of your owner. The woman who raised you. Trained you. Invested thousands of dollars in your future. Don't you think you owe her some loyalty?

OLGA: Why, so she makes money? And I make little Me's? I am sick of own kind! Let's go, Duke.

FLETCHER: No! I won't let this happen!

(FLETCHER leaps at DUKE. They go at it, snarling and growling. Offstage, human commotion. FLETCHER finally yields, rolling on his back to signify surrender. DUKE rises.)

DUKE: Had enough?

FLETCHER: Yes. I accept my nature. I know when I'm beaten.

DUKE: Then come with us. Quit selling out.

OLGA: Yes, come. We need loyal opposition.

(FLETCHER has struggled to his feet. He turns his back on the others.)

ROLF: Oh well. *Auf wiedersehen*, dude.

(DUKE and OLGA exit with ROLF and DASH.

A tennis ball rolls on the stage.)

OFFSTAGE VOICE: Come on, Fletcher! Pick up the ball! Pick up the ball! Bring it here!

(Human commotion, as DUKE, OLGA, ROLF and DASH make their escape, with a sound of joyful yelping.)

OFFSTAGE VOICE: Fletcher, bring the ball! Come on, boy!
Fetch!

(FLETCHER stares at the ball.)

OFFSTAGE VOICE: Fletcher, what are you waiting for?

(FLETCHER starts to pick up the ball.)

OFFSTAGE VOICE: Fletcher...hurry up, boy...you're embarrassing me!

(FLETCHER straightens. He looks down sadly at his crotch. Then:)

FLETCHER: Fetch it yourself, you asshole.

(He flings the ball aside and hurries off in the direction of the joyful yelps, which rise and blend into wolf-like howls. Blackout. END OF PLAY.)