

## What I Wear Outside

by Janet Kenney

© Janet Kenney  
52 Strathmore Road #44  
Boston, MA 02135  
[missjanetkenney@gmail.com](mailto:missjanetkenney@gmail.com)  
617.543.1403

## LENNY'S MOM

OK, so the doctor just gave you a shot that is going to make you sleepy. So it's alright if you feel sleepy, OK? Thirteen years. That's... thirteen years you've been the best thing about me. I don't know how to walk around the neighborhood without a leash attached to me. But if you're suffering. But I – I wish you hadn't wagged your tail. You gotta give me a clear signal. You gotta give me a definite sign because I'm not gonna do this unless it's time. But. I can't have you just bleeding internally. God, that's the worst thing I've ever seen. Blood in your mouth. If you come home - It would just be more of the same. I told you to die in your sleep. I made that very clear. Every morning, for the last few weeks, I looked over at you to see if you were breathing. And you were. Little stinker. When you were a puppy— Oh, God – puppies suck. Puppies are cute so we don't kill them. When I NEEDED you to go down for the night because I was exhausted, I draped your strong, fragile chicken-bone body over my shoulder and sang “doo doo doo doo doo/Good Night, Sweetheart/Well it's time to go....” until you fell sleep. I spent the first six months thinking I should give you up for adoption. But I kept you, and, eventually, after a mere forty thousand hours of training, you learned everything I needed you to know. Then it was nice to walk together and not have you pulling me the way some dogs do. (Don't get me started, Lenny. You know how I feel about people who don't train their dogs.) I wish you hadn't wagged your tail. We wouldn't be here if I didn't think it was time. And then you go and wag your tail. What the fuck, Lenny? Was that, like, a reflex or something, a muscle ... thing? I wish you could talk. Nah. If dogs could talk, it'd be like, “Treat? Treat? Can I get a treat? Now can I have a treat? Where's my ball? Can I have a

treat?" It'd be stupid. You have to learn to see what your dog wants. To *feel* it. Dogs talk with their eyes. with their tails...talk to me, bud. I won't get a new dog. Not for a long time. Maybe never. Maybe you were my one shot at it. I'm gonna miss your coat so much. Golden toasted coconut shade of red. Oh, gorgeous. When I was brushing you last night I was thinking - this is the last time I'll do this. Maybe wait one more week? And then you threw up. So....I just wanted to be a good dog-Mom. Was I a good dog-Mom? I gave you breakfast and dinner on time and treats when appropriate. But not too many. I lost my temper once in a while. But only when you deserved it. When you were awful. When you ate those Ralph Lauren sheets and that bedspread: 1935 vintage perfect condition chenille with four colors! And you ate it. But...we had a ton of fun, didn't we? The beach and the Reservoir and the park ... thousands of hours at that park. Just the neighborhood, right? Just the neighbors. You gotta show a dog a good time because -- Oh, that ear scratch, oh, yeah. That's nice. You like that. You a sleepy boy? That's the medicine. The doctor said it's gonna wear off in twenty minutes. So I gotta quit fooling around. When you wag your tail, I think you're happy. Are you happy to go? Do you want to go? I don't know how I'm going to live through this. People do. People have six and eight and ten dogs in their lifetimes, and -- eight or ten? They go through this eight or ten times? Oh, no. I'm not going through this again. And people will be, like, *Oh, I'm so sorry about Lenny*. And they'll mean well and I'll think, *Shut up! Shut up. Don't talk about Lenny*. But they'll miss you, too. There are so many people who will miss you. Debbie will miss you. Jen will miss you. The guys at the hardware store will really miss you. The kids'll miss you. I'll have to call auntie first thing. (She still hates it when I call you her nephew.

When I first got you and I started saying, like, “We’ll be on the 1:30 train,” and sissy would say, “Who’s we?” Obviously, us.) Oh. The kids. This’ll be their first encounter with death. You know when I was in grade school - I just thought of this. There was a dog in the neighborhood who was hit by a car. We were playing in the Mahoney’s yard. And there was this THUMP and this YELP. And that dog was blood all over. And they gathered him up in a blanket and took him to the vet and... he died. And our mothers gave us chocolate chip ice cream. And we all had a million questions, but we didn’t ask them. Chuckie. That was the dog. Mr. Crimson’s dog. I remember Chuckie swimming in our pool, Dad freaking out because his nails might scratch the liner. He loved the water – like you! You love the beach! You love chasing the shells into the water. You don’t care that you’ve never actually found one. Nut. I won’t go to the beach for a long time. I’ll just stay in the house. Walking down the street with a dog - that dog loves you and everyone can see it. People call out the dog’s name first, so you have a second to collect yourself. To think of something to say. You have a second to put up your guard. You have a second to decide *not* to put up your guard because you don’t need one because you have a dog. And he is your guard dog. Of course, You’re not much of a *real* guard dog. You’d let a serial killer in the front door if he had a treat. But you’re my guard - - Don’t do that! If you wag your tail, I think you wanna come home...but. No, buddy. Your body is throwing you out in chunks and pieces. You know that stupid story about the Rainbow Bridge? Dogs go to some sort of dog heaven and they’re like, six years old. In their prime. They’re happy and they’re healthy and running around with the other dogs. And then one day, they catch a whiff of something in the air. And what the dog caught was *you*. Because you died.

And the dog comes and finds you and you're together again. Do you think that's true? Will you find me when I die?-Will you promise to find me when I die? I'm not getting a signal here. Any confirmation that it's now. That it's right. You're being kind of a jerk. I'm just kidding. Do you promise you'll wait for me? Wait for me, bud, because even in heaven, I'll be lost without you. You are the face I wear when I leave the house – my sweet, furry smiling-at-everyone face. Oh! Is that – Oh my God. Is that blood on your teeth? Oh, no. Just the light. It just looked – for a second – what? No sign from God? No signal from you? I thought you'd come up with something. But. OK, then. The doctor is going to give you another shot now, and then you won't have any more pain. Won't that be nice? Good night, sweet boy. (*sings, badly*) Doo doo doo doo doo/Good night, sweetheart//Well, it's time to go/Doo doo doo doo doo/Good night sweetheart/Well, it's time to go....

BLACKOUT

END OF PLAY