

We know the sun so well

A short play

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WE KNOW THE SUN SO WELL

SONNY: AN ARIES THROUGH AND THROUGH, INVESTED IN LOOKING BEAUTIFUL, NEVER CAUGHT ON AN OFF DAY. HATES BEING DISRESPECTED. LOVES TO DANCE, LAUGH. EXUDES LIGHT.

DAMON: A CAPRICORN. PROTECTIVE OF HIS QUEER FRIENDS, BUT MORE INVESTED IN THE OPINIONS OF OTHER MEN. HATES BEING THE CENTER OF ATTENTION, LOVES MUSIC, BEING OUTSIDE. EXUDES CALM.

BIG DOG: A LEO, OBVIOUSLY. COULD NOT GIVE LESS OF A FUCK ABOUT ANYONE EXCEPT SONNY AND DAMON. BELIEVES HE IS ALWAYS THE CENTER OF ATTENTION, AND ITS USUALLY TRUE. HATES BEING QUIET, CONTAINED, RESTRAINED. EXUDES MUSIC.

TALL FRIEND: GEMINI. KIND OF A HIVE MIND DUDE. GOOFY, ONLY CHILD. PLAYS BASKETBALL WITH SMALL AND DAMON. CONSIDERS THEM BROTHERS.

SMALL FRIEND: TAURUS. CONSIDERS HIMSELF IMPORTANT, REGAL. PLAYS BASKETBALL WITH TALL AND DAMON. THE ELDEST OF THREE SISTERS, CRAVES THE BROTHERHOOD OF DAMON AND TALL.

Spotlight on stage left. BIG DOG (17) enters the light. He's an appropriately large teenager, wearing cheap doggy ears and cheaper make-up. Besides the beat on his face he's a standard butch queen, and he speaks in staccato. His voice is booming and his charisma is commanding; he's been bred for the stage.

BIG DOG

Hey hello what's up y'all it's Big Dog here. Don't even ask honey, yes, I'm a man's best friend so you better keep an eye out. Keep a leash on him if you wanna, if not you gonna lose him. Yes ma'am on sight -- oh! Oh here she comes!

Spotlight on center stage. SONNY (17) enters the light, vouging. He is lithe and lively and his every step matches the rhythm of the city.

BIG DOG

Ms. Sonny like the Day! We exalt you baby, exalt you. Category is thug realness Sonny, give us hard. Serve something the girls need and that turns the boys on, okay?

His duck walk becomes unsteady, and he falls to the ground. Lights up on DAMON (18), stage right.

His hands cradle each other coolly below his core.
His chin raised defiantly. Shoulders wide. He
looks coldly to SONNY on the floor. Holds this
gaze for a moment.

BIG DOG

Ooh competition is fierce honey, serve or be served. Damon, the token heterosexual,
teaching us something about realness on this fine night. Tens across the board.

Breaking with a smile, DAMON reaches out to
help SONNY up. Easy laughter fills the stage as
the streetlights do. It is nighttime at the PIER,
completely empty except for the boys.

A conveyor belt along the front of the stage
begins to move, and the boys step on, talking
animatedly as they walk against its current.

SONNY

Whatever yo, thug realness is a dumb category anyway.

DAMON

Well it makes a lotta sense to me.

SONNY

Right...so what I said.

BIG DOG

Settle down girls, you both did wonderfully. Can't wait to see it on the stage one day. The
great house of --

SONNY

House of Sunlight!

BIG DOG

Yeah sunlight, or like daylight? Somewhere between Damon and Sonny.

Both look to Damon, but he's not listening. He
looks down, deep in thought.

SONNY

Don't pull a brain cell beloved, if you don't like the name just say so.

DAMON

I already told you I ain't going to no ball. Don't name that house after me and think you gonna see me in it.

BIG DOG

Damonn. Come on playa we gotta bag to catch. Alla us on this pier looking free tonight. Looking safe and at home.

SONNY

Safer.

BIG DOG

Right. Safer. We a team and that makes us safer.

DAMON

I'm safe enough. I worry about y'all more.

SONNY

What's that supposed to mean?

DAMON

It's just with all your --

(gesturing to SONNY's body)

that, you making yourself a target. People gonna try to fuck with you. All you got out there is Big Dog and you know he soft too.

SONNY

(gesturing to own body)

Don't worry about all of this, Damon. I made it through middle school so I can make it through anything.

BIG DOG

I know that's right.

SONNY

And I made it with y'all. Probably *because* of y'all.

(a beat, then, urgently)

We've walked so far together. Imagine how we could run.

SONNY reaches for him, DAMON moves away. Shaking his head, DAMON steps off conveyor belt. SONNY follows him, BIG DOG walks up ahead of them.

SONNY

Day...

(sighs)

Look, performance comes naturally to you. The other butch queens wouldn't have a chance, you can win money and we can go to parties with alcohol--

DAMON

I'm not like you, Sonny.

(a pause. Then, softer)

I love you, but I'm not like you.

DAMON sighs. He walks back onto the conveyor belt and SONNY follows. This time they stand still, letting the flow carry them offstage.

YEARS LATER

The boys are in their early 20s now. BIG DOG is mostly just around college buildings, but SONNY and DAMON are full time students at Pratt. Stage left, spotlight on BIG DOG, reading his texts aloud as he types them. He looks like he hasn't aged much and still wears dog themed clothing.

BIG DOG

Hey ladies. Just coming from brunch, can someone please please please please please swipe me into the dining hall. Prayer hands emoji, eyes emoji.

Spotlight on SONNY at stage right, texting back. She's only just started estrogen shots, but her hair done, nails done, everything did.

SONNY

How you coming from brunch still hungry? I could sell these swipes you know.

BIG DOG

Girl nobody wanna buy your stale ass swipes. That is your cross to bear, but out of the goodness in my heart I seek to help you. Honestly you're welcome.

SONNY

Damon, can you feed this man? I'm still on line.

BIG DOG

(singing)

AIN'T TO PROUD TO BE-EG. SWEET DARLIN'. PLEASE JUST FEED ME BOY.

BIG DOG sends this as a voice note. It plays out of SONNY's phone and she laughs, drawing the lights up on the full stage. SONNY is already in line at the cafeteria and its creeping forward at an infuriating pace.

DAMON appears, walking on the conveyor belt with some friends who are comically different sizes. They crack each other up.

SMALL FRIEND

One of her daughters she was like she wanted a pink room with a leather table, all this other shit. She's like seven--

TALL FRIEND

Sounds like her house is--

SMALL FRIEND

Yeah her house is huge, like its over oh my god.

TALL FRIEND

If you wanna be rich like that you just bougie. Like thats it. You just--

SMALL FRIEND

Yeahhh bougieeee! She is bougie. Why would you wanna be rich like that?

DAMON

I mean like.

(thoughtful pause)

Better question is what do you wanna be rich from?

TALL FRIEND

Oooooooh.

SMALL FRIEND

Oooooooh.

SONNY sees DAMON.

SONNY

Psst. Damon. Hey, Day.

DAMON catches SONNY's eye. His friends see.

SMALL FRIEND

Oh yikes bro. You talking to that?

DAMON

She's my friend.

His friends laugh, unkindly. DAMON, leaves the belt, walking to SONNY. His friends go to sit at a table in the back end of the stage, watching their conversation with glee.

DAMON

You're embarrassing me right now.

SONNY

Those stupid ass boys are not my problem. They your friends, for whatever reason. You too thug realness to answer texts now?

DAMON

Nah Son, its not like that. I just need a little space when we out like this.

SONNY

Out? Nigga you ain't never been out. Never been out with me thats for sure.

DAMON closes his eyes, taking a deep breath.
The line inches forward.

DAMON

Let's talk about this later.

SONNY

Whatever. Big Dog needs to be fed again somehow. I just was gonna ask you to run my card down to let him in.

A PAUSE.

DAMON

Uh, I don't think thats a good idea.

SONNY

What?

The line inches forward.

DAMON

Its just when you and Big get together, you get kind of like, loud. And like y'all just attract a lot of attention, and I just feel like it's pretty crowded in here and maybe you should just lay low for now? Big will survive with one less meal any--

SONNY

You're saying no? You won't let *our* friend in to *eat*. Because it would affect *you*?

DAMON

Uh, yeah.

The line inches forward. Sonny takes a deep breath.

SONNY

I don't know why I thought you were better than that.

SONNY finally gets her sandwich. She walks off stage and DAMON walks back to his friends table.

SONNY emerges on stage left next to BIG DOG. They greet each other warmly, and walk off stage.

SONNY and BIG DOG emerge back into the cafeteria from stage right, arms linked. DAMON watches from the background, chewing slowly. On the conveyor belt, SONNY starts vouting. BIG DOG gasses her up, calling like a ballroom commentator.

BIG DOG

Get it get it gat giddit gat gat gat. Kitty Kitty cat kitty cat cat cat. Gimme soma that soma that that that.

BIG DOG cuts the sandwich line and puts a couple in his pockets. He has everyones attention and he loves it. SONNY continues to dance, and BIG DOG heckles the crowd.

BIG DOG

Who wants a bite who wants a bite ah! Better get your money right, don't ask the price nah!

BIG DOG makes his way around to DAMONs table, stealing fries off TALL FRIENDS plate. SMALL FRIEND shoves BIG DOG, hard, and he slides across the floor. DAMON springs up, holding SMALL FRIEND back. SONNY stops walking, running to help BIG DOG up. DAMON and SONNY share a pained look before guiding their friends off stage. Opposite ends.

YEARS LATER

The stage seems to have been submerged underwater. We are in CLUB AFROSUNK, a premiere venue for balls, kikis, and other types of queer performance in Harlem. The sound of laughter fills stage, then music. The bodies follow, all beautiful and different and glittering. Wave after wave of guest appears, each dressed more aquatically than the last. A spot light cuts on in the center of the crowd, illuminating an empty pedestal. The crowd quiets, and turns to face it.

BIG DOG steps into the light. The crowd cheers. He's dressed, as always, like a dog.

BIG DOG

Come one come all, down down dowwwwwwn to the ball. Tonights theme is Under the Sea, first category is Fish realness. Who gonna who gonna swim? Who gonna who gonna win win win?

SONNY is brought onto the stage via the conveyor belt. She is giving us mermaid, with an extravagant sequin tail and jeweled face. She looks wise, this time walking without vouging. Her walk is elegant, smooth, feminine. Tens across the board. The crowd goes crazy.

BIG DOG

Anybody anybody else? Is there anybody anybody else? Who thinks they can be queen of the seas better than she? The glorious, overall mother, Sonny Daylight. House of Daylight is undefeated tonight ladies. Undefeated.

Sonny curtsies, stepping off the belt. Lights go down on stage and the party seems to freeze. People in the crowd start disappearing slowly, in pairs. Sonny remains motionless.

Spotlight on stage right, a streetlight. DAMON enters into the light, smoking a joint. Everything's cool for a minute, then, in the crowd, he sees something he doesn't like. TALL and SMALL emerge into the light behind DAMON, flanking him like bullies on a playground.

DAMON

Yo. Hey man what are you doing here? This our block. I don't wanna embarass you, so why don't you go on back where you came from.

(soft and dangerous)

Okay?

DAMON jumps at the crowd, the three men laugh.

SMALL FRIEND

Maan you make it look easy.

DAMON

Ain't nobody realer on this sidea the river. I been walking this pier since I was...young.

TALL FRIEND

Damn so a while then huh?

TALL and SMALL guffaw. DAMON is unamused. On the other side of the stage, everyone has disappeared except for SONNY and BIG DOG. In the dark, they regain motion, hugging each other goodbye. SONNY walks to the conveyor belt, and BIG DOG remains in the club. He looks uncharacteristically small.

DAMON

I'll catch up witchall. I gotta find a bathroom.

DAMON and SONNY both walk on the conveyor belt, maintaining distance from each other, but walking in the same direction - against the current. Lights up on BIG DOG, center stage. The silhouettes of DAMON and SONNY frame him.

BIG DOG

The question is not who are you, sweetie, we never asked you that. The question is who do you want to be? Cus ain't nobody we wanna be that we not already. Shh shht tutut! Don't tell me. Show me. Walk like you are who you say you are. Walk, and then run -- like you have somewhere to be. Like you have someone to be. You have SOMEONE to BE.

(deep breath, gathering)

Oh hey look, don't worry bout me baby, I don't need no walks. I'm a house dog. As real as it gets honey. So watch ya man because he might need him a lil companionship, ha!

(singing John Legend's "Refuge")

When its cold outside...

BIG DOG runs backwards offstage, as if yanked by the scruff of his neck. His singing can be heard in the distance. DAMON and SONNY continue to walk as the set transforms into two symmetrical bathrooms connected by a wall. Two different sinks are mounted opposite each other on the wall. Mirrors are mounted in the same place above them. DAMON enters bathroom, SONNY enters the other. They primp in the mirror, facing each other. SONNY touches up her make up, DAMON readjusts his durag. They both check their teeth. Grunt in satisfaction. Lights out on stage.