

LAST DOG STANDING - PILOT

by

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Note: This based on true events action series is designed to segue with a separate ASPCA Rescue Deployment Reality Series.

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as "Last Dog Standing" 2015

FADE IN:

CAPTION: *Dog Fighting is an animal Blood Sport to the death. It has two venues, city...and rural.*

INT. CHARLIE TUNNEL - DARK

YOUNG AMELL DOGE is nicknamed "DOG" because his last "e" is silent. An Army Ranger Sergeant, African-American, 19, in dirty tiger-stripe camos, is crawling through a tiny hand-dug tunnel. He stops to flick the spark-wheel of his steel 82nd Airborne lighter. His black shoulder-patch reads AIRBORNE SCOUT DOG - 42 PLT with a logo red patch underneath it, HELL ON PAWS. He lifts his nose, *sniffs* the air, and eyes narrow. He screws a vintage suppressor onto a 1973 9mm Browning then closes his lighter's lid back to darkness and waits. *Scraping* crawling noise gets closer and closer. Young Dog's muzzle-flash lights up the female face of V.C. SOLDIER, 15, with a surprised-look as her head implodes. Total darkness again.

YOUNG DOG (O.S.)
Nuthin' personal.

CAPTION: *Vietnam, 1973*

An old-style telephone begins *ringing*.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. RUNDOWN APARTMENTS AT NIGHT - FIFTY YEARS LATER

Same phone continues *ringing* in seedy garden apartments under a full moon. Its parking lot is full of snow-covered cars with dirty snow-piles plowed to one end. Rental Office neon letters V, A, C, Y are burnt-out, so sign flashes NO --CAN--.

CAPTION: *Three wars later*

INT. DOG'S APARTMENT BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Moonlight silhouettes old furniture draped by dirty clothes. A vintage rotary-style phone on bed's nightstand is *ringing*.

ADULT DOG, now in his 60s, is a retired K9 Sheriff with a drinking problem. A massive blob hidden under the covers, his hand snatches the receiver back under like a lizard-tongue.

DOG (O.S.)
Nuthin' personal.

MARY DOGE THOMAS, his estranged younger sister, is heard.

MARY (FILTERED)

Amell?

DOG (O.S.)

Mary? --Been a long ...

MARY (FILTERED)

She's gone!

Dog rises from under his Linus-blanket on an elbow. Now fat, out-of-shape, in a torn t-shirt with dirty matted hair and a greying scraggly beard, he looks like a homeless Black Santa.

DOG

Who's gone, Dave, I don't ...?

MARY (FILTERED)

That's right, you never did!

Dog grabs an old jelly-glass off the nightstand to sip its contents glancing at a vintage AM clock-radio. It's 3:00 a.m.

DOG

You woke me up this early, to tell me off this late?

MARY (FILTERED)

She disappeared tonight and ...!

DOG

"Tonight?!" Jesus sis, only been a couple of hours?

Dog yanks the receiver away from his ear wincing, puts it back listening, now hears only *dial-tone*, and hangs up.

DOG

Thanks for --reachin' out.

Dog grabs a half-full whiskey bottle off the nightstand and re-fills his glass. He turns on the AM-radio. Vintage static rock-music *plays*. He sips stoic scanning his "me-wall."

INT. DOG'S WALL COLLAGE WITH MUSIC - CONTINUOUS

PICTURES OF: Young Dog, 18, big smile, in new green fatigues, no flash, standing near a wooden sign reading, *42nd INFANTRY SCOUT DOG PLATOON*, with motto under, *IN FRONT OF THE REST*. Centered in smaller print under it is, *Ft. Benning, Ga.* Then Young Dog is standing beside a wooden sign reading, *Camp Eagle*. Painted under it is, *Phu Bai City - Vietnam*. Now a Private, Dog wears dirty fatigues and an Army green-bandana as a headband. He is kneeling with no smile hugging the neck of his black M.W.D. German Shepherd, LUCKY.

Next is a group-picture of Young Dog, now a Sergeant, posed with his PLATOON BUDDIES, all 19, dirty, with no smiles and M-16s slung, who stand beside their VARIOUS M.W.D. PARTNERS.

Wall ends on Law enforcement pictures, plaques, and trophies of ADULT DOG. He is now clean cut, in shape, smiling, in full Sheriff's uniform with black tactical gear labeled *Canine*. He is kneeling with a different black NEW GERMAN SHEPHERD.

Dog focuses in on a framed newspaper article of both him and his new Canine Partner. Caption reads "*DOG SAVED, K9 KILLED.*"

Dog stands and goes to trace a finger around its frame sad, then punches a fist through the drywall beside it.

DOG
Shoulda' been me --*both times.*

INT. DOG'S BEDROOM - NEXT NIGHT

Nightstand lamp is still on. Phone *rings* again. Dog shuffles in wearing an old robe, sipping a drink, and answers gruff.

DOG
Speak.

MARY (FILTERED)
(crying)

Dog sits on the bed's edge putting down his glass.

DOG
Hey, hey, sis --it's okay.

MARY (FILTERED)
No, it's not okay, okay?! Dave's gone, mom and dad are gone, my own brother's always been gone.

DOG
Contact your sheriff?

MARY
Yes, drove around all night, no one's seen her. She, Left, Me!

Mary *wails*. Dog grabs his whiskey bottle and stares at it. His lower lip curls. TURNING POINT. He puts the bottle down.

DOG
I'll leave in a couple of hours,
drive all day, be there late
tomorrow night. How you holding up?

MARY (FILTERED)

You, you're coming back? --Me? I haven't slept since, I keep ...

DOG

Sis, you need rest. Lay down, put the receiver on your pillow. I'll keep talking till I hear snoring.

MARY (FILTERED)

(snuggling pillow)

I, don't, snore?

DOG

Not what Dave said.

MARY (FILTERED)

(breathing slows)

Why didn't --you like Dave?

DOG

Sis? Mary?

(no response, whispers)

Was coming to his funeral, for you.

But I hate 'em, so got drunk. When

I came to, it was too --. I got

angry, then ashamed, so stayed

away. Sorry I wasn't there for you.

Mary is heard *snoring* through his phone. Dog lays receiver on nightstand, reaches to turn the lamp off, and sees himself in the wall mirror. He throws his bottle at mirror breaking both. Dog sits *breathing heavy* like a cornered animal.

DOG

Am now.

EXT. DOG'S DRIVING MONTAGE - ALL NEXT DAY

Dog drives his filthy vintage convertible car with top up from morning to dusk through cities and countrysides wearing Vietnam-green sunglasses, old jeans, and faded Army BDU with 1975 Ranger patches, Master Sergeant patch, 70's Indochina campaign ribbons, and an Army *Expert* badge with *Pistol* clasp.

EXT. DOG'S HOMETOWN OUTSKIRTS - DUSK SAME DAY

His car's convertible top is now down with its boot-cover on.

Dog drives on a two-lane winding country road. He pulls over to stare overtop his sunglasses at a *Welcome To* sign.

DOG

"Welcome to" --bumfuck. What the fuck, is this bum doing here?

Dog laughs crazy doing a *drum-beat* on his steering wheel.

DOG

Drivin' my daisy, 'cause there ain't no airport!

Dog grabs a near-empty whiskey bottle laying beside him, toasts the sign, then drives on one-handed sipping and "barking" like a *Saint Bernard*.

DOG

A-roo Roo, A-roo Roo, etc.

EXT. DOG'S HOMETOWN MAIN STREET - LATER THAT NIGHT

Dog drives past a Newspaper office, Sheriff's Department, and Barber Shop. He toasts the town *slur-singing* a nursery song.

DOG

"This old Dog came roooolling
hooooooooome!"

Dog hits his car's diesel *air-horns*. They sound like a *Mack* truck. He drives on *laughing* and pounding on steering wheel.

EXT. MARY'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Dog parks at a quaint small house with a white picket fence. He exits wearing green-black Vietnam-era Jungle Boots. He trips over the curb and looks back at it *mumble-cursing*. He walks on then sees a note on the front door and reads aloud.

MARY (V.O.)

"Still missing, at Diner."

Dog crumples note angry and throws it. He walks to his car, stops, then re-traces his steps to police his own trash.

INT. MARY'S DINER - LATER SAME NIGHT

Dog enters a 1950-style restaurant and sits at the counter.

MARY, his sister, African-American, 50s, matronly in a floral dress with a waitress apron over-top, waits on BOOTH CUSTOMERS.

Standing behind the counter wiping it down is DESTINY, 20s, African-American, in a cowgirl-shirt with a waitress apron over-top. She thinks Dog is a vagrant.

DESTINY
Sorry, sweetie, no hand-outs.
Would you like some water?

DOG
Rather have Mary.

DESTINY
I'm your Destiny.

DOG
Mary's my sister.

DESTINY
Oh, I thought --?
(grabs coffee urn)
Hey Mary, it's your bruth-er!

Mary's eyes are blood-shot as she head-motions Destiny to take her Booth Customers. She excuses herself and runs to Dog. He stands. They hug. He lets go, but Mary hangs on, so he re-hugs. She squeezes, then pushes him away whispering.

MARY
Heard what you said last night.

Mary's look hardens. She punches Dog in his stomach.

MARY
That's for missing Dave's Service!

DOG
(doubled-over)
Oooooof! Hate to think what you'd
have done, if you hadn't heard me?

Mary throws her arms around Dog's neck hugging too tight.

MARY
I miss her so much!

Dog pats her back awkward. He was never really a big brother.

DOG
And me?

Mary steps back primping her hair, then punches Dog in the stomach much harder doubling him over again.

MARY
Want something to eat?

DOG
(doubled-over in pain)
Sand--wich?

MARY
B.L.T., wheat toast, mustard only?

Dog straightens-up rubbing his big sore belly.

DOG
Awww, you remembered.

MARY
You're my favorite brother.

DOG
I'm your only brother.

MARY
That's what I said?

INT. MARY'S KITCHEN - NOW MIDNIGHT

Small and tidy with a basement-door in corner. Curtains hang over sink's window and half-window on outside-door. It opens.

Mary enters *sniffing*. Dog enters behind her holding a faded 1973 Army duffle bag covered with Far East foreign flags. He drops it on the floor to sound of *clinking* bottles inside.

DOG
Take a chair, Mary.

Mary throws a chair-pillow. Dog tilts head so it misses him.

MARY
You only came back because of her!

DOG
Please, sis, sit.

Mary *stomps* a foot, then sits angry at the small round table.

Dog sits opposite her and slides the table's flower vase over so he can see her. He raises an eyebrow at her, *And?*

MARY
We were out in the front yard, the
phone rang, guess a wrong number.
When I went back out --

Mary jumps-up frantic, turns left then right, can't decide.

Dog stands and grabs Mary hugging her tight as she squirms.

DOG

Sis, Mary, no, you're not to blame.

MARY

(pushes away angry)

How would you know?! You never called once to check up on us!

DOG

Is she chipped?

MARY

(re-sits thinking)

Town's so small, didn't think was needed? But I did put her name and our phone number on the collar!

DOG

Tell you what, you draw-up a flyer and I'll make copies, then we can post them tomorrow. Sound good?

MARY

Have to open the diner? But Destiny is off, she could help! You really think she's okay?

DOG

(lies)

Absolutely, positively.

MARY

And you, are you okay? I smell the booze. Fall off your wagon again?

DOG

Wheels come off now and then --put them back on best I can.

EXT. THE TOWN'S ANIMAL SHELTER - NEXT MORNING

Tiny run-down stand-alone building on the outskirts of town. One rusted old pick-up truck is parked at its end. A paper hand-written sign in the window reads "*Animol Sheller.*"

Dog parks with car's top still down wearing same clothes. He reads the window's sign and shakes his head.

DOG

Home school without the schoolin'?

Destiny is his passenger, now in a different cowgirl shirt, chewing a bubblegum cud. Dog stares ahead.

DOG
Been in town long?

DESTINY
Couple a' months.

DOG
What brought you?

DESTINY
Greyhound.

DOG
Funny. From what or whom?

DESTINY
"Whom?!" Aren't you a fancy-pants.
Mary said you were an ex-cop. Hard
to let go of being suspicious, huh?

DOG
The hard way.

Dog exits car and enters the building. Destiny follows carrying an 8 x 10 flyer and a staple-gun.

INT. ANIMAL SHELTER - CONTINUOUS

Dog and Destiny enter an unfurnished bare lobby. Dog *dings* its counter-bell. CANINES in back *bark*. No one shows.

Destiny *dings* bell harder. Same canines now *bark* louder.

FOREST (O.S.)
Hold yer horsies!

FOREST, 40s, thin and bald Caucasian Redneck with a hairlip, enters from the back room in a dirty smock with a *Warden* nameplate. He is chewing tobacco. He eyes Dog as homeless.

FOREST
Need a haircut, hippy?

DOG
Need a lip-tuck, lippy?

Both lean forward to glare at each other.

DESTINY
Got any Beagles?

FOREST
Nope, just strays. Mutts mostly,
nope, no breeds, never ever.

DOG

Nice speech, been practicing it long?

FOREST

Maybe. And you be?

DOG

Name's Amell D, o, g, e, but my "e" is silen ...

FOREST

Your sis sure ain't! Already done called here a bunch a' times.

DOG

She's understandably --upset.

FOREST

Well "understandably" this, I won't never forget her name, *uh-uh*, or your ugly face, *duh-uh*. See?

Dog forms fists *cracking* all eight knuckles.

DOG

Wanna' see way past beauty --beast?

Destiny removes her gum to give a loud two-finger *whistle*.

Dog and Forest look at her. She puts her gum back in.

DESTINY

You two finished flexin' fearsome?

Destiny *pops* a bubble angry, then fake-flirts with Forest.

DESTINY

Okay if I put up my flyer, please?

Forest relaxes, then shrugs. Destiny goes to a cork bulletin-board having one other flyer and staples-up her poster. It has a picture of an older white Beagle-face with *MISSING* above and *REWARD* below with "*ANSWERS TO TOMMIE*" beside it. Mary's contact information is at the flyer's bottom.

Dog leans-in to read the board's other flyer. It's child-like hand-written in magic-marker as "*NATE'S SERVIZE - Freindlee.*"

DOG

This guy do your signs too?

FOREST

You a comedy man or a dick-tective?

Forest spits thick black juice into a spittoon, *ding*.

FOREST

Got a good barber in town if you
wanna lose the "Bad Santa" look.

DOG

(thinks, nods)
That's a good central gathering
place. Sure. What's it called?

DESTINY/FOREST

Frank's.

Dog and Destiny exit. Their car *starts* and drives away.

Forest goes to his bulletin-board to read Destiny's Tommy-
poster. He *sneezes* on it, *recovers*, *yanks* her poster off, and
blows his nose in it. He *crumples* it up.

FOREST

Damn fereigners.

INT. FRANK'S BARBERSHOP - LATER SAME DAY

Dog enters the two-seater tonsorium. Over-door bell *dings*.

FRANK ALBO, 50s, comb-over, paunch, round-shouldered, wearing
a Barber's Frock, is meek and prone to over-talking. He sits
in a barber-chair reading the local newspaper. He jumps-up,
pulls barber-towel off a shoulder, and *slaps* his seat clean.

FRANK

Yes sir, closest shave in town!

DOG

(sits)
Only shaver in town. Trim beard.
Shorten hair. One inch only.

FRANK

Always good to cut-off loose ends.

Frank throws a black cutting-cape over Dog.

FRANK

Shampoo? For you, half-price.

DOG

"Half?!" Sure, then ponytail it.

Frank spins the chair 180° and drops its seat-back too fast
so Dog hits the back of his head on Salon Sink's rim, *thunk*.

FRANK
Passin' through?

Dog rubs the back of his hurt head studying Frank.

DOG
Do that again, and I'll be passin'
out. Name's D, o, g, e, but ...

FRANK
Yeah, yeah, e is silent, Mary lives
here you know. So you're her long
lost brother, thought you was dead.

DOG
Then I'd really be silent.

Both *laugh*. Frank lathers Dog's hair making an icky-face.

FRANK
So what brings you back to life?

DOG
A gift I gave her years ago went
missing. She called me and ...

FRANK
We gots a coyote problem you know.

DOG
Thought they only preyed on cats?

FRANK
(rinse and repeat)
One even came up on a porch and
took a puppy last Summer.

DOG
Ahhh man, that's awful.

Frank starts to reply, but his door opens so merchant bell
dings. Destiny enters *snapping* gum.

DESTINY
Posted at the Grain And Feed, Post
Office, Stop-n-Shop, and the Bank.
Rest are on pecker poles.

FRANK
Rest a' what?

Destiny hands Frank her last poster then falls in one of two
customer-chairs dropping her staple-gun on the coffee table.
She grabs a magazine off the table to flip through its pages.

DESTINY
Wanted posters.

FRANK
Need a permit for that.

Frank doesn't look at the flyer and floats it in a trashcan.

Dog jumps out of his chair to retrieve flyer then re-sits straightening its paper out under his cape.

DOG
"Permit?!" Who permitted that stupid ordinance?

FRANK
"Stupid" Sheriff.

DESTINY
Gonna' make Dog look "purty?"

DOG
Good luck with that.

All Three *laugh*. Frank studies Dog like a sculptor.

FRANK
Let's shoot for --presentable.

DOG
Let's not shoot --at all.

Destiny makes a finger-gun at Frank, then drops her thumb *popping* a loud bubble.

Frank grabs his chest stepping back like "shot."

Destiny and Frank *laugh*. Dog doesn't.

INT. TOWN'S SHERIFF DEPARTMENT - LATER SAME DAY

Dog, hair now clean and ponytailed with beard shapened, enters the small police station lobby.

JAMES BARNES, African-American, 40s, in Deputy tan-uniform, is reading Frank's same newspaper with both feet on a desk behind the counter. He jumps up smiling, then "eyes" Dog.

BARNES
Need help, Flower Child?

DOG
All I can get --Miss Tibbs.

Dog flip-opens a badge-case showing a *Retired Sheriff* badge.

BARNES
Retired Sheriff, you, what locale?

DOG
Mayberry.

BARNES
Funny. And you're in front of me
because --?

DOG
My sister lives here and ...

Barnes grabs a pad and pencil with professional detachment.

BARNES
Name?

DOG
D, o, g, e, but ...

BARNES
(slams pencil on counter)
Tell her to stop calling here every
hour on the hour!

DOG
Well, was going to apologize if
she'd been a nuisance, but now --
(leans-in menacing)
you just pissed me off, off-i-cer.

BARNES
(leans in glaring back)
Anything else, buddy?

DOG
Don't know, bud-dee, what with your
"don't care" attitude.

BARNES
Don't know, don't care, sounds
about right.

DOG
Might wanna' try doing both, son.
Makes the job go down easier.

BARNES
Ask your question or leave!

DEXTER TOWNSEND, Caucasian 50s, Redneck beer-gut, in full Sheriff uniform, exits his office sipping from a large coffee mug. He looks Dog up and down, then to Barnes.

BARNES

Mary's brother, won't say why.

DOG

Didn't get that far Sheriff, we're too busy having a pissing contest.

SHERIFF

That so? Well --

(sips coffee detached)

just don't lift a leg on me.

Dog and Sheriff *laugh*, then shake hands. Barnes watches.

DOG

Fair 'nough. I'm here helping my sister find her lost pet.

SHERIFF

After she called, we patrolled the entire town. Nuthin'. Try the town's rescue?

DOG

First place I went this morning, but ole' Poindexter there don't exactly instill confidence.

BARNES

You mean --the Sheriff's cousin?

DOG

(apologetic to Sheriff)

Ahhh man, sorry. Anyway I could go out and come back in?

SHERIFF

Have to come back in?

All Three *chuckle*.

SHERIFF

Nah, it's all good. He couldn't find a job so my sister said "make 'im one!" And, well, family, can't shoot 'em, right?

DOG

Not legally. Town's barber said we need a permit for "lost flyers."

SHERIFF

Frank said that, huh?

DOG

"Frank," yeah, okay, but I mean, is there like a form to fill-out or do you just issue verbal approval?

SHERIFF

Now, now, no need to put up papers that'll blow all over. I decide what our townsfolk need to know.

DOG

Really?! How, con-ven-i-ent. Well, pleased to meet you, Sheriff --?

SHERIFF

Townsend, Dexter. Friends call me Dex. You can call me --Sheriff.

Dog shakes Sheriff's hand again, then extends same hand to Barnes who puts both behind his back. Dog's eyes narrow.

DOG

Careful about not caring, Deputy. Bad habit --for a good cop.

Dog exits. Screen door *bangs* closed behind him.

Barnes winces.

INT. TOWN'S NEWSPAPER OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Dog enters a small newspaper storefront lobby. Wooden desk and chair with phone. Supply boxes everywhere, but no one is present. He waits, then opens and closes door again, *loud*.

SOFIA SANTIAGO, Hispanic, 40s, attractive, long black hair, enters from the back wiping her hands on an ink-stained rag.

SOFIA

Pesaroso. Thought you were a student.

DOG

Hola, cómo estás. You teach?

SOFIA

'Estoy bien, gracias. Sí, part-time Journalism, down at City College.

(offers her hand)

Sofia Santiago, owner, editor, reporter, typesetter, and --

They shake. Dog releases to see his hand is now covered with her ink. Embarrassed, she hands him her rag to wipe it off.

SOFIA

Janitor.

DOG

Renaissance woman. Run this as a full-page ad, por favor.

Dog hands her back the rag and earlier flattened-out Tommie-poster. She looks at Tommie's picture cooing.

SOFIA

Aaawww, él es lindo.

INT. MARY'S KITCHEN - THAT NIGHT

Dog, wearing apron, prepares a spaghetti dinner on the stove. A new open whiskey bottle is beside him on the counter.

Destiny, dressed-same, mixes salad in a bowl with fixings.

Mary enters kitchen door from work and notices Dog's apron.

MARY

Nice outfit. Do windows?

DOG

Thought you might like someone waiting on you for a change.

MARY

(sniffs air)

Spaghetti, sauce cooked in, more on top, lots of Parmesan. Right?

Destiny puts a bowl of rolls in a cloth napkin on the table.

DESTINY

With garlic bread and Caesar Salad.

MARY

That was Dave's favorite.

(spins angry to Dog)

Hey ass-wipe, why didn't you like my husband?!

DOG

(drops head, *not again*)

I "liked" him, sis. It's just that, this was our home growing up.

(goes back to cooking)

I'm glad you kept it, but it's got a lot of memories for me. So when he started telling me what to do in it, well --didn't sit too well.

MARY

He just asked you to take your shit out of our basement?

DOG

"Our" basement. Yeah, well, bad timing, on his part.

Mary picks up a dinner roll and throws it at Dog who moves his head without looking. Her roll hits upper cabinet door and falls into his cooking sauce. Destiny is horrified.

DESTINY

Mary?!

DOG

It's okay, she's always throwing stuff at me.

Dog picks her roll out of the sauce and begins eating it.

DESTINY

Dog?!

MARY

That why you didn't come to his funeral, got drunk instead?!

DOG

Already been to too many. Again, bad timing, on his part.

Mary picks up another roll to throw, but Destiny holds her back taking it while changing the subject.

DESTINY

Mary said you were in the Vietnam Conflict?

DOG

"Conflict?!"

(gags, swallows roll)

Yeah, we were all "conflicted." But it was a war, good people died bad. We were mostly teens. Kids really.

DESTINY

Mary said the Army trained you as a Scout Handler. That why you became a Canine Officer?

DOG

You two closer than I thought.

MARY

She doesn't mean to be nosey. I've talked about you, so she's curious.

Dog uses side of a butcher knife to crush a garlic clove, then uses knife to slide crushed garlic in his sauce.

DOG

Know what they say about that.

DESTINY

What happened to your pet?

DOG

Partner!

Dog uses knife to cut-up an onion with fast precision, then uses its side to slide onion into sauce and stir with knife.

DOG

We were Ordered to leave our "equipment" behind. Brass lied to us, said our "partners" had a disease, made us --abandon them.

DESTINY

That's so sad. How many?

MARY

Three thousand eight hundred.

DESTINY

That many?! What color was yours?

DOG

Black is an unlucky color in that country. They kill them.

(snort-chuckles)

Good thing I named him, Lucky.

Dog stabs his knife into the cutting-board splattering its sauce, then spins to them furious.

DOG

Like the other Teams, V.C. put a bounty on our heads! But he saved hundreds of G.I.'s lives as a Scout, saved my ass more than once, and we, I, I --!

MARY

Then you know how "I" feel.

Dog goes emotionless. Mary tears-up. Destiny changes topic.

DESTINY

How long did you work with a canine partner at your Sheriff department?

DOG

Seven wonderful years.

DESTINY

And it took a bullet for you?

Dog *back-kicks* a lower cabinet door with his heel, hard.

Mary and Destiny are startled.

DOG

We breed them to be so loyal and loving, even when we mistreat them, they forgive us thinking it's their fault --and keep coming back.

MARY

Tommie's not "coming back," is she?

Dog shrugs shoulders, then grabs his whiskey bottle. Mary takes it away and hugs him. He tries to push her away, but she holds on. They really do care for each other.

DESTINY

(clasps hands to chest)

She brought you both back together.

Spaghetti water *boils* over its pot. The bubbling-burning *sound* turns into that of an antique film projector *whirring*.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. HOME MOVIE MONTAGE - 1973 TO RECENT

Black-and-white Vietnam archived news-footage of U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Handlers, in uniforms, working "In Country" with their various breed M.W.D.s. Then Young Dog and his Platoon Buddies release their Partners on the tarmac and board a cargo plane home. All watch out plane's windows as their Partners run after them *barking*. Handlers break down except Young Dog who is watching Lucky run with others. He puts a hand on his window and pantomimes "*Nuthin' personal.*"

These black-and-white Vietnam images now MORPH to colorized. In color, Adult Dog, now high-n-tight, clean-shaven and in shape, hands a BEAGLE PUPPY with a bow to YOUNGER MARY who plays in her front yard. Younger Mary grows older into Adult Mary as the Puppy grows into TOMMIE. Lots of hugs and kisses.

RETURN TO.

INT. TOWN'S ANIMAL SHELTER - PRESENT NEXT MORNING

Dog enters wearing his BDU and camo-pants with same ponytail. He *dings* counter-bell, then cocks head listening. No barking. Forest enters from back room wiping hands on a dingy towel.

DOG
Vets don't know why they bark, but they always do. Except now?

FOREST
County Ordinance says adopt-out after ninety-six hours.

DOG
"Ninety-six?!" What idiot ...?

FOREST
"Idiot" Sheriff.

Dog is speechless. Forest sees and smiles a crooked smile.

FOREST
Don't fret, some rancher takes any leftovers to his Sanctuary.

DOG
An animal shelter with no animals? Surprised taxpayers pay for that?

FOREST
Don't. We're funded, private-like.

DOG
How's that work?

FOREST
"That" rancher.

DOG
"Leftovers, sanctuary," a wealthy patron --wow. What's his name?

FOREST
Confidential, pally.

Dog thumbs over his shoulder to the bulletin board.

DOG
Our flyer "confidential" too, pally-wally?

FOREST
Must have fallen down.

Dog exits out backwards back-kicking the door open.

DOG
Kinda' like you.

Forest goes to the window to watch Dog drive away, *sneezes*, yanks *Nate's* flyer off the board, and blows his nose in it.

FOREST
You should fall --permanent-like.

INT. FRANK'S BARBERSHOP - LATER SAME DAY

Dog enters dressed same. Its door's merchant bell *dings*.

Frank, in frock and Barber Chair, reads newspaper as before.

FRANK
Find the bitch?

DOG
(tilts head surprised)
You never looked at the poster, so how do you know her sex?

FRANK
What? Uh, 'cause I know everyone and everything in this town. Why?

Dog falls into other barber-chair with a big wide-eyed grin.

DOG
Hey, ain't that somethin', about your shelter always being empty?

FRANK
How do you know how I live?

DOG
What, no? I'm talking about your animal-less animal shelter. Some rich rancher takes them all in.

FRANK
Pets? Don't know, don't care, never had one.

DOG
"Never?!" Parents never gave you a turtle, goldfish --pet rock?

FRANK
Just a hard time.

Both *laugh*.

DOG

Well, since you know "everyone,"
who is this fat-cat zookeeper?

FRANK

You mean Warden Forest?

DOG

"Forest?!" Forest, should have
guessed. No, his boss.

FRANK

You need to move on.

DOG

Excuse me?

FRANK

"You need to move on" --to the
sink, if you want another shampoo.

DOG

Still wanna' make me "look purty?"

FRANK

Good luck with that!

Both *laugh*. Frank stands. Dog sits in Frank's chair.

DOG

Sure, why not? Keep the ponytail.
Only a lil' shorter, just a little.

Dog holds a hand behind his head as Frank spins the chair.

INT. SHERIFF DEPARTMENT - LATER SAME DAY

Barnes is not present. Sheriff, in a freshly-pressed uniform,
stands reading newspaper on the counter sipping from his huge
coffee mug with large printed letters, *Cops Love A Big Bust*.

Dog enters with a shorter braided-ponytail and beard shorter.

Sheriff glances, then back to reading paper, sipping coffee.

DOG

Nicer look.

SHERIFF

Back atcha'.

DOG

You're fast.

SHERIFF

Try not to be.

DOG

Talking about our "Missing" flyers. They're missing? Awful, expeditious of you.

SHERIFF

(spit-takes coffee)

Uuu-eee, there's a big-city word!

(wipes chin)

Gonna' have to carry a dictionary around you, boy.

(*snap-finger* points)

Dave! Mary's husband. Died, oh, must be going on five year now. Didn't see you at his funeral?

DOG

Great memory, both times. Yeah, bad timing --on my part.

SHERIFF

Why you still here?

DOG

Excuse me?

SHERIFF

Nope, don't think I will.

DOG

(shakes head to clear)

Was wondering if been any roadside kills, could've been hit by a ...

SHERIFF

Nope. You leaving soon?

DOG

Nope, promised to stay till we find her. Oh, outta' curiosity ...

SHERIFF

Know what they say about that.

DOG

What, yeah, no, seriously --who's this Pied Piper of pets?

SHERIFF

Come again?

DOG

Your county's canine connoisseur.

SHERIFF

Say which?

DOG

Guy who takes in all the strays.

SHERIFF

Excuse me?

DOG

"Nope, don't think I will."

(turns to leave)

Thanks for the support.

SHERIFF

But I didn't --did I?

Dog quick-turns to *snap-finger* point at Sheriff.

DOG

You're right, you're not that fast.

Dog exits walking backwards. Screen door *bangs* shut behind.

SHERIFF

Only thing missing --is him.

EXT. BINOCULAR VIEW OF FRANK'S BARBERSHOP - LATER THAT DAY

Frank peers out his door's window, then flips its *OPEN* sign over to big clock-hands on back showing "*Back In One Hour.*" He exits carrying a 1950's doctor's satchel, locks the door, and gets in a luxury car parked at curb having a windshield sunscreen of capital letters "*FOR A CLOSE SHAVE, SEE FRANK.*"

Frank folds-up the sunscreen, *starts* car, and drives away.

INT. DOG'S CAR - SIMULTANEOUS

Dog sits in his now clean car with convertible top up and engine off a block away. He is watching Frank through new micro-binoculars with its price-tag still hanging. Dog pulls down binoculars, sees the tag, and yanks it off. He *starts* the car, then puts on his Vietnam dark-green sunglasses.

DOG

How close a shave --Frank?

Dog follows Frank at a distance.

EXT. BINOCULAR VIEW OF NATE'S GAS STATION - LATER SAME DAY

Rusted, falling-down, two-pump gas station at edge of town.

NATE WILDER, 40s, thin, 1950-crewcut, in a soiled jumpsuit, exits his office followed by Frank who brushes off Nate's shoulders, then drops his neck duster in doctor's bag. They shake hands, then Frank drives away.

INT. DOG'S CAR - IMMEDIATELY

Dog's car is parked on a hill above the gas station with its top down and boot cover on. Dog watches through binoculars.

DOG

A barber --who makes house calls?

Dog puts down earlier binoculars to *start* his car.

DOG

Put on your shoes, kids --we're at Gramma's.

EXT. NATE'S GAS STATION - MOMENTS LATER

Dog drives over the station's bell-hose. It *dings* twice. He parks at a dirty gas pump, exits, and pumps in ten dollars.

Nate exits Service Bay wiping his hands on a red mechanic's rag. He admires Dog's car. Dog reads his name-tag as, *Nate*.

NATE

Nice car. Sellin'?

DOG

Buyin'. Listen, uh, "Nate," I've been driving around better part of an hour looking for some Farmer Brown who's got land for sale.

NATE

Hear tell got some two mountains over.

DOG

No, seriously. I was getting my hair cut and Frank said some rancher who takes in all the shelter's strays has some to sell.

NATE

Frank talks too much.

Dog hits Nate on the back way too friendly. Nate is wary.

DOG
Uuuu-eeee! That he do, son, he
surely do.

Dog puts back the pump-nozzle, then locks-on car gas-cap.

NATE
You a' agent?

DOG
"Agent?" Oh, real estate. Nah, this
is for me. So what's Rockefeller's
real name and where be his estate?

NATE
Can't help you, stranger. Not now,
not never.

DOG
So Frank's wrong?

NATE
Not usually.

DOG
Then sorry to bother you.

NATE
Smartest thing said all day.

Dog hands Nate a folded-twice twenty-dollar bill. Nate pulls
and *pops* the bill, then stuffs it and both hands in his pants
pockets. He smiles big showing-off his two gold front teeth.

NATE
Don'ts got change.

DOG
Then you owe me. But be advised --
(gets in car, smiles big)
I always collect, what's due me.

Dog starts car, *revs* engine twice, and burns-rubber leaving.

Nate fans away Dog's smoke watching the car go up a hill,
then flips *The Bird* after it, and runs into his office.

INT. DOG'S CAR - SIMULTANEOUS

Dog sees Nate in his rear-view mirror flip him off.

DOG
And fuck you too very much. Bet
you're calling your boss right now.
Right, Natey-baby?

Dog dead-stares out his windshield, then shakes head.

DOG

Something's not right in Kansas,
ToTo. Gonna' have to sniff out the
truth the old fashioned Dog way.

Dog tilts his head back and *Bloodhound* barks.

DOG

Owu, owu, owu, owu, owu, owu, etc!

Dog *laughs*, then drinks from bottle driving one-eyed.

INT. DOG'S CAR - LATER THAT DAY

Dog drives up a dirt road, stops, looks at a highway map marked with hand-made red X's, then looks up scanning the area. He sniffs the air, then *growls*.

DOG

Woof.

Dog drives on.

EXT. WALSH RANCH - MOMENTS LATER

Dog drives to a closed gate of an eight-foot-high chain-link fence topped with razor-wire, stops, and *taps* his air-horn.

REDNECK ONE, Hispanic, 30s, in a straw cowboy hat and jeans, exits out a rusted school bus made into a house-trailer nearby and walks to Dog cautious.

REDNECK ONE

What up, geezer-rider?

DOG

The Sun, the Moon, just different
times. I'm looking for --Sanctuary.

REDNECK ONE

Sank, what?!

Redneck One's walkie-talkie in his hand comes on. BOBBY WALSH squawks over it.

WALSH (FILTERED)

Who's disturbin' my see-esta!

Redneck One jumps, then keys his radio on.

REDNECK ONE

Mister Walsh, stranger's here
asking about a, a statue 'airy?

WALSH (FILTERED)

Statue, what?!

Dog hand-motions to Redneck One, *Give*. Redneck One glares,
then hands his radio to Dog who *keys* it.

DOG

I'm developing land, heard you have
some to sell.

WALSH (FILTERED)

Land Developer?!
(radio keys off, on again)
Let 'im pass.

Dog hands radio back to Redneck One who opens gate and waves
Dog through, then closes his gate spitting after Dog's car.

EXT. WALSH'S PARKING GRASS - MOMENTS LATER

Dog parks in a grass field on the side of a two-story Ranch
House by a huge Satellite dish. He exits to see a broken
toilet, old tires, and a rusted-out junker near the fencing.
He focuses-in on a large oak growing just outside the fence.

DOG

High security, for a junk yard?

Bobby Walsh, Caucasian, 60s, in new cowboy clothes, stands at
the side of his freshly-painted white front porch watching.

WALSH

Mint Julep?!

DOG

(spins to Walsh)
Fresh spearmint?!

WALSH

Any other kind?!

DOG

Muddled?!

WALSH

Any other way?!

Dog walks up on porch. They shake hands, then both sit in
matching white wicker-rockers. Walsh picks up radio off
matching wicker table and keys it.

WALSH

Two Juleps --not too tart!
(to Dog)
How much land?

DOG

Well, I'm new in town, looking to
buy my own place, and everybody
said you have the biggest spread.

WALSH

"Every, body?"

DOG

Sheriff, Frank, Forest.

WALSH

Oh, so you're the feller that
stopped by my shelter twice.

DOG

Your shelter? Then yes sir. I was
considering getting a pet, but --
(*laugh-snorts*)
you gots 'em all!

REDNECK TWO, 30s, with a goatee, exits house carrying a
silver tray with two pewter cups and presents them.

Dog picks up his cup two-handed by its bottom and top edge.

WALSH

Sees you knows how to drink Julep,
proper-like.

DOG

Sees you know how to serve Julep
"proper-like" --silver and pewter.
(raises cup for toast)
Don't think you need --my money.

WALSH

Prob'ly right. But then a'gin --
(tilts cup to Dog)
cain't never have, too much.

Both *laugh* then sip as Walsh gives Dog the once-over.

WALSH

Dressed as you be, ain't here to
buy no land.

DOG

No, really, I am --one acre.

WALSH
(*spit-takes*)
"One?!"

DOG
For a cabin, I just love Nature.

WALSH
And my nature is suspicious of any
that likes livin' like a ani-mule.

DOG
Speaking of, was hoping you might
have an extra canine to give away.
You know, free to good home?

WALSH
"Free?!" Nuthin's free in this
cruel world. You has to take it.

Walsh grabs thin air in a fist, then squeezes it hard.

DOG
You mean, "earn it?"

WALSH
I mean, "mean" it! Unfortunately --
(sips, smacks lips)
I screens all new owners and you
don't pass my only requirement.

DOG
Which is?

WALSH
I trust 'em.
(holds cup for toast)
Asses-up!

They *clink* their cups, then both chug while glaring one-eyed
around their goblets at each other.

INT. MARY'S DINER - LATER SAME DAY

Dog enters, then freezes not liking what he sees.

REDNECK THREE, light-skinned African-American with freckles,
30s, shaved-bald, wearing a denim shirt and jeans, sits at
the counter hitting-on Destiny.

REDNECK THREE
Hey sweet-cheeks, for the last
time, when we going out?

DESTINY

Only in your sinking dreams, love-boat.

REDNECK THREE

There, right there, see how you keep leading me on? Gonna' happen sooner or later. How 'bout sooner!

Redneck Three grabs Destiny and pulls her in. She struggles.

REDNECK THREE

Pickin's slim in these here parts, I'm all the man, you'll ever get.

MARY

Swine is more like it.

REDNECK THREE

(spins to Mary)

You calling me a pig, piglet?

MARY

And a bore. Let, her, go.

REDNECK THREE

She may be acting madder than a wet hen, but she's swimmin' in it.

Destiny struggles more. Mary glares at Dog, *Do something.*

Dog goes to the Juke Box to read its selections. He talks to Redneck Three over his shoulder.

DOG

Ya' know, a real man knows what "No" means, and always treats a lady like one.

Redneck Three spins on his stool angry to Dog.

REDNECK THREE

Go away ya' bum, 'fore I gives ya' the bum's rush!

DOG

Know the difference between being ignorant and just plain stupid?

Dog presses a selection button, *click*, then turns to see Redneck Three is confused-silent with a "*duh*" look.

DOG

So, that would be a "no."

A record *scratches* on, then plays a *Beach-Boy* surfing song.

Redneck Three releases Destiny who runs to Mary who whispers.

MARY

Watch this.

Redneck Three stands *cracking* all eight knuckles. He's tall.

Dog wags a pointer-finger back-and-forth up in his face.

DOG

Uh-uh-uh. I know what you're thinking, that I'm old and fat.

(Santa-laugh)

And you'd be right!

(mean, serious)

But don't confuse that --with being weak, or slow.

Redneck Three swings at Dog who ducks and sidekicks Three's kneecap backwards dropping him flat on his stomach. Dog jumps on Three's back in surfer-pose and *sings* along with record.

RECORD/DOG

"Surfin' is the only life the only way for me, now surf *ba-bump* surf!"

REDNECK THREE

Surf the fuck off me!

Redneck Three tries to push up but Dog jumps up and back down flattening him, then *sings* more while still in surfer-pose.

RECORD/DOG

"We'll do the Surfer's Stomp, it's the latest dance craze!"

A red Taser-dot wavers then centers on Dog's chest.

BARNES (O.S.)

HANDS!

Dog looks down at his dot, raises both hands, and steps off. Dog side-kicks the Juke Box stopping the record.

DOG

Gosh gee, Officer Krupke, self-defense.

BARNES

Exactly when did you stop defending yourself to plain start having fun?

DOG

Hey, only perk of law enforcement.

MARY

My brother was swung-on first, Jim.

Barnes holsters his Taser and bends to ask Redneck Three.

BARNES

That true?

REDNECK THREE

He broke my god damn knee!

DOG

Just hyper-extended it, ya' big baby. Rest and ice is all it needs.

DESTINY

Jim, he was bothering me, all Dog did was ask him to stop.

BARNES

(to Redneck Three)

You like pestering pretty girls?

DESTINY

"Pretty?!"

Barnes looks up embarrassed then back down at Redneck Three.

BARNES

Wanna' go to jail, or wanna' go home?

REDNECK THREE

Wanna' go to hospital!

BARNES

Fine, I'll take you, give me time to teach you about good manners.

(up to Dog)

There someplace you need to be?

DOG

Yes sir, Occiffer sir, matter of fact, two someplaces.

(whispers to Mary)

Car rental place?

MARY

At the dealership down in the city?

DOG

Know Frank the Barber?

MARY

Comes in the diner sometimes, why?

DOG

He ever seen or asked about Tommie?

MARY

No, don't think so. Think I mentioned you in passing. Why?

DOG

Tell you tonight, over leftovers.

Dog kisses Mary's cheek, then nods at Destiny who smiles back. He side-kicks jukebox again jump-starting same song.

Barnes helps Redneck Three stand and All Four watch Dog *Cupid-Shuffle* dance-exit while lip-synching the song's end lyrics.

RECORD (FILTERED)

"But that won't stop me baby 'cause you know I'm coming baaaack!"

Dog back-kicks screen door open and exits. Door *slams* behind.

BARNES

What tha' fuck is wrong with this guy?

Redneck Three nods animated hopping on his good leg.

INT. FRANK'S BARBERSHOP - NOW DUSK SAME DAY

Dog enters. Door's bell *dings*. Dog sits in a barber chair.

Frank exits out his backroom taking off his frock.

FRANK

Closed! --You again, now what?

DOG

Time I look like I feel. Haircut and a shave --kinda'.

Frank puts on his frock, then drapes cutting-cape over Dog.

FRANK

Sorry about Tommie.

Dog grabs both of Frank's wrists and squeezes angling them up forcing Frank to bend his knees in pain. Dog looks maniacal.

DOG

Why'd you say that?!

FRANK

Two customers --said something.

Dog calms down and lets go. Frank rubs his wrists.

FRANK

Quite a grip there, mister. Gonna have to be more careful around you.

DOG

Sorry, training kicked in. What'd these "two" say --exactly?

FRANK

Uh, about how, uh, how "friendly she is." Then, uh, oh, what'd they say then? Oh yeah --"damn shame!"

DOG

Past or future tense?!

FRANK

"Past or," hmmm, well --? How about that, did sound like whatever was hadn't happened yet.

DOG

You know them?

FRANK

One's named, Nate, works at the gas station. 'Member other in a minute.

DOG

Ever hear them mention "The Show" or anything about fighting?

FRANK

Got bare-knuckle down in the city?

DOG

No, no, I mean, animals fighting?

FRANK

Ever see the way those guys fight, sure act like animals?

DOG

Frank!

FRANK

(*finger-snaps*)

Uuuu-uuuu, other's named Jerry Lee. Does something or nuther for Mister Walsh.

DOG

"Walsh?" Same rancher that owns your shelter?

FRANK

Bobby Walsh, yeah, pretty sure?

Dog sits upright and pulls his cutting-cape off to stuff a twenty-dollar bill in Frank's hand.

DOG

Ponytail my hair tight, use three bands so it won't come loose, make it tight! Got it?

FRANK

(looks at money)
Sure you should do this?

Frank pockets cash, then pulls Dog's hair back. Dog winces.

EXT. BINOCULAR VIEW OF NATE'S GAS STATION - LATE THAT NIGHT

The station's lights go out. Nate exits office, *starts* a muscle car, *revs* its engine, and burns-rubber leaving.

INT. DOG'S RENTAL CAR ABOVE NATE'S STATION - SIMULTANEOUS

Dog, wearing jeans and a flannel shirt, is parked on earlier hill now in a rental car with engine and lights off. He puts down earlier mini-binoculars, *starts* car, and follows Nate at a distance with lights off. Dog drives emotionless, then goes berserk *beating* his fist on the dash.

DOG

MOTHER, FUCKERS! Animals feel pain!
(*snarls rabid*)
And I feel like sharin' some.

Dog grabs a half-empty whiskey bottle, spins cap off with thumb and index-finger, then guzzles while driving one-eyed.

EXT. WALSH'S RANCH GATE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Nate drives up to the closed gate guarded by Redneck One in earlier clothes now with a red safety-vest overtop a shoulder-holster pistol. Redneck One holds hand up, *Stop*. Nate does.

NATE

Called earlier, couldn't get through. Any big Purse?

REDNECK ONE

One's ten "K." Mucho dinero to be made tonight, cabrón.

Redneck One opens gate, Nate drives through. Redneck One closes gate, hears a twig *crack*, and spins drawing his gun.

Dog weave-walks up the road holding bottle, now empty.

Redneck One holsters his gun shaking his head.

REDNECK ONE

Lost your way, abuelo?

Dog walks up to Redneck One nose-to-nose drunk-smiling.

DOG

If you're doin' what I think you're doin', chico, you done lost your way --a long time ago.

Dog exhales forceful into Redneck One's face who *coughs*. Dog straight-stabs four-fingers into One's *Adams-Apple* who bends over clutching his throat gagging. Dog breaks his bottle over the back of Redneck One's head who falls unconscious. Dog drags him in the bushes, throws his gun, then hogties and gags him. Dog flips ponytail up on top of his head and covers it with Redneck One's cowboy hat. Dog enters and closes the gate behind. He trips over a stone, recovers, glares at it.

EXT. WALSH'S PARKING GRASS - CONTINUOUS

Dog walks through fifty parked muscle cars and pristine fully restored pick-up trucks admiring them.

DOG

If the grills look so good, bet the owners have bad teeth.

EXT. WALSH'S BARN - MOMENTS LATER

A red weathered two-story wood barn has open double-doors and a double-spotlight above them illuminating the entire outside. A vintage LP-stereo inside *plays* "Dueling Banjos."

DOG

I'm in god, damn, "Deliverance."

Dog shakes his head and shoulders like a horse, then enters.

INT. WALSH'S BARN - CONTINUOUS

Its hard dirt floor with scattered hay has farm equipment around two walls, a raised hayloft in one back corner and a free-standing metal storage shed in adjacent back corner.

Dog sees a rusted girl's bicycle leaning beside him, then looks up at a twelve-foot round steel-reinforced wooden-cover hanging centered from the ceiling by a heavy chain.

DOG

Clever way to hide --The Box.

FIFTY REDNECKS, all ages and ethnics, *laugh*, drink and yell. TWO PRE-TEEN SONS were brought to learn about the "sport."

The air is thick with smoke, so Dog waits for his eyes to adjust. A hand lands on his shoulder. Dog grabs for a two-on-one wrist-lock, then twists as he turns around so the other person is forced to drop from the pressure.

JERRY LEE, 30s, tall with full black beard, is on both knees.

JERRY

What the --? Owwww, Fuck You!

DOG

Didn't mommy tell you not to touch strangers, dude?

Dog releases Jerry who stands rubbing his twisted arm.

JERRY

Fuck you dude-ette, you are a stranger, so get the fuck out!

DOG

Hey man, caught me off-guard, okay? You, Jerry Lee?

JERRY

No, I'm not okay, okay! And who the fuck is asking?!

DOG

Just a Dogman passing through who stopped for a trim. Frank lead me to Nate who brought me here.

Dog hands Jerry a hundred-dollar bill and tries to pass.

DOG (CONT'D)

Gate Fee's a hun', right? Now, where's the Shine?

JERRY

Not so fast, fat boy. This is a betting Show. Got real money?

DOG

"Boy?!" Son, I'm here to pick a fight, not pick one.

Dog holds up two thousand-dollar rolls of cash.

DOG
We cool?

JERRY
Lukewarm.

Jerry stabs to fingers to his own eyes, then walks away.

Dog points two fingers at his own eyes, then at Jerry, and goes to a liquor picnic-table to pour Moonshine from a brown ceramic jug into a paper cup. He sips while scanning room.

Dog sees only the back of DOC MARQUILES, 60s Latino, in jeans and a flannel shirt, doing a drug-deal with Redneck Two.

Dog chugs the rest of his cup, then over-reacts on purpose.

DOG
Ouu-eee, now that's "Hair of the Dog!" So when's The Show start and which Prospect got Gameness?!

JERRY (O.S.)
Follow me, ya' old drunk.

Dog spins surprised, then follows Jerry *crumpling* his cup.

DOG
Like to sneak up on folks don't you. --I'll remember that.

Jerry walks to the barn's center *clapping* his hands.

JERRY
FIVE MINUTES, FINAL BETS!

INT. "THE PIT" IN WALSH'S BARN - CONTINUOUS

A ten-foot round pit is eight feet deep walled-up by upright 2' x 8' wooden planks all covered with dried-blood, claw-scratches, and fur. Some loose hay is on its hard clay floor.

Wooden drop-gates are built into either side of "The Box" holding back TWO FIGHTERS, young, thin but muscled, with ears cropped off and multiple fighting scars, who pace and *snarl*.

Dog looks up at its round cover again hanging from ceiling over The Pit. His eyes follow its heavy support-chain down to a hand-crank winch near the back wall. He nods smiling.

DOG
Tell me about, The Fighters?

JERRY

Doberman's three. It's his fourth fight, so he's as mean as a poked rattler. The Pit is two. Only his second fight, but he's bull-strong.

DOG

Dios mío! The Dober is one fight from Grand Champion. He wants to live so bad, he'll do whatever it takes to kill. Who's the referee?

JERRY

No Draw, no Pick-up, or Quit. Don't need one. All stakes are final.

DOG

Side purse?

JERRY

Whatever you carry, Old-Timer.

Dog studies the Pit Bull. Its eyes show fear and desperation. He examines the Doberman. Its eyes show only hatred. Dog pulls out one of his two \$1,000 money rolls.

DOG

Ten-to-one on The Dober, Greenhorn.

JERRY

Hell, I just might win the Norman Hooten Award tonight, gramps.

Jerry gives hand-signals to REDNECK FOUR, 60s, a mountain-man in bib-overalls wearing a shoulder-holster, who writes their bet on a portable school-blackboard marked into grids.

Fifty Rednecks see and react to the large bet with *cat-calls*.

JERRY

Fighters On Deck, LAST CALL!

Redneck Two and Redneck Three with an ACE-bandage around his injured knee, are both wearing shoulder-holsters. They step through the crowd to grab rope handles on the divider-gates.

Dog recognizes Redneck Three and pulls his hat-brim down to hide his face as Jerry points across The Box.

JERRY

Make room for --Tha' King!

All Rednecks at Pit's edge separate like the *Red Sea* as Walsh steps through in his earlier clothes, now wearing a shoulder-holster with a vintage *Colt .45 Peacemaker*. He stands hands-on-hips like a feudal lord surveying his redneck fiefdom.

TOMMIE THE BEAGLE is passed from behind to Walsh who holds her high, sees it still wears a collar, and rips it off.

WALSH

Bait dog a-n-d, FIGHT!

Walsh throws Tommie up in the air to fall into The Pit as he nonchalantly tosses her torn collar across it's chasm.

INT. FLOOR OF "THE BOX" - IMMEDIATELY

Tommie lands to a loud *crack* as she breaks a leg. She gets up limping, looks up, recognizes Dog, wags tail, and *Woofs*.

Redneck One and Redneck Two both raise their gates.

Two Fighters come charging-out snapping fierce and *barking*.

TIME LAPSE:

INT. EDGE OF THE BOX - SIMULTANEOUS

Dog catches collar and turns to read its engraving, *Tommie*.

Dog coils forward to jump in, but his shirt collar is yanked from behind by Nate, so Dog's hat is knocked off and his ponytail falls out. Dog elbows Nate in his rib cage hard, then flicks-open a spring-assist knife and jumps *yelling*.

DOG

T-O-M E-E-E!

TIME LAPSE ENDS.

Jerry steps over Nate to catch Dog by his ponytail and yank him backwards onto all-fours at The Pit's edge. Jerry clubs Dog's head with a vintage *Blackjack*. Dog crumples face-down. Jerry picks up Dog's fallen cowboy hat and examines it.

JERRY

Thought I recognized this.

(waves hat to Walsh)

Got him, Boss!

Dog's eyes flutter-close as Tommie *screams* being torn apart.

INT. WALSH'S THE BOX - LATER SAME NIGHT

The Show is over. Dog comes-to on the ground with hands tied behind. Rednecks One, Two, Three, Four, Jerry, Nate, and Walsh stand over him *laughing*. Jerry has a rope looped over one shoulder playing with Dog's knife. Dog fights to speak.

DOG

How --long?

WALSH

The Show lasted an hour, you been out two. Got one minute to tell me the truth, or you will go into The Box, only this time --head first.

DOG

First, I'm a drunk, so I drank too much and wound up here by mistake.

WALSH

Big one. Second?

Dog spits blood, then glares up at Walsh *snarling*.

DOG

That was my Rescue Beagle.

NATE

Nuthin' much worth rescuin' now!

ALL Rednecks *laugh*. Jerry stops concerned.

JERRY

Wait, you're Mary's brother?

WALSH

Ahhhhh, let me guess. Your sister called all kinds of upset-like, so you jumped in your three-hundred n' fifty horses ridin' to her rescue.

DOG

Something like that.

WALSH

Then best all this gets real, Boy-George, because all this --
(waves hand around)
is just business --Show, Business.
(snarls down at Dog)
Nuthin' personal.

DOG

(spits blood, *snarls*)
Doesn't get --any more personal.

Walsh squats to talk at Dog, then leans-in eye-to-eye.

WALSH

Should be leaving us soon. But to make it sooner, how 'bout I get your sis a new Beagle. Deal?

DOG
(sits up)
Half.

WALSH
(stands angry-confused)
"Half?!" Half what? Which half you
talking about half-wit?!

DOG
I take care of my sister, and you,
you get outta' --Show Business.

Jerry pushes a foot against Dog's shoulder, so he falls flat.

JERRY
Ain't the brightest bulb in the box
are ya'?

Walsh pulls his vintage revolver and aims down at Dog's face.

WALSH
Life is pretty comfy for us as is,
dog-stain, so half --welllll, half
ain't gonna' cut the cake.
(clicks back hammer)
So here's my finalist offer. Jerry
keeps your bet and my boys keep the
rest. While you, you go crawl back
in whatever hole you crawled out of
and drink yourself to death or --
(closes one eye aiming)
What's it gonna be, G.I. Joe-Dirt?

DOG
Easy on the trigger there, trigger-
man. I fucked up, so just wanna'
get gone-gone. Deal?

Redneck One steps forward and kicks Dog in the head.

REDNECK ONE
That "gone" enough, dogman?

Jerry peers over edge of *The Box* and yells back to Walsh.

JERRY
Hey Boss, Dober's still kickin'!
Can Trixie shoot it?!

WALSH
Hell, no! Punish it for gettin'
hurt. Burn it alive like all the
rest. She can shoot the charred
corpse.

Walsh back-hands Redneck Two's chest hard with free hand, knocking Two back, then aims his gun at Two threatening.

WALSH

Next time dummy, remember to pour
Bleach down the Bait's throat so it
goes crazy to set off my Fighters!

Redneck Three *chuckles*. Walsh spins and brings his barrel-tip up under Redneck Three's chin tilting his head back.

WALSH

And you, dummy's twin, why didn't
you break the Beagle's teeth off
with pliers? It almost tore the
Dober's eye out. Ferget again, and
I'll yank yer teeth out!

Redneck Three slap-covers his mouth with both hands.

Jerry *laughs* as he circles the lasso over his head, then launches its loop down into The Pit.

WALSH

(re-aims at Dog)
Last time, Ajar-Head.

DOG

Nothing you can do to me, ain't
already done to myself --thrice.

WALSH

You giving up, or buying time? Done
seen your Ranger Flash so knows
you're used to fighting for truth,
justice and --whatever.

DOG

(paraphrases *Ghandi*)
The greatness of any people, is
judged by the way they treat their
animals.

WALSH

Nice speech, Bapu. Been practicin'
it long?

DOG

All my life.

WALSH

Then we's decided.

Dog's voice lowers in warning.

DOG

Ever hear it's better to let a
sleeping Dog lie?

WALSH

Only in a grave.

Walsh holsters and nods. Redneck Three stomps on Dog's knee who *screams*. Walsh head-motions for all his Rednecks to beat Dog. They descend on Dog like wolverines.

Jerry stands at the edge of The Pit watching Dog's beatdown as he pulls his rope up hand-over-hand. He whines.

JERRY

I miss out on all the fun.

Doberman rises over The Pit's edge ripped-open twisting and turning in its hangman's noose fighting to stay alive.

Doberman and Dog pass out simultaneous.

EXT. A MOUNTAIN ROAD CURVE WITH STEEP BANK - NOW MIDNIGHT

Dog's rental car breaks through the winding road's guardrail and *crashes* down its hillside into a creek. Dog's bashed-car rolls over, then all noises stop.

Nate and Jerry are heard *laughing*, then two car doors *slam*, and tires *squeal* away.

EXT. SAME MOUNTAIN ROAD CREEK BED - DAYBREAK

Fire Truck and Ambulance are parked up on edge of the road with red lights rotating but no sirens. Dog is *dead-to-the-world* strapped onto a stretcher as THREE FIREMEN pull his litter by rope up the cliff to a waiting gurney. Their EMT stands down in the gully guiding the rope's bottom-line.

Barnes, in uniform, walks around Dog's smashed-up rental car. He reaches in the *Jaws-of-Life* pried-open driver's door past its deflated airbag to pull out a broken dowel-rod from the floorboard. He puts its two pieces together and wedges them between the gas pedal and driver's seat-cushion. Perfect fit. Barnes looks up as the Ambulance exits now with its *siren* on.

BARNES

Hope you bought the full insurance.

INT. MARY'S KITCHEN - LATER SAME MORNING

Mary is washing dishes in the kitchen sink.

She hears a car door *close* and looks out sink's curtained-window, then runs to the kitchen door and throws it open.

Barnes enters and takes off his hat then holds it nervous.

BARNES

Ma'am, uh, there's been a car accident, involving your brother.

MARY

Is he hurt bad?

BARNES

He's down at city hospital, that's all I know.

MARY

When, where?

BARNES

His rental car went off Wolf's Cliff early this morning. He'd been drinking --heavy.

Mary grabs her car keys off table, but drops them on the floor. She starts *crying*. Barnes picks up her keys.

BARNES

Ma'am, I'll drive you --both ways.

Mary nods, grabs purse, and both exit. Barnes closes door.

Kitchen faucet *drips* water on an upside-down pan in the sink. Its water-drops sound, *boom-boom-boom*, like a ticking bomb.

INT. DOG'S HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER SAME MORNING

Dog is in a bed wearing a hospital gown with an arm and a leg in floating-casts. A nose airline-tube is around his ears with an I.V. in a wrist. His heart monitor *beeps* slow.

Mary enters, runs to, and strokes Dog's forehead.

MARY

Oh Amell, why do you drink so?

His face is bruised and battered. Dog's swollen-eyes flutter open. His teeth are wired shut, so he has to talk efficient.

DOG

N-o m-o-r-e.

MARY

Where were you last night?

Dog closes his eyes and hears Tommy's *screams* in his head. A tear rolls down his cheek. Mary chokes-up.

MARY

What's wrong, sweetie?

DOG

U-s-e l-e-s-s.

MARY

Don't say that! Just get well. I'll take care of you. Need anything?

DOG

L-a-p t-o-p.

MARY

Uh, what? A "laptop?" Now?! Jesus Amell, your timing always was ...

Dog looks up with puppy-eyes. Mary wipes away his slobber.

MARY

Fine. I'll bring you mine tomorrow.

DOG

N-e-w.

MARY

"New?!" A new laptop? Brother, if you weren't already punchy I'd --

DOCTOR, Indian with accent, 40s, dark hair, in a lab coat with stethoscope around neck, enters reading Dog's Chart.

DOCTOR

Morning! The way you first looked gave us quite a scare. Next time wear your seatbelt, Mister, uh --?
(glances at clipboard)
Dogee.

Dog rolls his eyes. Mary stares dead-pan at Doctor.

MARY

Just, "Dog."

DOCTOR

Ahhhhh, "e" is muzzled, like him.

Doctor points at Dog's wires *chuckling*. Dog *growls* vicious.

DOCTOR

(coughs nervous)
Or not. --Either way, you're going to be with us for awhile.

MARY

How long's "awhile," Doc?

DOCTOR

Well, the bones in his arm and leg aren't fractured, but the M.R.I. does show multiple Bone Bruises. Almost as if, he'd been stomped on.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE DOG'S HOSPITAL ROOM - SIMULTANEOUS

Barnes, in uniform, stands outside Dog's door listening.

DOCTOR (O.S.)

Matter of fact, his soft tissue injuries are similar to being punched and kicked repeatedly.

Barnes nods animated.

INT. DOG'S HOSPITAL ROOM - IMMEDIATELY

Mary lifts Dog's upper lip and pulls down his lower lip to show the shiny wires on his teeth. Dog pulls his head away.

MARY

And his jaw?

DOCTOR

It's not dislocated, but we had to place it back into position, so I wired it, but only as a precaution.

MARY

Again, how long is long?

DOCTOR

Two to three weeks, maybe four.

DOG

D-i-e-t, P-T.

MARY

"Diet, T" what? Oh, a Dietician and Physical Therapist. Why?

DOG

U-s-e f-u-l-l.

DOCTOR

Those are expensive charges, Mister --uh? I can prescribe them, but only if you pre-authorize all in writing.

Dog makes circling motion in air with pointer-finger, *Now*.

DOCTOR

Fine. I'll bring you the Release,
then write their Orders.

Doctor is exiting as Barnes, out-of-sight in hallway, motions
Doctor to step over to him. Doctor does disappearing.

DOG

S-i-s t-e-r.

Mary

Broth-er?

DOG

S-e-l-l c-a-r.

MARY

"Sell car?" --Your car! But you've
had it forever, why sell it now?

DOG

C-a-s-h.

MARY

"Cash?" Oh --money. Oh, honey, I
can lend you ...!

Dog hits his free fist on the bed's metal side-rail, *clang*.

MARY

You always were too proud. Fine,
how do I sell it and for how much?

DOG

D-e-a-l-e-r k-n-o-w.

MARY

Is there something else going on
here, anything to do with Tommie?

Dog turns head away to look out the window *low-growling*.

DOG

Grrrrrrrr --.

INT. SHERIFF DEPARTMENT - LATER THAT DAY

Barnes enters front door carrying two coffees, walks behind
counter, and hands a cup to Sheriff who opens lid and blows.

SHERIFF

Cite that mangy mutt for D.U.I?

BARNES

The fact a retired sheriff wasn't wearing his seatbelt means, we don't know if --he was driving.

SHERIFF

(drinking, spit-takes)

"We don't?!"

(wipes coffee off chin)

Well I sure do! So go back up there and charge him D.U.I., then bring me his Summons. Think you can see your way to do all that, Dep-u-tee?

BARNES

Yes sir, thank you sir.

(pantomimes)

May I have another.

Barnes leaves his cup and exits. Sheriff bites off a chunk of chewing tobacco, chews, then *spits* his juice in Barnes cup.

INT. DOG'S HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER SAME DAY

Mary is gone. His monitor *beeps* peaceful as Dog sleeps.

Barnes enters, waits looking around, then steps closer staring down. Dog snap-opens his eyes startling Barnes.

BARNES

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

(recovers)

Sheriff ordered a Ten Fifty-Five.

DOG

(shakes head slow)

T-e-n, N-i-n-e t-e-e o-n-e.

BARNES

(*snort-chuckles*)

Dead Dog.

DOG

Y-o-u G-r-e-e?

BARNES

Doesn't matter.

DOG

D-o-e-s m-e.

BARNES

Well, it's your injuries see. I've been beaten black-and-blue.

DOG
B-l-a-c-k t-o-o-k.

Barnes *laughs*. Dog tries, but it hurts.

BARNES
Find what you were looking for?

Dog *growls low* and deep.

BARNES
Anything else?

Dog's eyes burn with hate.

BARNES
Ahhhhh, that's why you're here.
Anything to do with our Sheriff?

Dog shrugs his shoulders too hard and grimaces.

BARNES
Anything to do with me?

DOG
D-e-e p-e-n-d-s.

BARNES
"Depends?" --How?

DOG
D-e-e c-i-d-e.

BARNES
"Decide?!" Decide what, what side?

Dog nods once. Barnes heads for the door. Dog *taps* a knuckle on his bed rail. Barnes spins angry quoting *Anonymous*.

BARNES
"Not to decide --is to decide!"

Dog makes a writing-motion in mid-air with his free hand.

Barnes nods, *Ahh*, pulls Summons Book from back pocket, flips it open, begins writing, then stops to examine Dog's face.

BARNES
Looks like you've been in a war.

Dog bares his wired-teeth *growling* deep.

DOG
N-o-t, y-e-t.

TO BE CONTINUED