

THAT'S MY DAWG

Written by

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&
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FROM BLACK:

Pitch black except two small pools of light shining into the interior of a cardboard box from holes cut in the side.

A tiny WHIMPER from a puppy.

ANNA (O.S.)
(Whispering)
You wrapped it?

TERRY (O.S.)
He chewed up the bow.

ANNA (O.S.)
Deep breath, hun. Nature dictates
that it'll have a taste for
furniture and shoes. Is the camera
set?

TERRY (O.S.)
Send in the clowns.

Electronic Christmas bells CHIME loudly, followed by the sound of small feet BOUNDING down stairs.

GRAYSON (O.S.)
Dino-naught!!!!

CUT TO:

INT. JOHNSON LIVING ROOM - MORNING

The tranquility of a tastefully appointed middle class home decorated for the holidays is shattered by GRAYSON (5) charging down the staircase and diving into the pile of neatly wrapped presents placed carefully under the tree. Grayson immediately starts tearing into packages.

ANNA
Wait for your sister, hun.

GRAYSON
Dino-naught!!!!

INT. WRAPPED CHRISTMAS PRESENT - CONTINUOUS

Grayson's large eyes are peering into a box.

INT. JAMES LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Grayson is curiously inspecting the package. Anna is carefully repositioning the presents Grayson tossed aside under the tree while Terry picks up wrapping paper which is strewn everywhere.

Grayson shakes the box. It emits a louder WHIMPER.

GRAYSON

Dino-naught?

Grayson tears off the wrapping paper and rips open the box. The tiny head of a one week old St. Bernard puppy cautiously emerges from within it. The puppy stares timidly at Grayson, who regards it for a moment before frowning and tossing the box aside, electing a YELP from the puppy.

Terry picks up the now empty box in which the puppy had been wrapped.

TERRY

Man overboard.

Anna notices a tiny tail poking out of a pile of discarded wrapping paper. She motions to Terry, who creeps over. He carefully lifts the paper to reveal the puppy. Grayson pounces in front of it with a toy resembling a Tyrannosaurus Rex in astronaut apparel, holding a large ray gun in its small claw. Grayson presses a button and the T-Rex lets out a loud ROAR while firing the ray gun. Terrified, the puppy runs for the safety of the couch, scurrying beneath it.

ANNA

Dino-naught?

Grayson smiles sweetly and nods.

Terry looks down at the puddle of puppy pee on his Persian rug.

TERRY

Where's your sister?

CUT TO:

INT. UTILITY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

AVA (8) has a Santa hat perched on her head and a red bag slung over her shoulder.

She is standing before an assortment of cages, aquariums, terrariums and other pet friendly living quarters that are stacked along the wall in the unfinished room. Ava snaps open the door to a cage which contains two floppy eared bunnies.

AVA

Must have been a really good girl this year, Lucky. Santa left an entire banana just for you.

(beat)

Jackpot, about the incident with that sack of flower... It must not have made the list!

Ava's puts her finger to her lips and smiles, then drops the peeled banana and carrots into the cage. Before Ava can move on to the next cage, a privacy screen unfurls in the Rabbit cage with the words 'Do Not Disturb', hiding the interior of the cage.

AVA (CONT'D)

Again? You two are encourageable.

Ava carefully removes a blanket from a large, antique bird cage. Inside a barn owl, REMERICK, stirs awake and gently HOOTS. One of its eyes remains shut. A deep scar runs from its head, across the eye lid down to its beak. The owl stretches its wings as it wakes, but one of them is obviously gimpy.

AVA (CONT'D)

Sorry, Remerick, no mice in the North Pole.

Angry SQUEAKS from one of the aquariums.

AVA (CONT'D)

Joking. The elves did manage to find some fresh Reindeer though. Actually that seems kind of disturbing and wrong. Let's call it happy surprise food.

(beat)

Don't tell daddy.

Ava unwraps a steak and places on the floor of the cage. Remerick HOOTS softly and as we push in on his beak and the HOOTS morph into...

REMERICK

Thank you, dear one.

Ava slides open the roof of an aquarium containing a frog (RUFUS), a toad (BOB) and a chameleon (CARL).

AVA
Rufus, Bob, Carl, mealworms and
grasshoppers all around. Bon
Appetit.

RUFUS
Dibs on the crunchy ones.

CARL
Mealworms or grasshoppers?

BOB
Save the thoraxes for me, guys.

Ava slides the top back in place on the aquarium to the sound of happy CROAKING. Ava turns to the last aquarium. Two mice, PIP & ZIP, look up at her expectantly and stand up on their hind legs.

AVA
Gentlemen, I give you Cheddar.

As do all mice, Pip and Zip speak with a proper English accent.

PIP
Unexpected and undeserved, but
certainly appreciated, my lady.

Zip scurries to the slices of cheese and sniffs with his twitchy mouse nose.

ZIP
Ah, Nectar of the Gods.

Ava slides closed the top of the aquarium and turns to go to the sound of CHIRPING and CROAKING.

AVA
Merry Christmas to all and to
all...

Ava is interrupted by a loud BURP.

AVA (CONT'D)
Easy on those mealworms, Bob.

INT. JOHNSON LIVING ROOM, UNDERNEATH THE COUCH (PUPPY VIEW) -
MOMENTS LATER

Two large hands are swiping around haphazardly with brittle dog bones accompanied by the sound of loud, guttural, indiscernible WALLA.

INT. JOHNSON LIVING ROOM, UNDERNEATH THE COUCH - CONTINUOUS

The puppy backs away from the hands, then turns and walks toward the other side of the couch. It creeps from underneath the couch and notices a mirror hanging on the wall. The puppy tilts its head quizzically staring in the mirror, when it notices something else in the reflection. Looking to its right, the puppy spots the dino-naught. Several feet away, Grayson presses down on a remote control and the dino-naught roars loudly and shoots sparks from its mouth. Terrified, the puppy makes a break for the hallway, running as fast as its little legs can carry it. The dino-naught pursues and is gaining ground when the puppy leaps, landing right in...

Ava's arms as she's coming up the stairs.

AVA

Bernie!!!

ANNA

Bernie?

TERRY

Bernie?

Ava holds Bernie close to her in a tight embrace, but Bernie nudges her chin up with his snout so their eyes meet. Bernie extends his neck until his nose touches Ava's nose. She doesn't pull away, but just continues staring into Bernie's eyes with wonder.

AVA (CONT'D)

Eskimo kiss?

Bernie licks her face and Ava giggles with delight.

AVA (CONT'D)

I love you, too, Bernie.

INT. JOHNSON LIVING ROOM - LATER

Ava is happily playing with Bernie as Anna looks on. Terry is in the background looking in a Styrofoam container, emblazoned with the words 'HEARTLAND STEAKS'. The lid is on the table beside him with a red bow on it. Dino-naught flies past them and smashes into the wall. Neither reacts.

ANNA

She didn't think you'd ever give in.

TERRY

You kidding? What about the animal half-way house she's got stashed down in the utility closet.

ANNA

A dog's different. Free range pet.

Anna snuggles into Terry and kisses him.

ANNA (CONT'D)

You did good, hun.

TERRY

How many of these steaks did you start thawing?

ANNA

Four, for **tomorrow** night. And by that I mean we're still going to my mom's place for dinner.

TERRY

Seems like I'm missing a couple.

ANNA

Ava, time to put Bernie away and get ready for Nana's house.

INT. UTILITY ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Bernie stares into the room at the cages and the various animals they contain. Terry and Ava stand behind him. Terry gently nudges Bernie into the room with his foot and begins fitting a baby gate in the doorway. Bernie looks back at Ava and whimpers, the gate casting a shadow across his face like prison bars.

TERRY

Until he's potty trained, Bernie's gotta live in the zoo.

Terry locks the baby gate into place and walks away. Bernie looks up at Ava with his big, sad puppy dog eyes and WHIMPERS.

AVA

It's ok, Bernie. They're part of the family.

INSERT MUSICAL NUMBER - Ava introducing Bernie to the other animals.

Ava hugs Bernie then steps over the baby gate and departs up the stairs, leaving Bernie alone with the other animals.

BERNIE

Where's my mom going?

The other animals laugh at the question. Bob, the toad, is laughing so hard he COUGHS up a grasshopper. The grasshopper tilts its head quizzically and stares at Bob.

BOB
Ah, grasshopper.

Bob promptly darts out his tongue, secures the grasshopper, swallows it whole, then BURPS.

PIP
Classy.

RUFUS
You got the wrong species, kid.
Your mom has four legs and a tail.

ZIP
Wee little thing, isn't he?

PIP
Can't be more than four weeks.

REMERICK
Where are you from, little one?

BERNIE
I don't know.

REMERICK
Come closer, so I can see you.

Bernie cautiously approaches Remerick's cage. The large owl swoops down from a perch and lands at the base.

REMERICK (CONT'D)
Don't be frightened, you had the
right idea, we're all family here.

The overhead light pops on and Ava carefully steps over the baby gate and gently pets Bernie on the head.

AVA
You getting on ok with your new
friends?

Ava carefully lifts Remerick's cage from the shelf.

AVA (CONT'D)
Nana thinks your wing is healed
enough to travel, Remerick. You'll
like it on the farm, lots of new
friends to meet.

Ava steps over the gate with the cage.

BERNIE

Where's she going now? How come he gets to go? I want to go too.

RUFUS

Calm down, kid, she'll be back. You got nothing to worry about.

Bernie is pacing nervously.

PIP

Now then, I'll explain the rules.

Bernie bolts for the gate.

BERNIE

Don't leave me here.

The tiny dog jumps and, amazingly, clears the gate, which is five times his height.

INT. BASEMENT, STAIRWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Ava is at the base of the stairs and pauses, feeling a tugging on her pants. She looks down to see...

AVA

Bernie?

Terry is standing at the top of the stairs, having witnessed the whole thing.

TERRY

We got a leaper.

(beat)

By the way, you find that snake yet?

EXT. JOHNSON BACKYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Terry slides a collar onto Bernie's neck that is much too large for the little dog. Bernie's head and neck droop from the weight of the collar. Terry feels the glare of Ava on his back. Anna joins Ava in the doorway her and shakes her head at the ridiculous site of the tinny dog wearing the enormous collar.

TERRY

When I heard St. Bernard, I was picturing barrels of brandy and toboggans.

AVA

You can't leave him out here by himself, daddy. He's scared.

TERRY

It's all fenced in, where's he gonna go? He's a guard dog, sweetheart, it's in his blood. This is exactly where he wants to be.

Bernie WHIMPERS.

TERRY (CONT'D)

See?

Terry leads Ava back inside and slides the patio door closed.

In the distance a Coyote's HOWL causes Bernie to cower. Ava slips back outside and carefully sets a plate with three steaks on it in front of Bernie. She touches her pointer finger to her lips.

AVA

Don't tell daddy.

Bernie sniffs the steaks and is momentarily calmed until he perks at the sound of a car engine TURNING OVER. Bernie runs to the wood fence and peers through a small hole, watching as Ava climbs into the backseat of a late model Mercedes station wagon and shuts the door just before it backs out of the drive way and proceeds down a narrow alleyway.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - CONTINUOUS

Two rough looking men, GRIGGS (40s) and BLAKE (50s) are pushing an empty grocery cart down the alleyway and are forced to step to the side to let station wagon pass. As it does so, the right rear tire bumps through a pot hole causing the pooled water to SPLASH on Griggs and Blake. Unaware of the incident, Ava's father drives on.

GRIGGS

(To the car)

Thanks alot, pal. Dang Mercedes, thinking they own the world.

Blake gets Griggs attention and directs it away from the car and to another part of the alley where a pile of piping, broken plaster and fixtures sits beside a dumpster.

BLAKE
What did I tell you?

GRIGGS
Copper?

BLAKE
It ain't mahjong.

GRIGGS
What does that mean?

Blake and Griggs go to work, grabbing the copper pipe and scrap metal and dropping it into the cart. It doesn't take long.

BLAKE
You still think it ain't worth the effort to hoof it all the way up here?

Griggs has turned his attention to the wood fence on the other side of the alley.

GRIGGS
Looked like they were going out for the evening.

BLAKE
What're you thinking?

GRIGGS
Nice Mercedes they was driving, probably got some nice things on the inside too.

EXT. JOHNSON BACKYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Bernie is finishing up the first steak when he notices Griggs and Blake slip over the fence. Bernie tries to bark but it comes out as more of a WHIMPER.

BLAKE
That sounded like a dog. I ain't messing with no dog.

GRIGGS
Gimme a break, that sounded like a Shih Tzu.

Blake turns back and heads for the fence. Griggs cautiously continues toward the house and notices Bernie cowering.

GRIGGS (CONT'D)

Blake, it ain't dog, it's a rodent.

Blake joins Griggs and they notice the plate with steaks on it.

GRIGGS (CONT'D)

When's the last time you had a steak dinner? This part of town, even the dogs eat better than regular folk.

EXT. JOHNSON HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Blake has a crow bar and is carefully prying the window casing loose when he feels something tap his shoulder.

BLAKE

What'da ya want?

Several yards away, Griggs is reaching for the remaining two steaks as Bernie looks on timidly.

GRIGGS

What're you talking about.

Surprised that Griggs was not behind him, Blake turns around to find a boa constrictor, PEARL, hanging down from a tree branch. Startled he loses his balance and falls into the window, causing it to crack and the alarm to SOUND.

BLAKE

Let's get outta here.

Griggs shoves the steaks into a paper sack.

GRIGGS

Least we'll eat well tonight.

As Griggs and Blake slip over the fence, Bernie cautiously approaches the snake.

PEARL

So you're the new one. Don't worry, I'm part of the family.

BERNIE

Who are you?

PEARL
 Pearl the wise, keeper of
 information. I sneak in and out,
 observe and report. You are?

BERNIE
 Bernie.

PEARL
 Trouble, Bernie.

Just as Bernie starts to turn to follow Pearl's gaze, a hand grabs him by the scruff and shoves him into a burlap sack.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Griggs drops the burlap sack into the cart. Bernie's head pops out and he manges to wriggle free and jump from the cart to the alleyway before Griggs catches him with the sack and ties off the top.

Griggs and Blake quickly push the cart down the alleyway, as POLICE SIRENS approach. On the ground sits his oversized collar.

BLAKE
 We get caught cause of that dog,
 you and I are through. I'll scrap
 by my lonesome.

GRIGGS
 We're seeing Scratch anyway. I hear
 he's in the market for a new guard
 dog.

BLAKE
 Guard dog?

EXT. RABID DOGS SCRAP YARD - NIGHT

SCRATCH (60s) is a gritty looking Navy Veteran. He's using a baseball bat to sift through the scrap metal in the shopping cart as Griggs and Blake look on. Scratch alternates between chewing and inhaling from a cheap cigar as he mulls over what's in the cart.

SCRATCH
 This stuff is so hot, it'd burn my
 hands.

GRIGGS

Ain't like that, Scratch. We found it on a curb on the Eastside; big remodel job.

SCRATCH

Left for the vultures, huh? Twenty for the lot.

GRIGGS

Come on, Scratch, there's copper.

Scratch shoulders the bat and glares at Griggs. From the shadows a menacing GROWL unnerves Griggs.

GRIGGS (CONT'D)

25?

Scratch continues to glare as the GROWLING gets louder.

BLAKE

The dog, tell him about the dog.

GRIGGS

Heard you lost that old Doberman a while back.

Griggs opens the burlap sack and dumps Bernie on the ground at Scratch's feet. Scratch leans in to inspect the pup, poking at Bernie with two fingers, the smoldering cigar secured between them. The tip of the cigar brushes past Bernie's ear, causing him to yelp and scurry behind Griggs' leg for cover. Griggs tries to nudge Bernie back toward Scratch with his foot.

SCRATCH

You seen the sign.

Scratch points to a flickering neon sign, 'Rapid Dogs Scrap', that hangs at an angle from a rust worn pole.

SCRATCH (CONT'D)

He seem like he fits the bill?

GRIGGS

Things nasty; hoped a fence and chased us down the alleyway. Nearly took a chunk out of my leg.

Even Blake gives his partner a skeptical look.

GRIGGS (CONT'D)

Gonna be a powerful animal someday.

SCRATCH

And I suppose you got the right to
be selling him?

Griggs nods enthusiastically.

SCRATCH (CONT'D)

Twenty for the metal and fifty for
the dog. Anybody comes asking
about either one, I'll be paying
you gents a visit. Savvy?

Griggs and Scratch shake on it. Scratch tosses the cigar
into a metal drum and snatches Bernie by the scruff. Scratch
glares into Bernie's eyes.

SCRATCH (CONT'D)

Either you're a fighting dog or you
ain't. I just bet fifty bucks that
you got a fire burning in there
somewhere. Find it quick, or I'll
show you what nasty looks like.

Scratch carries Bernie to a chain link paddock in an unlit
section of the lot, tosses him in and slams the gate closed.

INT. CHAIN LINK DOG PADDOCK - CONTINUOUS

Bernie creeps to the corner of the paddock, which is the only
section not covered by black fabric. This small section of
unexposed chain link fence is bathed in a sliver of
moonlight. He begins to WHIMPER.

DOG (O.S.)

You'll find no comfort here.

Bernie cautiously creeps forward.

BERNIE

Hello?

DOG (O.S.)

Ronin.

Bernie spins around to find a massive Akita, RONIN, standing
behind him.

RONIN

You mustn't whimper, he despises
weakness. Show any and he'll treat
you poorly.

BERNIE
Are there others in here?

RONIN
No, I'm the last.

BERNIE
I need to get back to my mom. She
walks on two legs.

RONIN
Your mom?
(beat)
Show no weakness. There endeth the
lesson.

Ronin presses his head against a spring loaded doggie door and digs in his paws, struggling to lift it. Ronin struggles to wiggle underneath it, jumping clear on the other side before it loudly SNAPS shut, causing Bernie to jump backwards.

BERNIE
What are you doing?

RONIN
Honoring my pack with service.

Ronin sniffs the air and takes in a deep breath in, holding it for a long moment.

BERNIE
Don't leave me here alone.

RONIN
Out here I cannot ensure your
safety.

Ronin walks away, leaving Bernie alone in the paddock. The silence is broken by the sound claws SCRAPPING against cement as a beautiful Afghan Hound puppy, MINDY, climbs atop a high wall that boards one side of the yard. It is the only section of the yard that is visible to Bernie through the sliver of uncovered chain link fence. Standing in front of a full moon, Mindy is stunning.

INSERT MUSICAL NUMBER - Mindy singing about being lonely / longing for something more.

Bernie is transfixed, but is startled when, Ronin's head darts into Bernie's narrow vantage point, blocking Mindy from his view.

RONIN (CONT'D)

Lesson number two, they are pure
and not for the likes of us.
Several former members of this pack
were lost for failing to follow
it.

BERNIE

I don't understand.

RONIN

You will in time.

BERNIE

I miss my mom.

EXT. JOHNSON BACKYARD - NIGHT

POLICE OFFICERS are milling around the backyard and one is inspecting the damaged window frame with Terry. Ava is walking the perimeter of the yard with a flashlight, Anna at her side. Ava WHISTLES.

AVA

Bernie?

ANNA

He'll turn up, hun.

AVA

He shouldn't have been out here in
the first place, mom.

POLICE OFFICER #1 (O.S.)

Found him.

Ava and Anna race around the house and through the front gate.

EXT. ALLEY WAY - CONTINUOUS

Ava and Anna enter the alley way to find a POLICE OFFICER (20s) shining a flashlight on Pearl while maintaining a cautious distance.

AVA

That's not my dog.

POLICE OFFICER #1

Dog?

AVA

Hi Pearl.

POLICE OFFICER #1

That's a big snake, kid. You need some kind of license for that, right?

Ava pats Pearl on the head while handing the officer a laminated paper.

AVA

Exotic reptile in captivity.

(To Pearl)

Good to have you home.

Pearl slithers away from Ava, causing the officer to jump back. Pearl circles around something. Ava walks over to her and finds Bernie's collar.

AVA (CONT'D)

It's Bernie's. He must have gotten loose.

Terry and another officer have joined them and the adults exchange a knowing look about the very large snake and very small, missing puppy.

AVA (CONT'D)

We gotta get to the pound right away.

TERRY

It's almost nine o'clock at night, Ava.

POLICE OFFICER #1

Besides, kid, it's much more likely that...

ANNA

You heard her, dear, right away!

INT. POUND, DOG ROOM - NIGHT

The room is dark and quiet except for the occasional WHIMPER or PANT. The door swings open and the fluorescent lights FLICKER ON causing all the dogs to perk up and BARK excitedly. FRANK (40s) enters wearing a dog catcher's uniform, though the shirt is unbuttoned and hanging open. He's wearing his dog catcher's cap backwards and is puffing on a cigar. He is followed into the room by Ava, Terry, Anna and Grayson.

Ava immediately begins inspecting the cages, searching for Bernie. Terry hands Frank some cash.

TERRY

Thanks again for this. I didn't think anyone would be here at this hour.

Frank tucks the cash into the front pocket of his shirt.

FRANK

You ain't the only father in town. This here's my 401k. 'Sides, I got a little poker game going in the back. What the wife don't know, eh pal?

Terry opens his mouth to answer, but catches Anna glaring back at him and thinks better of it.

Ava has arrived at the last cage and starts to CRY.

ANNA

Sorry, honey. He'll turn up.

TERRY

And if he doesn't we'll get you another puppy. Or, better yet, more fish.

Ava glares at Terry.

AVA

I don't want another puppy, I want Bernie.

Ava storms out of the room.

ANNA

Too soon.

Anna follows her.

FRANK

Any idea where the dog might be?

TERRY

The belly of a snake.

FRANK

That's rough, pal.

Frank pats Terry on the shoulder and hands the money back to him.

FRANK (CONT'D)
No limit hold 'em?

EXT. RABID DOGS SCRAP YARD - MORNING

Bernie wakes up in the middle of the scrap yard and is disoriented. In the light of day he can see that the yard is enormous and covered by heaps of metal, dilapidated, rusting appliances and the occasional boat or lawn mower. Broken and stripped cars are staked into the sky. The door to the chain link paddock in which he slept hangs open.

Bernie cautiously walks forward to explore and notices a tight metal collar has been placed on his neck and it is connected to a length of chain. The other end of the chain is secured to the ground by a metal stake, allowing Bernie about twenty yards of slack.

Somebody WHISTLES causing Bernie to jump. The sound of the paws of a very large animal POUNDING against the ground grow louder.

Bernie turns to see that a large and vicious looking Rottweiler, PRINCESS, is charging at him and bearing her teeth.

Bernie runs for it but is yanked to a violent stop when he reaches the end of the chain.

Bernie WHIMPERS and cowers, awaiting annihilation, as Princess pounces but is stuck mid-air by...

Ronin, who gracefully takes her to the ground and stands on top of her growling, his teeth inches from her throat.

Scratch approaches the dogs as does another man, TAFT (30s), from another direction.

SCRATCH
Let 'er up, Ronin.

Ronin complies and moves away from Princess. Taft WHISTLES a different cue and Princess dutifully walks and sits at attention beside him.

TAFT
Ronin still owns the crown.
(beat)
What's with the puppy, Pop?

SCRATCH
Not one of my better ideas. What'da you want?

TAFT

Doctor Armitano. 10am. I called yesterday to remind you.

SCRATCH

Spit.

(to Ronin)

See what you can do with 'em.

TAFT

I don't like you taking in strays off the street. Always a chance they'll turn on you. Mom only got pures for the yard.

SCRATCH

Well she ain't with us no more. And neither are they.

Taft leads Scratch away, but Princess lingers, sharing a moment with Ronin.

PRINCESS

I'll look forward to finishing what we started.

RONIN

As will I.

Princess turns and runs to catch up with Taft and Scratch.

BERNIE

She was going to kill me.

RONIN

Just performance. She's magnificent.

BERNIE

I don't understand.

RONIN

Really?

Bernie follows Ronin's gaze to the border wall, on top of which sits Mindy along with a well groomed Shih Tzu, GLAMOUR. Mindy locks eyes with Bernie for a fleeting moment before coquettishly turning away and hoping back down behind the wall.

RONIN (CONT'D)

Don't get any ideas.

(beat)

(MORE)

RONIN (CONT'D)

Now, Princess may not have had intent to harm, but there are many outside of these walls who do. The Zain pack rules over all. They occasionally breach our walls and will show no mercy no matter your size.

BERNIE

Why are you telling me this?

RONIN

I'm not as young as I once was. This pack used to have many. Now it is us alone.

BERNIE

I'm not staying here. As soon as I get off this chain I'm gonna find my mom.

RONIN

There's only one way off that chain and it starts with me. Our master's not a patient man. I need you to train hard, become strong. When he sees this, he'll bring in others. Then I'll help you escape.
(beat)
Agreed? Now bark.

Bernie BARKS, small and cute. Ronin BARKS, thunderous and booming. Two cats SCREECH in the distance and flee from their hiding place to the edge of the yard.

RONIN (CONT'D)

From the depths of your belly.
Again.

Bernie BARKS. It's a little louder, but still...

RONIN (CONT'D)

One hundred a day. Now, come at me.

BERNIE

I don't want...

RONIN

Now!

Bernie lunges at Ronin, but the older dog is suddenly on the other side of him as if by magic. Bernie stares at him in wonder.

RONIN (CONT'D)

Trust your nose above all else. A crow sits on the other side of that scrap. Do you smell him?

Bernie shakes his head.

RONIN (CONT'D)

Breath in and hold the air. Find his scent, his movement, his heart beat.

Ronin bounds over the scrap amazingly fast. Bernie runs around to the other side to find Ronin holding a crow between his paws.

CROW

What gives, pal?

RONIN

To a mind that is focused, the whole universe surrenders.

Ronin releases the crow.

MONTAGE - VARIOUS

A) EXT. SCRAP YARD - DAY - The end of the chain holding Bernie is wrapped around a cart loaded with scrap metal. Scratch points to the other side of the yard. Bernie strains to pull it.

B) EXT. SCRAP YARD - NIGHT - Bernie is practicing barking at night and looks up to see Mindy watching him from the wall. She hops back when he notices her and off his face we cut to...

C) ECU - Bernie's face on a poster. Pull back to reveal that Ava is stapling the poster to a telephone pole. It reads, "Lost Dog - Big Reward." Terry looks on from the car. A metal garbage can tumbles past the station wagon and smashes into the telephone pole. Grayson climbs out of the can, dazed. He smiles and gives a thumbs up to Ava who just glares back.

E) EXT. SCRAP YARD - DAY - Bernie pounces over a pile of scrap to find a crow several yards away. It shakes its head.

F) EXT. SCRAP YARD - DAY - Bernie is pulling a larger load of scrap. He is noticeably growing older and stronger.

G) EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY - Ava is pulling a red wagon loaded with more posters. She carefully tapes one to a cement wall.

The poster now reads, "Lost Dog - Really Big Reward." Grayson races past Ava with a bees nest dangling from the end of a ski pole. Seconds later, hundreds of angry bees follow. Ava just shakes her head.

H) EXT. SCRAP YARD - DAY - Bernie is lunging at and trying to bite Ronin, but keeps missing as the older dog anticipates, dodges and weaves.

I) INT. DOG POUND - NIGHT - Ava is inquiring about Bernie, holding out a poster to Frank, who is smoking a cigar. He shakes his head and turns to rejoin a poker game that is raging in the background. Ava sullenly shuffles out the door.

J) EXT. SCRAP YARD - DAY - A bowl filled with slop is plopped in front of Bernie.

K) EXT. SCRAP YARD - DUSK - Bernie, now larger and more muscular, finishes pulling a very heavy load of scrap. He turns to find Scratch and Ronin looking on, impressed. Bernie is knocked backwards from the force of a fire hose Scratch has turned on to hose him down.

L) INT. JOHNSON HOME, UTILITY CLOSET - NIGHT - Ava is reading a story to her various animal friends. A poster of Bernie hangs on the wall.

M) EXT. SCRAP YARD - DAY - Bernie is lunging at and trying to bite Ronin as Princess looks on. All are surprised when Bernie makes connect. Ronin steps back and bows his head in respect.

END OF MONTAGE

INT. DOG POUND - DAY

Ava is looking in one of the cages and pets an adolescent Pit Bull, OZ, on the head. It excitedly wags its tail in response. Oz only has three legs. Ava turns to Terry, who is waiting in the background.

TERRY

Poor, buddy, must have had an accident. Looks like he could use a good home.

AVA

We're here for Bernie, dad. He's my dog.

TERRY

Honey, we've talked about this. We may not find Bernie.

Ava glares at him.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Maybe one of these dogs will help keep you company until Bernie comes home?

Frank is in the background and overhears their conversation.

FRANK

Sorry, pal, these dogs are on the black list. Can't let any of them adopt out.

Frank points to a sign above the cage with a skull and crossbones above a warning written in big red letters, "DANGER - AGGRESSIVE DOGS."

TERRY

(re: Ava's inquisitive look)

You know, You're right, honey. Bernie will be home soon. We should go.

Ava holds up five fingers and smiles sweetly.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Not a chance.

AVA

We'll keep them at Nana's farm. I won't ask for another animal for at least a year.

TERRY

Nana's farm, huh?

Frank reaches out with an open palm and clears his throat. Terry SIGHS as he reaches for his wallet.

EXT. RABID DOGS SCRAP YARD - DUSK

Ronin is standing beside Bernie as a gentle wind blows. Bernie has his eyes closed, deeply concentrating.

RONIN

One thousand days of training, a beginner.

Bernie pounces over a pile of scrap and lands on top of a crow, catching it between his paws.

BERNIE

Ten thousand days of training, a master.

CROW

What's with you guys? You're worse than cats. The animals, not the musical. That's lovely.

Bernie releases the crow and BARKS, prompting two cats to SCREECH and flee from their hiding place to the other side of the yard.

CROW (CONT'D)

Everybody's a critic.

The crow flies away and Bernie notices Mindy watching from the wall.

BERNIE

So when is he going to cut me loose?

RONIN

As I've already told you, there's only one way off that chain.

We push in on Bernie looking up at Mindy and...

CUT TO:

ECU BERNIE'S FACE ON THE POSTER

Time begins to ACCELERATE as we slowly pull back. The poster becomes ragged and weathered. Rain wets it, sun bakes it and slowly Bernie's face fades as other posters and flyers accumulate and intrude on top until only Bernie's eyes are visible from the well worn poster.

SUPERTITLE: SIX YEARS LATER

EXT. RABID DOGS SCRAP YARD - NIGHT

Bernie is lounging on the deteriorating front seat of an old car that has been removed and left to rot. Bernie is much bigger and more muscular. Without warning, Ronin is suddenly beside him. Bernie doesn't detect the older dog's presence until Ronin's snout is right behind his ear.

RONIN
 Trouble. Move without sound.

Bernie immediately perks up and follows Ronin. Although still chained, Bernie has much more slack to roam the yard. Ronin is moving quickly and silently, sniffing the air. They follow a scent to a chain link fence which separates the yard from an overgrown, abandon lot. A half dozen Pit Bulls are on the other side of the fence furiously digging.

Ronin and Bernie pause in the shadows, silently taking in the unfolding invasion.

RONIN (CONT'D)
 They are Zain.

BERNIE
 What do they want?

RONIN
 We'll soon find out.

Three of the Pit Bulls slip under the fence through the freshly dug hole and race for another part of the yard. Ronin and Bernie follow.

EXT. RABID DOGS SCRAP YARD, WALL BESIDE PURE BRED HOUSE -
 CONTINUOUS

The three Pits reach the wall and immediately start frantically digging. Bernie and Ronin notice Mindy and Glamour, sitting on top of the wall, oblivious to what is unfolding below.

RONIN
 They've come for the pure breds.

BERNIE
 What are we waiting for?

RONIN
 It may be best to avoid a confrontation. Allow them what they want and they'll go away.

Bernie looks up at Mindy with concern.

BERNIE
 What happened to defend the yard,
 defend the pack?

RONIN
 They are not our pack.

BERNIE

What about our territory? Let them
through once and it won't be the
last time.

Ronin considers.

The Pits are frantically digging when, without warning, Ronin bounds past them and uses the wall as a spring board to redirect and increase his momentum into the trio of invaders, knocking them backwards. Before the Pits can stand, Ronin is on top of them, moving impossibly fast and snapping viciously at each of the dogs, who scramble regain their footing. Backing away from Ronin, the Pits run into Bernie, whose BARK causes them to jump. Bernie bears his fangs and growls, causing the Pits to turn and retreat in the direction from which they came BUT they skid to a stop when...

A massive white Pit Bull, TITUS, and two soldier Pit Bulls step out from the shadows. One of the soldiers has a scar where one of his eyes used to be, CYCLOPS, and the other is missing a large swath of fur from his back, KRILL.

TITUS

STOP!
(re: Bernie)
He's chained, you fools.

RONIN

The noise will have awoken our
master.

TITUS

Leaving us just enough time to
finish the only enemy to have
escaped the Zain.

RONIN

You count all dogs who are not Zain
among you enemies.

TITUS

Other breeds are weak. Cower to
humans. Humans are no friend to the
Zain. They leave us to the fend in
the streets and rule the night.

RONIN

This is not the street.

TITUS

There's no hole for you escape
through this time.

The five Pit Bull soldiers, lead by Cyclops and Krill, quickly converge on Ronin. Bernie strains against the chain, trying to reach his friend.

BERNIE

Ronin!

Ronin is fighting bravely, moving with speed and grace, but cannot match five attackers and is beginning to be overwhelmed. Ronin YELPS in spite of himself as one of the Pit Bulls manages to bit his shoulder.

TITUS

Good bye, Ronin.

The snarling Pit Bulls converge on Ronin, who braces for the end just as...

Bernie snaps the chain and barrels into the group, knocking the Pit Bulls into the wall. Bernie fights with a ferocious intensity, biting and tossing the Pit Bulls around like chew toys. The Pit Bulls start to retreat as Bernie turns to face Titus.

BANG - a baseball bat smashes into the hood of a rusting car.

Scratch SMASHES the side view mirror of the vehicle with his bat and charges at Titus.

SCRATCH

God dang mutts.

TITUS

(to Bernie)

We'll meet again.

Titus turns and races away in the direction the other Pit Bulls fled. Scratch and Bernie give chase, following the Pit Bulls back to the chain link fence. The Pit Bulls slide under the fence through the hole in the ground and disappear into the abandoned lot and the darkness of night.

EXT. RABID DOGS SCRAP YARD, WALL BESIDE PURE BRED HOUSE -
MOMENTS LATER

Scratch and Bernie stand over Ronin, who is wounded and bleeding. Scratch affectionately pets Bernie on the head, who is taken aback, unaccustomed to such tenderness.

SCRATCH

You did good, Bernie. You did good.

Scratch gently picks up Ronin.

SCRATCH (CONT'D)
I'm gonna get him to the vet.

As Scratch carries him away, Ronin locks eyes with Bernie.

RONIN
That's how you get off the chain.

Standing in the now silent and still yard, Bernie looks around, sensing that someone is watching him.

MINDY (O.S.)
Thank you, Bernie.

Bernie looks up to see Mindy still sitting on top of the wall. Bernie opens his mouth to respond to her then looks down at the broken chain still attached to his collar.

Bernie quickly races behind a stack of rusty cars and then emerges, pushing a rusted out dishwasher unit to the base of the wall. Bernie turns and races back behind the scrap pile and this time appears pushing a large, empty oil drum which he leaves beside the dishwasher. Bernie races back once again and this time pushes a ten foot high bin of various scrap items and leaves it beside the drum.

Bernie runs and leaps onto the dishwasher, then leaps up onto the drum, than leaps on the scrap bin. Bernie is now only a few feet below the wall -- and Mindy.

MINDY (CONT'D)
Been planning this a while?

Bernie follows her gaze to his make shift ladder.

BERNIE
Everyday since I got here. I've got a real home to get back to, an owner that loves me.

MINDY
Must be nice.

Bernie props up on his hind legs so he is inches away from Mindy. They lock eyes longingly before Bernie self consciously turns his head to see over the wall.

A finely manicured back yard in which a half dozen, meticulously groomed, female show dogs lounge on the grass. Palm trees and awnings provide shade and several fountains are both decorative and offer a place for the dogs to drink the fresh, clear water.

Bernie also notices a plate on the bark porch of the home with several juicy T-Bone steaks on it.

BERNIE

I would never have imagined this place existed just beyond this wall.

MINDY

It's not as wonderful as it seems.

BERNIE

Amy idea why the Zain wanted to enter your yard?

MINDY

No good deed goes unpunished. The white one's name is Titus. I did him a favor once...

CUT TO:

EXT. PURE BRED BACK YARD - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Mindy is by herself in the yard and hears a YELPING. She walks over to a fogged basement window with an orange glow coming from it. Another YELP. The window is braced shut by a metal bar. Mindy nudges the bar with the snout of her nose and it comes loose. Titus' head emerges from the window. He squeezes through the window, a terrified look on his face. He locks eyes with Mindy. Krill and Cyclops also emerge from the window and race for the wall. From the basement we hear a man's booming voice.

HOLLIS (O.S.)

Get that dang window shut, they're getting away.

CUT TO:

EXT. RABID DOGS SCRAP YARD, WALL BESIDE PURE BRED HOUSE - NIGHT

Mindy has a far off look in her eyes, remembering the night Titus escaped.

MINDY

His way of saying thank you, I guess, is to scare the be-jesus out of me. Could be they were here to spring some of their old friends too.

(MORE)

MINDY (CONT'D)

(beat)

So, why are you still here, Bernie?
You got a home to get back to,
right?

BERNIE

I won't leave without Ronin's
blessing. Make sure he's well
enough to hold the yard. I owe him
at least that. How did you know my
name?

MINDY

I've been watching you for the last
six years, Bernie, is Ronin the
only reason you're staying?

Mindy leans down and rubs her nose against Bernie's nose. A
BELL rings somewhere on Mindy's side of the wall.

MINDY (CONT'D)

Dinner time. Tardiness means
punishment. I'm glad you're
staying for now, Bernie, I'll see
you again.

(beat)

I've noticed you've been watching
me too, Bernie.

Mindy hops onto the steeped cement top of a fountain and
slides down the horizontal face before hopping to the ground.

BERNIE

Wait, what's your name?

MINDY

(calling behind her)

Mindy.

BERNIE

(repeating to himself)

Mindy.

EXT. RABID DOGS SCRAP YARD - DAY

Bernie is resting on a dilapidated car seat. Scratch
approaches from the office carrying a paper sack. Ronin is
walking beside him, his wounds having been treated and
bandaged. Scratch reaches into it and removes a thick steak
which he drops on the ground in front of Bernie. Surprised,
Bernie looks up at Scratch with a puzzled look on his face.

SCRATCH

I know, I know. Just remember, far as everyone else is concerned, I'm a angry old man and you're an angry old dog.

Scratch rubs Bernie's snout then turns to go.

SCRATCH (CONT'D)

Keep an eye on Ronin.

Scratch walks away, headed for the driveway to greet Frank, who climbs down from an ANIMAL CONTROL truck.

RONIN

I wasn't sure you'd be here when we returned.

BERNIE

I wanted to make sure you were ok.

RONIN

I noticed you rearranged a bit.

Bernie follows Ronin's gaze to the make-shift ladder.

RONIN (CONT'D)

You would not be the first to go over that wall. None have made it back.

BERNIE

Your beef with the Zain seemed like an old one.

RONIN

The Zain were not always as they are now.

BERNIE

You used to be one of them?

RONIN

The Zain once welcomed all dogs without a home. It offered safety and access to food. It also meant following certain rules. Most important among them, avoid contact with humans. You can see what has become of it.

Bernie follows Ronin's gaze to the driveway where Scratch is talking to Frank. Scratch points to the chain link fence under which the Zain invaded.

Two workmen are installing electrified coils above it along with a sign which reads "Danger - Electrified Fence."

BERNIE

What happened to all the other dogs, besides the Pits?

RONIN

I know not. When I defied Titus, I was attacked. He defeated me.

BERNIE

He defeated **you**?

RONIN

Consider yourself fortunate he fled last night. I barely managed to escape into the sewer. It was our master that found me. Brought me back to health. I have not left the yard since.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Terry's station wagon kicks dust high into the air as it cruises down the dirt road. The car slows and turns down a rugged, cinder driveway, passing through an open metal gate with a sign above it, "Vida Nueva Ranch".

EXT. VIDA NUEVA RANCH - MOMENTS LATER

Terry pulls to a stop in a large, circular driveway that is boarded by two large barns and a modest ranch house. Beyond them are fenced in fields with a mix of SHEEP, GOATS, LAMAS, HORSES and COWS.

Ava, now 15, exits the passenger seat, prompting a flurry of motion around the driveway as small animals of all types converge. Terry proceeds to the back of the car and opens the hatch back and carefully removes a large cage.

VARIOUS ANIMALS (O.S.)

She's here. She's here. She's here!

OZ (O.S.)

Atten-hut!

Remerick, the owl, lands on a fence posts next to Ava as she passes.

AVA
Remerick, the wing looks great.

Remerick bows slightly as she passes. Lounging on top of a fence post are Rufus and Bob, the frog and toad. Bob darts out his tongue and catches a fly then swallows it in one motion, prompting a BURP. Ava smiles as she passes.

AVA (CONT'D)
(to Rufus & Bob)
Gentlemen.

Snuggled in next to each other on the ground, are Lucky and Jackpot, the rabbits. Ava pauses to scratch Lucky behind the ears. She notices the mice, Pip & Zip, trying to wrangle three NEWBORN BUNNIES in the background. One of the bunnies tries to bolt, so Pip jumps onto its back and uses its floppy ears like reins to direct it back to the area by its parents.

PIP
I'm much too old for this nonsense.

AVA
(to Lucky)
I see you two have been busy.

Ava continues along, arriving at the three legged Pit Bull, Oz. Four other DOGS stand shoulder to shoulder, rigid and at attention. As Ava passes Oz, he hops along at her side, keeping pace as they inspect the troops. Ava rubs the snout of a GERMAN SHEPHERD at the end of the line then turns to Oz and pets him on the head.

AVA (CONT'D)
Looking good, Oz.
(to the other dogs)
At ease everyone.

A long shadow falls across Ava and the dogs. Ava looks up to see NANA (80s) on top of a horse, wearing a cowboy hat, chaps leather gloves and spurs. Nana's eyes hidden by large aviator sun glasses and a long blade of grass dangles from her mouth.

NANA
The prodigal granddaughter returns.

AVA
It's only been a week, Nana.

Nana slides off the horse, tucks the sunglasses into her coat and hugs Ava.

NANA

Lots to do, my dear, lots to do.
The folds here any day now and
it'll be sheering time soon enough.

Nana leads Ava and the horse away as most the animals follow along when...

TERRY (O.S.)

Uh, little help here.

They turn to see Terry dancing around in an attempt to avoid having his legs pecked by three very angry and aggressive CHICKENS. The large cage has fallen on its side and the door hangs open, having promoted the escape.

NANA

Chickens?

AVA

I'm volunteering at the shelter.
Six months since Easter, you do the math.

NANA

Good to see city slickers still plan ahead.

AVA

No rabbits yet, though.

TERRY

(in distress)
Ava?!

AVA

Come on guys.

The chickens immediately stop harassing Terry, dust themselves off with their wings and calmly fall in line behind Ava and Nana. One turns back to Terry.

CHICKEN 1

(indignant)
Good day, sir.

EXT. VIDA NUEVA RANCH, HORSE PASTURE - LATER

Nana and Terry are leaning against a fence, watching Ava try to calmly break a broncing young colt for riding in the background. The ornery colt cautiously bows its head, allowing Ava to rub its muzzle. Ava grabs the horse's mane and slides onto its back.

NANA

She's got a gift. Won't be long
'fore she's running the place.

TERRY

I'm worried it borders on
obsessive. She's still spending way
too much time at that shelter
looking for that St. Bernard. We
figured she'd have pieced it
together by now.

NANA

Girl and her first dog; it's a bond
that runs deep.

Ava now has the colt calming cantering around the enclosure
while Remerick flies next to them, keeping pace.

NANA (CONT'D)

Maybe the snake didn't gobble it
and it's still out there some
where.

EXT. CITY STREET - MORNING

A street in the industrial part of town, it is lined by
warehouses and factories, along with coffee stands and a
couple of greasy spoon restaurants.

A small, Jack Russell Terrier, BAIT, races down the street
with a fast food wrapper and the remnants of a discarded
cheeseburger hanging from his mouth. Cyclops, Krill and
another angry Pit Bull are in pursuit.

EXT. COFFEE STAND - MOMENTS LATER

Frank is exiting a coffee stand and heading for his Animal
Control truck carrying a large coffee and a bag of pastries.

Bait brushes past Frank's legs, causing him to briefly lose
his balance, juggle and nearly spill his coffee. He turns and
watches as Bait continues down the road.

FRANK

(muttering)

Seven fifteen in the bloody morning
and I've ready got dogs running
loose. Haven't even had my morning
coffee...

He turns back toward his truck, but is barrelled over by the three pit bulls, coffee and croissants fly through the air. When Frank sits up, his sunglasses are broken and askew, dangling from one ear. He tosses them away and runs to his truck, eyes locked on the Pit Bulls.

EXT. RABID DOGS SCRAP YARD, OUTSIDE THE FRONT GATE - MOMENTS LATER

The gate is open and Blake & Griggs are exiting the yard, pushing a shopping cart that has a sewing machine in it.

GRIGGS

I told you he wouldn't want a sewing machine.

BLAKE

He stuck me as a craftsman.

EXT. RABID DOGS SCRAP YARD, INSIDE THE FRONT GATE - CONTINUOUS

Bernie and Ronin look on as Scratch presses a button on the exterior office wall and the gate begins to close but grinds to a halt half way.

SCRATCH

Gear's stuck again. I'm gonna fetch a wrench. Make sure they don't happen back. Got sticky fingers.

Bernie yawns and Ronin's eyelids droop shut. Ronin's eyes flash open and he sits with a start. Bernie notices.

BERNIE

What is it?

Before Ronin can answer, Bait races into the yard. He skids to a stop at the sight of Ronin and Bernie. Bait places a wrapper with the cheeseburger on the ground and backs away slowly.

BAIT

Can I interest either of you, extremely large new friends in a cheeseburger?

Bernie and Ronin exchange a confused look just as three Pit Bulls enter the yard. Bait smiles innocently at the Pits and reverses course, backing toward Bernie and Ronin.

CYCLOPS

This doesn't concern you.

BERNIE

Everything that occurs in this yard concerns us.

RONIN

Leave now. We'll put him out in a few hours and you can settle the dispute elsewhere.

The Pits stand their ground. Scratch emerges from the office and sees the confrontation unfolding. He picks up his bat and raises it, along with the wrench as he marches toward them.

RONIN (CONT'D)

Avoiding humans is the first rule of survival.

The Pits exchange a look, then turn to go.

BAIT

Thanks for lunch, fellas. Lucky for me you took advantage of two for one neuter-labotomy special.

The Pits stop, and turn back, confused. Bernie is also puzzled, though Ronin's face registers concern.

BAIT (CONT'D)

It means you're dumb as dirt and just about as brave as you are ugly.

Ronin sighs, knowing what comes next.

The Pits charge at Bait. Bernie and Ronin knock Cyclops and Krill off course, but the third Pit is bearing down on Bait, who darts toward Scratch. Bait runs between Scratch's legs, followed by the Pit, which smacks into Scratch and knocks him to the ground. Scratch is unfazed and grabs the Pit by the scruff of the neck then wrestles it to the ground as it snaps at and him, struggling to get loose.

SCRATCH

Dang mutts, coming through by yard, attacking my pooches. I'll teach you a lesson you ain't ever gonna forget.

Scratch has pinned the dog to the ground with his forearm. Ronin, Bernie, Bait, Cyclops and Krill all freeze, transfixed by the human.

The Pit Scratch has pinned manages to wrestle its head free from Scratch's forearm and bite him in the shoulder. Scratch SCREAMS out in pain then drops the wrench and clutches his chest, stumbling backwards. Seizing its opportunity, the enraged Pit pounces on Scratch and bites him several more times, then, realizing what its done, backs slowly away.

Scratch is motionless on the ground. None of the dogs move, unsure what happens next. Bernie and Ronin exchange a look with the Pits who simultaneously turn and race from the yard.

Ronin instinctively gives chase as Bernie cautiously approaches Scratch.

Scratch's eyes are closed and his breathing labored. He is cut and bleeding in several places including a deep scratch on his face. His eyes blink open and he looks up at Bernie. Scratch speaks with great difficulty.

SCRATCH (CONT'D)

I need ya' to help me get to the office, Bernie. Gotta call an ambulance.

Bernie bites down on Scratch's shirt, securely holding the fabric along the shoulder and collar, then begins dragging Scratch toward the office.

In the background a truck enters the yard and skids to a stop. Frank steps out and takes in the scene of Bernie dragging Scratch to the office. From his vantage point, Bernie looks like he's attacking Scratch.

Suddenly Bernie's entire body jerks in a massive spasm, thousands of volts of electric current surging through it.

Several yards away, Frank is holding a taser. He squeezes the trigger again, causing Bernie's body to jolt and then go still. Bernie lays motionless on the ground next to Scratch. Frank places the taser on the hood of his truck and leans into the cab, picking up the handset of his radio.

FRANK

I need an ambulance at the Rabid Dogs Scrap yard right now. Dog attack victim. Motionless. Putting the animal down now.

DISPATCHER (THROUGH THE RADIO)

Ambulance in route.

Bait creeps out of the shadows and nudges Bernie.

BAIT

Wake up, pal. You gotta get out of here.

Frank opens the back of his truck and removes a dart gun and a small plastic box with the word 'poison' written on it next to the skull and crossbones universal hazard symbol. He opens the box, removes a dart and loads it into the gun.

Bait is nipping at Bernie, who groggily awakens as Frank continues loading the dart gun in the background.

BAIT (CONT'D)

You ever want to see your owner or anyone else again, you better snap out of it.

Bernie manages to stand, wobbly, and looks down at Bait. From his perspective the little dog is going in and out of focus, his voice distorted.

BAIT (CONT'D)

You gotta beat it, pal.

Bernie looks up and sees Frank cautiously approaching, blocking any exit path through the front gate. Bernie bolts to his feet and runs toward the chain link fence under which the Zain entered previously, a dart landing in the dirt behind him. Although he's running fast, Bernie is off kilt and stumbling from side to side. He wobbles to the left just as another dart WHIZZES past. Bernie grits his teeth and leaps; amazingly he manages to get his front paws over the 10 foot fence, but the barbed wire digs into his fur and electricity from the electrified wire SURGES through his body. Frank stops running and lines up a shoot for Bernie's back as he hangs helplessly from the fence. Bernie strains with all his might and lifts himself up and over the fence, but a dart lands squarely in his back as he does so. Bernie's body crashes down on the other side in a tangle of barbed wire.

Frank lowers his gun and runs toward the fence as Bernie somehow manages stands and quickly wobble away. Bernie disappears into an alleyway off the abandon lot.

Frank loads up another dart and begins to walk toward the fence before thinking better of it turning back to Scratch. The SIREN from an ambulance rises in the distance.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Bernie collapses in the alleyway, his body giving out from the injuries he's sustained and the after effects of the electricity. Bait races up to him nervously.

BAIT
Keep moving, big fella, he's
coming.

Bait bites and tugs at Bernie's fur to no avail. The shadow of an approaching human falls across the alleyway.

A gate pops open a few feet from Bernie and Bait. Standing on the other side is... Mindy.

MINDY
Help me get him inside.

Mindy and Bait bite and then tug at Bernie's limp body, dragging him out of the alley and into the back yard of Mindy's pure bred Eden. The gate SNAPS shut behind them just as Frank rounds the corner.

EXT. RABID DOGS SCRAP YARD - LATER

As Frank returns to the yard through the front gate two EMTS are loading up gear in an ambulance. They make eye contact with Frank and sadly shake their heads.

EXT. PURE BRED HOUSE BACKYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Bait and Mindy struggle to drag Bernie behind an ornate chicken coup.

BAIT
Nice place you got here.

MINDY
You best leave, it's dinner time
now, but when the other's return,
they'll smell you. Hopefully the
chickens will cover his scent.

BAIT
This is on me.

MINDY
I'll care for him. And don't touch
anything on the way out. There's
danger where you wouldn't expect
it.

BAIT

What makes you think you can talk to me like that, Princess? You may be a dog, but you're no D-O-G. The street's watching. I'll be back to settle up.

Bait trots away.

EXT. PURE BRED HOUSE BACKYARD - LATER

Mindy furtively carries a bowl full of food across the yard, the lip secured tightly in her mouth. She enters the chicken coup and sets it beside a bowl full of water for Bernie. He is sweating profusely and squirming around, in and out of consciousness. Mindy lays down next to him, concerned.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

A poster featuring Bernie's face is pasted onto a brick wall by a paint roller attached to a long metal pole. It reads, 'WARNING: KILLER DOG'.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET CORNER - EVENING

The same poster is being stapled to a telephone pole on top of the last vestiges of Ava's tattered missing poster.

INT. ANIMAL SHELTER - DAY

Ava, now 16, is staring in disbelief at the same poster attached to a bulletin board. She pulls it off the board.

AVA

Bernie?

EXT. PURE BRED HOUSE BACKYARD - DAY

Mindy is furtively carrying a bowl of food, heading for the chicken coup, when Glamour and a Pomeranian, BELLA, block her path. Bella has a newspaper clenched between her teeth. Mindy tries to go around, but Glamour side steps to block her path.

GLAMOUR

You're not fooling the rest of us, we all know he's here.

MINDY
Master won't find out.

GLAMOUR
Our master's not the only one for
you to be worried about.

Bella drops the newspaper in front of Mindy. Bernie's face
stares back at her next to the headline, "Killer Dog Still On
Loose."

GLAMOUR (CONT'D)
It's time that he left.

MINDY
One more night?

Glamour and Bella consider.

MINDY (CONT'D)
Please?

Glamour and Bella reluctantly nod.

EXT. PURE BRED HOUSE BACKYARD, CHICKEN COOP - MOMENTS LATER

Mindy enters to find Bernie doing his best to choke down food
from the bowl sitting in front of him. Bernie wounds have
healed. Mindy gently sets down the water next to the food
bowl.

MINDY
Not exactly prime rib.

BERNIE
What is it?

MINDY
High fiber, low carb, vitamin
fortified, sea weed based protein.
Brings out the natural shine in
fur.

BERNIE
Sounds worse than it tastes. Why
doesn't anyone go for one of the
steaks on the porch?

MINDY
Show dog rule 1; be disciplined
always. Steaks are electrified; one
bite equals nasty shock.

BERNIE

I've had enough jolts for this
lifetime.

MINDY

Your hair's still standing on end.

Bernie turns and looks in at his reflection in a puddle.

MINDY (CONT'D)

Kidding. Gullible much?

(beat)

The others think it's time for you
to go.

BERNIE

What do you think?

MINDY

I agree. We're leaving in the
morning.

BERNIE

We?

MINDY

I'm tired of being scared. I don't
know what's out there, but I'm
ready to find out so long as it's
with you.

BERNIE

And all it took for you to finally
say yes was for me to be
electrocuted and poisoned.

MINDY

I like to think of it as love,
Rasputen style.

(beat)

You're sure Ava will take me in?

BERNIE

She loves all creatures, especially
one as beautiful as you.

Their noses touch tenderly and they snuggle in together.

MINDY

There's something else I need to
tell you, but not here, not now.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - MORNING

Bait is waiting in the alleyway outside of the pure bred house, pacing nervously.

BAIT

Sun rise, she tells me. Crack of dawn. Here I am, so where are you, princess?

Tired of waiting, Bait scampers up a dumpster and leaps to the fence, landing on a cross bear near the top. He hops over.

EXT. PURE BRED HOUSE BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Bait is casually walking toward the chicken coup when he notices the plate of steaks on the porch. He WHISTLES a cat call.

BAIT

Hello beautiful.

EXT. PURE BRED HOUSE BACKYARD, CHICKEN COOP - MOMENTS LATER

Bernie and Mindy and snuggled in together, but are jolted awake by the sound of an ELECTRIC SURGE and a YELP from a dog. They run out of the chicken coup to find Bait running away from the porch, heading for the fence to the alley way. A man, HOLLIS (40s), is standing in the back doorway watching Bait flee. Hollis raises a homemade rock salt cannon, which is a truly bizzare looking contraption.

Hollis FIRES and barely misses the little dog as it scurries up a slanted trellis and leaps over the gate, rock salt peppering the wood behind him. Hollis quickly pours more rock salt into the contraption.

MINDY

Go, now, follow Bait. I'll find you, I promise.

Bernie is conflicted, not wanting to leave Mindy. A shotgun BLAST knocks Bernie backwards. Dazed and wounded, Bernie stands and runs for the fence, but calls to Mindy over his shoulder as he goes.

BERNIE

I'm ok, it's just rock salt. I'll come back for you.

Bernie has a now familiar, determined look on his face and leaps, clearing the fence as another rock salt blast ERUPTS behind him.

Hollis marches over to the chicken coup and stares at Mindy. Her face is badly bleeding having been punctured in several places by the rock salt and she's missing part of her left ear.

HOLLIS

You gotta be kidding me. That dang mutt just cost me five grand. Ain't no showing a hideous looking thing like you.

EXT. CITY STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Bernie is limping along the sidewalk, looking around at the massive warehouses and factories that dominate this part of town. He is disoriented and trying to get his bearings. Bernie steps off the curb to cross the street, but is forced to jump back, narrowly avoiding being crushed by a large Mac Truck which BLARES its horn as it goes by.

BAIT (O.S.)

Check yourself, big fella. You can't be roaming these streets in daylight. That's asking for one kind of trouble...

Bernie charges at Bait, barring his teeth, and backs the smaller dog into a brick wall.

BAIT (CONT'D)

...or another.

BERNIE

This is your fault. I outta finish you myself. The Zain were going to walk away and leave us out of it.

BAIT

Think so? Zain got a beef with every dog that ain't Zain.

BERNIE

So I hear.

BAIT

Sorry I got y'all involved. Let me do you a solid.

Bernie stares at the little dog, mulling it over.

BAIT (CONT'D)

Forget the Zain, you got other problems if you be wandering the streets in the light of day. I got a place that's safe.

Bait nods to a lamp post that has Bernie's Wanted Poster taped to it.

EXT. ABANDONED LOT - LATER

Bernie is following Bait as they make their way through a overgrown field, thick with high grassy. Along a chain link fence that borders one side of the lot is a thick patch of blackberry bushes that mostly obscure a dilapidated shipping container.

BAIT

Step where I step less you wanna get chewed up.

Bait carefully makes his way into the blackberry bushes, following a narrow path between the brambles. Bernie follows Bait's exact path, but still winces as his shoulders and back are periodically scratched by brambles.

Bait stops beside one corner of the container and hits the metal wall five times with his paw in the 'shave and a hair cut' pattern. Two hits from the inside of the container follow and a pudgy English Bulldog, Griffin, emerges from beneath the metal corner of the container, which has become unbolted. Griffin is holding up the loose corner with his head and back. Bait walks past him, entering the container.

BAIT (CONT'D)

What'da say, Grif?
(Re: Bernie)
He's with me.

Bernie has to crouch down on his belly in order to shimmy into the container, past Griffin, narrowly making it underneath the metal siding. Griffin backs into the container, the loose metal corner SNAPS shut behind him.

The inside of the container is dimly lit, illuminated by a little bit of sunlight that filters in through a few rusted holes in the top.

Bernie blinks to get his bearings. Two dozen mangy dogs and puppies of various breeds, ages and sizes stare back at him.

GRIFFIN

Who's this?

BAIT

Enemy of the Zain. Makes a friend
in my book.

GRIFFIN

It also could bring trouble.

BERNIE

Who are you?

Griffin can't help laughing at the question.

GRIFFIN

What do you think? We're mutts.

INSERT MUSICAL NUMBER - The mutts singing about their hard
life; the Zain; other mutts packs they don't get along
with...

EXT. RABID DOGS SCRAP YARD - DAY

Ava approaches the front gate riding a bicycle and skids to a
stop beside it. She rings a buzzer. BARKING rises from the
distance and then Princess appears. As she approaches the
fence and notices Ava, she stops barking. Princess stops at
the fenceline and stares at Ava, fascinated.

After a moment Scatch's son, Taft, appears on the other side,
looking her over.

TAFT

What'da you want, kid?

AVA

I'm looking for my dog.

TAFT

He ain't here.

AVA

I saw a poster that said he was.

TAFT

That right? Listen, kid, I'm sorry
you lost your pooch, but my dad
owned that mutt for six, seven
years now.

AVA

That's right! Got him as a puppy?
Line around his right eye?

Taft considers then sighs.

TAFT

I don't know how my dad came by that dog. Hate to say he dealt with some pretty shady characters. No idea where that mutt is now.

Ava smiles brightly.

AVA

He's still out there!

TAFT

Easy, kid. Seven years out here, hauling and guarding scrap hardens a dog. Ain't no way he'd recognize you now even if you did find him. He's a mutt and mutts ain't safe.

Ava is still smiling as she turns and rides away, calling over her shoulder.

AVA

Thank you!

Taft watches her peddle away, a broad smile still lighting up her face.

TAFT

Hey kid?

Ava skids to a stop and looks back at him.

AVA

Your dog wasn't responsible for my dad. He had a bad heart for years.

Ava nods and then peddles away. Ronin approaches the fence.

RONIN

Who was that?

PRINCESS

Just some kid looking for her dog.

EXT. ALLEYWAY ADJACENT TO THE PURE BRED HOUSE - NIGHT

Bernie, Bait, Griffin and a black Scotty, TEX are looking up at the roof of a garage across the alley from the pure bred house.

GRIFFIN

It's a heck of a jump. You sure about this?

BERNIE

Trust me. I appreciate you showing me the way back.

GRIFFIN

You saved one in our pack. This makes us square.

Bernie jumps onto the top of a dumpster next to the garage and then jumps onto the roof. He backs up to the edge. One deep breath, then Bernie sprints to the edge of the roof and jumps, sailing across the alley and over Griffin, Bait and Tex, who watch in awe. Bernie catches the wall surrounding the backyard of the pure bred house with his front paws and propels himself over the other side.

EXT. PURE BRED HOUSE BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Bernie hits the ground and barrel rolls out the force and momentum.

It's quiet, no other dogs in site. Bernie skulks around the yard and notices Bella and Glamour sitting on top of the section of wall bordering the scrap yard. He jumps onto the top of the chicken coup and then onto the wall. Glamour and Bella don't turn to face him.

GLAMOUR

She's not here.

BERNIE

The basement?

Glamour shakes her head.

GLAMOUR

The woods.

EXT. DIRT ROAD IN THE COUNTRY - DAY

A car skids to a stop, sending a wave of dust continuing along down the road. Hollis gets out of the car, opens the passenger side door and unceremoniously dumps Mindy by the side of the road.

GLAMOUR (V.O.)

It happened once before when I first arrived here; an injured dog. Rumor was he took it to the woods and left it there. Alone.

Hollis gets back into the car and guns it in reverse, casting dust in Mindy's face, who COUGHS. Hollis shifts the car into drive and speeds away.

EXT. PURE BRED HOUSE BACKYARD WALL - CONTINUOUS

Bernie steps closer to Glamour, a concerned look on his face.

BERNIE

Where?!

GLAMOUR

I don't know anything more.

BERNIE

Why weren't you surprised to see me?

GLAMOUR

He said you'd come back for her.

BERNIE

Who?

Bernie follows her gaze to the scrap yard where Ronin is looking up at them.

EXT. RABID DOGS SCRAP YARD - MOMENTS LATER

Ronin is waiting for Bernie just inside the locked front gate as Bernie approaches from the street. They meet on either side of the gate.

BERNIE

They said she was taken to the woods.

RONIN

So I've heard. We've not much time.

BERNIE

We?

Ronin bolts, disappearing behind the office/tailer. Bernie stares intently wondering what Ronin is up to when his old friend appears at his side.

RONIN

You'll need my nose.

BERNIE

It's good to see you again, Ronin.

RONIN

And you. But if we do find Mindy...

BERNIE

When.

RONIN

When we find Mindy, where will you go?

BERNIE

I'll find Ava. She'll keep us safe.

RONIN

You're sure?

BERNIE

I'm sure.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Ronin and Bernie are sprinting through the thick brush, hopping over stumps and ducking under low hanging branches without breaking stride. They reach a clearing and skid to a stop. Bernie looks to Ronin, who closes his eyes and deeply pulls air into his nose. Ronin's eyes snap wide open.

RONIN

I've got her. There are others.

BERNIE

Dogs?

RONIN

I don't know what they are.

EXT. ANOTHER PART OF THE WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Mindy is slowly trudging along. A breeze rustles the trees causing her to shiver. The branches steady, but Mindy looks over her shoulder, sensing she's being watched. Mindy turns back and starts walking again, picking up the pace.

The brush behind her begins to BEND and BREAK as if a large animal were trampling through. Mindy starts to run when, bursting from a large bush is -- Remerick, the owl.

He swoops over Mindy then glides back up and lands on a branch in front of her. Mindy stops and stares at the majestic owl perched in front of the bright moon.

MINDY

Can you tell me the way back to the City?

REMERICK

It is far and you are alone. You will not survive the night.

MINDY

Very helpful. Thanks.

Mindy starts walking.

REMERICK

Danger approaches. I know of a place where dogs are taken in, given a home. You will follow me there.

MINDY

Bossy much? City, me, go, now.

REMERICK

If you've come from the city you know the Zain ensure the lives of strays are miserable. Why is it you are so desperate to return?

Mindy stops and turns back to Remerick.

EXT. ANOTHER PART OF THE WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Ronin and Bernie are sprinting at a break neck pace; dodging, weaving, ducking and jumping, a shared look of determination on their faces.

RONIN

We're getting close. As are the others.

EXT. ANOTHER PART OF THE WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Remerick has landed on the ground in front of Mindy and is staring up at her.

REMERICK

Very well, we'll do what we're able to and wish you Godspeed.

Remerick HOOTS twice prompting PIP and Zip, the mice, to emerge from a small bush. A third, smaller mouse, PICKERING, sheepishly steps out from behind them.

REMERICK (CONT'D)

(to Pip & Zip)

You're sure he knows that way and you trust him?

PIP

He's family.

ZIP

We'll send you word along the way, lad. Safe riding.

Pickering nods to the older mice then scrambles up Mindy's leg, onto her back.

MINDY

Well, are you going to tell me which way to go or am I supposed to read your mind?

PICKERING

A little from column A, a little from column B...

MINDY

Huh?

Picking winks at the other mice then yanks hard with each paw on two clumps of hair just above Mindy's neck causing her to instantly YELP and race away at break neck speed, her WHINING trailing off as she goes.

MINDY (CONT'D)

Owwwwwwwwwwwwww.

ZIP

Ah, to be young again.

EXT. ANOTHER PART OF THE WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Ronin and Bernie emerge from thick brush into a clearing atop a gentle slope. Looking down without breaking stride, they see Mindy running in the woods below. Thirty yards behind her, the brush is bending and breaking; something is in pursuit. Ronin and Bernie change direction and head down the slope at an intercept angle.

EXT. ANOTHER PART OF THE WOODS - CONTINUOUS

As Mindy sprints through the brush a second mouse, ZAP, leaps from a tree branch, landing on her back next to Pickering. Zap whispers something into Pickering's ear then leaps off Mindy's back, disappearing into the brush below.

PICKERING

They are upon us. Change of plans.

Pickering yanks hard with his right paw, causing Mindy to bank sharp right and YOWL again.

MINDY

Pleeeeeeeese stop doing that.

Pickering lets go of Mindy's fur and digs his paws into her back causing her to skid to a stop at the edge of a cliff.

MINDY (CONT'D)

OWWWWWWW.

She looks down at the raging river 100 feet below.

MINDY (CONT'D)

On second thought, I'd rather the
hair pulling than the gouging.
(re: the cliff)
What now?

GROWLING rises from the woods behind them as twenty snarling COYOTES emerge.

PICKERING

You jump. I hide.

MINDY

That's your plan?!

PICKERING

The river flows into the city.
It's your only chance.

EXT. WOODS - OUTCROPPING OVERLOOKING THE CLIFF - CONTINUOUS

Remerick is sitting on a branch watching the drama unfold below. Standing beneath him is Oz, the three legged dog.

OZ

She's not going to make it and we
don't have the numbers to
intervene. How did she convince you
to let her try for the city?

REMERICK

She'll be having puppies very soon.
The pups will need their father.

They notice Ronin and Bernie charging toward the scene.

REMERICK (CONT'D)

Zain in the woods?

OZ

The Akida looks like one of the original pack but I don't recognize the other.

REMERICK

His face is familiar to me, but I can't place it.

EXT. WOODS, EDGE OF THE CLIFF - CONTINUOUS

The coyotes advance on Mindy in a rigid line, leaving no opening for escape. Mindy backs up until she is balancing on the edge of the cliff. She looks at the river below and then back at her attackers. One of the Coyotes lunges for her throat, it's jaws snap shut inches from Mindy's neck as she turns and leaps from the cliff.

Bernie and Ronin emerge just in time to see her jump.

BERNIE

No.

Bernie prepares to run for the cliff from which Mindy just jumped, but Ronin blocks his path.

RONIN

There's too many. We'll find another way down.

Bernie steps around him and starts to run toward the coyotes who notice and turn to face him. Ten more coyotes emerge from the woods and join the ranks which prompts Bernie to slow to a stop. Taking in the size of the force, Bernie turns and runs back toward Ronin. The coyotes give chase.

EXT. RAGGING RIVER - CONTINUOUS

Mindy's body is being tossed about by the rapids as she struggles to keep her head above water and fights for air. The back of her head strikes a rock and her body goes limp, continuing to be pushed down the river, the harbor lights and skyscrapers of the city looming in the distance.

EXT. WOODS, RIDGE LINE ABOVE THE RIVER BANK - CONTINUOUS

Bernie and Ronin are just ahead of the pack, which is gaining ground on them. Bernie and Ronin stop at a downed evergreen which is perched against the lip of the ridge line and leads down to the riverbank. Bernie hops on and is most of the way down before he realizes Ronin is no longer behind him.

Bernie turns back to see Ronin pushing the end of the log resting against the ridge line toward the edge.

RONIN

We can't outrun them.

Before Bernie can protest, Ronin pushes the tree over the edge, causing it to crash down and forcing Bernie to leap safely to the river bank below. On the ridge line above, Ronin turns to face the large pack of coyotes, which now surrounds him. The coyotes attack.

Bernie HOWLS in anguish at not being able to help his friend.

Ronin is doing his best to fend off the coyotes, but it's clear his situation is hopeless. Some of the coyotes have peeled off from the pack and are making their way down a trail to Bernie.

RONIN (CONT'D)

(calling down to Bernie)

Save her. Go. Now.

Bernie reluctantly turns to go. A determined look crosses his face and he runs along the river bank, toward the lights of harbor and city in the distance. He winces when a piercing HOWL crosses the air followed by the YELPING and HOWLING of coyotes.

EXT. DILAPIDATED CITY WATERFRONT PIER - NIGHT

Mindy's body washes up on a cement landing below a dilapidated, wooden city pier. She groggily wakes, alive but dazed. The large, hulking shadows of approaching animals get her attention and she tries to stand, but winces and collapses back down.

As the animals get closer, the shadows shrink drastically and she realizes it's not people or dogs, but a dozen mice that are carrying FLICKERING torches.

MOUSE #1

My dear, we're very glad to see
you've made it back.

MINDY

Who are you?

MOUSE #1

I'm a relative of Pickering, Pip
and Zip. Bartholomew Roddaway
Kippering the Third at your
service.

(beat)

Or Kip for short.

MOUSE #2

How are you related to Zip.

KIP

Fourth cousin twice removed. You?

MOUSE #2

Second cousin on my Mum's side.

MINDY

What're all mice related?

All of the mice exchange a look - 'is she an idiot' - and
then look back at Mindy.

KIP

Of course.

Mouse #1 whistles to get the attention of a Sea Gull, GUS,
perched on an old piling.

KIP (CONT'D)

What'da say, old man, do us a
favor? Any other dogs come by
inquiring about this one, you saw
nothing?

GUS

What's in it for me?

KIP

Partially eaten, partially rotting
Wallyburger.

GUS

I thought that was for not trying
to eat you.

KIP

Don't be uncivil. Agreed?

GUS

Ok.

KIP
Bob's your uncle.

MOUSE #2
How did you know?

Kip turns to Mindy.

KIP
Now, if you'll follow us please.
We've got a lovely, brand new
dumpster picked out for you behind
a restaurant that just opened.
Zain are unaware of its existence
It's not the Savoy, but...

MINDY
Why did you ask that crow to lie?

KIP
We received word the Zain may have
followed you into the woods. If
they went to such lengths, it's
best they not know you've returned.

Mindy follows the mice along the underside the of pier.

MINDY
How did you know I'd wash up here?

KIP
Everything washes up here.

Mindy looks around and notices they are right. Treasure and trash of all types, shapes and sizes is everywhere like the urban equivalent of Willy Wonka's candy room.

EXT. DILAPIDATED CITY WATERFRONT PIER - LATER

Griffin and Bait lead Bernie down a ramp to the same pier where Mindy washed up. Griffin stops in the exact spot where she washed up and looks up to Gus, who is still perched on the piling, but is now picking at a partially eaten burger.

BERNIE
What makes you think she'd wash up here.

GRIFFIN
Everything washes up here.

As with Mindy, Bernie looks around at the booty and realizes he's right.

GRIFFIN (CONT'D)

(to Gus)
Any dogs washed up?

GUS

Nope.

BERNIE

You sure? Afghan hound, all white with a touch of brown on her face.

GUS

What did I tell you, pal. I ain't seen nothing.

GRIFFIN

(to Bernie)
Sorry.

BERNIE

She's out there. She's a survivor.

Griffin and Bait exchange a dubious look.

BAIT

Sure she is and we're just the ones to help you find her. We ain't got much, but we look out for each other. Pack could use another brawler like you.

Bernie considers the offer, unsure.

GRIFFIN

We best not linger on the street.

Griffin and Bait turn to go. Bernie lingers, looking out at the Bay, searching the waves for any sign of Mindy.

GRIFFIN (CONT'D)

(to Bait)
Give him some time.

EXT. VIDA NEUVA RANCH - MORNING

Remerick is perched on a fence post and Oz is sitting at attention on the ground below him. A path of dust is rising up from a field of waist high alfalfa grass, bridging the distance from the edge of the woods to Remerick and Oz. As the billowing dust reaches the edge of the field, Pickering emerges riding on the back of one of the young bunnies at a full gallop.

As the bunny nears the fence line, Pickering yanks back on its floppy ears, prompting it to skid to a stop, sending a cloud of dust wafting over Oz and Remerick.

When the dust settles, Remerick and Oz are covered in it and don't look pleased. Oz COUGHS out a mouth full of dust.

PICKERING
Sorry, old chap.

Oz GROWLS prompting Pickering to back away sheepishly.

REMERICK
Did she make it?

PICKERING
Happy to report they're all safe.

REMERICK
They?

EXT. CITY ALLEY BEHIND A DUMPSTER - MORNING

Two tiny puppies are snuggled in beside Mindy as the sun peaks over the horizon. The smaller of the two puppies is quietly jostled awake by Kip, the mouse.

KIP
Fancy some fun.

The LIL PUP slowly rises and creeps away with Kip.

EXT. NARROW CITY ALLEY - MOMENTS LATER

Kip's tail is caught in a mouse trap and he is struggling to get free as TWO CATS enter the alley. The cats exchange a smile before stalking toward Kip.

PIP
I don't suppose you gents are vegetarians?

The cats shake their heads and prepare to pounce just before...

Lil Pup leaps from behind a box and lets out a booming BARK.

The cats SCREECH and race away.

Kip and the Lil Pup LAUGH hysterically. The two are still LAUGHING as Kip easily frees his tail from the trap.

LIL PUP
 You see them jump? Suckers bailed
 out faster than...

A booming HORN blast causes the Lil Pup and Pip to jump with a start. They spin to find a massive garbage truck RUMBLING down the alley straight toward them.

Lil Pup and Kip race away, just in front of the garbage truck's massive tires.

LIL PUP (CONT'D)
 What is it?

KIP
 Garbage truck. City must've added
 this alley to its route. We've
 gotta warn your...

LIL PUP
 Mom!

Lil Pup cranes his neck to peer down the alley and sees Mindy, who is struggling to lift the other puppy out of the dumpster with her teeth. Mindy's eyes widen when she sees Lil Pup racing just ahead of the dump trucks massive tires.

LIL PUP (CONT'D)
 Mom!

Before Mindy can answer the truck stops abruptly, its hulking tires inches away from Lil Pup's head. The trucks massive metal claw sweeps over head and jerks the dumpster upward, lifting Mindy and the other puppy out of site. Lil Pup races around the back of the truck, but stops in his tracks when he sees a dozen pit bulls, led by Cyclops and Krill, trolling behind the truck. Lil pup creeps back, relieved that the pits did not notice him.

KIP
 Out of the frying pan, into the
 fire.

Lil Pup looks down to see the dutiful mouse at this side.

LIL PUP
 What do they want?

KIP
 You on a stick. Run. Fast. Now.

LIL PUP
 My mom and sister...

KIP

I'll try to lead them away.

Cyclops raises his nose, catching a smell he GROWLS and searches the alley. Cyclops skulks around the truck to find Kip the mouse.

KIP (CONT'D)

I've got three words for you Gents;
expired baby food.

The pit SNORTS and walks away.

KIP (CONT'D)

Top notch stuff, easy pickings...

EXT. DUMPSTER - CONTINUOUS

The dumpster has been raised by the metal arms attached to the garbage truck and tipped completely over. Garbage bags and other refuse tumble past Mindy, who is clinging desperately to the lip of the dumpster with her back paws while grasping her other puppy between her teeth. Her paws are losing their grip and sliding away from the lip of the can just as the metal claws jerk back and return the dumpster to the ground, sending Mindy and the puppy tumbling back inside.

The garbage truck RUMBLES away, leaving the alley silent. Mindy's head emerges from the dumpster, puppy still secured between her teeth, and she leaps into the alley to find herself face to face with Cylops, who is flanked by the other pits. All the pits bare their teeth and SNARL.

Mindy backs away while craning her neck to see past them to search the alley for Lil Pup.

MINDY

What'da ya say, boys?

CYCLOPS

It's a dog eat dog world.

MINDY

Are you speaking metaphorically
or...

The pits GROWL and move in on Mindy in a tight circle.

MINDY (CONT'D)

Literally, got it.

Mindy has backed into the dumpster and has no more room to retreat. The pits stop their advance, inches away from Mindy and part into two rows, revealing...

TITUS

And so we meet again.

EXT. INDUSTRIAL CITY STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Lil Pup is in the jaws of dopey springer spaniel, CRONK, who is casually trotting along with two other mutts.

LIL PUP

Thanks for the lift, big dog, think I'm good from here. Reached my daily quota for sharp teeth digging into my spine.

Cronk drops Lil Pup at the feet of Bernie and Griffin. Bernie moves toward Lil Pup, his shadow casting the tiny dog in darkness.

BERNIE

Who's this?

Staring up at Bernie's massive frame, scared face and sharp teeth, Lil Pup backs up sheepishly.

CRONK

Found him just ahead of a Zain pack that was trolling a garbage truck. Least a dozen of them.

GRIFFIN

Good thing. He wouldn't have lasted long out here alone.

LIL PUP

I ain't alone. It's what I was trying to tell your partner. I gotta get back to that alley my mom and sis are waiting on me.

Bernie exchanges a concerned look with Griffin.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Bernie, Griffin and the other mutts are standing beside the dumpster, but the alley is otherwise empty. Lil Pup hops down from the lip of the dumpster.

BERNIE
We'll keep looking.

LIL PUP
Dang straight we will. If you
partner ain't messed with me, I'd
be with them now.

CRONK
The Zain would'a torn you apart
seeing as talking's the only thing
about you that's big.

BERNIE
Enough. The streets are not safe
with the Zain out in force.

INT. DILAPIDATED SHIPPING CONTAINER; MUTT HIDEOUT - LATER

Lil Pup slides his head below the loose metal panel, which promptly slams shut behind him, and takes in his surroundings; a sorry lot of dogs managing the best they can.

LIL PUP
(under his breath)
So it's just us...

BERNIE
That you're name? Justice?

LIL PUP
I ain't never had a name, my mom
wanted to wait till we found my
pops.

BERNIE
Justice it is. Don't look so grim
about it, kid.

JUSTICE
I ain't the one with a long face,
big dog. Look around. This be a
sorry lot of dogs. Come on, fellas,
it ain't no big thing living on the
streets. Buck up.

Justice strolls toward a small terrier, who backs away at his approach, sheepishly.

JUSTICE (CONT'D)
We all in the same boat, you got
nothing to hang your head about...

INSERT MUSICAL NUMBER;

JUSTICE (CONT'D)

I'm a mutt...so what? I won't give up, jus' 'cause I'm a mutt! You're a mutt too, Sir, but hey, look at you... look at all the things that you can do... We're MUUUUTTS..SO WHAT?

As the mutts continue to dance and chant, Justice drifts to the edge of the crate and pauses, locking eyes with a black and white collie puppy, FERGIE, who can only hold his glance for a moment before looking away, coquettishly. Justice responds with a grand gesture, bowing and backing away.

FREGIE

My mom warned me to stay away from the likes of you.

Creeping back.

JUSTICE

You're mom ain't here now.

Fergie nods with her head to behind Justice where a full grown, and rather vicious, BORDER COLLIE is showing her fangs and staring at Justice.

JUSTICE (CONT'D)

I see beauty trickles down the line.

The border collie GROWLS.

JUSTICE (CONT'D)

Ma'am

The boarder collie snaps at Justice, who hops back, avoiding her fangs by mere inches.

CUT TO:

INT. DANK SEWER - NIGHT

Mindy and her other puppy are led from a narrow passage way into a circular flat, crumbling stone expanse with a gaping hole in the center. A blast of flame rises from the hole, causing Mindy to jump back.

TITUS

Mind the gap, dear. Gas plant for the city is right above us.

CYCLOPS

Keeps us nice and toasty, but
causes a whole lotta accidents.

TITUS

Most of which weren't accidents.

Two of the Zain soldiers nudge Mindy's other puppy down a narrow passage way, splitting off from the main group, which heads for the center of the chamber and the flames. The puppy is led to the edge on the other side the chamber. A spectacular waterfall emanating from a sewer pipe is spilling several hundred feet to a collector pool below. Mindy's other puppy looks scared, but shares a glance with the younger of the soldiers, BEN, who smiles in spite of himself.

PUPPY

It's beautiful

BEN

A long way to fall.

PUPPY

What're they gonna do to my mom?

BEN

I look like the one to give you
that answer?

PUPPY

Yes.

BEN

What's your name?

PUPPY

Hope.

BEN

Why's that?

PUPPY

My mom said we could all use some.

BEN

Sounds about right.

Ben directs Hope's gaze to a fracture in the rock through which they can see Mindy and the soldiers in the main chamber.

BEN (CONT'D)

Silent and strong, Hope.

In the chamber below, Cyclops looks up at Ben and Hope.

CYCLOPS
Over the edge, boss?

TITUS
Depends on the lady. She's pure as
the driven snow. We've been due a
queen. Does she stay or does she
go?

Mindy follows Titus's gaze to Hope and Ben. Hope is on the edge of the drop off, unaware of the danger. Ben is positioned between her and safety and has his eyes locked on Titus.

Mindy turns her attention to Titus and nods. He looks to Ben and shakes his head. Ben looks relieved.

BEN
Stay close to me.

INT. SHIPPING CRATE; MUTT HANG OUT - NIGHT

While Bernie dutifully stands alert, all the other mutts are dancing and singing, following Justice's lead. As they continue, drifting on like revelers in the night, Justice notices Fergie is staring at him, her mom sleeping soundly beside her. Griffin approaches and nods in acknowledgment to Bernie, who does the same. Griffin then follows Justice's gaze to Fergie, who is smiling back coquettishly.

JUSTICE
What'da say old timers.

GRIFFIN
Looks like you got business to
attend to.

JUSTICE
Catch you on the flip side.

As Justice heads toward Fergie, Griffin calls softly after him.

BERNIE
You wake her mom, you're on your
own.

Justice turns and touches his paw to his forehead then brings it away and points to Bernie in the manner of a playful salute.

GRIFFIN

Finished polling the pack; he's in.
Only one vote against. Wanna guess
who?

Griffin and Bernie watch as Justice and Fergie flirt in
whispers while her mom continues to sleep soundly a few feet
away.

GRIFFIN (CONT'D)

Kid's got a lot of strut in him.

BERNIE

We haven't had any dust ups with
the Zain in weeks; last thing we
need is a spark.

Bernie walks away and pushes his way through the loose metal
siding.

Justice is nuzzled into Fergie, but notices Bernie's exit.

JUSTICE

Where's he going by himself. I
thought that was off limits.

FERGIE

For the rest of us it is. He goes
out every night. Looking for
someone he lost. Ain't got no
notion who.

Justice nuzzles Fergie then turns to go.

FERGIE

It ain't safe for you to go out
there alone.

JUSTICE

Exactly. Ain't safe for any of us.
That's why things gotta change.

EXT. ALLEYWAY BESIDE JOHNSON HOME - NIGHT

Bernie is hunched in the spot where Blake and Griggs snatched
their copper, looking at the fence of the Johnson home.

JUSTICE (O.S.)

What'a you say, B?

Bernie turns to see Justice skulking along the alleyway.

BERNIE

You forget the rules of the pack already?

JUSTICE

Did you?

(beat)

Who's on the other side of that fence?

BERNIE

First owner. Dotted on me. Loved me.

JUSTICE

So you come here every night and stare at this fence? Didn't think you were the type to be scared.

BERNIE

Only a fool fears nothing. What if she doesn't remember me?

JUSTICE

Either you're going over that fence or I am.

Justice starts for the fence. Bernie cuts him off.

JUSTICE (CONT'D)

Your think you're the only one who left someone behind? We all lost someone. That's why we're stuck out here. We're mutts. But if knew where my mom and my sister were, I be there in a second.

EXT. JOHNSON BACKYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Bernie lands in the yard and notices the house has a colorful tent over it. Confused he starts toward it when two men in CHYRO suites emerge from the tented house and start toward Bernie, plumes of smoke emanating from them, they are carrying chemical sprayers which resemble Hollis' rock salt cannon. Startled Bernie races back towards the fence and hops over it.

The men remove their helmets and vapors rise into the sky.

MAN 1

What was that about?

Ava and Terry enter from the side fence.

TERRY

You fellas got everything you need?
 (re: Ava)
 Also in your professional capacity
 can you confirm that non-
 domesticated animals living inside
 were the cause of this little
 infestation?

Ava glares at him.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Just saying.

MAN 1

You got a dog kid?

AVA

A dog?

EXT. ALLEYWAY BESIDE JOHNSON HOME - CONTINUOUS

Bernie races past Justice, nearly barreling him over in the process.

BERNIE

Come on, kid. This ain't the right
 place.

Justice races after him and they round a corner just before Ava opens the fence and steps into the alleyway, scanning in all directions for any sign of her dog.

AVA

Bernie?

EXT. CITY ALLEY - NIGHT

Bernie, Griffin, Bait and Justice are perched on a garden ledge above the basement apartment of a brownstone, camouflaged by the flower pots and foliage. They are peering down on a dumpster.

BERNIE

Being part of a pack means more
 than just following the rules; you
 gotta contribute; *beyond sticking
 your nose in other folks business.*

JUSTICE

What's so special 'bout this place?

As if on cue, the back door to one establishment swings open and a disheveled bus boy spills out, hauling a large cart filled with bins of left over food. He begins to toss the food scraps into the dumpster.

JUSTICE (CONT'D)

Dang.

BERNIE

Wait for it...

No sooner has the first bus boy left, the back door to another establishment swings open and a baker's assistant walks out with a shopping cart full of bread, which he tosses into the dumpster.

GRIFFIN

Compost bin.

BERNIE

Best eatin' in the city.

JUSTICE

All right, then. Let's hit it.

Bernie and Griffin exchange a look.

BERNIE

You watch and you wait. Zain will come by and take what they will. Then it's our turn.

JUSTICE

Come on, dog. It's right, now.

GRIFFIN

I'm too old for his kind of nonsense.

Griffin hops off the stoop to the alley below where a dozen other mutts are waiting.

GRIFFIN (CONT'D)

We gotta get to the next perch.

BERNIE

(to Justice)

We got mouths to feed. You're part of a pack now. It means thinking about more than just yourself.

Bernie hops down and trots to catch up with Griffin and the other mutts. He calls over his shoulder...

BERNIE (CONT'D)
Don't screw this up.

BAIT
Ain't no chance I'd let 'em,
Biggie.

BERNIE
(calling over his
shoulder)
I was talking to you.

EXT. CITY ALLEY, PERCH ABOVE THE DUMPSTER - LATER

Justice is pacing and becoming antsy. Bait is tossing dice with his paw against the brick wall and WHISTLING casually.

JUSTICE
Come on, dog, time's a wasting.

Bait locks eyes with Justice for a brief moment before resuming his WHISTLING and tossing the dice.

BAIT
Seven, lucky seven. Dang. Got
anything to bet with?

JUSTICE
So it's gonna be like that?

BAIT
You ever been bit, big talker? And
I mean for real, not your sis or
some other pup. Teeth in your hide.

Justice stops pacing, engaged, and shakes his head.

BAIT (CONT'D)
Yeah, I used to talk alot of talk
too. Then I got bit. It hurt. Alot.

Bait shrugs and tosses the dice against the wall again for good measure.

BAIT (CONT'D)
Seven from heaven. Course. Dang.
(beat)
By the pricking of my thumbs,
something wicked this way comes.

Justice's eyes follows Bait's gaze down the alley to where a half dozen Zain Pitts are marching in lock step.

JUSTICE

They don't seem so tough.

BAIT

Famous last words, dog. Famous last words.

At the other end of the alley, three (3) SCRAPPY MUTTS scurry from the shadows, heading for the dumpster. The dumpster is positioned between them and the Zain, blocking their view of the approaching soldiers.

BAIT (CONT'D)

Looks like your about to get an object lesson, son.

JUSTICE

We've gotta warn them.

BAIT

Ain't our pack, ain't our problem.

JUSTICE

That ain't right.

Before Bait can respond, Justice is on the move, skulking down from the ledge.

BAIT

Gonna be one of those days...

INT. DUMPSTER - MOMENTS LATER

The three mutts are quickly devouring the food that surrounds them. Justice's head pokes into the dumpster.

JUSTICE

Y'all gotta go. Now. Zain.

The mutts stop for a moment and consider before... barring their teeth and GROWLING aggressively at Justice.

MUTT 1

Not a chance.

JUSTICE

I ain't trying to scare you away,
I'm trying to save your sorry hide.

The mutts GROWL more aggressively at him.

MUTT 1

Blow. Now.

EXT. ALLEYWAY, BESIDE THE DUMPSTER - CONTINUOUS

Bait has made his way down from the perch above the dumpster and is standing in the street just below where Justice is perched. The Zain are approaching on the opposite side and are nearly upon them.

BAIT
Forget 'em, kid.

INT. DUMPSTER - CONTINUOUS

The mutts are still barring their teeth and GROWLING at Justice.

JUSTICE
Any of you make it out of this,
remember I tried to warn you.

Justice disappears over the ledge, but the mutts keep GROWLING for good measure. But when they stop, a louder, more ominous GROWLING surrounds them. The mutts exchange a terrified look just before...

Cyclops and three (3) ZAIN SOLDIERS land inside the dumpster with a crash.

CYCLOPS
It looks like you already had your
last meal. Any last words?

MUTT 1
We can help you. We got some prime
spots scoped out. Lotta food.

The Zain soldiers look the Mutts over; bones are protruding and their skin sagging beneath tangled and matted fur.

CYCLOPS
Sure looks like you do.

Cyclops nods to another of the soldiers, who leaps at the mutts while barring his teeth. Before he lands on top of them, he is yanked out of the dumpster, into the daylight, something metallic firmly secured around his neck.

The Zain and the mutts are confused as to what just happened and all exchange a befuddled look.

Cyclops snaps out of it and nods for one of the other soldiers to attack. But when he leaps at the mutts, he too is mysteriously yanked out of the dumpster before landing upon them. Mutt 1 looks anxiously at this two companions.

MUTT 1

DIVE!!!

The three mutts start clawing their way under the food just as the third Zain soldier is yanked from the can, leaving only Cyclops, his face still awash in confusion. Before he can react to the mutts diving under the food and refuse, he too is yanked from the dumpster into the bright sunlight...

EXT. ALLEYWAY, BESIDE THE DUMPSTER - CONTINUOUS

Cyclops has a metal collar around his neck, which is attached to a metal pole on the other end of which are Frank and another animal control officer from the poker game, DAVE (30s).

They wrestle Cyclops into a jail like cage in the back of their truck where he joins his other captured comrades. The door to the cage is slammed shut and the Animal Control Officers hop in their truck and drive away without a word, leaving the alleyway silent.

The heads of the three mutts cautiously peer over the edge of the dumpster in time to see their would-be attackers staring back angrily from inside the cage as the truck exits the alley.

JUSTICE (O.S.)

Y'all ok?

The Mutts turn to see Justice and Bait standing at the opposite end of the alley looking up at them.

MUTT 1

What's it to you?

JUSTICE

So it's gonna be like that?

MUTT 1

Ain't nothing changed, Mutt. We in.
You out.

JUSTICE

You in, huh? What you're in is a
pack of three.

BAIT

Three against twenty is an ugly
fight.

MUTT 1
 Right, so you two tiny, scrappy
 chew toys are in a pack.
 (chuckling)
 Run along.

Mutt 1 turns to his two partners and sees that they're not laughing. In fact, their faces register concern. Mutt 1 follows their gaze to the street on the other side of the dumpster. Bernie, Griffin and two dozen other dogs are staring back.

Crestfallen, Mutt 1 turns back to Justice and Bait.

MUTT 1 (CONT'D)
 Let us walk away?

JUSTICE
 Nope.

Bait looks over at Justice, surprised.

JUSTICE (CONT'D)
 You ain't gotta walk away. Eat all
 you want. Today's on us. You
 wanna eat tomorrow, join the pack.
 Safety in numbers.

The mutts exchange a look, dubious of the generous offer.

MUTT 1
 You for real?

BAIT
 (whispering to Justice)
 It don't work like that, kid.

EXT. CITY ALLEY, DUMPSTER - LATER

Griffin and all the other dogs in the pack, except Bernie and Justice, have joined the mutts in the dumpster and are gorging themselves on the bounty.

Bernie and Justice take in the scene from the look out perch, eyeing the alley and streets beyond for any sign of more Zain.

BERNIE
 We don't know where they come from,
 we don't know what they've done.
 Can't trust them. Answer is N-0.

JUSTICE

You didn't know where I came from either. And as far as what they've done, your face is the only one I've seen on a poster.

BERNIE

Watch it.

(beat)

We hardly find enough food to feed the pack as it is.

JUSTICE

The reason we ain't got enough is cause we only get the scraps. Strength in numbers. Four more Zain taken to the lock-up; saw it myself. Their packs dwindling, getting weak...

BERNIE

We're mutts, not fighters.

(Nodding toward the dumpster)

We survive by staying in the shadows. Last time I'm gonna tell you; N-O.

JUSTICE

Point of order, King Mutt. I believe this calls for a vote.

Bernie shrugs.

BERNIE

Go ahead. They remember what an empty stomach feels like and what adding three more open mouths will mean.

Justice looks down at his pack in the dumpster, all keeping their distance from the three outsiders who are huddled together in the corner of the dumpster.

Justice song -- all the mutts were lost and alone; now a family.

INT. SEWER, ZAIN HIDEOUT - LATER

There's a dozen or so Zain lingering about. Titus marches in and they snap to attention. Ben, who had been sitting beside Hope, joins the ranks. Mindy also enters, trailing Titus and looking forlorn.

TITUS

Where are the others?

KRILL

Four more picked up today,
including Cyclops. Ever since we
attacked that human...

Titus' glare cuts him off.

TITUS

We know the routes. We know the
times. They got picked up because
they were sloppy.

KRILL

Tuck wasn't on its route when it
picked them up. It was tracking
that pack of mutts. One with
the...

(making quotation marks
with his paws)

Killer dog.

TITUS

As long as he's out there, the
humans will continue to crack down
and we're their favorite target.

KRILL

Rumor is that pack of mutts has
grown large....

START MONTAGE:

1. Two scrappy mutts are outside mutt hideout, staring hopefully at the sentry, Griffin, who is holding up the corner of the crate. The two mutts part to reveal Justice standing behind them with five others in tow.

KRILL (V.O.) (CONT'D)

On the streets, some dogs are
saying it's up to a hundred.

2. The pack is in an alley, Justice in the lead, staring at a fairly large brown lab, considering letting him in the pack. Justice looks back at Bernie and Griffin, who shrug approvingly - this one's not that bad. Justice nods. The lab smiles and then nods his head, prompting a small poodle and three lab/poodle mix puppies to creep out from the shadows. Justice nods again - 'ok, they're in.' Bernie shakes his head.

ZAIN 1 (O.S.)

Some are saying it's more. Ask Saw
tooth and Van Gough.

3. Two Zain, one with jagged teeth and one that is missing an ear are chasing a Springer Spaniel who holds a chain of hotdogs in casing in his mouth. The Zain take turns snapping at the Springer's hide and then snatching up and swallowing hole, hotdogs which are trailing behind.

The Springer skids to a stop in front of a brick wall at the end of an alleyway -- dead end.

The Zain move in. The Springer no longer looks fearful of his attackers. He nods for the Zain to turn around and look at what's behind them -- the entire mutt pack; over one hundred mutts of various breeds and sizes. Justice is at the front of the pack and smiles and waves at the Zain.

4. Moment's later the mutts have parted like the red sea to allow the Zain to pass in between them. The mutts glare and for the first time we see fear in the eyes of the Zain, who nervously make their way through the midst of their enemies.

END MONTAGE:

INT. SEWER, ZAIN HIDEOUT - LATER

Titus steps forward and speaks softly to his lieutenant.

TITUS

Yes, I had a thought about that.

(beat)

Round up the pack. Tonight the
Zain settle all scores.

Titus turns and marches over to Mindy.

TITUS (CONT'D)

That means you too.

MINDY

I see where you're confused, what
with my huge muscles and razor
sharp teeth, naturally I'm a fight
dog. Oh wait, that's you.

TITUS

I don't trust you here alone.

MINDY

You do dote on me.

TITUS

You're free to go anytime you care
to.

Titus nods toward the steep and jagged drop off overlooking
the waterfall.

TITUS (CONT'D)

Learn your place, or she'll be
joining you.

Titus nods in the direction of Hope, causing Ben to perk up
and instinctively move in front of her. Titus trots away,
Krill following closely behind. As he passes Ben, Krill snaps
at Ben, his fangs coming closed only inches away from Ben's
face. Ben instinctively leaps back in spite of himself.
Krill smiles and shakes his head as he continues on.

EXT. OVERGROWN FIELD - NIGHT

In the field outside the shipping container hideout, dozens
are mutts, mostly puppies or adolescents, are standing
shoulder to shoulder in a circle, surrounding Justice and a
small Scotty who are in the middle of a rap competition.

Bernie, perched on top of the shipping container, is a
silhouette in the moonlight, looking down on the scene below.
Griffin emerges through a hole in the ceiling of the
container. Bernie senses the older dog approaching.

BERNIE

Kinda hard to find a quiet place
around here these days.

GRIFFIN

Feed a mutt and give 'em a safe
place to rest his head and what do
you get?

BERNIE

Hope.
(beat)
There's something about that kid.

GRIFFIN

He likes you too.

INT. DOG POUND - LATER

Ava, now seventeen years old and still adorable, is looking
in at a very crowded pen, two dozen pit bulls, including
Cyclops, are crammed together in the dangerous dog area.

AVA

It just seems like such a shame.
So many...

FRANK

Not this time, Ava. Too dangerous;
they're being sent down the hall
tomorrow.

Inside the pen is a window covered in bars. We push in to see, Hope's tiny head peering through.

Ava CLICKS off the lights.

AVA

What, no game tonight?

FRANK

Moved to Thursday.

AVA

Night, Frank.

EXT. ALLEY WAY OUTSIDE OF DOG POUND - NIGHT

Hope is perched on her hind legs, looking through the window, and is standing on Ben's back. She hops off. Titus and the other Zain are in the alley, as is Mindy.

HOPE

They're in that one.

TITUS

Excellent.
(to Zain Soldiers)
You three are with me.
(to Krill)
You stay here and listen for the
chain. When it reaches you, have
the little one tap on the glass.

Titus bites down intently on the storm drain cover in the alleyway and grimaces in determination. His jaws clamp down hard on either side of the grate. He struggle, growling mightily as the storm drain cover slowly moves. Titus keeps inching back until the grate is completely off the manhole.

Titus turns to the three soldiers.

TITUS (CONT'D)

Let's go.

They follow him into the manhole.

HOPE
 (to Ben)
 Where are they going?

BEN
 (nodding toward the pound)
 To get them out. He's the only one
 who has ever escaped.

EXT. ALLEYWAY OUTSIDE OF DOG POUND - LATER

Hope is peering through the window and can see that in the hallway outside of the room containing the pen, Frank is pushing a large floor polisher around the perimeter of massive facility. From Hope's vantage point, she can see inside as Frank passes the doorway and continues on, out of site. She looks to Krill, who is standing above the storm drain.

HOPE
 He's passed.

Krill BARKS. Four other barks follow, growing fainter in the distance of the storm drain below.

INT. DOG POUND, DANGEROUS CAGE - CONTINUOUS

Inside the pen, in the middle of the floor, a grate used to wash away debris when hosing down the pen slowly slides open.

TITUS (O.S.)
 (Through the grate)
 Let's go. It's clear.

A pit bull in the pen wedges his body into the grate and squirms, struggling to get through the narrow hole. Finally he makes it, barley.

The next pit begins his attempt.

EXT. ALLEYWAY OUTSIDE OF DOG POUND - CONTINUOUS

Looking in at the interior hallway beyond the dog pen, Hope sees that Frank is approaching the door to the kennel room with the floor polisher. She BARKS. Again the chain follows.

INT. DOG POUND, DANGEROUS CAGE - CONTINUOUS

TITUS
 Hold.

As Frank passes in the hallway with the polisher, he pauses and stares for a moment at the dangerous dog pen; it doesn't seem as crowded. He shrugs and continues along.

A few seconds later a faint BARK can be heard and the grate is moved.

Another Pit piles in.

EXT. ALLEYWAY OUTSIDE OF DOG POUND - CONTINUOUS

Cyclops emerges from the storm grate and breathes in deeply, like an freed convict.

KRILL

Good to have you back, brother.

The alley way is now crowded with freed pits. One accidentally bumps into Ben, causing Hope to lose her footing and fall. She lets out an unintentional BARK as she hits the ground.

INT. DOG POUND, DANGEROUS CAGE - CONTINUOUS

Frank is standing in the doorway, staring at the pen, which now only contains about ten pits. He looks perplexed as a faint BARK is heard and the grate slides open. He watches in disbelief as a pit struggles to wiggle in.

Frank flicks on the lights and hits a switch.

EXT. ALLEYWAY OUTSIDE OF DOG POUND - CONTINUOUS

Flood lights SNAP on and an ALARM sounds. Four pits emerge from the storm drain followed by Titus, who knocks past them.

TITUS

Out of my way; every dog for himself.

Pits flee in every direction as the back door to the pound slams open revealing Frank and two DOG CATCHES, who are both struggling to get their protective gear on. They give chase, but the pits manage to get away.

EXT. CITY STREET, PERCH BELOW A BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

Justice and Fergie are staring up at the full moon. He nudges in next to her causing her to giggle and move away. Suddenly, Fergie perks up.

FREGIE
Oh my goodness!

JUSTICE
I know.

FREGIE
No, Zain!

Justice turns and sees four Zain sprinting in their direction. He and Fergie jump down into the sunken alleyway beside a basement apartment.

Their heads emerge to witness as the Zain pass, another dog hemmed in between the four pits.

JUSTICE
Mom?!

Justice scrambles out of the basement well and starts after them.

FREGIE
Where are you going?

JUSTICE
I just saw my mom.

FREGIE
We need to tell the pack!

JUSTICE
I won't lose her again. Just remember our plan.

Fergie watches him go then reluctantly turns and trots away in another direction.

CUT TO:

Justice rounds a corner and finds himself above a large cement spillway. The Zain are nowhere in sight. He notices two massive doors made out of metal bars are askew at the end of the spillway and races down without hesitation, sliding through the doors and disappearing into the dark sewer tunnel.

INT. SEWER - MOMENTS LATER

Justice is creeping through a tunnel in a river of storm water runoff, lost. A SPLASH in the distance perks his ears. He looks back over his shoulder, nothing there.

GROWLING resonates off the tunnel walls and Justice picks up his pace.

Now at a trot, and increasingly surrounded by pitch dark, Justice falls to notice a sudden drop off and suddenly finds himself...

Free falling through the air. His body separates from the trough like that of a child going over a steep water slide.

Justice flings out his paws and manages to snag a ledge. His claws are dug into the metal ledge, but the weight of his body causes them to scrape along, starting to give way. Justice looks down and sees that it is several hundred feet to the trashing pool below. Just as his claws reach the edge and he starts his descent down, he is snatched by the neck and dragged back up.

Disoriented and coughing up water, Justice looks up to see his rescuer, who is gently releasing his neck from her jaws... Mindy.

JUSTICE

Mo--

Mindy's sudden GROWL and SNAP in his direction, cuts Justice off and leaves him started and confused. She locks eyes with him and shakes her head very slightly.

Justice looks beyond and notices for the first time the half dozen pit bulls that are approaching... He's in the Zain hideout.

KRILL

Look what the rain washed in. Any of you boys fancy a snack?

MINDY

Finders keepers.

KRILL

What do you want with 'em?

MINDY

Hope's not gonna be a pup much longer. If she's gonna make it in this pack she's gotta learn to fight. He's about the right size for her to cut her teeth on.

KRILL

Boss wouldn't like it.

TITUS (O.S.)
And it's your place to speak for
me?

Titus enters with a couple more pits.

TITUS (CONT'D)
Fact is, I want every dog in this
pack to know how to fight.

Mindy snuggles in to Titus, her head brushing against his
tenderly, though he fails to see the grimace of her face and
loathing in her eyes.

MINDY
I am starting to like it here.

TITUS
All dogs eventually do.

CYCLOPS
Or we push them over the edge.

TITUS
That was implied.

MINDY
So, you agree then? About the
fighting?

TITUS
Absolutely. On both counts.

MINDY
Both?

TITUS
Push that mutt over the edge.
(to Mindy)
Cyclops will teach you both the
basics.

MINDY
But Hope needs someone her own
size...

Several Pits are marching toward Justice as he backs toward
the drop off. Mindy is growing desperate...

TITUS
Too easy to pick on someone your
own size.

MINDY

But...

TITUS

(to the Pitts)

Be quick about it.

Van Gough pushes his way through some other pits to stand beside Titus, taking notice of Justice who is nearly at the edge and continues to back up as the his would be attackers advance.

VAN GOUGH

What's he doing here?

TITUS

What's it to you?

VAN GOUGH

He's with that pack that be causing all the trouble. Front and center along with the big one. Seen it myself.

TITUS

Really?

Hope has entered with Ben by her side. As Justices' would be attackers part, she locks eyes with him.

HOPE

Brother!

All the Zain turn and stare at Hope and linger a moment before turning their attention to Mindy. A smile touches Titus' lips as his gaze returns to Justice.

EXT. MUTT ALLEY WAY HANGOUT - LATER

All the young pups are in the street, freestyle rapping and chasing each other around playfully. Bernie and Griffin are up on the stoop along with a dozen of the older dogs, who are milling around.

BERNIE

Young ones are getting restless for the show. Where's the kid?

GRIFFIN

Should only take one guess.

Griffin nods in the direction of Fergie's mom, who is searching the crowd of mutts for her -- and Justice.

BERNIE

He's got some licks coming to him.

INT. SEWER, ZAIN HIDEOUT - LATER

Justice is in a dank corner, Van Gough and Krill are standing guard and staring at him intently. Justice is starring across to the other corner of the cement outcropping to where Hope and Mindy are seated. Both are starring back at him, desperate for communication.

JUSTICE

Guys, can I get a little privacy.
Nature calls, know what I'm saying.

Van Gough and Krill continue to stare at him, unblinking.

JUSTICE (CONT'D)

Thanks alot.

He shrugs slightly at Mindy and Hope - 'I tried'. Ben approaches.

BEN

You fellas best hit it 'fore
there's nothing left to hit.

He nods to where the other Zain are tearing into packages of ground beef, which are spilling out of a box with 'expired meat' stamped across it in red ink.

BEN (CONT'D)

Good stuff. Came off a truck.

Van Gough and Krill exchange a look.

BEN (CONT'D)

I'll watch him.

Van Gough and Krill march away, toward the feeding frenzy.

BEN (CONT'D)

If you lead us to your pack, Titus
won't let you leave. Or them.

JUSTICE

What's it to you?

BEN

(re: Hope and Mindy)
Stop starring at them, it will draw
attention.

(beat)

(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)

Once the fighting starts, I can sneak you and your sister away. He'll keep your mom close, but I don't think he intends her harm.

JUSTICE

Why would you wanna help us?

A slight moment passes between them. Ben looks away, glancing over his shoulder and making eye contact with Hope.

JUSTICE (CONT'D)

That's how it is, huh? A Zain with a heart.

(beat)

You wanna be on the right side of this, here's how it goes down. You get Hope clear as soon as the fighting starts and don't look back. We got over a hundred to your fourteen. I don't care how many fights y'all been in, numbers don't lie.

Cyclops stomps into the room followed by Titus.

CYCLOPS

Time to go hunting, buys.

TITUS

You're better to be smart than brave. So what'll it be?

Titus narrows his eyes at Justice.

JUSTICE

Deal. It's your show.

EXT. MUTT ALLEY WAY HANGOUT - MOMENTS LATER

The alley has a now familiar canivalesque feel, mutts are swinging and swaying, signing and dancing while the older dogs lounge in groups on the stoops of the abandoned buildings that line either side of the alley.

Fergie enters the alley at a full sprint and zig zags her way through the crowd, making a bee line for Bernie and Griffin. She skids to a stop in the alley below the stoop they're sitting on. From the look on her face, it's obvious something's wrong.

GRIFFIN

What's happened?

FERGIE
 (panting)
 They're coming.

GRIFFIN
 Who?

FERGIE
 The Zain.

BERNIE
 Where's the kid?

FERGIE
 They've got him. His mom too.
 He's going lead them here. He
 wants us to ambush them.

BERNIE
 How many?

FERGIE
 Twelve, maybe fourteen.

Bernie and Griffin exchange a look. The alley is silent, all the mutts looking to their leaders for direction.

GRIFFIN
 We could take refuge in the Pad.
 We'd be safe there.

BERNIE
 But he wouldn't.

Griffin nods.

BERNIE (CONT'D)
 We stand together and fight.

Bernie lets out a booming BARK. All the mutts begin BARKING and HOWLING together.

EXT. MUTT ALLEY WAY HANGOUT - LATER

The Zain march into the no empty alleyway in a phalanx with Titus and Cyclops shoulder to shoulder at the point. Justice boxed in by four Zain soldiers. Mindy and Hope are toward the back with Ben bringing up the rear.

They march all the way to the end, searching for any signs of the mutts but find nothing.

Titus and Cyclops reach the brick wall at the end of the alley and turn back to face the soldiers behind them, who instinctively part leaving Justice face to face with the vicious white dog. Titus nods to Ben.

TITUS

No need for them to see this.

Ben ushers Mindy and Hope down into a stairwell on one side of the alley as Titus turns back to Justice.

TITUS (CONT'D)

They've abandoned you.

BERNIE (O.S.)

That's your way, not ours.

The Zain turn to find Bernie and Griffin standing in the entryway to the alley, fifty other mutts flanking them.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

Leave the city now or you'll never
make it out of this alleyway.
You're trapped and outnumbered.

Along the stoops above both sides of the alley, dozens more mutts emerge and stare down on the Zain.

TITUS

Mutts are mutts and soldiers are
soldiers.

Titus nods to Cyclops who BARKS three times.

At the entrance to the alley dozens of Zain march to close off any angle of retreat, Krill and Van Gough are backed by the escapees from the pound.

Titus walks towards Bernie and sniffs in deeply.

TITUS (CONT'D)

I smell fear.

(Beat)

The rest of you are free to leave.
Stay out off of our streets and out
of our dumpsters and you'll be left
alone.

Bernie looks around at the other mutts. Fear is setting in. Several of the smaller dogs sheepishly turn and head for the Zain blocking the entrance to the alleyway. The Zain step aside and the retreating mutts pass through their ranks, heads and tails dragging.

Bernie looks disheartened, betrayed. The silent retreat is suddenly broken by the sounding of BARKING coming from within the Zain ranks.

Justice emerges at a full sprint and charges Titus, leaping and biting him in the back before continuing to sail pass, land and trouble to a stop. Justice spins back to face Titus, baring his fangs and GROWLING.

Titus looks at a wound on his back then turns to face Justice.

Titus lunges at Justice, ready to strike, but is knocked off course mid-air by Bernie.

The other mutts and Zain form a circle around Bernie and Titus, watching the two champions fight.

Bernie and Titus circle each other in a tight arch, each sizing up the other. Bernie closes his eyes and smells deeply... time slows...

Begin Montage:

The other mutts, Zain and even the alley itself fade away into white translucent static as Titus begins to glow. We are in Bernie's mind's eye, seeing the alley from his perspective. Suddenly Titus SNAPS at us and time accelerates into superspeed as Titus side steps and snaps again, then lunges, then brings his jaws up like a boxer's upper cut, snapping down.

End Montage:

Bernie opens his eyes, calm and confident. Titus lunges in mirror fashion to what we just witnessed in Bernie's mind's eye. Bernie dodges and snaps down where he anticipates Titus will be, but finds nothing but air. Titus has moved with impossible speed and is suddenly behind Bernie. Titus snaps down with his jaws and catches Bernie in the back. Bernie winces and tries to regain his footing, but before he has a chance, Titus is on the other side of him snapping at his snout. Bernie barley manges to avoid the blow.

Bernie again closes his eyes and sniffs in deeply, trying to sense his opponents movements. When his eyes open, he is startled, Titus face is inches from his own.

TITUS (CONT'D)

Ronin taught you the old ways. Who do you think taught him?

Before Bernie can respond, Titus is on him, attacking from all different sides, moving impossibly fast.

Wounded and dazed, Bernie stumbles and his legs buckle, causing the big dog to crash to the ground.

Titus looks over his wounded opponent in disdain and turns his back to address the other dogs.

TITUS (CONT'D)

The rest of you can leave now or
suffer his fate.

Bernie winces and tries to stand, but his legs buckle and he collapses to the ground.

Bernie locks eyes with Justice.

BERNIE

Leave now, all of you.

Across the pack of mutts faces drop, their spirits broken, most turn and walk away slowly, exiting the alley through the phalanx of Zain soldiers.

Justice is watching the pack retreat from the back of the alley, disheartened. He looks to Bernie, who is still trying to stand.

Griffin and a few of the older mutts remain, resilient. Titus marches in front of them.

TITUS

Every dog only has on last chance.
This is yours.

Titus turns to Bernie and lunges. Looking at his loyal mutts, Bernie's eyes are full of resolve, he dodges Titus' onslaught and manges to counterattack, clapping his jaws down on Titus shoulder.

Titus looks down at his shoulder. Bernie musters the strength he has left and faces his enemy. Titus looks a little less confident. He looks over his Zain soldiers.

TITUS (CONT'D)

Finish him. And anyone else who
stays.

Bernie watches as Titus walks away, through the phalanx of Zain. Bernie is breathing heavy, spent, as a dozen Zain approach him. Ben and Mindy emerge from behind the dumpster and Bernie sees her for the first time, astonished.

BERNIE

(to himself)
Mindy?

Titus and Ben lead her away and exit the alley as the Zain soldiers continue to converge on Bernie.

The first Zain lunges at Bernie, but is knocked off course by Justice lunging at him.

The Zain stare at Justice and half splinter off and charge for the puppy.

Bernie snaps back to reality and charges for the Zain advancing on Justice, knocking into them like a bowling ball.

Bernie and Justice exchange a look.

BERNIE (CONT'D)
Get yourself out of here.

JUSTICE
Only if you do the same.

Bernie nods.

Justice bolts for a crack in the brick wall and wedges his way in. A couple of the Zain soldiers follow him, but are much too big to fit and can only GROWL into the crevice.

The other Zain march toward Bernie, who charges at them. Just before reaching them, Bernie jumps, sailing over their ends and landing on the other end of the alley amongst the handful of mutts that remained. Without breaking stride he looks at Griffin as the Zain spin.

BERNIE
Don't follow, I'll lead them away.

Bernie is at a full sprint when he reaches the end of the alley. He looks to his left, in the direction that Titus and Mindy left to find nothing. He considers pursuing, then looks behind him Griffin and the other mutts running toward him, the Zain snapping at their heels.

Bernie runs away. Griffin and the other mutts veer to the right and race away in a different direction. The Zain slow to consider, then continue after Bernie.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Three Zain soldiers remain in the alley adjacent to the crevice in which Justice is hiding. They are pacing and taking turns snapping their jaws in the crevice at him.

ZAIN 1

You can't stay in there forever,
mutt.

At then end of the alleyway a Zain look out BARKS. The other Zain respond immediately and sprint towards him. All the Zain leave at a high speed, exiting the alleyway. Moment's later a Dog Catcher truck enters the alley and sweeps it with a spot light before reversing and exiting. Justice emerges from the crevice and cautiously creeps along the alleyway.

Without warning a choke collar is thrust down around his neck and he is wrestled toward a truck. A bright spot light reveals the dark silhouette of a man.

INT. DOG POUND - LATER

Justice is tossed into a large kennel by a gruff looking dog catcher. He slides into a trio of other mutts in the crowded enclosure. Standing and looking around to get his bearings, Justice realizes the pen is filled with many of the mutts for his pack.

BAIT (O.S.)

Zain set us up. Came out in mass
and got the trucks rolling and then
slipped away. They weren't
offering us a pass, it was a one
way ticket here.

Justice turns to find his friend talking while munching from a bowl of kibble.

BAIT (CONT'D)

Funny thing, though, it ain't that
bad. Grub's pretty good and plenty
of it. Just got a bath from a lady
that said a cute thing like me not
gonna last long 'fore I get taken
to a home. You believe that?

JUSTICE

What about Bernie?

Bait nods with his head to a poster hanging on the bulletin board outside the pen with Bernie's picture on it and stamped across it in bold, red letters; 'killer dog.'

BAIT

He's marked. Might as well be
Zain, far as these folks are
concerned. Fortunately he ain't in
here.

JUSTICE

Yet.

Ava, now 19 and wearing a lab tech coat with a name tag pinned to it, approaches the kennel.

AVA

Got another heart breaker here,
fellas.

She reaches through the bars and gently rubs Justice's head.

AVA (CONT'D)

Let's get you cleaned up, puppy.

Justice grimaces as the other mutts snicker.

JUSTICE

(gritted teeth)

I ain't no puppy, lady.

Ava starts to unlock the pen and notices that Justice is staring at something. She follows his gaze to the poster of Bernie. She carefully steps into the kennel and gently picks Justice up. He is startled. Ava reassuringly scratches his head. She carries Justice closer to the poster and points to it.

AVA

You've seen this dog, haven't you?

Justice looks at the poster and then back at Ava.

AVA (CONT'D)

Bernie. His name is Bernie.

Justices' ears perk and he barks.

AVA (CONT'D)

Do you know where he is? Can you
show me?

EXT. POUND - MOMENTS LATER

Ava has Justice on a leash and a flashlight in her hand.

AVA

Lead on, McDuff.

Justice cautiously starts forward, craning his neck from side to side, uncomfortable with the collar.

AVA (CONT'D)
 Sorry, let me loosen that a bit for
 you.

As Ava bends down to disconnects the collar from the leash in order to loosen it, the alley is flooded with blinding light and a the sound of a gunning ENGINE. Startled, Justice sprints away.

AVA (CONT'D)
 Wait...

Ava looks over as the lights from one of the Dog Catches trucks turn off. Frank leans out the window.

FRANK
 Sorry, Ava. Olie pulled a Carl,
 left the floods on.

AVA
 It's all right, Frank.
 (to herself)
 Bond, Ava Bond.

Ava slips a smart phone out of her pocket and clicks on an app which pulls up a map, a blinking dot moving along it.

AVA (CONT'D)
 Wouldn't he be a better spy if he
 didn't go around telling everyone
 his name?

EXT. CITY STREET - CONTINUOUS

Justice is still running at full speed, a small red light on the collar Ava attached blinking away.

INT. CARGO CONTAINER, MUTT HIDEOUT - NIGHT

A half dozen mutts are huddled against the walls, most nursing injuries. Bernie is slumped against a wall in the shadows. He doesn't look good.

The sound of the trap door OPENING causes all the dogs to perk, and look over. Justice enters. Seeing him, the mutts slump their heads and return to wallowing. Griffin limps over to greet Justice.

GRIFFIN
 Good to see you, kid. Mice told us
 you got picked up with the rest.

JUSTICE

Fact is, I did. And it ain't that bad. Folks talking bout find homes for 'em all.

BERNIE

If it's so cushy, why'd you come back?

JUSTICE

I still got business out here. My mom and my sister. How 'bout you? What are you gonna do?

BERNIE

I'm doing it.

JUSTICE

You're giving up? Just like that?

BERNIE

Yep, just like that. Mutts are safe. I found Ava's house and she wasn't there; you saw that one for yourself. Finally found the dog I was looking for and she's with the Zain. Ain't nothing left for me.

JUSTICE

With the Zain? That's my mom you're talking about.

BERNIE

Your mom?

JUSTICE

She ain't Zain. They're holding my sister. That's the only reason she's with them.

Bernie stands and walks over to Justice.

BERNIE

Mindy?

JUSTICE

That's right.

Bernie stares intently at Justice, as if seeing him for the first time.

BERNIE

The Zain hideout. You know the way in?

JUSTICE

Yes I do.

Bernie nods to the exit and he and Justice march toward it, full of resolve.

GRIFFIN (O.S.)

The two of you don't stand a chance alone.

Bernie turns back to find Griffin and the rest the remaining pack standing at the ready.

EXT. SEWER ENTRANCE - LATER

Justice, Bernie and Griffin are at the lip of a flood wall cautiously peering over at the small tunnel entrance to the sewer twenty feet below. Seven mean looking Zain are milling about in the spillway, keeping watch.

Without speaking Griffin nods to Bernie and Justice - 'let's back away.' They carefully walk down the to other side of the horizontal, spillway wall to rejoin the rest of the montley crew. The grim look on Griffin's face informs the rest.

GRIFFIN

And many more waiting inside.

BERNIE

You heard what the kid said, the rest of you'd be better off finding a truck and getting swept up with the rest of the pack. It's crazy for you to be here.

BAIT

You've saved the skin of everyone of us at one point or another. So if you wanna do crazy, let's get it started.

BERNIE

The first time I lost Mindy. My best friend told me I'd be a fool to try and get her back...

RONIN (O.S.)

But better that than being another kind of fool who didn't.

The mutts turn to find Ronin along with OZ and a dozen dogs from Nana's farm as well as all the other animals, including Remerick, three other large OWLS, Bob the toad, Rufus the frog, Carl the chameleon, the MICE, Lucky and Jackpot the Rabbits and several pigs.

BERNIE

How did you escape from the coyotes.

RONIN

By the very skin of my teeth.

INT. WOODS - DAY (FLASHBACK / MONTAGE)

1. Ronin is dehydrated and mangy. Remerick lands on a stump beside him and HOOTS. Branches CRACK and jostle then part to reveal Ava following closely behind, pulling a wagon. She gently lifts Ronin and places him in the wagon.

RONIN (O.S.)

She nursed me back to health.

2. Ava has placed Ronin in cozy bedding and is treating his infected wounds with antibiotic ointment. Ronin struggles to lift his head slightly to drink water from a bottle feeder, Ava has hung beside him.

RONIN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I grew healthy and learned of your antics from the mice.

3. Ronin is looking somewhat recuperated but tender as he tentatively stands and drinks from a water dish while Pickering is animatedly reenacting a fight between dogs, likely involving Bernie.

End montage.

EXT. SEWER ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

Ronin is now beside Bernie.

RONIN

But we never heard of Mindy.

(Beat)

Until, that is, Pip's cousin spotted her in your alley yesterday. We heard of the fight and your escape. Expected another was coming.

BERNIE

It'll be the last, one way or the other.

Ronin looks Justice over then exchanges a knowing glance with Remerick.

GRIFIN

The question at hand is how we get past those guards.

RONIN

There's another way in.

BERNIE

How do you know?

RONIN

This was once a place of refuge.

GRIFFIN

And now it's a prison.

(beat)

The hatch -- but it can only be opened from the inside.

RONIN

Lead them to the gateway. I'll meet you there.

BERNIE

How will you get past the guards?

Ronin just turns to head for the spillway when a loud GROWL echoes from the alleyway behind them.

The mutts and other assorted animals turn to face the approaching danger. The silhouettes of three very large dogs emerge, obscured by the flood light behind them. As the three strangers approach, one of them darts to the side and is lost in the shadows.

The mutts scan the dark alley while still tracking the two others who are continuing to advance.

A shadow burst from the darkness, and crashes into Ronin just as the other two attackers charge into the light and skid to a stop just in front of Bernie and Griffin. They are large, handsome German Sheppards.

Bernie and Griffin look over to Ronin, who is pinned beneath - PRINCESS.

PRINCESS
Best three of five?

BERNIE
I remember you. From the
junkyard...

PRINCESS
And yet you're the famous one.

RONIN
Why are you here?

PRINCESS
Rumor has it you're about to make a
big mistake.

RONIN
He's on the fool's errand, we're
just the accompaniment.

PRINCESS
You promised to finish what we
started.

RONIN
I'd like nothing better. Duty
before fun.

PRINCESS
I suppose we'll keep your friends
company then.

Princess looks to Bernie.

BERNIE
You sure about this?

PRINCESS
I've no love for the Zain. And no
fear.

BERNIE
What about them?

PRINCESS
They're my brothers.

Ronin takes note and nods respectfully to the other two
German Shepherds.

RONIN
(to princess)
Until we meet again.

With that Ronin turns and races toward the edge of the culvert. The other animals watch as Ronin disappears over the edge and into the shadows.

EXT. ABANDONED FIELD, NEAR THE MUTT CONTAINER - NIGHT

A pick-up truck skids to a stop and Ava steps out. She looks down at her phone, which now displays a green line making a path across the GPS map. A yellow dot is blinking on the green line next to a red dot.

AVA

Stopped here, did 'ya?

She scans the overgrown field. It is quiet and still except for the sound of crickets CHIRPING in the moonlight.

Ava turns and starts to climb back in her truck but hears the WHIMPER of a dog and pauses. She closes her eyes and listens. Another WHIMPER. She climbs out of the truck and moves in the direction from which it came.

Ava reaches the bramble of blackberries and circles around, looking for a way in. The WHIMPERS grow louder. She finds the narrow path and crawls in, brambles catching on her clothes and digging into her neck, drawing blood.

Ava reaches the side of the container and puts her ear to it. She hears many dogs WHIMPERING. Ava bangs on the container. Nothing. She thinks for moment, then KNOCKS in the shape and a haircut pattern. Slowly the corner of the container lifts open revealing a small bull dog, limping and badly injured. He looks up at Ava and both stare in astonishment.

The bulldog starts to back away, causing the container to close.

AVA (CONT'D)

No, please. It's ok.

The bulldog stops and looks at Ava again. She smiles.

INT. CONTAINER - MUTT HANG OUT - MOMENTS LATER

Ava wriggles to get under the corner of the container. When it snaps back shut, the container is enveloped in darkness.

Ava CLICKS ON a flashlight and scans the container. Dozens of mutts lay seriously wounded and suffering, WHIMPERING and turning their heads away from the beam of the flashlight.

AVA
Oh, no. No. What happened to you.

Ava is wondering the container, gently petting dogs and looking at their wounds.

She takes a moment to collect herself and turns on her radio.

AVA (CONT'D)
Frank? Frank?

FRANK (O.S.)
I'm working on a straight flush
here, gimme ten.

AVA
You're obviously bluffing.

INT. DOG POUND - CONTINUOUS

Frank is seated at a poker table with two other pound workers, BILL and REED. Frank looks down at his cards. He is bluffing. Bill and Reed slide all their money into the pot. Frank folds, throwing down his cards in disgust.

FRANK
(Into the Walkie Talkie)
Ah, spit. You know what you just
cost me, Ava?

AVA (O.S.)
I need you here right now. Have
Bill and Reed fire up the otehr
trucks too.

FRANK
(Into the Walkie Talkie)
This a joke, Ava? What's going on?

INT. CONTAINER - MUTT HANG OUT - CONTINUOUS

Ava is looking over all the wounded dogs in disbelief.

AVA
I have no idea.

EXT. DARK ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

Bernie, Griffin, the other mutts and assorted animals are in a tight circle in the alley staring at a manhole cover. It begins to jostle and the group tenses.

Very slowly it raises and moves from its resting place, SCRAPPING as it slides along the pavement until it the hole is completely uncovered.

All eyes are fixed on the hole, staring intently and waiting for -- nothing.

Bernie looks to Griffin, who nods toward the hole. Bernie turns and looks at the group. All eyes are now on him.

Slowly he creeps toward the hole and peers down into the darkness. Bernie turns back and shrugs.

RONIN (O.S.)

There are several dozen Zain
between here and where they're
being held.

Bernie spins to find Ronin standing behind him.

RONIN (CONT'D)

The very end of this tunnel, called
by the Zain, the judgement room.
We'll not win this fight with
numbers.

Griffin steps forward.

GRIFFIN

I'll draw them out, into the
spillway.

Bait steps forward to stand shoulder to shoulder with Griffin.

REMERICK

We'll draw them out.

Bernie turns and looks at the group; his pack.

BERNIE

Looks like the pack just got a
little bigger.

The animals watch as Ronin, Bernie and Justice slide into the manhole and disappear into the darkness.

EXT. ABANDONDED FIELD, NEAR THE MUTT CONTAINER

Two animal control trucks are parked in the field outside the container. Ava emerges cradling a small Jack Russel in her arms. She hands him to Frank, who gently receives the mutt, cradling it like a baby.

FRANK

Don't worry, pal. We're gonna take
real good care of 'ya.

Ava's cell phone RINGS. As she looks to see who is calling, she notices the map program is still running and the green line tracking Justice's path, the red dot blinking his current location.

AVA

Let's let Billy and Reid wrap
things up here, I got a feeling
we're needed elsewhere.

EXT. SPILLWAY, ENTRANCE TO ZAIN HIDEOUT - NIGHT

Cyclops and Krill are lounging in the spillway in front of the entryway to the tunnel, flanked by a dozen other Zain who are circled together.

CYCLOPS

So I says, well, I'm tall and
handsome in the dark.

KRILL

I don't get it?

BAIT (O.S.)

Said the moron.

CYCLOPS

You talking to me?

BAIT

Said his ugly friend.

KRILL

I still don't get it.

BAIT

I can explain it to you, but I
can't understand it for you.

Cyclops and Krill stare blankly at Bait.

BAIT (CONT'D)

It means you're stupid and you're
ugly.

Cyclops bears his teeth at Bait. The dozen Zain soldiers in the background hear Cyclops GROWL and turn to face the intruder.

CYCLOPS

Any of you boys want out of the cold? First one to get that thing between your jaws sleeps by the furnace.

The Zain soldiers fixate on Bait and their muscles tense, ready to pounce. Bait smiles back and winks. Led by Krill, the Zain charge. Bait sprints away, along the channel of the spillway. As the Zain give chase, mutts begin to appear at the top of the spillway and race down, pacing the Zain. More and more join the chase until Bait skids to a stop beside Griffin and several other mutts.

The dozen Zain stop, but continue to glare at Bait before looking and realizing they are now surrounded by mutts.

GRIFFIN

This ends tonight.

KRILL

Couldn't have said it better myself.

Krill BARKS a specific pattern. A silent moment passes as the Zain and mutts continue to stare, sizing up their opponents. Still standing at the entrance to the sewer, Cyclops BARKS the same pattern as Krill. Moments latter the same pattern of BARKS rises up from deep within the sewer.

INT. SEWER, ZAIN HIDEOUT - CONTINUOUS

Zain soldiers are pouring into the main tunnel from all sides, repeating the BARKING pattern and marching in lock step toward the exit.

Dozens pass in quick and frenzied succession. The sudden commotion is followed by silence. Ronin, Bernie and Justice emerge from the shadows.

Ronin closes his eyes and sniffs deeply. Then nods toward a tunnel to the left. Bernie and Justice follow him deeper into the dark lair.

EXT. SPILLWAY, ENTRANCE TO ZAIN HIDEOUT - CONTINUOUS

Zain soldiers are exiting the spillway, running in a rigid formation toward the mutts and taking up positions around them, forming an even bigger circle to trap the mutts, Cyclops in the lead.

CYCLOPS
 (to Griffin)
 We kinda got you boxed in, old
 timer.

The mutts are restless, nervously glancing back and forth at the Zain soldiers positioned on either side of their line.

Cyclops trots up to the mutts and begins to circle them, stopping at Griffin, who stares back at him stoically. Cyclops leans in, inches away from Griffin's face, and sniffs.

CYCLOPS (CONT'D)
 No fear? Can't say the same for
 the rest of your pack.

Griffin just stares. Cyclops shrugs and walks back to join the outer circle of Zain.

CYCLOPS (CONT'D)
 Last stand, you're move.

Griffin marches over to the Zain line casually and circles them, stopping at Cyclops.

CYCLOPS (CONT'D)
 Well?

The old bulldog hunches over as if hurt or gimpy. Cyclops' ears perk and he leans in, curious. Griffin springs at him with surprising power and speed, knocking the pit bull onto his back several yards away.

Cyclops skids to a stop and YELPS in spite of himself. All eyes are on him. He shakes his head, dazed then tries to speak --

CYCLOPS (CONT'D)
 Get--

But is interrupted with a COUGH.

The Zain charge. Griffin is running back to the mutt line, a few steps ahead of the Zain. He skids to a stop and turns to face the oncoming force. Behind the mutts, the Zain they had encircled are also charging.

GRIFFIN
 All of us!

The rest of the mutts call out in unison.

MUTTS

All of us!

They turn in unison and charge at the smaller, inner circle of Zain.

The main Zain force, Cyclops in front, is just about to reach the mutts, who are fighting with the small band of Zain. The SCREECH of OWLS diving from above adds to the chaos.

Remerick and several others swoop down, dropping groups of mice from their talons onto the backs of charging Zain soldiers. The mice go to work yanking large tufts of hair with all their might. The infiltrated Zain SQUEEL, wobble and veer off course, snapping their jaws behind them at the nimble mice who avoid the blows and find other positions to inflict pain.

Having dropped their load the Owls swoop back around for another pass. Remerick drives at a steep angle and slams his head into the side of a Zain who was just about to reach Griffin.

At the base of the canal, Bob the toad watches over the action. He looks up to the top of the spillway and CROAKS the first three notes of 'Shave and a Haircut'.

At the top of the spillway, Rufus, the frog CROAKS the next two notes then turns to face several mice, including PIP, who is standing before his brethren like a field commander.

RUFUS

Ready for wave 2.

PIP

You heard him, chaps. Throw a spinner in the works.

The owls swoop down and pick up a mouse in each talon before sailing away, back toward the battle.

Another set of CROAKS can be heard from below in the spillway.

RUFUS

Wave three.

Pearl the snake and several other snakes of various shapes and sizes slither to the edge of the spillway.

PEARL

Shall we dance, ladies?

The snakes slither faster to pick up momentum until reaching the edge of the spillway, at which point they slide down the steep embankment at high velocity, right into the fray of fighting dogs.

The snakes go to work tangling legs and tripping Zain.

A Zain soldier is about to sink his open jaws into the back of Bait, who is already engaged in battle, when a large snake's tail SMACKS the Zain across the face, leaving him woozy and stumbling like a punch drunk boxer.

The snake's tail 'tisk -tisks' then recoils to Pearl.

PEARL (CONT'D)

Only fair to pick on someone your own size, hun.

Pearl strikes at the Zain, who hops back and YELPS, doing his best to avoid the jaws of the massive snake.

EXT. ROAD ADJACENT TO THE TOP OF THE SPILLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Frank and Ava stand beside their truck awestruck by the frenzied animal battle playing out in the spillway below.

FRANK

Holly guacamole.

AVA

We've gotta stop this.

Ava looks over at Frank and notices he's holding up his cellphone.

AVA (CONT'D)

You calling this in?

FRANK

You kidding, a lion fighting an alligator got 20 million hits; this is youtube gold.

INT. SEWER TUNNELS - CONTINUOUS

Bernie, Justice and Ronin have paused and are staring from the shadows down a wide entry way which is being guarded by eight Zain soldiers.

RONIN

The great room is just beyond the entrance to that tunnel.

BERNIE
 (to Justice)
 You wait here.

JUSTICE
 You know full well I ain't the
 waiting type.

BERNIE
 You're stubborn, just like your
 mom.

RONIN
 And brave, just like his dad.

BERNIE
 Which is why I need him here as a
 lookout. If the main pack returns,
 we need a warning, don't we, Ronin?

RONIN
 That we do.

JUSTICE
 I won't let you down, dad.

Bernie turns and marches away, followed by Ronin. As he
 watches his dad fade in the distance, Bernie calls over his
 shoulder.

BERNIE
 You never have.

INT. ZAIN GRAND ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Titus is lounging near the furnace, Mindy and Hope are seated
 a few yards away, near the waterfall drop off.

Ronin and Bernie enter and Titus stands. Bernie and Ronin
 separate and circle Titus until the three are ten yards away
 from each other.

Titus looks over to Mindy and Hope, who have stood, and
 shakes his head. Mindy and Hope sit obediently.

TUITUS
 When you managed to crawl out of
 here on your belly, I didn't expect
 the opportunity to finish what we
 started.

RONIN
 You see I didn't come alone.

TUITUS

You know it won't matter.

Bernie GROWLS and starts to advance on Titus, who continues to stare at Ronin.

Bernie is only a few feet away from Titus, who has still not turned to face him. Bernie GROWLS and lunges at Titus, who side steps the attack at the last possible moment. Bernie lands on the metal grating near the furnace and the trap door opens. Bernie falls through the grating and lands with a large SPLASH twenty yards below in a holding pool of water. He looks up through the grating as Titus now begins to advance toward Ronin.

TUITUS (CONT'D)

You did not warn him about the spill grate?

RONIN

I did not forget. He's here for them. I'm here for you.

Titus smiles and continues to advance toward Ronin.

TUITUS

You never should have left that old junkyard.

Titus and Ronin charge and snap at each other, neither making contact as each dog moves with impossible speed and dexterity.

Bernie watches through the grate and GROWLS in frustration. He trudges through the water as fast as he's able to, toward an outcropping leading to a tunnel.

As Mindy and Hope watch the fight from their perch, their attention is drawn to a slight WHIMPER. They watch as a small section of cement crumbles in the wall behind them. They peer through the small hole and see Ben on the other side.

BEN

He won;t notice when he's fighting.
Be quick.

The hole is much to small for Mindy to pass through. Hope looks to Mindy, who nods reassuringly.

MINDY

Your father will be back for me.
I'll see you on the outside.

Hope nuzzles Mindy, then squirms through the small hole, barley making it through to the other side.

Bernie makes it to the outcropping and struggles to pull himself up. Back on dry land and PANTING, Bernie does not hesitate, racing into the tunnel.

Hope and Ben are cautiously making their way along a tunnel when they turn a corner and see Justice standing guard. Justice locks eyes with Ben and moves between him and Hope, backing her away while protectively baring his fangs at Ben.

HOPE

It's ok. He was helping me escape.

ZAIN SOLDIER 1 (O.S.)

That right, Bennie Boy?

Justice, Ben and Hope turn to find four Zain soldiers standing behind them.

ZAIN SOLDIER 1 (CONT'D)

I suppose bos'll be wanting the sweet thing back, but as for Bennie and the pest...

Justice lunges at the Zain soldiers, snapping at them and moving with impossible speed, weaving in between them and snapping his jaws down on each one before rolling and sliding back to stand in front of Hope and Ben. The Zain are stunned.

JUSTICE

Pop taught me a thing or two.

The Zain soldiers have regrouped and stood.

JUSTICE (CONT'D)

Now we run.

Justice, Ben and Hope turn and start to run away from the Zain, but all stop suddenly and flatten their bodies against the walls in order to avoid Bernie who races past them and plows right through the Zain soldiers without slowing down. The Zain soldiers crash into the tunnel walls and slide down, unconscious. Hope, Ben and Justice exchange a look, then follow after Bernie. Justice kicks Zain Soldier 1 in the jaw as he passes, eliciting a WHIMPER.

INT. ZAIN GRAND ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Bernie races in to find Ronin listing, badly injured. Titus is circling him, ready to deliver the final blow.

TITUS

I let you escape once.

Ronin is crawling toward the trap door grate. Titus darts to cut off his retreat. They lock eyes.

TITUS (CONT'D)

But not twice.

A loud GROWL resonates around the chamber. They turn to see Bernie. Titus moves away from the grate, giving Ronin a clear path.

Bernie moves between Titus and Ronin. He looks to Mindy, who smiles hopefully and then to Justice, Hope and Ben, who have entered the chamber.

BERNIE

(to Ronin)

Can you lead them out?

Ronin nods and winces as he stands, legs wobbling.

TITUS

Go ahead.

Mindy, Hope and Ben look at the massive white dog, puzzled.

TITUS (CONT'D)

It will be good sport to hunt you down in the tunnels once I'm through with him.

Ronin looks Bernie over.

TITUS (CONT'D)

Shouldn't take long.

Ronin limps toward the tunnel in which Justice, Hope and Ben are standing.

RONIN

Your father is strong. He'll meet us on the outside.

Ronin continues down the tunnel, Hope and Ben close behind. Justice and Mindy remain.

TITUS

(to Mindy)

Stay and you'll be my princess.

Mindy and Bernie exchange a look. He nods reassuringly to her.

Mindy marches past Titus and brushes against Bernie tenderly before nudging Justice as she passes. They both disappear into the darkness.

Titus circles around Bernie to block the exit.

BERNIE

I'm fighting for them. What're you fighting for?

TITUS

The same thing I always do. My life.

Titus lunges and snaps at Bernie. Bernie does his best to fend off the attack, moving with blinding speed, but nonetheless, Titus anticipates his every move, countering it and lunging with his massive, razor sharp teeth.

Titus leaps away, easily and gracefully avoiding Bernie's counter attack.

Bernie is panting and dazed.

Titus charges again with another brutal and effective barrage of attacks, at a speed and ferocity we've not seen before. He leaps away as Bernie tries to snap at him, but misses, lumbers forward and falls to the ground.

TUITUS

You can't win.

BERNIE

I know. Ronin warned me.

TUITUS

You do have courage. I'll end it quickly.

BERNIE

I may not be able to beat you, but you can still lose.

TUITUS

How's that?

Without hesitation, moving like a blur, Bernie charges Titus and knocks into the enormous dog, plowing into him with all his might and sending both dogs over the ledge into the waterfall below.

As both dogs continue to snap at each other as they fall, Bernie is pulled from the air.

Titus watches helplessly as Bernie hangs from the jaws of another dog which are extending over a ledge.

Bernie looks up to see Ronin. Behind Ronin, Ben, Mindy, Justice and Hope have formed a chain and all have their teeth embedded in the dog's back in front of them. They collectively pull with all their might, straining to life the big dog. Slowly Bernie rises from the drop off and is dragged safely onto the ledge.

BERNIE

Thanks for always being there,
friend.

Ronin nods his head respectfully.

Bernie and Mindy lock eyes and then touch noses tenderly and snuggle together.

MINDY

I see you've met your son and
daughter.

BERNIE

Fortunately they have their moms
looks.

JUSTICE

Sorry to crimp this family moment,
but the mutts are still out there.

BERNIE

He's right.
(to Mindy)
Take Hope, Ronin will lead you to
safety.

MINDY

I'm not leaving you again.

RONIN

Every last mutt?

Bernie reluctantly nods.

BERNIE

Every last mutt.

EXT. SPILLWAY, ENTRANCE TO ZAIN HIDEOUT - MOMENTS LATER

Bernie, Ronin, Mindy, Justice, Hope and Ben emerge to utter chaos.

Seven animal control trucks are on the scene and over a dozen officers are scrambling to catch the dogs and then haul them away on extension polls.

Bob the toad notices the group emerging from the tunnel.

He croaks loudly.

Pip skids to a stop in front of Bernie and the others.

PIP

Well if that don't take the
biscuit. Good to see you again, old
man. Best run, we've sounded the
retreat.

Bernie turns to run, but is jolted by electric volts through a collar on an extension pole. He locks eyes with Mindy.

BERNIE

Go, get them out.

MINDY

I won't leave you.

BERNIE

I'll find you.

Bernie looks up and sees Ava, trying to manage the scene and ensure none of the animals are being mistreated. Bernie is SHOCKED again as Frank and Bill approach.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

(struggling to speak)

Ava.

MINDY

(to herself)

Ava?

Mindy nips at Hope and Justice.

MINDY (CONT'D)

He'll be ok.

They turn to run with Ronin and Ben trailing behind, watching over their shoulders as Bernie is wrestled to the ground and hog tied.

EXT. STREET ABOVE THE SPILLWAY - LATER

The scene is suddenly peaceful, all the dogs and other animals having either been captured and loaded into trucks or scattered into the shadows.

Ava finishes writing in clipboard, logging in a small terrier, then rubs it on the head tenderly.

AVA
You'll be ok, hun.

She stands and notices all the other animal control officers have gathered around one of the trucks. She walks over and pushes through the crowd. Frank is standing proudly beside the bed of the truck, in which Bernie is laying, his four legs bound together by steel wire and a muzzle around his jaws.

FRANK
It's him, Ava. The killer dog. I got 'em; my white whale.

Ava ignores Frank's words and continues towards Bernie, as if in a trance.

Ava removes a large hunting knife from her belt and cuts the cables that are binding Bernie.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Whoa, Ava, the heck are you doing.

All the animal control officers jump back a few feet and grab for their poles and tranq guns.

Ava removes Bernie's muzzle and the two stare into each other's eyes. Bernie leans in toward Ava.

Frank raises his arm, ready to fire a dart.

Bernie gingerly raises his head a little more until his nose touches Ava's nose.

AVA
Eskimoo kiss? I love you too,
Bernie.

EXT. STREET ABOVE THE SPILLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Ava is loading Bernie into the backseat of her truck.

FRANK
You know this is against
regulations?

Ava closes the back door and climbs into the driver's seat.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Ava? This time you could really
get fired. Serious stuff and all.

AVA
Kinda like running an illegal poker
game on city property?

Frank looks crestfallen.

Ava starts the engine and slowly drives away.

INT. STATION WAGON - CONTINUOUS

Ava reaches into the back seat with her free hand and gently
pets Bernie on the head.

AVA
Don't worry, hun, we're going home.

ECU - BERNIE'S FACE - FIERCELY BARING HIS TEETH

He is GROWLING viciously as we pull back to reveal a tiny
puppy standing before him in dusty landscape. We continue to
pull back revealing that we are...

EXT. LA DOLCE VITA RANCH - DAY

The tiny puppy steps closer to Bernie, showing no fear.

TINY PUPPY
Now do scared Pop-pop.

Bernie curls up in a ball and begins to WHIMPER. The tiny
puppy laughs hysterically. Mindy is standing a few yards
away and also can't help but to LAUGH.

JUSTICE (O.S.)
Time to go, little dog, city's
calling.

Bernie looks to Mindy then back to Justice.

BERNIE
She'll just keep asking.

JUSTICE

And getting the same answer back.
I ain't made for county life like
you pops. 'Sides hosting a block
party tonight. Even the mutts that
are living the high life indoors
find a way out for this.

BERNIE

Keep an eye on your sister.

JUSTICE

I always do. All right then,
little dog, time's a wasting.

The tiny puppy nuzzles with Bernie and then with Mindy.
Justice opens his mouth and picks up the Tiny puppy by the
scruff, then trots away toward the driveway, stopping beside
Ava, who is loading up her station wagon with empty cages.
She looks down and notices Justice and the Tiny puppy. Ava
smiles then looks to Bernie and Mindy who are standing in the
background.

AVA

Still no luck, huh? We'll, I do
like the company.

(To Justice)

Climb on board, boys.

Ava opens the passenger door and Justice climbs in with the
tiny puppy still securely between his jaws and gently lifts
it onto the passenger seat. He drops it there before hopping
up himself.

LA DOLCE VITA RANCH - MOMENTS LATER

Bernie and Mindy stand next to each other as they watch the
station wagon drive away, kicking up dust in its wake. The
sun is starting to set on the horizon. In the background a
cadre of various animals is circled around, rooting on a
mouse that is trying to stay on a rabbit that is bucking like
a bronco.

Mindy and Bernie nuzzle together contentedly.

Fade out.

Over the credits we see Justice is rapping as the block party
rages all around him. Hope and Ben are present as are a few
other pits, mingling with mutts of various breeds and sizes.