Dog Years

By

Jeremy Storey

Jeremy Storey
206-579-2740
jeremystorey@yahoo.com
INT. HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

BARLEY, an elderly collie-cocktail, lays by the front door.

BARLEY’S POV:

BOBBY, early-forties, shuffles quietly down the hall.

BOBBY
Ready?

Barley slowly rises. Bobby puts a leash on him.

BOBBY
Let’s shake a tail.

Bobby opens the door, they start their walk.

EXT. CEMETERY - MORNING

BARLEY’S POV:

Barley and Bobby walk past a cemetery. Bobby pauses, and smile as he recalls a memory.

BOBBY
Grievers and freakers, remember?

Bobby looks at Barley and grins wistfully.

EXT. CEMETERY - MORNING

FLASHBACK

SUPER: 98 Dog Years Ago

A younger Bobby sits cross-legged over a grave. Eats from a box of ‘Entenmann’s Donuts’. On his lap is a DRAWING. Next to the grave is an unopened bottle of JACK DANIELS.

INSERT DRAWING:

A grim illustration of a sad, young boy huddled over a bed, where a woman lays dead. In the doorway, is a large, brutish man. He looms menacingly over the boy.

END INSERT

Bobby wipes a single tear from his eye. Gets up, places a DONUT on the gravestone. He opens the BOTTLE.

BOBBY
You gave this to me on my seventh birthday. Said, when I turned 21
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
BOBBY (cont’d)
we’d drink it together and you’d share your deepest, darkest secrets.

Bobby pours the bottle over the grave and saves the last swig for himself. He gulps half, and then spits the rest contemptuously over the grave.

He places the picture beside the tombstone.

As Bobby leaves, he hears a RUSTLE coming from a bush. He investigates and finds in the bush a trembling PUPPY. Bobby looks around the cemetery.

BOBBY
Hey, buddy. How’d you get here?

The puppy whimper. Bobby picks up the pup. They stare into each other’s eyes.

BOBBY
Only griever and freakers hang with the dead. Which are you?

The puppy PEES on Bobby.

BOBBY
The latter.

Despite the pee, Bobby laughs.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. PARK – MORNING

BARLEY’S POV:

Barley pees on a bush, then sits next to Bobby. They overlook a pond. Bobby scratches Barley’s ears.

BOBBY
Remember Daisy?

EXT. PARK – MORNING

FLASHBACK

SUPER: 91.5 Dog Years Ago

Barley and another dog, dodge in-and-out of the pond. Bobby watches, while he sketches in a pad.
CONTINUED: 3.

KASSY (OS)
He looks great.

Bobby turns to see KASSY. Kassy is in her mid-twenties, be-spectacled, athletic, pretty, with gentle smile.

Bobby flashes confusion, then recognition.

BOBBY
Kass, yeah?

KASSY
Bingo. Bobby, right?

BOBBY
Uh-huh. You live around here?

KASSY
Just dog-sitting.

Bobby points to the dog Barley plays with.

BOBBY
Who’s that?

KASSY
Daisy. He have a name yet?

BOBBY
Barley.

KASSY
Hops and...?

BOBBY
Sorta fit I guess.

KASSY
He settled down?

BOBBY
Has his moments.

Kassy notices Bobby’s drawing.

KASSY
Are you an artist?

BOBBY
More of a hobby.

KASSY
Me goofing off on a guitar is a hobby. That’s art, my friend.
BOBBY
You think?

KASSY
My brother was an artist. A critic once said his paintings ‘magically captured the eternal blossoming of life with the ephemeral melancholy of decay’. Or, some artsy fartsy bullshit. Me? I just said he was amaze-balls.

BOBBY
Sounds it.

KASSY
Looks like your gifted too.

Bobby smiles, slightly embarrassed. Barley saunters over. Kassy leans over to pet him, but Barley backs away.

KASSY
Still shy around strangers?

BOBBY
He’s a work in progress.

KASSY
Aren’t we all?

Kassy takes a treat from her pocket and patiently holds it out for Barley. He approaches cautiously, then takes the treat from her hand. She lightly pets his head.

BOBBY
He likes you.

KASSY
He’s learning to trust again.

BOBBY
Wish I could help him more.

Kassy looks at Bobby, and then Barley, considering.

KASSY
Maybe I can assist.

BOBBY
I can’t afford a trainer.

KASSY
Quid pro quo. Pay me back in drawings of the dogs I sit. I can sell them to their owners. 20% commission to pay for the training.
Bobby looks at Barley, then at Kassy, then his drawing.

**BOBBY**
You could sell these?

**KASSY**
They’d sell themselves.

Barley BARKS in apparent agreement.

**BOBBY**
Okay. Deal.

**KASSY**
Meet me here tomorrow at noon.

Kassy leashes Daisy, starts to depart.

**BOBBY**
It’s a date.

**KASSY**
Oh, is it now?

Kassy winks at Bobby.

**KASSY**
‘Bobby and Barley.’ The dynamic duo.

END FLASHBACK

**EXT. CAFE – MORNING**

**BARLEY’S POV:**

Bobby pulls up a chair to a table, sips on a LATTE. In front of him, is a BLUEBERRY MUFFIN. He looks down at Barley, places the muffin in front of him.

**BOBBY**
Bon appetit, mon petite chou fleur.

**EXT. FLASHBACK – CAFE – AFTERNOON**

FLASHBACK

**SUPER:** 87 Dog Years Ago

Bobby and Kassy are snuggled up to each other at a table outside the cafe. Barley lays on the ground.

(CONTINUED)
BOBBY
*Mon petit chou fleur? Seriously? Did you just call me your little cauliflower.*

KASSY
*It’s a term of endearment.*

BOBBY
*Yeah, well when I think, ‘cauliflower’, it reminds me of the moldy veggies in my fridge.*

Kassy pauses for a moment, considers something.

KASSY
*They’re moldy, ’cos they’re neglected.*

BOBBY
*So’s my bed.*

KASSY
*Ever notice how much Barley loves my yard?*

BOBBY
*(Playing along)*
*Now that you mention it…*

KASSY
*And the view from the roof. Dude, the view.*

BOBBY
*Way better than an apartment facing a seedy strip club.*

KASSY
*Don’t forget the sweet smell of urine and the dulcet roars of gunfire and sirens.*

BOBBY
*Your point, young lady?*

KASSY
*I’m saying, splitting rent is both practical and logical.*

BOBBY
*That’s your pitch?*

KASSY
*Which brings me to the importance of a guard dog.*

Kassy takes Bobby’s hand.

(CONTINUED)
KASSY
I love you, Bobby. How’s that for a sales pitch?

BOBBY
It’s no Glengarry Glen Ross, but... I say... oui, oui, mon petit chou fleur!

Bobby and Kassy smooch tenderly.

BOBBY
But, can we see how this meeting goes first?

KASSY
Of course, my cute cucumber.

Bobby simply shakes his head sardonically. Kassy nods.

KASSY
Yeah, works better in French.

Bobby glances at his phone.

KASSY
No matter what, believe in yourself, okay?

BOBBY
Aye, aye, Cap’n.

Kassy gets up, gives Bobby a kiss. Barley sits up at the same time. Kassy grins lovingly at Barley.

KASSY
Wanna come with me, today?

Barley looks at her, then Bobby. He lays back down next to Bobby. Bobby shrugs apologetically.

KASSY
One day, Bar. One day you’ll leave his side.

Kassy gives Barley a kiss on the head. And Bobby too. She walks away.

Bobby smiles until her back is turned. He pulls out a FLASK from his hip pocket, drinks. Barley looks at him.

BOBBY
What? I don’t judge you for licking other dogs’ asses.
MARY (OS)
Mr. Kennedy?

Bobby hurriedly tucks the flask away and rises.

MARY, petite but terse, in her late-forties, in business attire, stands with a FOLIO under her arm.

BOBBY
Mary?

MARY
Ms. Braithwaite.

BOBBY
Ms. Braithwaite. Thanks for meeting me. Can I get you-

Mary sits down at the table, and DROPS the folio down in front of Bobby.

MARY
I reviewed your graphic novel manuscript.

BOBBY
Thank you. I-

MARY
It’s cute. But predictable. Unusual, but forced. It felt like I was reading something an artist regurgitated from a book.

BOBBY
I’ve never read a-

MARY
Normally I don’t do this in person, but through all the bluster and pretense, I can sense within you is an authentic artist waiting to emerge.

BOBBY
Waiting for what?

MARY
If I could unlock that magic box, I’d be asking for more than 15%.

BOBBY
So...?

MARY
So, keep digging. Find your truth. Write from your heart.

(CONTINUED)
BOBBY
But I thought I-

MARY
Good day, Mr. Kennedy.

Mary gets up. She pauses, looks at Barley, half-grins.

MARY
I had one just like him. Was my soul mate... through all the ups, downs, and beyond.

Mary leans over and kisses Barley on the head.

MARY
Good luck, Mr. Kennedy.

Mary walks away, leaves the folio behind.

BOBBY
(Grumbles)
Fuck. Me. Sideways.

Bobby gets up, his face burns with rage. He looks across the street at a bus stop. Next to it is a DIVE BAR.

Bobby’s phone BUZZES.

INSERT PHONE SCREEN:
A text message from KASSY: Good luck my ‘cute cucumber’.

BACK TO CAFE

Bobby frowns, pockets the phone. He heads to the bar. On the way, he throws the folio into the trash.

END FLASHBACK

INT. COMIC BOOK STORE - MORNING

BARLEY’S POV:
Barley and Bobby enter a comic book store.

HARVEY - a scrawny, bearded man in his late-forties, wears black jeans and a Green Lantern t-shirt.

BOBBY
What’s shakin’, Harve?

HARVEY
Stayin’ alive, dude. How ’bout you? When’s the next volume out?

(CONTINUED)
BOBBY
December.

HARVEY
Hell yeah!

Harvey reaches behind the counter and grabs a doggy treat. He throws it to Barley. It lands on the floor. Barley doesn’t move. Harvey looks over at Bobby, concerned. Bobby briefly shakes his head.

Harvey sighs sadly, comes out from the behind the counter and kneels down in front of Barley. He pats his head.

HARVEY
I remember when you were a timid pup. Back before Papa became the next Stan Lee!

BOBBY
Back before a lotta things, brother.

Harvey glances at Bobby who smiles back dolefully.

INT. COMIC BOOK STORE – DAY

FLASHBACK

SUPER: 70 Dog Years Ago

Bobby is behind the counter, he warily engages a young customer. The customer departs. Bobby takes a flask from his back pocket and takes a long gulp.

He pockets the flask, as Harvey emerges from a back room.

HARVEY
Why the return?

BOBBY
Said it was bogus.

HARVEY
Civil War? Marvel’s Civil War?

BOBBY
Apparently it’s nothing like the film. And not as good.

HARVEY
Five years sober... and it’s days like today that test me.

(continuing)
BOBBY
Oh. Uh. Yeah. Congrats on the five years.

HARVEY
Ain’t no thang. Hardest part’s admitting I had a problem. Everything after was gravy.

Harvey notices Bobby’s discomfort.

HARVEY
How’s the writing?

BOBBY
Blocked.

HARVEY
Why?

BOBBY
You know... there’s this place. Kassy wants to move. I’m broke. A lotta stress, man.

HARVEY
Kassy I get. Broke I feel ya. But this place? Dude, c’mon.

BOBBY
What? My plate’s full.

HARVEY
Of what? Shit? (Smiles sympathetically) Don’t give up, brother. Your stuff’s epic.

BOBBY
If wishing made it so.

HARVEY
You know... Quentin Tarantino started as a video store clerk.

BOBBY
That story’s so old it even sends Barley to sleep.

They look down at Barley asleep on the floor and chuckle. Harvey picks up the returned graphic novel and waddles away mumbling to himself.

HARVEY
Nothing like the film, eh? Little fucker face.

(CONTINUED)
Once Harvey is out of sight, Bobby takes out the flask, thinks better of it and puts it away again.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. BARBER SHOP - MORNING

BARLEY’S POV:

Barley and Bobby are outside a neighborhood barbershop. The place is abuzz, full of life and good cheer.

Bobby recalls a memory, sighs heavily.

BOBBY

One of the barber’s waves at Bobby, he smiles fondly, waves back.

Bobby whistles: ‘A shave and a haircut, two bits’.

EXT. BARBER SHOP - MORNING

FLASHBACK

SUPER: 68 Dog Years Ago

Bobby’s outside the same barbershop, but it’s in a state of decay. There’s also a FOR SALE sign on the door and a bunch of junk piled up outside on the stoop.

Next to Bobby is NATHAN, a heavy-set fifty-something commercial real estate agent, wearing a suit. Barley perches between the two.

Bobby is agitated. He looks at a check.

BOBBY
$1,456. Is this a joke?

NATHAN
There were a dozen liens against the property, Robert. Your father ran up a hefty debt.

BOBBY
Yeah. Drinking and gambling’ll do that. But why am I getting fucked for his bullshit?

NATHAN
(Shrugs apologetically)
I truly am sorry.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

BOBBY
Seriously? You’ve plundered 5% of my inheritance while I walk away with jack shit. How am I supposed to buy a house? Can’t buy a Goddamn Lincoln Log cabin with this crap.

Looking for a distraction, Nathan notices Barley. He kneels down to pet him. He smiles, whimsically.

NATHAN
Uh, I had a Husky called Max growing up. Man, the trouble we’d get into. He was my brother in arms.

Nathan looks up to see Bobby seething at him.

NATHAN
I, uh... I have an appointment I should get to...

BOBBY
Don’t let me keep you.

Nathan nods uncomfortably, promptly goes to his car.

Bobby notices an aging LEATHER STRAP amongst the pile of junk. Suddenly, he burns with RAGE. He grabs the strap and THROWS it at Nathan’s car as he motors away.

BOBBY
ENJOY MY INHERITANCE, ASSHOLE!

Barley BARKS, in sympatico.

Bobby glares at the barbershop. SPITS at the door. Takes a drink from his flask. Barley gazes at Bobby. Whimpers.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - MORNING

BARLEY’S POV:

Bobby and Barley stroll down a picturesque street. They pause outside a house with a white picket fence.

Barley peers up at Bobby, who seems remorseful.

BOBBY
Not my best day, was it?

Barley uses the rest-stop to lay down again.
INT. NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE

FLASHBACK

SUPER: 64 Dog Years Ago

PETER, a scholarly, lean, man in his late-sixties, shows Bobby and Kassy the house. Behind Peter’s back, outside, there’s a ‘FOR SALE’ sign in the yard.

Kassy’s mood is eager and happy. Bobby, morose and vacant.

KASSY
How long have you been here?

PETER
Thirty two years.

Kassy enthusiastically hooks Bobby’s arm.

KASSY
You can feel the positive vibes. Don’t ya think?

BOBBY
I suppose.

Kassy smells Bobby’s breath and notices his dark mood. As a distraction, she turns to Peter.

KASSY
Why are you selling?

PETER
After my wife, Alice passed and the kids left... the place felt too big for just little old me.

KASSY
I’m sorry.

PETER
Oh, don’t be. We gave it our full measure. And then some.

Bobby goes into the living room. Eyes a family photo. A man, a woman, two young boys, and a Labrador.

BOBBY
Your boys?

PETER
Olly and Barry. They live in Portland now. And the dog is the late, great, Bagel. She was the glue that held us all together for a generation.

(CONTINUED)
BOBBY
Turned out well, did they?

PETER
My boys? Well, let’s just say Alice deserves the credit.

BOBBY
(Sardonic)
Yeah. Thank God for Mom.

KASSY
Bobby.

BOBBY
Mothers. They’re the best. Or, so I hear. Never knew mine. She died hatching this chicken.

KASSY
Baby. Please.

BOBBY
What?

Kassy smiles apologetically at Peter.

Bobby continues on to the kitchen. There, he sees a box of ENTENMANNS DONUTS. He frowns. He opens the box, grabs a donut, takes a bite.

PETER
Um, excuse me?

KASSY
Bobby. What are you doing?

BOBBY
(To Peter)
What, you don’t like to share?

PETER
Share?

BOBBY
My Dad was the same. He once caught me eating one of his precious donuts. And you know what he did? He sat me down, and made me eat four boxes. FOUR! That’s thirty two donuts, if you’re counting.

Kassy tenderly touches Bobby’s arm. He shrugs her away.

(CONTINUED)
KASSY
Bobby. Don’t.

BOBBY
And then, when I couldn’t hold it down, and started to puke, he whipped me with a leather strap — you know, the kind they use at a barbershop. Strap in one hand. Bottle of JD in the other, shouting between smacks: 'You don’t deserve shit. You ain’t shit. You’ll never amount to shit'.

Bobby spits out another donut bite into the sink.

BOBBY
‘Ain’t shit’. Bet the worst you said to your eight year old boys was... ‘Brush your teeth’ or ‘Clean your room’. Right?

KASSY
Baby, we should go.

PETER
I think that would be best.

Kassy ushers Bobby to the door. Barley follows dutifully behind them. Kassy has tears in her eyes.

KASSY
(To Peter)
I’m really sorry. He’s going through a rough patch.

PETER
He’s lucky to have you.

Peter shuts the door. Walks over to the window -- which is open -- he can see and hear them argue in his front yard.

KASSY
Let me help. Or someone else. There’s no shame in it.

BOBBY
You don’t get it, do you?

KASSY
Get what?

BOBBY
Sometimes, what’s broke, can’t be fixed. Not now. Not ever.

(CONTINUED)
KASSY
Don’t say that. Not to me.

BOBBY
I am who I am. I ain’t shit.

KASSY
Please don’t do this.

BOBBY
It’s done.

Bobby walks away. Barley sits by Kassy, who cries. Barley looks up at Kassy. Then Bobby. Pauses, then bolts after Bobby, who stumbles haphazardly down the street.

Peter, closes his window. Shakes his head, sighs.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. ALLEYWAY – MORNING

BARLEY’S POV:

Bobby and Barley pass an alleyway. Barley sits down stubbornly. Bobby looks down the alley, sighs.

BOBBY
I still owe you one.

EXT. ALLEYWAY – EARLY MORNING

FLASHBACK

SUPER: 58 Dog Years Ago

Bobby’s PASSED OUT in his car. His face is bloodied and an empty bottle of whiskey is on the passenger seat.

A series of loud BARKS stirs Bobby. But not fully awake.

The BARKS get louder. Then, a THUNDEROUS rap, rap, rap against the passenger side window. Finally, Bobby groggily emerges from his drunken stupor.

Kassy, stands outside, vigorously rattling the window with her fist.

KASSY
Bobby! Are you okay?

Bobby rubs his eyes.

(CONTINUED)
BOBBY
(Croakily)
Kassy? What’s going on?

Bobby unlocks the doors. Kassy opens the passenger side, sees the bottle, THROWS it angrily into the alleyway. Barley BARKS, and jumps into the backseat of the car.

KASSY
We’ve been looking for ya..

BOBBY
We?

KASSY
Yeah. Me and Barley.

Bobby looks over at Barley, who pants back at him.

KASSY
I got a text from you last night. Said you’d gotten into a fight. And you’d wished the other guy had killed you.

BOBBY
What? I... I... last thing I remember was going to Kell’s. I got a bourbon, and then. I dunno. Blacked out.

(Pauses)
How’d you find me?

KASSY
Barley. Must’ve got out the back window.

Bobby sees the back window’s open.

BOBBY
Barley, left me?

KASSY
First time, ever.

BOBBY
Should’ve tried this years ago.

Kassy’s unmoved, she has tears in her eyes.

KASSY
You have to make a change, baby.

BOBBY
Not sure I can.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

KASSY
Look at Barley. LOOK AT HIM! At first, he cowered at his own shadow. But he changed. Because he felt loved and stopped being defined by his fears.

BOBBY
He’s a dog.

KASSY
We’re all strays, Bobby. Until we find our forever homes. Then it’s up to us whether we stay or keep ramblin’ on.

Kassy wipes the tears from her eyes.

KASSY
Alex had a home. He was loved. But he was too weak to face his demons. He made a choice, and it nearly broke our family. But I also made a choice to not let grief cripple me.

Bobby looks away again. Ashamed.

KASSY
That doesn’t mean I’ll blindly go through it again. So, this is your girl, your forever home, begging you to make a change.

Barley licks Bobby’s he ear. Bobby nuzzles, his dog.

BOBBY
Hey, Freaker.


BOBBY
(Into the phone)

Bobby starts to cry. Buries his head into Kassy’s shoulder. She holds him tight, tears in her eyes.

She looks at Barley, as Bobby’s continues to sob. She mouthes the words... "Thank you".
EXT. COMMUNITY CENTER - MORNING

BARLEY’S POV:

Bobby and Barley reach the end of the street. On the corner is a neighborhood community center.

BOBBY
Six years.

Bobby looks down at Barley.

BOBBY
My hero.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER GYMNASIUM - MORNING

FLASHBACK

SUPER: 44 Dog Years Ago

In the middle of a gymnasium, are ten chairs in a circle. A variety of people sit in them, drinking coffee.

Bobby is one of the folks. He stands up. They wait for him to speak. Barley is not with him.

Bobby looks around the group. Amongst them is Harvey, who beams back proudly.

BOBBY
Hi. I’m Bobby. I’m an alcoholic. I’ve been sober for two years.

The group of people applaud Bobby and in unison say:

GROUP
Welcome, Bobby.

BOBBY
I wanted to take a moment to thank you all for the support and love you’ve shown me. Especially my sponsor, Harvey. I love you, man.

Harvey nods, smiles back.

BOBBY
Two years ago, I was down in a hole. And I convinced myself there was no way out. I didn’t deserve one. I’d let myself be

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
BOBBY (cont’d)  
defined by a broken, man, who  
hated the world, and blamed me,  
for losing the love of his life.  
I was angry at him. But now I  
understand his pain. As I nearly  
lost the love of my life. I took  
er her for granted. I was selfish  
and she deserved more than my  
weakness. You see... she lost her  
brother, Alex to a drug overdose.  
And there I was, putting her  
through hell again. I wouldn’t  
have blamed her for duckin’ outta  
dodge. But she’s a warrior.  
Wouldn’t let me fade away. Not  
without a fight. But I knew... we  
all got our limits, right? And  
I’d tested hers. So, I had a  
choice... be the demon or get to  
gettin’.

Bobby pauses, catches his breath.

BOBBY  
It’s because of her. And you all,  
that I’m here today, happy and  
healthy.

The group applauds.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER GYMNASIUM – CONTINUOUS

Bobby and Harvey are alone in the gymnasium, cleaning.

BOBBY  
Two years. And it still feels  
weird.

HARVEY  
That’s ‘cos the pain of the past  
is closer now, than the joy of  
the future.

BOBBY  
You know, for comic book nerd,  
you can be surprisingly poetic.

HARVEY  
Not sure whether to say, ‘thank  
you’ or ‘fuck you’!

They laugh. Harvey suddenly remembers something.
HARVEY
Oh, before I forget.

Harvey pulls out a FOLIO, from a bag slung over his shoulder. He hands it to Bobby. Bobby holds it, deferential for a moment, and breathes deeply.

BOBBY
Wow. So, this is it?

HARVEY
Speak of being poetic. That’s some next level shit.

Bobby looks at the door.

BOBBY
Wish me luck.

HARVEY
You make your own luck, Brother.

Bobby and Harvey hug-it-out.

EXT. COMMUNITY CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Harvey and Bobby exit the community center. Outside on the grass is KASSY. Barley, sits next to her, he wears a BLUE BANDANNA around his neck.

Harvey nods to Bobby, pats him on the back, waves at Kassy and goes off down the street, whistling.

Bobby goes to Kassy, and plants a kiss on her lips.

KASSY
My cute cucumber.

BOBBY
Mon petit chou fleur. I don’t deserve you.

KASSY
That’s very true. But life without Mr. Barley would be a loveless, meaningless void.

BOBBY
I knew it. You’re only with me, ’cos of the dog.

KASSY
Since day one, pal. Day one.

Bobby laughs. Kassy notices the folio, that Bobby holds.

(CONTINUED)
KASSY
What’s that?

Bobby hesitates...

BOBBY
Remember that literary agent?

KASSY
Mary? Ms. Braithwaite if your nasty?

BOBBY
Yeah. Her. Despite the rejection, she gave me some helpful advice.

KASSY
Which is?

BOBBY
Write from the heart.

Bobby hands Kassy the folio.

KASSY
This is the one you’ve been working on for six months?

Bobby nods. Kassy carefully takes it out of the folio.

BOBBY
Jump to the last page.

Kassy looks at Bobby curiously. He nods back.

BOBBY
I think you’ll like it.
(Under his breath)
At least, I hope you will.

INSERT IMAGE ON SCREEN:

A full-page bleed. The frame is an image of BARLEY sitting in front of a woman (KASSY). Both characters are highly stylized;

Barley looks like some kind of ‘Battle Dog’, clad in golden, opulent armor.

Kassy is depicted as a beautiful, ‘Warrior Angel’.

She holds a small, silver box dangling from Barley’s collar -- in the box is a diamond ring.

A dialog bubble in the right hand corner of the frame reads:

"Will you"?

(CONTINUED)
Kassy holds her hand over her mouth in disbelief. She bows down to Barley. Lifts his bandanna to reveal a small box. She opens the box. Inside is a DIAMOND RING.

BOBBY (OS)
Will you?

Kassy slowly rises. Full-blown water works.

KASSY
Too much? Too corny? Too girly?

BOBBY
As far as pitches go... it’s no Glengarry Glen Ross, but... I it’ll do.

Kassy grabs Bobby, kisses him passionately.

KASSY
Are you kidding? I’m already thinking about a a castle wedding. How’s that for girly?

BOBBY
Castle. Church of Elvis. As long as we’re together, I’m happy.

Bobby looks at Barley and winks.

BOBBY
Well played, Bar.

Barley sighs contentedly as his humans embrace.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. VETERINARY BUILDING – MORNING

BARLEY’S POV:

Bobby sits down on a stoop in front of the building. Barley lays down, and puts his head on Bobby’s lap.

Bobby slowly, tenderly strokes Barley’s head.

BOBBY
Nothing to speed up, nothing to slow down, right?

Bobby glances up at a tree and gently sways with the breeze as a tear trickle down his face.
INT. FLASHBACK – VETERINARY BUILDING – MORNING

FLASHBACK

SUPER: 97.9 Dog Years Ago

A younger Bobby sits in the waiting room, a small crate between his legs.

A young woman (KASSY) comes over and hands Bobby a paper bag filled with puppy-related health items.

KASSY
Okay. Give him the de-worming medicine and the puppy formula twice a day.

BOBBY
Anything else?

KASSY
He has some separation anxiety. But now he’d found his forever home, I’m sure he’ll thrive.

Kassy peers into the crate and smiles sweetly.

KASSY
Got a name yet?

BOBBY
Workin’ on it.

KASSY
Call me if you have questions.

BOBBY
I’d love to call you. I mean... you know what I mean.

Kassy laughs and leaves the waiting room.

A man, (FRED) in his early-forties, enters.

Fred is sullen. His face is red and puffy with tears. He holds a collar. He slumps down opposite Bobby.

Fred stirs from his gloom to look inside the crate.

FRED
Mutt?

BOBBY
Bona fide dog cocktail.
FRED
Mine was a lab/collie mix.

BOBBY
Was?

Fred holds up the collar. Nods sadly.

BOBBY
Oh, I’m... I’m so sorry.

FRED
We had a good run. He lived to be 105... in dog years.

BOBBY
That’s a helluva run.

FRED
He was by my side through thick and thin; Two marriages. Three kids. Four jobs. And the death of my Dad. He was always there.

BOBBY
What was his name?

FRED
Hops.

BOBBY
As in, Hops ’n Barley?

Fred nods. Bobby looks into the crate, smiles.

BOBBY
Barley.

Bobby gets up to go.

FRED
The dog years.

BOBBY
What’s that?

FRED
The dog years. They’re a snapshot of an era. So, don’t slow down and don’t speed up. Just... be in the moment.

BOBBY
Uh, thanks. And again, sorry for your loss.

Fred nods. Bobby opens the door. Bright light bursts through. Bobby puts on his shades, looks at the crate.

(CONTINUED)
END FLASHBACK

INT. HOUSE - AFTERNOON

In a child’s room, a small girl lays on the floor, draws in a coloring book.

SUPER: Gretchen - 38 Dog Years Old

GRETCHEN’S POV:

She hears a door SHUT downstairs. She gets up to investigate.

She stops at the top of the stairs to see her Daddy and Mommy embrace in the hallway. Daddy’s sobbing, he holds a Barley’s collar in his hand. Mommy cradles him.

They notice Gretchen at the top of the stairs.

BOBBY

Hey, princess. It’s a beautiful outside. Wanna go to the park?

Gretchen nods. She goes down the stairs. Daddy swoops her up. She looks at his face. Wipes a tear away. Kisses him.

BOBBY

Alright, let’s shake a tail.

The family huddles together in a warm embrace.

Somewhere outside, a dog barks.

END.