

Dog Years

By

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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 *whimpers*. Bobby picks up the pup. They stare into each other's eyes.

BOBBY
Only grievers 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)

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
Kassy, 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.

(CONTINUED)

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 appetite, *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.

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.

(CONTINUED)

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
Worst. Haircut. Ever.

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)

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
ENTENMANN'S 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.

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.

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 thinks. He smiles apologetically at Kassy. Takes a deep breath. Reaches into his pocket. Takes his phone out. He dials. Kassy watches curiously.

BOBBY

(Into the phone)

Harvey. Hey. How's it goin?

(Listens)

Yeah, I know I sound like shit.

(Voice trembles)

I uh. I... I gotta problem. And I... I need some help.

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 mouths the words... "Thank you".

END FLASHBACK

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
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)

END INSERT ON SCREEN

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.

(CONTINUED)

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.

BOBBY

Ok. Let's shake a tail.

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.