

DOG POUND: The stage should have three dividers up making four spaces for the “dogs” to stand/sit whatever. Each “dog” would wear clothes to suggest that they’re dogs but not actually dog outfits i.e. brown pants and a brown shirt. They could wear collars as well. The goal is to make it seem normal and not “weird” that they’re dogs.

DANNO, a brown dog, sits in the stage left cage. Next to him is an empty cage, next to that is PAISLEY, a white dog, and next to her is SPOT, an all black dog.

DANNO

Let me out of here! I don’t deserve to be here! I’m a good dog, I’m house broken!

SPOT

Knock it off down there. No one wants to hear it. You’re here for a reason.

DANNO

Not me, not me. No way man. I was so good to my owners. I slept on their feet when it got cold, I licked their faces when they came home, I sniffed but not too aggressively. Come on man, what more could I have done?

SPOT

Sounds like the story of every other pound dog I’ve ever met.

PAISLEY

We’re all innocent in here. All of us. No one did anything wrong. At least nothing big enough to end up in the pound.

DANNO

Pretty sure they call them “shelters” now.

PAISLEY

You can argue semantics but you can’t argue location. You’re here. Might as well accept there’s a reason, even if you don’t understand it. Take me for example.

SPOT

Do we have to?

PAISLEY

You keep your mouth shut Spot, we're not going anywhere. You could hear my story again. You might learn something.

SPOT

Paisley, the microphone is yours.

PAISLEY

I am what you call a designer breed. I am a Shih-Poo.

Danno snickers.

DANNO

Sorry.

PAISLEY

Hmph. I am half Shizu and half Poodle. I was bought at a pet store for \$5000. Some people don't spend that much on their car. My owner was a single woman named Beatrix who lived in a gorgeous condo.

SPOT

Sounds like she had a dog name herself.

PAISLEY

I was her little princess. I had weekly groomings, we had matching manicures, she carried me everywhere she went in her handbag. It was the life. I ate nothing but wet food and spent the night on the softest pillow you've ever set your eyes on.

DANNO

Oh man, I love wet food.

PAISLEY

Wet food is like heaven in a can. She loved me dearly, took me on all her vacations and we had the time of our lives. Do you know what she said when the woman at the airport told her to put me in a carrier and place me in the cargo bay?

SPOT

"You wouldn't put your child down there, would you?"

PAISLEY

“You wouldn’t put your child down there, would you?” The woman turned right around and I rode first class all the way to Paris. Have you seen Paris before? There’s a bakery on every corner and people drop their bread all over the city. Fresh baguette! So fantastic. And the smells...

SPOT

Because people don’t shower over there.

PAISLEY

You’re so crass. But yes, the people over there smell different... more refined. It was a life I wish I could live a thousand times over. True love like that only comes once in a generation.

DANNO

She sounds wonderful.

PAISLEY

Yes Danno, she was. She was. But things change. She found another love.

DANNO

Another dog?

PAISLEY

Worse, another person. A man. His name was Lance. He was tall, he was so good looking. My god, the man was like a statue. Mmmm.

SPOT

I’m disturbed.

PAISLEY

Well, Beatrix fell for him hard. They were dating casually, then it became every other night and soon he had moved into her condo. Now, I didn’t mind. I continued being the princess I always was but my master started to slip. I didn’t get groomed as often, she stopped taking me when she had her nails done. Soon they were talking about marriage and moving out of the city to a giant house. Now, I’m not much for running around outside but who am I to complain.

DANNO

When do we get time outside? Do we get to run around?

SPOT

An hour a day. Big dogs with big dogs. Littles with littles. Next play time should be later this afternoon.

PAISLEY

Uch, play time. An excuse for dogs to slobber all over me. So there we were, talking about moving and houses when they started talking about a baby. Baby this and baby that. You can't have a baby before the wedding. And so on and so on. The last few days were a blur. There was some sort of rush rush ceremony and then they started packing to move out of the city. Can't raise a baby in the city. Can't raise a baby and a dog. At least that's what he said. She didn't argue. I spent seven years with her and she barely said goodbye. And that's how I ended up here.

DANNO

That's rough.

PAISLEY

I am a victim of love.

DANNO

Man, you seriously didn't do anything wrong. What injustice.

SPOT

Like she said, we're all innocent. Except for me.

DANNO

What'd you do?

SPOT

I don't want to talk about it.

PAISLEY

Spot's not big on sharing.

SPOT

I'm a lone wolf.

DANNO

You're a dog.

SPOT

I know that.

DANNO

I'm a dog too.

PAISLEY

We know. What about you Danno? I haven't heard your story yet either.

DANNO

Oh, I imagine it's the typical stuff. I'm a bouncy fun dog. We lived out in the suburbs. I had a yard to run and play. I used to love to dig holes. Man, holes are the best! My family was exactly what you'd see on TV. A dad, a mom and two kids. They were both boys and we loved to rough house. They'd take my toy and I'd grab it back. Then they'd take it back and I'd grab it back. Then they'd take it again and I'd...

SPOT

We get it.

DANNO

Man, it was the best! We had so much fun. We played fetch, they scratched my tummy. I loved it! The dad had some kind of job working for a newspaper. He sold ads or something. I know because when I was being housebroken he'd bring home fresh papers every single day for me. He'd tell me to pee on the Macy's ad because they always tried to haggle him down on prices. "You think you can pay Lifestyle prices for an ad in the World News section? You're crazier than the dog!"

PAISLEY

Macy's, how bourgeois.

DANNO

The mom just stayed home all day taking care of me. She'd always bring me back the best stuff from the store. Hamburger night was the best. Raw meat! Man, I could eat that stuff all day. So yummy. And those kids, they always threw some food on the floor for me. The grown-ups pretended to be upset but they'd do it too. I made some funny faces when I ate.

SPOT

Yeah, I can imagine.

DANNO

But then the internet came along. Do you guys use the internet?

SPOT

Of course not.

DANNO

It's a bad thing. You should stay away. Every day I'd hear "curse word the internet" and "the internet is so curse word stupid!" There was a lot of yelling at that house. The grown ups yelled at everyone: the kids, each other and me. I didn't take it personally or nothing, I knew they loved me. I still go lots of hugs and play time.

PAISLEY

They never stop loving you, they just forget.

DANNO

Well, my people started talking about moving too. The dad lost his job and he got a new one selling magazines over the phone. They found some tiny apartment near his work, so he could sell his car. It was tiny but they moved me with them.

PAISLEY

So lucky.

DANNO

Yeah, I didn't mind. They took me for walks around the neighborhood. That neighborhood was awesome, you could poop on the ground and no one had to pick it up!

SPOT

It must have smelled like something magical.

DANNO

I could smell a decade worth of dogs in one block. Fantastic. But with the new job and the tiny place the yelling just got worse and worse. People started throwing things at each other. One day a shoe hit me. Man, I hate shoes. That shoe was so mean! I picked it up and took it outside. Well, apparently that was the dad's favorite shoe. I didn't know that! He got so mad that he took me on a long walk. A super long walk and just tied me up to a fence somewhere far far away. I would have smelled my way back but he tied me up pretty good. Luckily some man who lived outside found me.

SPOT

You're lucky you didn't starve to death.

DANNO

Oh, it was pretty close with this guy. We just walked all day and some days we never found any food. One night he fell asleep and I just walked off. I wanted to see if there was some food nearby. Well, some lady walking down the street grabbed me and she took me here. Now I'm here with you guys.

PAISLEY

So sad.

DANNO

I want to go, I want to be a house pet again. I'll even walk around the streets with that nice man again. I don't care, I just don't want to be here anymore. How do I bust out?

SPOT

Well, I've got some good news and some bad news.

PAISLEY

Mostly bad news.

SPOT

There's two ways out of here. One is if a family comes in and decides they want to take you home.

DANNO

I want to do that! Let me do that!

SPOT

It's not so easy. They want young dogs, they want small dogs and they want dogs that aren't jumping up and down like crazy.

DANNO

But I get so excited when I meet new people! New people are the best!

PAISLEY

None of us are very young but you've got a certain spark of life. I see good things for you.

DANNO

You do? Oh thank you Paisley.

PAISLEY

I should find a new home too. Designer breeds are very in right now. I don't even shed.

DANNO

No!

PAISLEY

It's true!

DANNO

That's amazing! I'm a mystery dog, a mutt. But whatever I'm made of, you'd better believe I shed like the dickens! (Pause) You said there were two ways out, what's the other way?

SPOT

The long sleep. That's my way.

Their conversation is interrupted by a dog catcher walking in another dog. This is LUCY, a beige dog. The dog catcher doesn't speak or even look at the dogs.

DANNO

Oh boy, a person! A new dog! I'm so excited!

PAISLEY

Hello, hello there!

Lucy is led into the empty cell. The dog catcher leaves.

SPOT

Welcome to the row.

DANNO

Come closer to me! I want to sniff you through the bars!

Lucy moves a little closer to Danno, she smells him back.

DANNO

I'm Danno! I'm a dog!

LUCY

He's serious?

SPOT

Afraid so.

LUCY

Well, I'm Lucy. It's nice to meet all of you.

DANNO

What's your story? What are you in for?

LUCY

We have to have a story?

SPOT

Not really. Share if you want, don't share if you don't want.

LUCY

Not much of a story. I'm a pit bull.

PAISLEY

Oh no!

SPOT

That's rough.

DANNO

What happened?

LUCY

Yeah guys, what's wrong with being a pit?

SPOT

I've been at this pound for almost to weeks. I've never seen a pit last out the day.

DANNO

Because they find a new home? Because people love pit bulls so much? Because I think she's really cute.

SPOT

I'm afraid Lucy and I have an appointment at the other end of the hallway.

PAISLEY

Don't give up hope Spot. Some family could still come in for you.

DANNO

I like you Spot.

SPOT

Thanks guys but there's no adopting me. I'm a biter.

LUCY

You poor thing.

PAISLEY

No! You look so unassuming.

SPOT

I might as well tell you my story. I'm not going anywhere.

DANNO

Me either!

SPOT

I was born a country dog. I had a job. I was in charge of some baby cows and a pig. I lived out in a barn and spent my days keeping all sorts of predators away.

DANNO

Did you see scary animals?

SPOT

No, they knew I was there and they kept their distance. Well, when a sheep starts walking the wrong way you can bark at it, you can nudge it but if it's being real stubborn you've got to give it a little bite.

LUCY

You're in here for biting a sheep?

SPOT

What? No. That was my job! I was good at it, real good. But one day I ran away. I don't know what got into me, wanderlust maybe. I just had to see the world. I made it a couple miles down the road and a man picked me up and tossed me in the back of his truck. I can still feel that wind blowing my ears around. That guy was good to me. Drove me all the way to the city. But he forgot to feed me. Stuck his hand back in the truck and I bit it. I bit it real good. I got a bit of his finger tip.

DANNO

How did it taste?

SPOT

That was the end of the line for me. Found my way here this will be it for me.

PAISLEY

You poor thing.

SPOT

Nothing I didn't do to myself. Like you said, everyone's innocent here but me.

LUCY

I'm feeling really sad.

SPOT

It'll all be over soon. We'll get our playtime, then a treat and then we'll go with them down the hall. We'll never come back. Could be worse.

DANNO

How?

SPOT

Danno, don't you worry about it.

DANNO

Alright.

In comes the dog catcher. The dog catcher comes to Lucy's cage and takes her by the collar. He walks her down the hall the other direction.

LUCY

That was short. Nice to meet you folks.

DANNO

But she didn't get her play time! She didn't get a treat! Come on, it's not fair!

The lights fade.