

DOG SQUAD

By

Naomi jardine

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PAN OVER HOUNDLY HOUSE to the BACKYARD. JILLY is holding a ball as FLO, VLAD and ZAZA wait breathlessly to catch it, * <WAGGING AND WOOFING>. KETUS is napping and <SNORING> in * everyone's way as BASIL prepares to referee (he has a WHISTLE in his mouth).

JILLY

Ready... set... fetch!

Jilly flings the BALL as Flo joyfully jumps for it.

FLO

I GODDIT I GODDIT I GODDIT!

It bounces off her nose and soars into the air. She runs in a circle with no idea where the ball went.

FLO (CONT'D)

Where did it go?! It just disappeared! How does that happen?!

Vlad <LEAPS> in <DRAMATIC SLOW-MO> catching the ball spectacularly in midair. He does a loopy <VICTORY DANCE> like a football player after a touchdown.

ZAZA

Yay! A point for our team! No, two!
No, THREE!

Basil <BLOWS> his whistle.

BASIL

Three points?! What game is this?
How can I know when to blow the
whistle if there aren't any rules?

*
*

VLAD

Did everyone see that!? That's how
a wolf catches tennis balls in the
WILD!

Vlad (still celebrating) trips over Ketus and <WIPES OUT * SPECTACULARLY>, winding himself.

VLAD (CONT'D)

<WINDED SQUEAKING NOISE>

Zaza runs in circles around him, making sure he's okay. She pushes him back onto his feet. First his front legs, then his back, then his front again because they slipped.

*
*
*

FLO
 (giggles)
 And that was how wolves wipeout in
 the wild.

KETUS
 (Sleepily)
 Did we win?

Jilly takes the spitty ball from Vlad.

JILLY
 Ugh... You'd definitely win if we
 were playing "Slobberball".

VLAD
 (excited)
 Is that a real thing? We should
 play that!

They notice CLARA MARTINEZ, walking toward them, holding the
 hand of her **three** year old daughter, AMELIA, who is smiling
 shyly at the dogs. JETT comes ambling into the picture. *

JILLY/JETT
 Hi, Mrs. Martinez!/Hey Amelia!

The dogs bounce over to them rambunctiously, <WAGGING AND
 WOOFING!> Amelia backs up and clings to her mother's coat but
 still grins.

CLARA
 We were out for a walk and Amelia
 led me straight here to see the
 dogs, as usual.

Amelia shyly buries her face in Clara's coat, as Clara gives
 her a reassuring side-hug. Vlad **picks up Hedgie, trots over
 and drops the toy at Amelia's feet.** *

JILLY
**That's dog language for: he wants
 to play with you!** *

Amelia hesitates, then throws the **toy**. The dogs tear after it
 in a happy <BARKING RUCKUS!> Vlad catches it again and
 boisterously bounds back to Amelia, dropping it at her feet
 as the other dogs <WAG and WOOF!> *

It's all a bit much for Amelia. She hides behind her mother
 who shrugs helplessly at the Squad.

CLARA
 Maybe next time we'll play longer.

They head off. Amelia stops, peeks around her mom at the dogs, and gives them a little wave as she disappears.

ON: The dogs faces fall, watching them leave.

ZAZA

Amelia threw the toy this time. *

KETUS

And waved bye-bye!

FLO

I think she likes us.

A distant DOG BARK is heard, O/S.

2 <BIRDS-EYE VIEW OF NEIGHBORHOOD>

2

AROUND THE COMMUNITY - The <BARK> is picked up by a network of dogs and various <BARKS> are passed around like a relay: A Basset Hound from a house window... a Labrador Retriever in a back yard... a Beagle with it's head out a moving car window... a Chihuahua from the dog-bag carrier of a lady... until the howling and <BARKING> reaches the Houndly home.

(PAN DOWN TO)

3 EXT. HOUNDLY HOME - BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

3

BASIL

Do you hear that? Message incoming on the emergency frequency!

ON: Basil's ear perks up as he listens to the <BARKING> intently.

BASIL (CONT'D)

Someone saw a stray dog. It may be lost.

Everyone exchanges a concerned look.

ON: Basil listens to a few more last <YAPS>.

BASIL (CONT'D)

It's behind the taco place.

JILLY

What do you think, Squad? Do we go help, or play more slobberball?

VLAD
Help first, then slobber!

The Squad race towards the garage/clubhouse. Except Ketus, who plods along, prompting Zaza to push him from behind and hurry him up.

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ON: MOM pops her head out the window of the house.

MOM
Remember your training! It might be scared or nervous. Or even dangerous. So--

*
*

JILLY
Be cautious and calm!

JETT
(wildly enthusiastic)
I'm always cautious and calm! I'm cautious and calm right now! Now let's GOOOOO!

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*

JILLY
(sighs, then to Mom)
I'll keep an eye on him.

4 INT. CANINE CAVE (HOUNDLY GARAGE) POWER UP MONTAGE 4

INTENSE ACTION MUSIC as Jilly and Jett pull on their decorated HELMETS in unison super-hero style.

JILLY
Dog Squad ready?!

ALL DOGS (EXCEPT FLO)
READY!

MUSIC STOPS with a record scratch; we hear <SQUEAK SQUEAK SQUEAK>. WHIP-PAN to Flo, gleefully squeaking a rubber chicken. She stops, realizing everyone's staring at her, grins sheepishly and pushes it away.

FLO
Ready!

5 ACTION MUSIC RESUMES. 5

They burst out of the garage, the dogs <BARKING> alongside the kids on their BIKES as Jett <RINGS his BELL> the whole way.

6

EXT. BEHIND TACO RESTAURANT - SHORT TIME LATER

6

The Squad searches behind the taco restaurant. Jett dashes from spot to spot, peering into every little corner. Basil does an orderly search up and down in lines, while Flo spins in random circles, tongue flapping.

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JETT

No sign of a stray.

They regard a TACO WRAPPER on the ground that has been doggy-chewed.

*

ZAZA

Hmmm... a chewed-up taco-wrapper.

Basil marches in a protective circle around it.

*

BASIL

Careful now, stand back. It might be a clue. If the stray licked it, its scent will be all over it.

*

JETT

Ketus! Let's get that super-sniffer on the case! Go go go!

The dogs part for Ketus to plod over, unhurried.

JETT (CONT'D)

(impatient)

That's "going", but it's not "go go go-ing!"

Ketus sniffs the wrapper.

*

KETUS

I smell...
(dramatically)
Cheese.

Flo begins racing in ridiculous, excited circles.

FLO

We did it! We found the CHEESE!
(realizes)

Wait, that's not right.

*

ON: Ketus, continuing to sniff the wrapper, then the air.

KETUS

Yup, a dog licked this wrapper.
Labrador Retriever.

(MORE)

KETUS (CONT'D)

Black with a white stripe on his snout. No collar or tags.

JETT

That's AMAZING! You can tell all that just from sniffing a wrapper?!

KETUS

Nope. He's right behind you.

The gang whirls around.

PULL WIDE to reveal a scrawny BLACK LAB (AXEL) in the BG peering out from on top of a dumpster at the Squad.

They slowly and calmly approach... as Jilly uses a rubber glove from her doggy-belt to pick up the tack wrapper and put it in the dumpster.

FLO

Hi! What's your name?

AXEL

Name's Axel. But my friends call me... Axel.

Axel has a George Clooney vibe, easy-going and friendly, but also a bit of a standoffish "lone-wolf."

DOGS

<GREETING WALLAH> Hi Axel!/Hello!

JETT

We're
(dramatic)
The Dog Squad! Ooh, I'm gonna say it like that from now on.

VLAD

I'm the leader.

The other dogs regard Vlad skeptically.

VLAD (CONT'D)

(sheepish cough)
Co-leader.

JILLY

We've never seen you in Barkley Bend before. Where do you live?

AXEL

You're in Axel's house right now.

BASIL
Here? In the... garbage bin?

KETUS
Well... it's not so bad. There's
cheese.

FLO
(drooling)
Cheeeeeese!!

JETT
So... no home? No family? *

Axel bounds out of the dumpster.

AXEL
Nuh-uh. I'm a wild boy.

ON: Vlad, looking a bit put-off by this!

VLAD
(skeptical muttering)
Tch. Yeah, right. "Wild". Sure.

ON: Jilly and Jett exchange a concerned look.

JILLY
(thinking on her feet)
Maybe you'd like to visit us. You
look like you could use a **tasty**
meal. *

AXEL
(dubious)
I dunno. What's on the menu? I'm
really into tacos.

BASIL
Kibble. Mostly.

KETUS
Sometimes bones.
(licks his chops)

ZAZA
And frozen carrots.

FLO
I LOVE frozen carrots! Almost as
much as cheese!

Basil drops the rubber chicken in front of the dumpster.

BASIL

And we have many excellent toys. I
recommend the squeaky ones.
(squeaks it with his foot, giggles)
He hee! (recovers composure) Er,
yes, many toys.

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Flo <DROOLS!> at the sight of the toy.

ZAZA

(to Axel)

There's plenty more where that came
from.

Axel regards the toy uncertainly.

AXEL

Toys, huh? I've never really had
any. But... I guess I could pop by
for a little visit.

The gang <CHEERS!> as they all head O.S.

AXEL (CONT'D)

(hungrily)

You said something about bones?

Flo <GOES BANANAS> on the chew toy... notices the others are
leaving and races after them with it in her slobbery mouth.

*

7

EXT. HOUNDLEY BACKYARD - BIT LATER

7

The group are heading for the garage.

KETUS

What's it like living in the wild,
Axel?

ON: Vlad, who's been eyeing Axel apprehensively.

VLAD

Seriously?! I tell you about the
wild literally every day! I'm a
wolf!

ZAZA

Half wolf.

VLAD

Yeah! The wolfy half. Listen to
this...

(HOWLS)

AXEL
 (Genuine smile)
 Wow! I've never met a real wolf
 before.

ZAZA
 (rolling her eyes)
 Have you met half of one?

AXEL
 (to Vlad)
 You and me are the WILD boys.

Vlad's face lightens up, a bit disarmed.

VLAD
 (considering)
 'The wild Boys'... Cool. Ooh hey,
 can you do this?

Vlad bristles his fur.

BASIL
 Vlad really does do an impressive
 fur-bristling.

AXEL
 That's pretty wild. Can you teach
 me?

VLAD
 (shrugs false-modestly)
 It's pretty serious wild-wolf type
 stuff, so... I dunno... I can try?

They all head into the garage.

8

INT. CANINE CAVE (HOUNDLY GARAGE) - BIT LATER

8

The HQ is decorated with home-made cardboard SIGNS, including a RESEARCH STATION, with old broken RADIOS and DIALS and other BUTTONS embedded in cardboard.

JETT
 (gesturing around proudly)
 Don't worry, Axel. This stuff may
 look scary, but it's just the
 latest super hi-tech doggy
 identification gear. Which I made
 myself.

JILLY
 You can probably tell.

JETT

Yeah, because of how AWESOME it is.

ON: Axel, happily chewing on a <BONE>, only half-paying attention because the bone is occupying him. He glances up, then goes back to chewing. *

AXEL

~~Sorry, not really listening. Kinda into this bone right now.~~ *

Jett presses buttons and pulls levers on his fake console and makes a few "techno" noises to enhance the "NASA-style" experience. Jilly rolls her eyes at how serious/silly the whole thing is. *

Jett plunks a vegetable colander with two straw "antennas" on Axel's head. The dogs grin at the ridiculous sight. Axel eyes it uncertainly. Finally, Jett just whips out an actual TABLET and types something into it.

JETT

According to my doggy identification device--

JILLY

(aside)
The Internet.

JETT

Labrador Retrievers are smart and very friendly. A great family dog. *

ON: <GRAPHIC> of Lab in a happy home full of humans.

JILLY

Labs love being around humans.

AXEL

(shakes his head)
That's not me. I've always lived by myself. Nobody to... uhm... *

Axel regards the image of the happy Lab in a home full of humans getting a tummy rub... and for the first time, his carefree demeanor falters.

AXEL (CONT'D)

Rub my tummy... and stuff.

ZAZA

(helpfully)
Want to play ball? We do that a lot.

AXEL

I don't know any games.

FLO

Slobber ball! It's easy! There's a ball, and you slobber!

Vlad grabs a ball, shakes it around, tosses it and catches it again, then drops it. It's now covered in slobber.

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VLAD

(grins) With practice, you can be this good!

*
*
*

They all trot off to the backyard. Axel turns back, quickly finishes his bone... and heads after the others.

9

EXT. HOUNDLY HOUSE BACK YARD - LATER

9

The dogs play slobber-ball. Axel is really not that engaged as Vlad catches the ball with a fancy midair flip, drops the ball at Jett's feet and struts up to Axel.

VLAD

See that, Axel!? That's how wolves play this in the north.

(thinks)

Or the south. Wherever the wolves are.

AXEL

(hesitantly)

Yeah. Neat.

FLO

Six points! No, nine! Let's play again!

The dogs all start <WAGGING and WOOFING!> and racing around in a ruckus.

ON: Axel trotting off.

ON: Vlad, noticing this.

VLAD

(calling)

Hey, Axel, where are you going?

AXEL

They empty the garbage at the taco place right around now.

VLAD

What about the Wild Boys? And the fur-bristling! You don't want to miss the bristling!

AXEL

Maybe next time!

Jilly joins Vlad, watching Axel head off.

VLAD

I don't think he likes me.

JILLY

It's not you, Vlad. Axel probably hasn't been around others very much. The Squad can be kind of... intense.

*
*

As if on cue, in the BG, the dogs race towards the ball and <CRASH> into each other. They stand around, <DAZED> a moment.

FLO

AGAIN!!

Jett heaves the ball and they all <BARK and CRASH> again!

VLAD

So... he's really a wild boy.
(covering)
I mean, so am I! Totally wild!
(softer)
But he's, like... alone.

JILLY

(grins)
You're really a great big sook, Vlad.

Jilly pats Vlad and he rolls on his back and gets a tummy rub, wagging happily. Then Jilly turns back to Axel with Vlad.

JILLY (CONT'D)

Axel deserves a home. Maybe with a small, quiet family that he can get used to slowly. I don't know any right now looking for a dog.
(concerned)
Especially a wild one.

*

ON: Vlad. His expression brightens as a lightbulb goes off.

He suddenly trots after Axel as Jilly looks on, puzzled.

VLAD
Axel! Wait up! I'll come, too.

AXEL
(hesitates)
I kind of like being alone, Vlad.
It's my thing.

VLAD
Yeah, sure, I mean... Wild Boys,
right? But would you do me a favor,
one wild boy to another?

Axel tilts his head at Vlad, puzzled.

VLAD (CONT'D)
Just... sit. Stay.

Axel sits dutifully and watches, perplexed, as Vlad trots back to Jilly and has a little chat with her. Jilly looks over at Axel, then nods to Vlad and hurries off.

10 **EXT. HOUNDLEY BACKYARD - LATER**

10

ON: Axel still dutifully sitting. He scratches himself, getting fidgety.

ON: The Squad (sans Jilly) are in the yard being very calm. Ketus is asleep on his back, tongue drooping out all the way to the ground. Zaza snaps at flies buzzing around Ketus's nose, even clambering over Ketus to get at them. Ketus doesn't wake up. Vlad practices bristling and un-bristling his fur. *

Flo suddenly LEAPS UP, excited. They're coming! *

Clara, holding Amelia's hand, comes into the backyard, following Jilly.

CLARA
Are you excited, Amelia? *

Amelia looks shyly uncertain, tucked in close beside her mom.

CLARA (CONT'D)
There's a new dog the Squad wants
you to meet.

JILLY
(to Amelia)
His name is Axel.

Amelia steps out from behind Clara, and locks her gaze with Axel - his eyes widen.

Like a romantic melodrama, we PUSH IN SLOWLY on Amelia's hopeful face. PUSH IN SLOWLY on Axel's nervous face. PUSH IN SLOWLY on Axel's tail. It gives one little tentative wag.

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*

But... Amelia is still uncertain... and so is Axel!

ON: The Squad, looking back and forth between the two like they're watching a tennis match. It's soooooo dramatic!!

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*

ON: Vlad. He dashes OS, then returns with Hedgie. He trots over and drops Hedgie at Amelia's feet.

*

Amelia picks up the toy and slowly... walks over to Axel with it.

ON: Axel's ears perks up. Another little wag.

Amelia <SQUEAKS> the toy. More Axel wags. Amelia slooooooowly hands him the toy and Axel takes it in his mouth and gives it a single squeaky chew. Amelia smiles.

AMELIA

Good boy.

Amelia pats Axel who wags gratefully, then rolls over on his back. Amelia rubs his belly.

ON: The other dogs, watching in amazement.

ZAZA

Wow. A total tummy rub.

KETUS

Never saw Amelia do that before.

Clara turns to Jilly and Jett.

CLARA

I wonder... if it's OK with Amelia... if Axel might want to come live with us?

Amelia nods at her mom, delighted.

AMELIA

~~I love Axel!~~

*
*

ALL EYES turn to Axel. BIG DRAMATIC PAUSE. He sits up, smiles and wags.

JILLY

That's dog language for 'yes'!

Amelia and Axel beam at each other and Amelia hugs him. Jilly does a little delighted dance.

JILLY (CONT'D)

Ohhh, this is so PERFECT!

VLAD

I'm so happy, I could howl!

JETT

Let 'er rip, Wild Boy!

VLAD

AWOOOOOOOOO!

ON: Amelia looks momentarily taken aback by the howl, then Axel gives her a big face lick, sending Amelia into paroxysms of delighted <GIGGLES>.

THE END.