

# A DOG'S TALE

By Jon Boustead

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**SYNOPSIS:** When bouncy and bright-eyed pup, Charlie, is entered into a dog contest, his owner has high hopes for success. But Charlie is not like other pups and when he throws the competition into chaos, he is abandoned and left to fend for himself. Taken in by a pack of strays, Charlie learns what it means to be different and to accept yourself for who you are. A one-act whirling canine adventure packed full with storytelling, multi-roles and lots of scope for physical theatre.

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

*(6-15 females, 3-4 males, 9-21 either, extras)*

CHARLIE (f) ..... (89 lines)  
 SPOTS (m) ..... (20 lines)

### ENSEMBLE CAST:

WINNIE (f) ..... (21 lines)  
 MOLLY (f) ..... (19 lines)  
 MAX (m) ..... Charlie's first owner. Later, the  
 owner of Sophie. (25 lines)  
 JUDGE 1 (m/f) ..... (2 lines)  
 JUDGE 2 (m/f) ..... (18 lines)  
 JUDGE 3 (m/f) ..... (11 lines)  
 GWYNETH (f) ..... Owner and handler of Honey  
 Pot. (2 lines)  
 HONEY POT (f) ..... Pedigree dog. *(Non-Speaking)*  
 ARCHIBALD APOLLO  
 ANDROPHELIS THE THIRD (m) ..... Owner and handler of  
 Archibald the Fourth (5 lines)  
 ARCHIBALD APOLLO  
 ANDROPHELIS THE FOURTH (m) ..... Pedigree dog. *(Non-Speaking)*  
 BUTCH (m/f) ..... Owner and handler of Princess.  
 (5 lines)  
 PRINCESS (f) ..... A pug. *(Non-Speaking)*  
 DIAMONTE (f) ..... Pedigree dog. (10 lines)

REGINA (f) .....	Pedigree dog. (9 lines)
PENELOPE (f).....	Pedigree dog. (11 lines)
SNARL (m/f).....	Also known as MIDGE and CUDDLES. (38 lines)
TUBS (m/f).....	(16 lines)
LUGS (m/f).....	(18 lines)
TWITCH (m/f).....	(19 lines)
FARMER (m/f).....	(4 lines)
OWNER 1 (f).....	(3 lines)
OWNER 2 (m/f).....	(2 lines)
OWNER 3 (m/f).....	(2 lines)
OWNER 4 (m/f).....	(1 line)
CHILD (f) .....	(5 lines)
KATIE (f).....	(3 lines)
LEAH (f).....	(8 lines)
ELOISE (f).....	(3 lines)
SOPHIE (f).....	Max's new dog. (11 lines)

**MEMORIES:** An ensemble. They should be played by any available actors who are not assigned a character at that given moment. When the Memories' lines are unallocated, it is suggested that they be spoken in sync. Male or female.

MEMORY 1.....	(8 lines)
MEMORY 2.....	(8 lines)
MEMORY 3.....	(5 lines)
MEMORY 4.....	(5 lines)
MEMORY 5.....	(3 lines)
MEMORY 6.....	(3 lines)
MEMORY 7.....	(2 lines)
MEMORY 8.....	(2 lines)
MEMORY 9.....	(1 lines)

**DURATION:** 55 minutes

**SET SUGGESTIONS**

This can be performed on a blank stage with minimal set. The ensemble can set the scene with their physicality or a series of staging blocks could be used to assist with levels.

**PROPS LIST****SCENE 1**

- Rolled-up newspapers (Memories)

**SCENE 2**

- Trophy with a cash prize inside
- Paperwork for registration.

**SCENE 3**

- Squeaky ball (Max)

**SCENE 4**

- Ribbons (Eloise)
- Scarf (Katie)
- Lipstick (Leah)

**SCENE 5**

- Rat puppets\* (Memories)

*\*Alternatively, they could be represented through sound effects.*

**SCENE 6**

- Bowl of food and a towel (Owner 3 and Owner 4)
- Made in Toppleton 2<sup>nd</sup> Place* rosette (Sophie)

**PRODUCTION NOTE**

*At the start of SCENE 2, the actors playing MOLLY and WINNIE can become part of the MEMORIES, removing any costume pieces that suggest they are dogs.*

**PREMIERE PRODUCTION**

*A Dog's Tale* had its world premiere by members of the Chichester Festival Youth Theatre as part of their Saturday Shorts Program at the Minerva Theatre, 2014.

***DEDICATION***

To my ever-supportive wife, Briony, who never ceases to amaze me with her kind spirit, and to Paul Birch, inspirer, encourager, and genius.

## SCENE 1

**AT START:** SPOTS, WINNIE, MOLLY and CHARLIE are on stage. All are asleep except SPOTS, who is awake and whimpering. The MEMORIES enter, some of them are dogs sniffing their way around the stage, and others are owners that SPOTS has lived with in the past. They surround SPOTS and speak his thoughts.

**ALL MEMORIES:** (*Echoing and repeating each other.*) Spots. Oh, spots?

**MEMORY 1:** He's crying again.

**MEMORY 2:** 'Course he is. Always crying, moaning.

**MEMORY 3:** Wimp.

*SPOTS continues to cry.*

**MEMORY 4:** Shh... stop it. You'll wake them. You'll wake the owners.

**MEMORY 5:** And the mutts.

**MEMORY 6:** They won't like that.

**WINNIE:** (*Groaning, half asleep.*) Shut up.

**ALL MEMORIES:** Stupid dog, shut up, Spots!

**SPOTS:** I... I can't help it. I don't like it.

**MEMORY 7:** If you don't like it, leave. You don't have to stay.

**MEMORY 8:** Yeah, why's he here anyway? I thought they were getting rid of him.

**MEMORY 9:** Me too. They think he's a pest.

**ALL MEMORIES:** (*Echoing.*) Pest. They think he's a pest.

**MEMORY 2:** Ha-ha. A pest and a wimp.

**MEMORY 3:** (*Echoing.*) A pest and a wimp. Ha-ha.

**MEMORY 4:** A waste of time and space, they said.

**MEMORY 5:** And no one wants a mutt like that.

**MEMORY 6:** Go and cry outside. Go on.

**ALL MEMORIES:** OUT. (*Chanting.*) Out. Out. Out. Out.

*MEMORIES chase SPOTS, getting in his way, intimidating him and causing him to trip.*

**SPOTS:** (*Over the chant.*) Sorry, yes of course... sorry. I'll just...

*SPOTS is chased outside. MEMORIES laugh.*

**ALL MEMORIES:** And stay out!

*MEMORIES split away as WINNIE, MOLLY and CHARLIE start to wake. We hear a crack of lightning. SPOTS howls.*

**WINNIE:** Not again. That's three nights running.

**MOLLY:** He's scared.

*Lightning strikes. WINNIE, MOLLY, and CHARLIE cower. SPOTS howls again.*

**WINNIE:** Well he shouldn't sit outside in it, should he? Stupid dog.

**CHARLIE:** He's not stupid. He's just getting used to the place. That's all. *(Crosses to meet with SPOTS outside.)* What a beautiful evening to be howling outside said nobody ever. Do you like lightning?

**SPOTS:** I didn't want to wake anyone.

**CHARLIE:** I see. Well, we do have neighbors. And they are more than likely to have ears. Mrs. Byron might be OK. She's old and deaf, but if you don't stop then someone is bound to come knocking.

*Pause.*

**CHARLIE:** It won't always be like this you know?

**SPOTS:** I can still hear them. Had to drown them out. You wouldn't understand.

**CHARLIE:** Err, excuse me? I wouldn't understand. Spots, you do know where you are, right?

*Beat.*

**CHARLIE:** Come on, I want to show you something.

*SPOTS follows CHARLIE back inside.*

**WINNIE:** (*Noticing CHARLIE and SPOTS.*) Ah. Figured it out did you. Lightning's actually much louder when you're outside in it.

**MOLLY:** Shut up, Winnie. Go back to sleep.

**WINNIE:** Well I would, but somebody woke me up howling. . Someone thought it would be a good idea to—

*CHARLIE growls at WINNIE to silence her. He begins to tell a story, which is acted out by the MEMORIES. They walk on stage, and take up their positions with big smiles. They each have a rolled-up newspaper under their arm.*

**CHARLIE:** There are some things we dogs, all love to hear. Things like.

**ALL MEMORIES:** (*Whistling, as you would whistle when calling a dog.*) Walkies. (*Whistle their way around the stage, miming as though walking a dog. They wave as they pass one another, and find new positions on stage. Clicking, as you would to a dog.*) Dindin. (*Mime putting out a dog bowl.*) GOOD BOYYYYY! Who's a good doggie? Yes you are, yes you are! (*Mime petting and smiling at their dogs. Then they unroll their newspapers and begin to read.*)

**CHARLIE:** And then there are some things we really don't like to hear.

*MEMORIES become aggressive. In sync they look aside from their newspaper.*

**ALL MEMORIES:** (*Slowly and menacingly.*) What have you done?

**MEMORY 1:** What's this? Naughty! Get off that you stupid girl!

**MEMORY 2:** Bad boy! Where's my shoe? Where've you put it?

**MEMORY 3:** Not in the house! No! NO!

**MEMORY 4:** No chewing!

**MEMORY 5:** No barking!

**MEMORY 6:** No scratching!

**MEMORY 7:** No whining!

**MEMORY 8:** No biting! Ow! (*Screams.*)

*MEMORIES roll up their newspapers.*

**ALL MEMORIES:** *(Gesturing with their rolled-up newspapers, as though hitting the dog.)* No! Bad dog. Naughty. OUT! OUT! OUT!

*CHARLIE, WINNIE, SPOT and MOLLY all cower. MEMORIES regroup center stage, behind CHARLIE.*

**CHARLIE:** Everyone's scared of something. Me? I don't like—

**ALL MEMORIES:** Fetch.

*MEMORIES kneel down, and pant like expectant dogs, in sync.*

**CHARLIE:** That one makes me nervous. Makes me twitch. Itch. Even now.

**MOLLY:** And it's not like he can say—

**ALL MEMORIES:** Excuse me, please don't. It makes be nervous.

**CHARLIE:** Because it would come out as—

**ALL MEMORIES:** Woof, woof, woof, bark, woof...

*MEMORIES stand, smiling. They look down as though talking to a dog.*

**ALL MEMORIES:** Fetch. Yes. Woof! *(Short pause, then with a sharp shout.)* Fetch!

*MEMORIES split away to the edges of the stage.*

**CHARLIE:** *(Sigh.)* I hate it. That, and chicken and liver pie.

**SPOTS:** What? I LOVE chicken and liver pie! Juicy, meaty, tasty, yummy—

**CHARLIE:** *(Interrupting.)* Stop. So did I, but not anymore. It all started at a dog show.

**SCENE 2**

**AT START:** *MEMORIES* set the scene for the Annual Dog Show. *MEMORIES* should be paired up so that one person plays a dog handler, and the other a Pedigree dog. *JUDGES 1, 2 and 3* enter, as do *GWYNETH, ARCHIBALD APOLLO ANDROPHELIS THE THIRD,* and *BUTCH,* along with their Pedigree dogs: *HONEY POT* (Gwyneth), *ARCHIBALD APOLLO ANDROPHELIS THE FOURTH* (Archibald), and *PRINCESS* (Butch). Together they all form a group image with the *JUDGES* at center. *SPOTS* watches the story with *CHARLIE,* occasionally participating in the action. If desired, the actors playing *MOLLY* and *WINNIE* can become part of the *MEMORIES,* removing any costume pieces that suggest they are dogs.

**ALL MEMORIES:** MADE IN TOPPLETON!

**JUDGE 1:** The most exciting and exclusive event in Toppleton town.

**JUDGE 2:** And what a corker of an event we have for you this year!  
Let's meet some of this year's spiffing contest-aroonies!

*JUDGE 2 lets out an over-the-top snort of laughter as he goes to meet ARCHIBALD, who has a bit of cold.*

**JUDGE 2:** Afternoon, sir.

**ARCHIBALD:** Afternoon.

**JUDGE 2:** Archibald, is it?

**ARCHIBALD:** Nearly. Archibald Apollo Androphelis the Third to be precise.

**JUDGE 2:** Ah. Very good. (*Indicating the dog.*) And this is?

**ARCHIBALD:** This is Archibald Apollo Androphelis the Fourth. Or Archie-Warchie-Woozeekins for short.

**JUDGE 2:** Lovely to meet you (*Awkwardly.*) Archie-Warchie-Woozeekins.

*ARCHIBALD APOLLO ANDROPHELIS THE THIRD looks at JUDGE 2 with disgust and a "hmph." The next short exchange should be rhythmic.*

**JUDGE 2:** So, sir, how do you do?

**ARCHIBALD:** I'm sniffly but otherwise well, thank you.

**GWYNETH:** (*Interrupting the interview.*) Mine's come first four years in a row.

**JUDGE 2:** Records can be broken.

**GWYNETH:** Pah! Mine won't. My little Honey Pot is a beautiful dog.

**BUTCH:** I've seen nicer stuff in the bowl of my bog!

*The rhythmic exchange stops as JUDGE 3 approaches BUTCH.*

**JUDGE 3:** First time?

**BUTCH:** Yep.

**JUDGE 3:** Name?

**BUTCH:** Butch.

**JUDGE 3:** I'm sorry?

*Short pause.*

**BUTCH:** BUTCH.

**JUDGE 3:** I see. (*Indicating the dog.*) And this is?

**BUTCH:** Princess. Princess the Pug.

*PRINCESS sneezes a loud and snotty snort, catching JUDGE 3's hand. Pedigree dogs watch and laugh.*

**JUDGE 3:** (*Wiping her hand.*) Lovely. Nice to meet you, Princess.

*The rhythmic exchange begins again.*

**JUDGE 2:** Now, we've cut back just a tad, whilst making ends meet, So, I'm afraid, if you lose, you won't get a treat.

**OWNERS:** Lose? Pah! The idea is absurd.

**ARCHIBALD:** What about the prizes for second and third?

**JUDGE 2:** There is no prize for second-rate pups. We just can't afford more chew toys and cups.

*A short-lived uproar. JUDGE 3 exits returning with a trophy and cash prize.*

**JUDGE 3:** LISTEN! For the winner, a whopping five grand!

**JUDGE 2:** We blew the budget!

**JUDGE 3:** First prize. Tax free. Cash in hand.

**JUDGE 2:** That, and a nice trophy to take it home in.

*The trophy and cash are passed around by the OWNERS who are beginning to act like dogs, sniffing and dribbling over the prize.*

**ALL OWNERS:** *(Gawping at the cash.)* Ooooooh!

**JUDGES:** OK?

**ALL OWNERS:** *(Licking their lips.)* OK.

*JUDGES register the rest of the contestants as DIAMONTE, REGINA and PENELOPE come forward.*

**DIAMONTE:** I've just been for my weekly grooming. Lashes curled, nails trimmed. Totes the full works. Diamonte, nice to meet you.

**PENELOPE:** Penelope.

**DIAMONTE:** Oooh, Penelope, nice. Penny.

**PENELOPE:** No. Penelope. *(Indicating REGINA.)* This is Regina.

**REGINA:** Diamonte?

**DIAMONTE:** *(Smiling proudly.)* Mmm hmm.

**REGINA:** Oh dear. K9 Cuties, was it? Where you got your groom?

**DIAMONTE:** That's right.

**REGINA:** You poor thing.

**DIAMONTE:** What?

**PENELOPE:** It's like the butchers or lams of the grooming industry.

**REGINA:** Ergh, I can't abide lams. If you ever catch me eating lams, put me down.

**PENELOPE:** I won't eat anything from a tin.

**REGINA:** Nor me. Or, if I must, it should be... no, forget it, I'd rather be tied to a post and left to starve. By the way, have you seen the pug?

**PENELOPE:** No, where? Ergh, I can't abide pugs.

**DIAMONTE:** Really? Pug is so in right now.

**PENELOPE:** Ergh, they look like the back end of an old boot.

**REGINA and PENELOPE:** A PUGG BOOT.

*REGINA and PENELOPE laugh and DIAMONTE tries to join in. They stifle her with a look. JUDGES finish registering the contestants.*

**SPOTS:** *(To CHARLIE.)* Those dogs are horrible.

**CHARLIE:** You're telling me.

**JUDGE 2:** Right. Let's make a start. Positions!

*OWNERS prepare their dogs, taking a position near the back of the stage.*

**JUDGE 2:** Ah, we appear to be missing one. Do we have a Max and a—

**MAX:** *(Offstage.)* CHARLIE!

**CHARLIE:** *(To SPOTS.)* Oh, that's me!

*CHARLIE bounds to center stage. MAX soon follows. CHARLIE runs around the stage. He briefly sniffs PENELOPE before scurrying away.*

**PENELOPE:** Ergh. Get away from me, vermin.

**DIAMONTE:** OMG, somebody pass him a Dentastix.

*Pause. PENELOPE and REGINA look at DIAMONTE in disgust.*

**REGINA:** OMG? Dentastix? Really?

**DIAMONTE:** Er... yeah.

**REGINA:** You should be on one of those adverts. *(To PENELOPE.)* If you could give just three pounds a month.

*REGINA and PENELOPE laugh.*

**DIAMONTE:** I don't get it.

**REGINA:** Never mind.

**PENELOPE:** *(Mock comforting.)* There, there.

**MAX:** Charlie! Come HERE!

*CHARLIE playfully runs up to MAX, who grabs him by the scruff of the neck.*

**MAX:** BAD DOG! (*To JUDGE 2.*) Sorry we're late.

**JUDGE 2:** You must be Max.

**MAX:** That's right, and this is Charlie.

**JUDGE 3:** Hi Charlie.

**CHARLIE:** I love you!

*CHARLIE jumps up at JUDGE 3, playfully.*

**PENELOPE:** Oh please!

**REGINA:** Hussy.

**DIAMOND:** L.O.L. Totes look at those ears. No wonder he keeps walking in circles.

*MAX gets CHARLIE ready.*

**MAX:** Now, listen here, you stupid dog. Don't you spoil this for me, OK?

**CHARLIE:** I love you! Woof!

**JUDGE 2:** Ready?

*ALL DOGS bark in sync. CHARLIE offers a couple of barks afterwards. ALL OWNERS look at MAX. ALL DOGS look at CHARLIE.*

**JUDGE 2:** And begin.

*ALL DOGS and OWNERS take up a new position on stage, so that the space is equally balanced in their pairs.*

**JUDGES:** Heel.

*ALL DOGS heel, except CHARLIE, and walk with their owners. SPOTS runs alongside another dog, as though taking part in the competition.*

**MAX:** Charlie, heel. Heel, boy. Come on. Charlie!

*They stop.*

**JUDGES:** SIT.

*The dogs sit, including SPOTS. All except CHARLIE.*

**MAX:** Sit, Charlie. Sit. Sit. Sit!

*CHARLIE barks and does a spin. SPOTS giggles and MAX eventually pushes CHARLIE to the floor, but he lies down, instead of sitting.*

**JUDGES:** Roll over.

*The dogs, except CHARLIE, roll over. SPOTS, again, joins in. CHARLIE ends up on his back waiting for a tummy rub.*

**JUDGES:** Jump.

*The dogs and SPOTS jump again, except for CHARLIE. MAX is getting increasingly frustrated. The owners and available MEMORIES clap and mutter things like "Good dog," "Well done," etc. MEMORIES then set up an obstacle course, using their bodies, for the dogs to pass through and jump over.*

**JUDGES:** The obstacle course!

*All except CHARLIE execute the tasks with perfect accuracy. When CHARLIE reaches the final obstacle, he knocks it over.*

**MEMORY 1:** That stupid bloomin' dog. I know what I'd do.

**MEMORY 2:** Put him down.

*Pause.*

**MEMORY 1:** Or just not enter him for these competitions.

**MEMORY 2:** Oh, right. Yes, of course.

**JUDGE 2:** Never mind Max. Maybe young Charlie will manage to redeem himself.

**JUDGE 1:** *(Muttering.)* I doubt it.

**JUDGE 3:** Ladies and gentlemen, gorgeous pedigrees, it's time for the Dog Walk.

*OWNERS and MEMORIES position themselves like a crowd at a fashion show. The dogs line up, ready. Music begins – a tune in public domain is great. Each dog struts their stuff, finishing with a pose. CHARLIE is last, and he starts sniffing around the dogs who are posing, knocking them off balance. The crowd starts to mutter in frustration. CHARLIE then sniffs the floor and finds a spot he likes.*

**MAX:** Good boy, Charlie. Strike a pose.

*CHARLIE smiles and looks at SPOTS with a wink.*

**SPOTS:** Oh no. You're not?

**CHARLIE:** Oh yes I am! ...To pee, or not to pee.

*Crowd gasps. CHARLIE cocks his leg and mimes peeing on the floor.*

**MAX:** Charlie!

**REGINA and PENELOPE:** *(Together.)* Ewwwww!

**DIAMONTE:** Totes amazeballs. L.M.A.O.

*ALL JUDGES storm over, outraged.*

**JUDGE 3:** How dare you!

**ALL JUDGES:** BAD DOG!

**MAX:** I am so, so, sorry. He's not normally like this, he's usually really very good, I think he's nervous. Just nervous.

**JUDGE 3:** Nervous? He can't control himself.

*CHARLIE sniffs JUDGE 3's shoes.*

**MAX:** I think he likes you.

**CHARLIE:** *(To SPOTS with a wink.)* Oh no I don't! To pee or not to pee!

*CHARLIE cocks his leg up and mimes peeing on JUDGE 3 who screams and faints, falling into JUDGES 1 and 2. The crowd gathers around her, before turning on MAX and CHARLIE.*

**JUDGE 2:** Out, get out!

**MAX:** But—

**ALL:** (*Except CHARLIE, MAX and SPOTS.*) Now!

*MEMORIES turn their back on MAX before exiting. MAX leaves in frustration and SPOTS comes to CHARLIE.*

**CHARLIE:** Turns out, I wasn't contest material.

**SPOTS:** But what happened next? What's that got to do with you hating fetch?

*Pause. Lights fade.*

### SCENE 3

**AT START:** *MEMORIES set up a path, as though becoming lamp posts, SPOTS runs to the side to watch, and MAX enters with CHARLIE on an invisible lead. They are now on a walk.*

**MAX:** Stupid, dumb dog. You blew it. Completely blew it. What was I thinking, bringing you here? Look at you. You're all over the place.

*CHARLIE is walking around quite happily, occasionally steering to one side.*

**CHARLIE:** He took me to a place I'd never been before. Lots of others had though. Other dogs. I could smell them.

*MEMORIES group together on stage in order to mime CHARLIE's movements in sync. When they speak, they are telling us what CHARLIE can see, hear, smell, etc.*

**MEMORY 1:** (*Sniffing and panting with excitement.*) Big dog, Alsatian. Old and tired.

**MEMORY 2:** Young dalmation. Excited and quick.

*MEMORIES split up and sniff around their own places on stage. Short pause.*

**ALL MEMORIES:** *Very territorial. (Stop. Look out.) Squirrel!*

*They freeze. They sniff. They go to eat grass.*

**MAX:** *Come on, Charlie.*

*MAX tugs on the lead and the MEMORIES react with a yelp. CHARLIE is choking but still pulling forward.*

**MEMORIES:** *Choking. Choking. (Cough.) Grass!*

*CHARLIE sniffs the grass and the MEMORIES react in the same way.*

**MAX:** *Forget it.*

*MAX lets him off his lead, and sits. CHARLIE continues sniffing around, and the MEMORIES split away. MAX pulls a squeaky ball from his pocket. He squeaks it. The MEMORIES freeze, and turn, in sync with CHARLIE.*

**ALL MEMORIES:** *Ball?*

*CHARLIE and MEMORIES cock their heads to one side. MAX throws the ball in the air and catches it. CHARLIE and MEMORIES follow it with their heads, whilst remaining crouched in the same place. They take a step towards MAX.*

**ALL MEMORIES:** *(In sync, raising and lowering their heads as MAX throws and catches.) Is he? Will he? Throw it! BALL! Is he? Will he? Throw it! BALL!*

*MEMORIES continue to repeat "Is he?" "Will he?" "Throw it!" "Ball!" quietly over MAX's next line.*

**MAX:** I knew you were a mistake. Should have got rid of you when I had the chance.

*MAX examines the ball. As he walks with it, CHARLIE follows, with the MEMORIES behind him.*

**ALL MEMORIES:** *(Whispering amongst themselves, echoing and repeating.)* Is he gonna throw it. Oh boy he's gonna throw it. I think he's gonna throw it... *(Simultaneously.)* Ball. Fetch! Play!

*MEMORIES and CHARLIE bark once. MAX taunts CHARLIE by pretending to throw it. CHARLIE and the MEMORIES take a couple of quick steps in the direction which they thought the ball went, before returning to MAX.*

**MAX:** Dumb dog.

**MEMORIES:** Just throw it! Please!

*MEMORIES and CHARLIE bark twice.*

**MAX:** Come on.

*They continue on their route. MEMORIES, through physical theatre, become the description of the journey—creating things to climb, pass through, jump over, etc.*

**CHARLIE:** We took a different turn. I kept my eye on the ball. Always, always keep your eye on the ball. There's something just so mesmerizing about a ball, don't you think? The way it looks, the shape of it, the feel of it. The joy when you catch it. The thrill of chasing it. The— *(Interrupting himself.)* Sorry I'm getting off track. And... we did come off track. We twisted, turned, jumped and ran. And then we climbed. We climbed and we climbed and we climbed, until...

*MAX takes a deep breath. He's looking out over a dumping ground.*

**MAX:** What do you think, boy? Fetch?

*MEMORIES anticipate the throw with excitement, echoing whispers of "Fetch," "He's gonna throw it," etc.*

**MAX:** Three... two... one...

*CHARLIE and MEMORIES breathe in and freeze as they wait.*

**MAX:** Fetch!

*The ball is thrown, lifted and manipulated by the MEMORIES as CHARLIE follows it. MAX exits.*

**MEMORIES:** Up, up, over, up. Down, bounce, round, up. Squeeze, bounce, up, down, down, down, down, DROP!

*The ball ends up center stage. CHARLIE and MEMORIES group up behind it. MEMORIES make a heartbeat sound effect, which gets faster as they look at the ball.*

**CHARLIE:** He's gone. I can see it. He's gone. I can see it. It's there.

*CHARLIE barks once. He's excited but nervous, unsure of what to do. MEMORIES lean towards him.*

**MEMORIES:** *(In time with the heartbeat.)* Fetch... fetch... fetch...

*The heartbeat builds as the chanting of "Fetch" gets louder and faster. Pause.*

**CHARLIE:** BALL!

*CHARLIE jumps. If possible, MEMORIES lift and carry CHARLIE into the dumping ground. Otherwise, CHARLIE thrashes his way to the dumping ground. MEMORIES then become a pile of rubbish, in which CHARLIE gets buried.*

**ALL MEMORIES:** Crash!

**SPOTS:** *(Gasp.)* Are you dead?

**CHARLIE:** *(Buried in the dump, so his voice is muffled.)* Of course I'm not dead. I'm telling the story!

*SNARL, TUBS, LUGS and TWITCH (STRAYS) enter. They are sniffing around menacingly.*

**TWITCH:** You... you heard that right? You heard it, yeah? Lugs?

**LUGS:** Of course I heard it. Ears like this, I hear everything.

**TWITCH:** But what-what-what was it?

**TUBS:** *(Finishing some scraps with a belch.)* Can I eat it?

*Short pause. They look at TUBS.*

**TUBS:** What? I'm hungry.

*From the pile of rubbish, CHARLIE groans. STRAYS all look in his direction. They circle the stage, and approach the pile.*

**LUGS:** What is it?

**TUBS:** Don't touch it.

**TWITCH:** You scared?

**TUBS:** No. I'm hungry.

*Silence. TWITCH is watching the pile. SNARL jumps up behind TWITCH.*

**SNARL:** Boo!

*TWITCH screams and STRAYS laugh. CHARLIE groans which makes TWITCH jump even more. They keep a safe distance from the pile.*

**SNARL:** Go on, Lugs.

**LUGS:** Why me?

**SNARL:** 'Cause I said so, that's why!

*Reluctantly, LUGS approaches the pile. As he gets closer, the rest of the STRAYS watch.*

**LUGS:** Hello?

**CHARLIE:** Hello!

*ALL STRAYS jump back, and cower their way into a huddle. SNARL rounds them up and they go from cowering to getting ready to pounce as a group.*

**CHARLIE:** My head. Ouch. Max? *(Climbing out of the pile with difficulty.)* Ouch, ow! Max?

*STRAYS maintain a low, deep growl in unison.*

**SNARL:** Who's Max?

**CHARLIE:** Er... he's my. Max, he's my... my owner.

**SNARL:** OWNER!?

*STRAYS bark, and split away from the pack, making a circle around CHARLIE. The movement should be fast and slick. The available MEMORIES become the dog owners.*

**TWITCH:** We don't like owners.

**LUGS:** No. Owners smack!

*MEMORIES clap and the STRAYS react with a sharp bark.*

**TUBS:** Owners hit!

*MEMORIES "thump," and STRAYS react with two sharp barks.*

**SNARL:** Owners own.

*MEMORIES mime putting a lead on the STRAYS and tugging. The STRAYS lean back as though being pulled and then throw themselves forward, pulling MEMORIES.*

**SNARL:** And no one owns us.

*STRAYS bark and scare away MEMORIES, who form at the back of the stage. STRAYS laugh and MEMORIES begin to chant.*

**ALL MEMORIES:** Cast offs. Throwaways. Out of here, bad dogs. Cast offs. Throwaways. Out of here, bad dogs.

*MEMORIES repeat the words and SNARL, TUBS, LUGS and TWITCH speak in rhythm over the top of it.*

**SNARL:** We're the ones they leave behind. The ones they throw away.

**TWITCH:** They kick us out and close the door.

**LUGS:** Dump us here and drive away.

**SNARL:** We're the extra one too many. The runts of every litter.

**TUBS:** We're the ones they spit at. The ones that make them bitter.

**SNARL:** We're the accidental mutts. The misfits and mistakes.

**LUGS:** The dogs that no one else would want.

**STRAYS:** The dogs that no one takes.

**TWITCH:** Lurking in the dirt, with other filthy castaways.

**TUBS:** We smell.

**LUGS:** We're dumb.

**TWITCH:** We're ugly.

**STRAYS:** We're the dumping ground strays!

*STRAYS howl and bark as the chanting stops. They advance on CHARLIE.*

**CHARLIE:** Dumping ground? But I'm playing fetch.

*STRAYS stop growling and cock their heads to one side in unison. All except SNARL.*

**STRAYS:** Fetch?

**CHARLIE:** Fetch. Yes. I'm playing fetch. Look.

*CHARLIE shows the ball and STRAYS get excited. They are hypnotized for a moment.*

**TUBS:** Oh boy!

**TWITCH:** Ball!

*STRAYS wag their tails in excitement. MEMORIES and STRAYS run in a circle, as though chasing their tails. SNARL stares down MEMORY 1. MEMORY 1 is motionless.*

**SNARL:** Stop it!

*MEMORIES, STRAYS and CHARLIE stop, itch, then shake their heads and bark once. All in unison.*

**SNARL:** We don't fetch.

**TWITCH:** But Snarl...

**SNARL:** No! (*Taking the ball.*) Give me that.

*CHARLIE tries to go for the ball, but his leg is too sore. SNARL barks at STRAYS, and they cower. MEMORIES split themselves so each is by a STRAY.*

**SNARL:** (*To CHARLIE.*) You need to leave.

*The MEMORY by TWITCH, whispers in his ear.*

**TWITCH:** But, but, we can make it work. Look at him, he's different.

*The MEMORY by TUBS, whispers in his ear.*

**TUBS:** Yeah, he's odd. Look, look at his ears. They're wonky.

*The MEMORY by LUGS, whispers in his ear.*

**LUGS:** Bet they don't slap him in the face every time he shakes. Stupid Lugs.

**CHARLIE:** But I need to get back.

**SNARL:** See. Too good for us. Ha-ha! He's too good for us.

**TWITCH:** Too good? But you've been dumped.

**CHARLIE:** Dumped?

**LUGS:** Dumped. Abandoned. Left to fend for yourself.

**TUBS:** Were you left with any food by any chance?

**CHARLIE:** I've not been dumped or abandoned. I'll prove it. When I can get out of here, I'll find him.

**SNARL:** Still loyal. That's refreshing. I forget what that feels like.

**CHARLIE:** He's my owner.

**SNARL:** You're wasting your energy, mutt. We're all here because of our owners.

**CHARLIE:** Mine's different.

*STRAYS laugh except SNARL. Pause. SNARL growls and exits, taking the ball with him.*

**TUBS:** Don't mind him. He's old.

**LUGS:** Old and cranky.

**CHARLIE:** How old?

**TWITCH:** Pft. Like a hundred and one! He was the first in the dump.

*Lights fade.*

#### SCENE 4

**AT START:** *TWITCH, TUBS, LUGS, CHARLIE, and SPOTS are still on stage. SNARL (now known as MIDGE) enters. MIDGE is younger than we saw in the Dumping Ground. There are several sheep, played by available MEMORIES. MIDGE is watching them excitedly from behind a gate, also made by the MEMORIES.*

**GATE MEMORIES:** Look at them all. Eye them up. Want to chase.  
Want to chase.

*MIDGE moves to look through another part of the gate.*

**GATE MEMORIES:** Look at them all. Eye them up. Want to chase.  
Want to chase.

*MIDGE moves to look through another part of the gate.*

**GATE MEMORIES:** Look at them all. Eye them up. Want to chase. Want to chase.

**FARMER:** (*Entering.*) Ready, lad?

*MIDGE quickly moves to another part of the gate.*

**GATE MEMORIES:** (*Faster.*) Look at them all. Eye them up. Want to chase. Want to chase. Look at them all. Eye them up. Want to chase. Want to chase. Look at them all. Eye them up. Want to chase. Want to chase. Look at them all. Eye them up. Want to chase. Want to CHASE!

**FARMER:** Right, Midge, heel.

*The gate is opened, and the chanting stops. Gasp. Beat. Sudden panting begins and MIDGE runs from the gate, chasing the sheep.*

**GATE MEMORIES:** Chase. Chase. Look at them go. Left, right, dodge, play! Chase. Chase. Look at them go. Left, right, dodge, play! Chase. Chase. Look at them go. Left, right, dodge, PLAY!

*MEMORY 4 (as sheep) freezes in front of MIDGE. Short pause.*

**MEMORY 4:** (*As sheep.*) Baaa?

**MIDGE:** Gotcha!

*MIDGE pounces on the sheep, accidentally killing it. He thinks it's playful and doesn't realize he killed it. MEMORIES freeze.*

**MIDGE:** (*Oblivious.*) Ha-ha! Chase, chase, chase.

*MIDGE backs away, then comes back to the sheep sniffing it.*

**FARMER:** MIDGE!

*MIDGE jumps, as FARMER storms over.*

**ALL MEMORIES:** (*Whispering.*) Bad dog. Bad dog. Bad dog.

**FARMER:** Bad dog!

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