MAFIA DOGS

FADE IN:

EXT. SAWYER'S PUPPY FARM - NIGHT

Moonlight bathes the tranquil countryside and houses in shades of grey.

Passing headlights illuminate a sign near the road:

INSERT - SIGN

SAWYER'S PUPPY MILL. PROUD BREEDER OF CHAMPIONSHIP DOGS. 555-DOGS.

BACK TO SCENE

A car slows down, brakes SQUEALING to a stop.

VINNY (45), a tall thin man, creeps passed the sign. A flashlight lights his way. He trips and nearly falls, the light spins madly. Not the most agile man alive.

INT. SAWYER'S KENNEL - MOMENTS LATER

Vinny enters, shining his light into a cage. An adult SAMOYED stands at the gate, panting. The light passes the second gate with the same result. The third is different.

VINNY
(below breath)
There ya go.

A SAMOYED MOM lays on the straw-covered floor. TANGO, a puppy, lays in a ball next to her. Not much is seen of him.

Vinny opens the gate and gingerly steps inside. He pulls a burlap sack from his jacket pocket.

VINNY
Easy, mommy dog. Easy.

He places his light under his arm. It swings around, illuminating everything but his target.

Vinny plucks Tango from his mother and steps from the cage.

Tango's sleepy eyes open. His lips smack a little. As Vinny closes the gate to the cage, Tango BARKS. A chain reaction starts with the other dogs. Vinny motions for quiet.

VINNY
Shh! Shh! Shhhhhh!

He shoves Tango into the sack as lights appear from outside the kennel.

BREEDER (O.S.)
Is someone out there?

Tango's Mom leaps against the cage gate, horror in her eyes. She BARKS the loudest. Her baby!

Tango climbs halfway out of the sack. He looks at his mother with equal horror; his YELPS are like high-pitched squeaks.

BREEDER (O.S.)
I'm calling the police!

Vinny shoves the puppy back in the sack and runs.

EXT. SAWYER'S KENNEL - CONTINUOUS

Vinny runs from the kennel, ducking a sweeping flashlight. He leaps to his feet and races for the nearby trees.

BREEDER (O.S.)
Stop! Thief! Come back here!

Vinny runs through the trees, holding the sack for dear life. Tango is heard CRYING.

With long legs-a-racing, he runs up to a beat up old car. Flashlights follow him in the distance, the breeder's cries trailing in his wake.

INT. VINNY'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Vinny leaps into the car, tossing the sack on the passenger seat. It yips. He jams the key in the ignition. The engine COUGHS. Vinny tries again, frantically looking around.

VINNY
Come on! Come on!

The engine ROARS to life.

VINNY
Yes! Yes! YES!

He slaps the car into gear and punches the gas. Jerking to life, the car races down the road, swerving across the double yellow, almost out of control.

The burlap sack squirms and Tango sticks his head out. Even in the dim dashboard light, fear and confusion are seen on his face.

Vinny looks at him.

VINNY
You better be worth all this, Puppy...

And he shoves him back in the sack.

FADE OUT

FADE IN:

EXT. NEW YORK HARBOR - DAY

Boats glide lazily across the water on this beautiful day. Cawing sea gulls float across the sky. The Statue of Liberty stands majestically in the harbor.

The tranquility of this scene is broken by distant BARKING. It grows louder as the statue moves away.

A long narrow building rests near the Staten Island shoreline. The barking comes from within this old cinder block structure.

INT. KENNEL - CONTINUOUS

JOE (45) hoses down a chain link cage, one of dozens in the kennel. He’s sloppy and heavyset, running an illegal puppy mill. Dirty water runs past his boots and down a drain.

Different breeds of DOGS fill the cages, BARKING.

DOT, a grey Standard Poodle is tied to the wall on a leash. Her head hangs low. Ashamed. She looks at STELLA, a caged Jack Russell Terrier. Stella looks back with sad eyes.

STELLA
It’s okay, Dot. We all get sick.

Dot lays down, wet and broken. Stella rests a supportive paw against her cage.

STELLA
They’ll bring you to the doctor and you’ll be fine.

The kennel door swings open and two Doberman Pinschers trot in. BELLADONNA leads, a large and fierce Red Doberman, followed by her subordinate, DANTE, a smaller and sleek-looking Black Doberman with shifty eyes.

The two rush Joe, dancing happily around him. He drops the hose to pet them, accidentally spraying Dot.

JOE
Belladonna! Dante! How are my babies?

COSTELLO, a goofy-looking Black Doberman RACES in, BARKING.

He locks eyes with CINDER, a caged Pomeranian. He slips on a floor brush and slides past her, crashing into a stack of canned dog food. It topples with a CRASH, followed by Cinder's high-pitched (and annoying) bark.

JOE
Costello!

Joe hurries to Costello's side as Joe walks in, carrying a plastic dog crate.

VINNY
I got him!

He looks at Dot.

VINNY
What's going on?

Joe helps Costello up as Cinder watches with concern. She smiles when she sees Costello licking his owner.

JOE
Eh, cleaning up Dot's cage.

Belladonna and Dante slink over to Dot. She trembles at their presence.

BELLADONNA
Sick again, Dot?

Dot tries pulling away from the two, but her leash stops her. Belladonna bears her teeth, terrifying the Poodle.

STELLA (O.S.)
Leave her alone.

Belladonna and Dante look at Stella. The Jack Russell stares at them, defiantly. Belladonna nudges Dante who steps over to her cage.

DANTE
Careful, little dog. One night, the masters may leave your cage open by accident.

STELLA
I'm not afraid of you, Dante. You're all bark.

DANTE
I'll show you who's all bark!

DANTE jumps at the cage, BARKING and clawing. Stella BARKS back, showing no fear. Joe and Vinny look at them, startled.

VINNY
Hey! Hey! Get off the cage!

He walks through the kennel, crate in hand. He steps between Dante and Stella, pushing the Doberman back.

VINNY
You should know better than that, Dante. Go on, the two of you. Go.

Belladonna and Dante step back as Vinny puts the crate on a stack of boxes next to Stella's cage.

JOE
We gotta bring her to the vet.

Joe unleashes Dot and puts her in a cage next to Stella's. Closing the door, he catches her tail. She YIPS, pulling herself free. He slides a latch, locking her in.

VINNY
Next week, maybe. We got something more important here.

The two look in the crate, smiling. From the floor, Dante and Belladonna look on. Costello walks up.

COSTELLO
Hey guys. What I miss?

BELLADONNA
Every chance to better yourself.

Costello's face drops. Cinder looks sadly at him.

ANGLE: JOE AND VINNY'S POV OF THE CRATE

The crate sits by the window. A SMALL WHITE BALL of fur lies on a blanket. The ball stirs. Four paws with tiny black pads, and a tail, emerge from the fluff.

Stella leans against her cage, trying to get a look.

White legs stretch. A pair of curled ears are seen, followed by a small dog's head.

Vinny and Joe stare at the crate like expecting parents.

Tango stretches and yawns, mouth opening widely. His tongue stretches out and back.

He turns toward his audience, opening THE BIGGEST AND BLUEST EYES you'd ever see.

VINNY
Awwwwww!

JOE
He's adorable!

Dante and Belladonna exchange doubtful looks at each other.

BELLADONNA
Adorable? That little appetizer?

Costello drools. Belladonna looks at him in contempt.

BELLADONNA
Disgusting.

DANTE
You did say 'appetizer.'

BELLADONNA
Shut up.

She walks off. Costello and Dante follow.

Vinny and Joe stare at Tango. Joe sticks his finger in the crate, smiling as the puppy chews on it.

JOE
He's adorable. Little Sophia's gonna love him.

VINNY
Hey, as long as her father's happy, I'm happy.

Dot and Stella look at each other, shrugging their shoulders, as Tango continues chewing.

VINNY
We should go give him a call, now. Let him know we got the dog.

JOE
You better do it. This little guy ain't letting go.
(baby-talk to Tango)
Who's the tough wittle guy? Who's the tough wittle guy?

Vinny pats him on the shoulder.

VINNY
Enough with the tough wittle guy stuff, okay? Let's make the call.

Joe pulls his finger out and they leave. Tango stands up. His eyes darting around. 'Where'd everybody go?' He pokes the crate door with his paw, smiling.

ANGLE: TANGO'S POV THROUGH THE CRATE

Old paint cans are stacked along the far wall. Rusty old tools hang on the walls, along with faded pictures of dogs.

He sees nothing of interest in his crate until he finds --

-- HIS WAGGING TAIL!

Eyeing it slyly, he leaps at his prey. He chases it like a whirling dervish.

After a dozen spins, his teeth clamp down successfully. He loses balance and flips over with a loud THUD. He lies on his back, feet in the air.

STELLA (O.S.)
Sounds like someone found his tail.

Tango's eyes dart around as his tail slowly slides from his mouth. He leaps to his feet.

ANGLE: TANGO'S POV

Through his crate, he sees Stella looking up at him.

STELLA
Hello there, puppy.

TANGO
Hello...

He looks around the kennel.

TANGO
Where am I? Where's Mom?

STELLA
You're in a kennel. Your mother's not here. She's at her kennel.

TANGO
But why am I not with her?

DOT
Because you were sold.

CINDER
Dot!

DOT
Your mother's a breeder, like us. She has puppies and her puppies are sold... just like ours.

She lowers her head, saddened.

STELLA
(to Tango)
My name's Stella. What's yours?

TANGO
I'm... I'm...

His eyes roll upward, deep in thought.

STELLA
No one named you yet?

TANGO
Why do I need a name?

STELLA
Why? So you can come when someone calls you, of course.

DOT
So, they'll have something to write on the receipt when they sell you.

STELLA
Ignore her.

Dot buries her face in her fur, shutting out the world.

Tango stands on his hind paws, scratching at his crate. He teeters backwards and fall flat on his back. His whole body twists and turns as his fluffy head looks around.

Finally, he uprights himself, facing the back of his crate. He stares straight ahead of him, amazed.

TANGO
Wow... What's that?

STELLA
What's what, Blue Eyes? A bird?

ANGLE: TANGO'S POV

Through a broken window, near his crate, Tango sees the Statue of Liberty, perfectly centered in the pane.

TANGO (O.S.)
A big green lady, in a green robe and holding a big green chew toy.

Stella starts jumping - vertical leaps that would make an Olympic athlete envious. Tango stares at the statue while Stella spends more time in the air than on the ground.

STELLA
That's the Statue... of Liberty...

TANGO
Statue of Liberty? Wow.

Tango's tail happily wags, while Dot looks at Stella, irritated by her rubber ball impersonation.

DOT
Don't you ever tire of doing that?

Stella spins toward her in mid-leap.

STELLA
I'm a Jack Russell... I can do this all day...

Dot covers her eyes with her paws.

TANGO
What's this statue for?

Stella swivels back to Tango.

STELLA
Statue of Liberty...? It represents freedom...

CLOSE UP - CINDER

Cinder follows Stella (O.S.) with her eyes. Her eyes rise and fall with the bouncing dog.

STELLA (O.S.)
To do what you want... To enjoy life.

Tango lies on his belly, staring at the statue.

TANGO
Sounds neat! How do I do that?

DOT
You don't!

Everyone looks at Dot. Stella even stops hopping.

DOT
Liberty isn't for dogs like us.

STELLA
Dot!

DOT
It's true. We're breeders. That's all we do.

Stella turns her attention toward Tango.

STELLA
Ignore Dot. She's just a party-pooper of a poodle.

CINDER
Nice alliteration!

Dot gives Cinder a dirty look. The Pomeranian sticks her tongue out at her.

STELLA
You'll be going to a good home soon, Puppy.

TANGO
What makes you say that?

STELLA
Because they only keep girl dogs here, and you're a boy dog.

Tango looks at her with big surprised eyes.

TANGO
I am? How do you know that?

He looks everywhere but the obvious place.

STIGS (O.S.)
It's called woman's intuition!

Everyone looks to the far end of the kennel.

STIGS, a field mouse, steps from the paint cans. He wears his MULTI-FUNCTION PACK ('MFP'), a red knapsack that bears a striking resemblance to a Swiss Army Knife.

STIGS
And Stella has more of that than a dog four times her size.

STELLA
(smiling)
Hello Stigs. Where's Everette?

STIGS
Why, he's right...

He looks around and sees he's alone.

STIGS
Everette?

Something stirs behind the paint cans.

EVERETTE
Just waiting for my intro...

Stigs SIGHS.

STIGS
Everette, please...?

Stigs and Stella look at each other before he steps to the middle of the kennel, shaking his head in regret.

STIGS
Ladies and gentlemen. Returning to the Old Gravy Kennel from his two week tour --
(muttering)
-- Too weak is right --
(loud)
-- Of the Fresh Kills landfills, heeeere's Everette!

EVERETTE, a second field mouse, strides out from the cans, humming the theme from THE TONIGHT SHOW. He waves his hands around, throwing kisses. He also wears a MFP.

The dogs watch as he strides up to Stigs.

EVERETTE
It's great to be back at Old Gravy! I have to tell you, though, I am a bit confused about something.

After a moment, he gives Stigs a gentle elbow.

STIGS
(reluctant)
Confused about what, Everette?

EVERETTE
Glad you asked, Stigs. I'm confused about the name 'Fresh Kills Landfill.' Have you smelled it? Nothing fresh about it.

Stigs shakes his head in disbelief.

STIGS
Can we get to work now?

EVERETTE
Not done with my monologue yet.

He steps up to Stella.

EVERETTE
Landfill is a funny word, isn't it? Of course, when it starts out, it would be a 'land empty,' wouldn't it?

Stigs turns away, pressing a button on his MFP. A grappling hook and wire fire from it with a soft THWIP. It wraps around high wall shelving. He presses the button again and the wire retracts, pulling him up.

He lands gracefully on the shelves.

EVERETTE
Coming up next, stupid mouse tricks.

Stigs gives him a look as he examines the various jars and cans on the shelf.

STELLA
What are you doing up there, Stigs?

STIGS
Trying to build a battery for my electric snake repeller.

STELLA
Electric snake repeller?

EVERETTE
We need one. Trust me.

Stigs reads labels on the various containers.

STIGS
To create my battery, I'll need an acidic compound to create a charge.

He looks at a bottle of aspirin.

STIGS
Acetylsalicylic acid? Hrumph! I can get more acid out of a lemon.

EVERETTE
A lemon? Maybe we should go find us a Fiat, then?

Stigs turns to Everett, glowering.

STIGS
That was three! You said three jokes and you would help me!

Everette's face drops. Playtime is over.

Stigs points to containers on the floor, near the door. Everette slowly walks to them as Stigs reads more labels.

STIGS
So, who's the new dog?

TANGO
That's me!

STELLA
A new arrival.

STIGS
Well, welcome to the kennel, puppy. I'm Stigs and my friend, Everette...

ANGLE: STIGS' POV OF EVERETTE

Everette sits on a gallon jug and pulls the cork out with a resounding POP.

He sniffs the bottle and immediately falls over, hitting the floor with a comical KLUNK! Standing up, he staggers about, rubbing his nose.

EVERETTE
I found the ammonia!

STIGS
Wonderful.

FOOTSTEPS are heard. Stigs looks through a dirty window.

ANGLE: STIG'S POV OF THE WINDOW

Joe and Vinny's blurry shapes approach the kennel, followed by three blurry dogs.

STIGS
(turning around)
Everette! The humans are coming!
Hide!

Everette presses the button on his MFP. The hook and line shoot out... about a foot. It lands in front of him with a THUD. The mice look at each other.

STIGS
Run!

Everette slips out of the MFP, frantically looking around. He scurries up the boxes toward the crate.

STIGS
The paint cans, Everette! Run for the paint cans!

Everette slips through the bars in Tango's crate and leaps into Tango's thick coat. Tango watches, enjoying the show.

EVERETTE (O.S.)
I hope you're not one of those rodent-hunting dogs.

TANGO
I'm a boy!

EVERETTE (O.S.)
(beat)
I can see that.

The kennel door opens.

Stigs jumps behind a bottle on the shelf, his image distorted like a funhouse mirror.

Joe and Vinny enter, followed by the Dobermans.

JOE
And that's why the new Yankee Stadium was built right next to the old Yankee Stadium.

VINNY
So, it got nothing to do with the disappearance of Joe Collins?

They step up to the crate.

JOE
None whatsoever. Joe Collins retired down in Florida and left no forwarding address.

Joe opens the crate and pulls Tango out.

JOE
Let's take a closer look at you, little fella. Shiny white coat...

He holds him up. Tango looks around, smiling.

JOE
And eyes bluer than Sinatra's.

Tango licks Joe's face.

Everette's hind legs pop out from Tango's fur from his tail area, flailing around.

Stigs' eyes bug out at this.

JOE
Mister Carbone's daughter will definitely love this dog.

VINNY
She better. After all the problems I had getting him.

Joe looks at Vinny, casually lowering Tango to the Dobermans.

JOE
Problems? What kinda problems?

Tango is face-to-face with Belladonna. He's smiling. She's SNARLING!

VINNY (O.S.)
The breeder... didn't want to negotiate. Wanted full price.

JOE (O.S.)
The full price? And...?

VINNY (O.S.)
I didn't have that kinda money on me. And he didn't want to trade.

Tango presses a playful paw against Belladonna's nose.

STELLA
Belladonna, please don't hurt him.

Belladonna glances at Stella and angrily turns back to the puppy. Everette's feet disappear in the pup's fur.

Vinny defends himself to Joe.

VINNY
He questioned our dogs' quality. Said we weren't breeders of good character.

JOE
So, what'd you do?

VINNY
I, er, stole the puppy.

JOE
What!?

Tango playfully bites Belladonna on the nose. She HOWLS.

Joe yanks Tango away from Belladonna's teeth as all the dogs in the kennel BARK and jump around. Pandemonium!

JOE
(screaming)
You stole the puppy?

VINNY
I had no choice!

JOE
We're giving a stolen puppy to our boss' kid?

The BARKING gets LOUDER. DALMATIONS! POINTERS! NEWFOUNDLANDS! And more! All BARKING from their cages.

VINNY
She wanted one of these dogs!

JOE
We're giving a stolen dog to the daughter of New York City's most wanted --

He turns to the BARKING dogs.

JOE
(extremely loud)
-- SHA-A-A-A-A-D-D-U-U-UP!

The kennel goes instantly silent. Joe shoves Tango in the crate, sliding the latch shut with a subtle CLICK.

Tango looks through the front of his crate. Everette pops out of his fur. The two look at each other, smiling.

JOE
The police have been trying to bust him for years. If they hear he owns a pilfered pooch, they will!

Cinder leans against her cage, next to Dante.

CINDER
'Pilfered pooch.' Nice alliteration.

Dante snarls at her. She jumps back.

JOE
We fake the paperwork like we always do. Mister Carbone's girl gets her dog and we're in his good favor. Nothing to worry about.

Belladonna rubs her nose with her paw. She stares furiously at Tango. He smiles back.

COSTELLO
Cute little fella, huh?

Belladonna glares at Costello. He cowers.

BELLADONNA
Wait outside.

COSTELLO
I'll be... I'll be outside.

He slinks off. As he leaves, he and Cinder exchange glances.

Belladonna turns her attention back to Tango.

BELLADONNA
When I get my paws on you --

STELLA
-- He's only a puppy, Belladonna. He doesn't know any better.

BELLADONNA
Stop talking to me, breeder.

STELLA
Breeder? You used to be in these cages too, remember? Until you got too old to have puppies?

Belladonna walks out the kennel door.

BELLADONNA
Dante!

DANTE
Right behind you, boss.

He follows her out.

Vinny pulls shrink wrap off a case of canned food.

VINNY
Mister Carbone will be here soon to look at the dog. We'll talk to him about it.

JOE
'We?' I won't be here when you tell him you got his daughter a hot dog for her birthday.

Vinny snickers.

VINNY
Hot dog? With ketchup or mustard?

Joe closes his eyes and rubs his temples.

JOE
I get these headaches...

He walks past Vinny and leaves.

VINNY
Get the lights when you're done.

Viny finishes with the shrink wrap and leaves, turning the lights off and closing the door. The kennel is quiet.

Stigs steps from behind the bottles. The dogs peer through their cages. Tango leans against the door of his crate.

And Everette sticks his head out from atop Tango's head, smiling and giving the thumb's-up. Everyone smiles back.

EXT. KENNEL - CONTINUOUS

The kennel is behind an old ranch house, near the harbor. The unkept lot around it is muddy and filled with junk. Muted BARKING is heard.

INT. KENNEL - LATER

Stigs stands over a disassembled MFP.

STIGS
Hmmm. The spool that held the monofilament was too tight. Fortunately, it's an easy repair.

He grabs the other MFP and hits a button on it. A Phillips screwdriver POPS out.

STELLA
And fortunately, Everette didn't get hurt.

He looks at her, while applying the screwdriver to the MFP.

STIGS
That goes without saying, Stella. Everette is a dear friend.

From his crate, Tango gazes out the broken window, while Everette pats his nose.

EVERETTE
Looking at the statue, eh?

Tango nods.

EVERETTE
Incredible, that statue. Stood there a hundred years. Never once switched hands with that torch.

TANGO
I want to see it.

EVERETTE
Hmm. I do have a cousin who works the docks there. Maybe I can --

TANGO
-- I wanna go now!

EVERETTE
Follow me. I'll see what I can do.

Everette walks between the crate bars. Tango tries following but bangs his head on the gate. Everette opens it.

Stella sees this.

STELLA
Everette, don't!

Tango sticks his head out and looks around with wide eyes.

EVERETTE
Don't what?

Tango steps from the crate.

STELLA
Back in the crate, young pup!

Tango leans over the stack of boxes he's on, looking at Stella.

TANGO
What? Why?

His front paw slips off the edge. He struggles to regain balance, but falls. He bounces off the boxes like a ball.

Stigs uses the corkscrew on his MFP to wind up the filament on the broken one. He smiles proudly.

STIGS
There. That should do it --

Tango lands on him with a loud CRASH! Everyone looks in horror as Tango lies still on his back, legs pointing in different directions.

Moments pass before the puppy wiggles on his back. His tail wags and he giggles. Stigs crawls out from underneath him. Tango leaps to his feet and licks Stigs.

STIGS
Who let the dog out?

EVERETTE
I guess this would be a bad time to sing Baha Men.

Stigs gives him a dirty look.

STELLA
Stigs, you have to get him back in his crate. Before he gets hurt.

CINDER
Or before the humans come back.

STIGS
You're right. Everette, gather some rope. I'll devise a system of levers and winches --

STELLA
-- Stigs...?

STIGS
I'll use the resources available to fashion a harness to lift --

STELLA
-- The puppy's escaping!

Everette and Stigs spin around as Tango crawls behind the paint cans, knocking them over. Some open up, spilling bright green paint across the floor. The mice jump back, avoiding the puddle.

Tango squeezes through the hole in the wall, and finds himself --

EXT. KENNEL - CONTINUOUS

Tango looks around, bug-eyed.

SEA GULLS fly overhead, CAWING. Overgrown grass dances in the wind. This is so cool! And big!

Tango turns to the water, the wind blowing his white hair back. He does a double-take and stares straight ahead.

ANGLE: TANGO'S POV

The Statue of Liberty is so close he could taste it. And he wants to! He runs to the statue, hopping like a rabbit.

Stigs and Everette run through the hole, searching the grounds frantically.

STIGS
Here, puppy! Here, puppy!
(to Everette)
Which way do we go?

EVERETTE
The water! He's heading toward the statue!

The two run toward the water.

EVERETTE
Come back, boy! Come back!

They disappear in the tall grass.

EXT. SHORELINE - CONTINUOUS

Bouncing along at a happy pace, Tango reaches the water. He skids to a stop at the remains of an old pier, kicking sand and pebbles into the dirty water below him.

He sees the statue in the distance. And turns back to the water. Confused, he leans over until --

STIG (O.S.)
-- No, boy! Don't do that!

Tango jumps back, startled. Spinning around, he sees the mice racing up to him.

STIGS
Keep away from the water, boy. You don't want to go in there.

EVERETTE
The water's very dirty! And you're very clean!

The mice walk calmly over to him.

STIGS
And good boys want to stay clean.

Tango turns back to the water. He looks down.

ANGLE: TANGO'S POV

And sees his broken reflection in the dirty choppy water.

The mice slowly get closer.

STIGS
Why don't you come back with us? We know where the humans keep the chew toys.

EVERETTE
There's a squeaky football that you'll love. Hmm?
(enticingly)
Squeaky. Squeaky.

Tango's ears pick up upon hearing this.

EVERETTE
Squeaky. Squeaky.

Tango's ears pick up a little more. The mice see this. Everette nudges Stigs.

STIGS
Of course! Squeaky. Squeaky.

EVERETTE
Squeaky! Squeaky! You know, you sound like a mouse when you do that.

STIGS
Squeaky! Sque-- I can't believe you.

The mice look at each other; Stigs is upset.

EVERETTE
What? It was just an observation --

Tango looks at the two, confused.

STIGS
-- That was no observation. You planned that little joke.

EVERETTE
I didn't plan it. Honest.

STIGS
You thought it would be funny.

A butterfly catches Tango's attention. It flies around his head before flying along the shoreline. He chases it while the mice argue like an old married couple.

EVERETTE
It was spontaneous. Looking back, though, I do see the humor.

They look around and realize Tango is gone.

EVERETTE
Rats!

Stigs glares at Everette who raises his hands and walks away.

EVERETTE
Spontaneous... Spontaneous...

EXT. KENNEL - LATER

A limousine pulls up Two muscle-bound goons, RICHIE and ROCKY (both 30) step out, wearing identical suits. Joe and Vinny race from the house, jumping around and GIGGLING like schoolgirls.

JOE
It's him! It's him!

VINNY
I know! I know!

The Dobermans follow.

JIMMY CARBONE (60) slowly emerges from the car. He's a portly man in an expensive white suit and shoes. His orange tan-from-a-can skin and sneer make him look like an angry basketball. He steps toward Joe and Vinny.

VINNY
Mister Carbone. You honor us with your visit.

JOE
Welcome to our humble home. We're very -- don't move!

Carbone freezes. Rage grows on his face as Richie and Rocky step up.

JOE
Not you, Mister Carbone. The dog.

He points to Belladonna, frozen in front of Carbone. Her head hangs low.

JOE
Didn't want her getting hair on your nice suit, is all.
(to Belladonna)
Get over here.

Belladonna reluctantly walks behind Joe, next to Dante.

DANTE
Wow boss, he really ripped you a --

BELLADONNA
-- Shut up.

Carbone's expression softens as he looks around.

CARBONE
You've acquired the dog that my daughter desires for her birthday?

JOE
Yessir, Mister Carbone. The perfect dog.

Vinny and Joe hurry to the kennel door, smiling. Carbone and his henchmen follow.

Costello turns to Dante and Belladonna.

COSTELLO
I thought we were the perfect dogs.

BELLADONNA
You're not even close.

She and Dante walk off, giving Costello dirty looks.

Vinny pulls a ring from his pocket, holding over fifty keys. Finding the right one, he inserts it in the lock.

JOE
Vinny and I visited every breeder in five states to find the perfect Samoyed for Sophia.

VINNY
Championship lineage, Mister Carbone. From a family of winners.

Joe opens the kennel door and gesture to Carbone to enter.

INT. KENNEL - CONTINUOUS

Carbone steps in and looks around. Vinny and Joe joyously follow. Their smiles quickly fade.

The crate is open! Tango's gone! And Carbone's shoes are covered in light green paint! Carbone looks at his shoes and then Vinny and Joe, furious.

EXT. KENNEL - MOMENTS LATER

The back DOOR of the limo SLAMS shut. The car drives off, leaving Vinny and Joe looking terrified.

VINNY
We are so dead.

EXT. SHORELINE - CONTINUOUS

Tango chases the butterfly, laughing, until it disappears into the sky. Unable to follow, Tango looks around and sees the Staten Island Ferry. He races toward it.

INT. KENNEL - CONTINUOUS

Vinny and Joe enter the kennel, green paint on their boots.

VINNY
We had the dog...

JOE
He's gonna murder us...

VINNY
You saw him! We had a dog in here!

Vinny stands in front of the empty crate.

JOE
Sophia's birthday ain't until Saturday. Can we get another dog?

Vinny shakes his head, defeated.

VINNY
There ain't no other one! We gotta find this one!

JOE
How? We ain't no blood hounds.

VINNY
No, but we got the next best thing.

He turns to the Dobermans, waiting by the door.

EXT. KENNEL - MOMENTS LATER

Tango's crate rests on the ground. The Dobermans walk around it, sniffing it. Vinny and Joe watch.

VINNY
You think they can pick up the scent?

JOE
They better.

BELLADONNA pulls the blanket from the crate and whips it around, SNARLING. She shreds it.

VINNY
Alright guys. We're really counting on you guys, okay?

JOE
Bring back that puppy and there's steaks in it for you's, okay? Go get him.

The Dobermans race off behind the kennel.

EXT. SHORELINE - CONTINUOUS

The Dobermans race along the neglected landscape, Belladonna and Dante more graceful than the slower Costello.

BELLADONNA
Hurry! I can smell the little cur, just ahead.

COSTELLO
(winded)
Guys? Can you slow it down a little? Just a little?

BELLADONNA
Hurry up, you fat bag of kibble!

The dogs race past the mice, not even noticing them.

EVERETTE
Oh-oh. This isn't good.

EXT. STATEN ISLAND FERRY TERMINAL - MINUTES LATER

The Dobermans race to the terminal as the ferry pulls away. The FOG HORN BLASTS twice, making the three cringe.

DANTE
That cleaned the wax out. Don't they know dogs got sensitive ears?

COSTELLO
Uh, guys...

BELLADONNA
Forget the noise. Find that dog.

Belladonna and Dante sniff the ground for clues while Costello stares at the departing ferry.

COSTELLO
Belladonna...?

BELLADONNA
Gonna make an example out of him.

DANTE
Well, he couldn't have gotten far.

COSTELLO
Excuse me, guys?

BELLADONNA
What? What do you want?

Costello points straight ahead.

ANGLE: COSTELLO'S POV OF THE FERRY

Tango sits on the stern, looking at the three, tail wagging.

Belladonna HOWLS in frustration.

EXT. HARBOR - LATER

The ferry CHUGS along. Sea gulls float over it like kites. Diving down, they take popcorn from passengers outside the stern. People's laughter is mixed with gulls' CAWING.

Tango enjoys the show from underneath a bench. More popcorn is thrown in the air, and the gulls swarm after it. Some lands in front of Tango. He reaches out for it, only to have a gull swoop in and scoop it up.

Tango looks around, confused.

GLADYS (O.S.)
(whiney)
Now why'd you go and do that for?

Tango looks up.

ANGLE: TANGO'S POV

Two old Sea Gulls, ABNER and GLADYS, sit on a ferry canopy. Abner chews on popcorn.

ABNER
What? I saw popcorn and I took it.

GLADYS
(in Abner's ear)
But the puppy's hu-u-ungry!

ABNER
Don't scream in my ear, woman!
Besides, dogs don't eat popcorn.
(to Tango)
You eat meat! What you really need is a pastrami sandwich from Katz's Deli --

TANGO
-- I wanna go to the statue!

He points to the statue.

ABNER
Listen dog. They don't have good food at the statue. Go to Katz's Deli on East Houston --

GLADYS
-- He wants to go to the statue!

ABNER
I heard him! Your screaming only deafened one of my ears!
(to Tango)
Get yourself a nice sandwich. Some seltzer to wash it down. Then you're ready to see the statue.

Gladys opens her mouth. Abner covers it with his wing.

ABNER
Not a word.
(to Tango)

The boat to Liberty Island is right up the block from where this boat lands. You can't miss it.

She pushes his wing from her face.

GLADYS
Those aren't good directions. He'll get lost.

ABNER
He won't get lost! May God strike me down if my directions are bad --

The air horn BLASTS next to them, shooting both gulls off the ferry. Tango watches them hurl through the sky, vanishing. He shrugs.

EXT. BATTERY PARK FERRY TERMINAL - LATER

The ferry docks. Its passengers exit like mindless cattle.

Tango zig-zags through the crowd. People trip and grab each other to keep from falling, ad-libbing surprise.

MONTAGE

A) Tango races from the terminal, into Battery Park.

B) He gazes at all the tall buildings around him.

C) Tango looks at a six foot tall replica of the Statue of Liberty. He tilts his head at it, confused.

D) Tango chases a squirrel up a tree, laughing.

E) a KID stands at a water fountain, spraying water up in the air. It arcs down and into Tango's waiting mouth.

F) Tango struggles to stand on his hind legs, holding up his right paw. He mimics the small statue until he falls over.

G) A WOMAN (95) on a bench, feeds pigeons. They peck at bread crumbs until Tango races through. The birds scatter.

END MONTAGE

EXT. BATTERY PARK - CONTINUOUS

MICHAEL and CHRISTINA SANTOS (both 30) walk along hand-in-hand, casually dressed. She carries a 'green' shopping bag in her free hand. He raises a hot dog to his mouth.

CHRISTINA
I can't believe we came all the way down here just to buy a hot dog.

MIKE
Hey, Hank Hoffman works down here and he makes the best franks in New York City.

He takes a bite out of his hot dog, covered with 'the works.'

EXT. BATTERY PARK - CONTINUOUS

Tango chases a pigeon into a street. He stops in the middle of a lane as the bird flies away.

MIKE (O.S.)
Besides, whenever I visit Hank, you get to visit the farmers' market --

The BLAST of a truck horn makes them spin around. A truck speeds down the street and at Tango. The DRIVER (40) hits the HORN again. The Santoses see the puppy, frozen in fear.

ANGLE: DRIVER'S POV

Tango cowers in the street, blue eyes luminous with fear. At the last second, he's grabbed by the scruff of the neck and yanked to safety.

MIKE (O.S.)
Got him!

The truck races away, BLASTING its horn.

CHRISTINA (O.S.)
Is he okay?

Mike holds the squirming and frightened puppy in his arms.

CHRISTINA
Look. The poor thing is scared.

MIKE
Nearly getting run over does that.

She rubs Tango's belly and he quickly calms down. The Santoses look around.

CHRISTINA
What's a puppy doing running loose?

MIKE
I don't know. See anybody looking for a dog?

No one pays attention to them.

CHRISTINA
No.

MIKE
He got no collar, but he's too clean to be a stray.

The two look at each other, concerned. Oblivious, Tango nibbles at Christina's finger.

EXT. EAST VILLAGE STREET - LATER

Brownstones fill the tree-lined street. Hipsters ride along on custom-built bicycles. An elderly man walks a pack of Pugs; their collective SNUFFLING is loud.

CHRISTINA (O.S.)
How do you think Baby will take to the puppy?

MIKE (O.S.)
We're gonna find out.

INT. SANTOS'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

An old apartment with hardwood floors and Ikea furniture. The door opens and Tango rushes in, followed by Christina. She holds him on a red leash. His paws scurry on the floor.

CHRISTINA
Baby, we're home!

Mike enters, carrying a shopping bag from PETCO.

MIKE
And we have a surprise for you.

Tango's paws continue sliding as he runs in place. From the back room, four paws LUMBER across the floor.

ANGLE: LOW POV

The paws belong to BABY, an old British Bulldog. A chew toy resembling a rolled newspaper hangs from his mouth. He proudly walks from the bedroom.

BABY
Hey, you're back. I was just enjoying my newspaper and --

He stops in the doorway, leading to the living room --

ANGLE: BABY'S POV

-- and stares at Tango. The puppy tries running to him, but is held back by the leash. His legs are a blur, like a cartoon character's. Too much freakin' energy!

Baby's TOY falls from his mouth, hitting the floor with a loud SQUEAK!

INSERT - DOG TOY

The headline of THE DAILY MUTT reads WORLD'S BEST DOG.

BACK TO SCENE

BABY
What in Sam Hill...?

Tango's paws excitedly scrape the floor as the Bulldog takes a few steps toward him.

BABY
They got a puppy?

TANGO
Hey! Hi there! Hello! Look! Another dog! Wow! Neat!

Baby shakes his head in disbelief as Tango strains against the leash, trying to get closer.

TANGO
Your name's Baby? That's great! They call me Tango. It's because I dance around --

-- his leash still taut, his feet continue to slip-slide across the floor --

TANGO
Neat huh?

Baby stands there in shock.

Christina relaxes the leash as Tango pulls toward the older dog. Mike steps over to Baby and gently nudges him toward Tango. Baby doesn't move.

MIKE
Come on Baby. Say hello.

Tango stands on his hind legs, fighting the leash. Mike gives Baby a supportive back rub.

CHRISTINA
Do you think he's scared?

MIKE
Baby? Afraid? British Bulldogs are afraid of nothing.

Baby loudly WOOFS.

Christina pulls Tango back as Mike jumps back. Baby WOOFS again. He picks up his chew toy and returns to the bedroom.

BABY
A puppy! After all these years of me being their dog, they go and bring home a puppy.

Through the bedroom, he storms into the bathroom and closing the door behind him.

CHRISTINA
I can't believe Baby just did that.

MIKE
I can't believe he went into the bathroom with his newspaper.

CHRISTINA
He gets that from you.

Mike rolls his eyes, smirking.

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Baby lies on the tiled floor between the sink and toilet, with his toy. Mike opens the door and sits down with him.

MIKE
Hey. What was that about? Barking at a little puppy? Tango just wanted to say hello, is all.

Baby looks at Mike with big sad eyes, and lowers his head on his toy. He sighs as Mike pets him.

MIKE
It's not like he's replacing you or anything. We've been family for ten years. A puppy can't break up a family.

He grabs Baby and drags him on his lap, belly up.

MIKE
Ooof. You gotta lose some weight, boy. Maybe we go to the park. Let you run around.

Mike gives him a belly-rub. A very satisfied look spreads on Baby's face as he goes limp.

MIKE
Do you wanna go for a walk? Go play in the park?

Baby looks like he doesn't have a care in the world, until...

ANGLE: BABY'S POV

Still tethered to Christina, Tango enters the bathroom. His scurrying feet sound like tap dancers on the tiles.

Baby tenses up.

EXT. EAST VILLAGE STREET - LATER

Attached to Mike by an old leather leash, Baby trots proudly along the sidewalk, making soft PATTING sounds with each step. Tango walks alongside him, his paws racing.

TANGO
So, this is a dog walk, right?

Baby quickens his pace, distancing himself from Tango. The puppy quickly catches up.

TANGO
So, if one dog is being walked, it's a dog walk. But if two dogs are being walked, is it a 'dogs walk?' Or 'dog walks?'

Baby steps in front of Tango, stopping him.

BABY
Listen kid --

TANGO
-- Tango!

BABY
(sighing)
Listen Tango. You gotta understand something. I don't play.

Baby steps over to a tree, looking at Tango.

TANGO
Don't play? Why not?

BABY
'Cause I'm old. My joints ache. My back hurts. And sometimes I need help getting on the sofa.

Tango prances over to him.

TANGO
But what about chasing birds? Or balls? Mike said he was going to throw a stick for me. I don't know what it means, but it sounds fun.

BABY
It is... for puppies. But I ain't been a puppy for a long time. For me, fun is just lying in the grass.

Tango looks at him, confused, as he walks off.

BABY
You got a lot to learn.

EXT. BATTERY PARK FERRY TERMINAL - NIGHT

Passengers exit the docked ferry. Within minutes, the area is deserted. Belladonna and Dante step out, SNIFFING the air.

BELLADONNA
He was here.

DANTE
You sure? There's a whole lot of smells here.

Costello staggers out, looking nauseous.

DANTE
And here comes one more.

COSTELLO
(woozy)
Oooooh. My stomach. I've never been seasick before.

DANTE
Licking a spilled milk shake off a dirty ferry floor does that, you know.

BELLADONNA
Quiet, both of you.

She sniffs the air, taking slow and graceful steps.

BELLADONNA
He was here, alright... Spread out and start looking.

INT. SANTOS'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Mike and Christina sit on the sofa, watching the news. Baby lies next to Mike's feet. Tango lies next to Christina's.

CHRISTINA
You'll put the posters up on the way to work? What if no one calls?

Tango's ears pick up. He looks at his humans and smiles.

MIKE
I guess we keep him.

She picks up Tango and cradles him.

CHRISTINA
Do you want to stay with me and Mike and Baby, Tango? Do you?

She kisses him on the nose. He licks her face.

CHRISTINA
It's time for you to go to bed, cutey. You look tired.

MIKE
Yeah. I am pretty tired.

She stands and walks away, taking Tango with her.

CHRISTINA
I was talking to Tango.

Mike and Baby look at each other. Baby HUFFS.

INT. SANTOS'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Baby climbs into an old doggy bed as Christina and Mike fluff their pillows. Tango steps up to Baby's bed, carefully stepping over the Bulldog.

BABY
What are you doing?

TANGO
I'm... I'm going to bed.

BABY
Not here you are. This is my bed.

Tango looks at him, confused.

BABY
This is my bed. And this --

He drops a paw on his newspaper.

BABY
-- Is my chew toy. They ain't yours. See that blanket over there?

He points to a blanket on the floor behind Tango.

BABY
That's your bed. That's where you sleep.

Tango looks at it. After a moment, he smiles and trots over to it.

BABY
Good. Now, maybe this pup will leave me alone.

Tango drags the blanket next to Baby's bed. Stepping on it, he spins around three times before settling in, facing the Bulldog. Baby SIGHS as the lights in the room go out.

EXT. BATTERY PARK - MORNING

People in business attire rush to and fro. Unnoticed, the Dobermans climb out from under benches. They stretch, showing signs of aches and pains.

DANTE
Not the most comfortable place I ever slept. What's the plan, boss?

BELLADONNA
Find the puppy. We don't go home without him.

She sniffs the air. Desperate for clues, Costello walks around sniffing the concrete. He looks up at a light post, eyes widening.

COSTELLO
Uh, Belladonna...?

She looks at him from a short distance away, annoyed.

BELLADONNA
Do you see him?

COSTELLO
I think so.

Costello stares at the light post.

INSERT - SIGN ON LIGHT POST

DOG FOUND POSTER. On it is a photo of Tango, held up by a pair of hands.

COSTELLO (O.S.)
He looks taller, though.

BACK TO SCENE

Dante steps over and looks at the poster.

DANTE
You idiot. He looks taller because someone was holding him up when they took the picture.

Dante rips the poster down with his teeth and places it on the ground. Belladonna approaches. The three stand over it.

BELLADONNA
Can you read it?

DANTE
What do I look like? A Boston Terrier?

Belladonna and Costello look at him, confused.

DANTE
Why else would humans want one?

A gust of wind picks up the poster. The Dobermans chase after it as it swirls away.

RALPHIE, a pigeon, sits on the railing by the water. The poster SLAPS against his chest. He looks at it, surprised.

RALPHIE
Whoa! Hey! Suddenly I'm a corkboard now?

The Dobermans run up to Ralphie.

BELLADONNA
Alright, pigeon. Give us the poster and you can keep your feathers.

RALPHIE
Oh! I'm so frightened!

He raises a feather over his faces, swoons, and falls off the railing, presumably into the harbor. The Dobermans rush to the railing, sticking their heads through the bars.

COSTELLO
Now what?

Ralphie flies up and lands on a railing a few feet away, holding the poster in one claw.

RALPHIE
Now you stop threatening ol' Ralphie. Capisce?

Belladonna and Dante pull their heads back in.

BELLADONNA
We need that paper, pigeon.

RALPHIE
What you need is to calm down, Red. Otherwise your precious paper lines my girlfriend's cage in Paramus.

Costello frees his head after several tries. Ralphie holds the poster up by the tips of his wings.

RALPHIE
Let's see... 'Dog found -- '

DANTE
-- You can read?

RALPHIE
What? You can't?

They stare at each other. He returns to the paper.

RALPHIE
'Small white fluffy dog found in Battery Park area. If yours, please call...'

BELLADONNA
That's it?

RALPHIE
It comes with a phone number, but I don't read numbers too good.

DANTE
You can't read numbers?

RALPHIE
You gonna be making a call if I do?

Dante bears teeth. Ralphie holds a wing up to his face.

RALPHIE
Talk to the wing, fleabag. You guys need all of Ralphie's help that you can get.

The three look at him. He looks back in a condescending way.

RALPHIE
'Why do we fleabags need Ralphie's help?' You ask. Ol' Ralphie will tell you. First of, I got friends. Eyes and ears everywhere.

Ralphie jumps off the railing and lands in front of them.

RALPHIE
Second, we're smart. Did you ever look at a pigeon up close? Look in his eyes?

Ralphie taps a wing tip against his head, staring at her. His big eyes seem brimming with intelligence.

RALPHIE
We're thinking. Constantly.

He waddles around the three.

RALPHIE
Third. We network like you can't imagine. And our networking is why we're so respected.

DANTE
You're respected?

RALPHIE
Why else would the humans makes all these statues for us to perch on?

He turns to Belladonna.

RALPHIE
We pigeons can help you's, but you's gotta help us.

BELLADONNA
What do you want?

Ralphie smiles slyly at her.

EXT. WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK - DAY

Christina walks both dogs along a path. Baby walks in a straight line while Tango zig-zags like a buzzing bee.

TANGO
Hey there! Hello! Tango coming through! Hi there!

BABY
Save some of it for the dog run, will you? Geesh!

Tango scoots up next to Baby.

TANGO
Baby, can I ask you a question?

BABY
What is it?

TANGO
Yesterday, you and Mike were talking about family. Am I family?

The two stop walking and look at each other.

BABY
Family is, well, it's hard to explain in words.

TANGO
Can you explain it in song?

BABY
What...? No! Listen kid, family looks out for each other. We take care of each other. Watch each other's backs. I'll explain it to you later, okay?

EXT. PARK DOG RUN - LATER

Christina walks the two into a fenced-in dog run. She unleashes them.

CHRISTINA
Now, you boys play nice.

She steps aside as a pack of dogs playfully runs by.

TANGO
Oh boy!

Tango tries walking off. Baby grabs him by the collar, pulling him back.

BABY
Listen to me, kid --

TANGO
-- All these dogs --

BABY
-- I said listen!

Tango looks at him, surprised.

BABY
There are rules here, so pay attention. First, if a dog doesn't want to play, don't bother him. Let sleeping dogs lie, as we say.

TANGO
Sleeping dogs lie. Gotcha!

Tango tries running off. Baby pulls him back.

BABY
Second, be careful with dog packs. You wanna join one, fine. But let the experienced dogs lead them. Less injuries that way.

TANGO
Don't lead. Gotcha!

He tries running off again. Baby pulls him back again.

BABY
Third, and most important. Keep away from Prince.

TANGO
Prince?

Baby points to the side.

ANGLE: BABY'S POV

Two Cocker Spaniels playfully fight over a branch.

PRINCE, a very large and fierce-looking German Shepherd walks up. He's followed by SCHULTZ, a grey Miniature Schnauzer with facial markings resembling Hitler's mustache.

PRINCE
(Schwarzenegger voice)
Ahh, mein shtick.

SCHULTZ
(German accent)
Ja, mein furry. Your shtick!

Prince takes the stick as the Spaniels shrink away. He and Schultz stride off.

Baby taps Tango on the head, getting his attention.

BABY
Prince don't play well with others.

TANGO
How does he play?

BABY
He doesn't. Do yourself a favor and keep away from him, okay?

TANGO
Okay.

BABY
Alright. Go make friends and don't forget what I taught you.

Baby walks over to a sunny patch where several old dogs lie.

BABY
Hey fellas.

He lays down next to FIDO, a grey-haired Dachshund.

FIDO
That a new puppy, Baby?

BABY
Owners found him. Had no say in the matter.

FIDO
Too bad.

EXT. DOG RUN - NEARBY - CONTINUOUS

An AFGHAN HOUND and a COLLIE stand over a crying CHINESE CRESTED. The Afghan and the Collie have immaculate coats; the Crested looks like a burn victim.

AFGHAN
It's not that bad. Really.

CRESTED
It is... It is...

COLLIE
Nonsense. A little conditioner and brushing and your coat will be as full and shiny as anyone else's.

CRESTED
You think so?

AFGHAN
There's a lot worse here.

Tango trots up to the three. A pack runs in the background.

TANGO
Hi!

The three look at him and his perfect coat.

The Crested BAWLS even louder. The Collie and Afghan rolls their eyes. Tango walks off, confused.

EXT. DOG RUN - NEARBY - CONTINUOUS

A BERNESE MOUNTAIN DOG, two MALAMUTES, and a SAINT BERNARD stand in a corner of the run, flexing.

BERNESE
(tough jock-like voice)
So then I carried that tire clean across the basketball courts. It happened just like that. I swear.

The Malamutes and the St. Bernard snicker.

MALAMUTE
Course you did.

BERNESE
I'm serious!

ST. BERNARD
Only tire I ever see you carry is that spare around your waist.

The dogs laugh out loud as Tango walks up to them.

BERNESE
I'm telling you guys the truth!

MALAMUTE
Of course you are. Hey look!

The four turn to Tango, very chummy.

MALAMUTE
Future dog sledder coming through.

ST. BERNARD
You a Samoyed?

TANGO
I'm Tango!

MALAMUTE
Samoyed attitude. Definitely a sledder. Think you can pull a heavy wagon when you get big?

TANGO
You bet!

MALAMUTE
Good. 'Cause this guy's dishing out a lot of baloney and we're gonna need help moving it!

The Malamutes and the St. Bernard burst out laughing. One Malamute falls over, laughing so hard.

BERNESE
I'm telling you the truth! A truck tire! I swear!

EXT. DOG RUN - NEARBY - CONTINUOUS

Baby relaxes in his sunny spot, eyes closed and content until something blocks his light. Slowly opening his eyes, he sees --

ANGLE: BABY'S POV

-- Prince standing over him.

PRINCE
You are in mein shpot, little dog.

SCHULTZ
Ja. You are in mein furry's shpot.

Baby's friends look at him, nervous.

EXT. DOG RUN - NEARBY - CONTINUOUS

Tango trots happily along when a pack of dogs race by him. He anxiously joins in, his tongue hanging from his mouth.

EXT. DOG RUN - NEARBY - CONTINUOUS

Prince stands over Baby, menacingly.

PRINCE
You're in mein shpot. I vant it now. Move!

BABY
You're barking up the wrong tree, Prince. Bother someone else.

SCHULTZ
You would be vise to obey mein furry und relocate before --

BABY
-- And take your sidekick with you before I bury you both like yesterday's bones.

Schultz and Prince look at each other.

EXT. DOG RUN - NEARBY - CONTINUOUS

Tango runs with the pack until he's winded. He breaks away and looks around. Something catches his eye.

ANGLE: TANGO'S POV

Prince stands over Baby, showing teeth, reminiscent of the movie 'Alien.'

Tango angrily charges Prince, slamming into him. All the dogs look at this, surprised, as the puppy bounces off him.

TANGO
Leave Baby alone!

Tango leaps at Prince again. The Shepherd swats him with a forepaw, sending him reeling.

He angrily looks at Tango.

PRINCE
Iss welpe. A kleiner welpe. Do you know what I do vith little puppies?

Baby jumps up.

BABY
Leave him alone, Prince!

PRINCE
Oh, zee fat dog can get up.

SCHULTZ
Ja! Zee fat dogs rolls like un barrel!

PRINCE
(to Tango)
I don't like puppies. They are veak und shtoopid.

BABY
Leave him alone, Prince! You want my spot. Take it! Take it!

Prince turns and kicks dirt in Tango's face. He walks by Baby. The two exchange looks as Prince takes Baby's place.

PRINCE
Remember. It's mein shpot!

Tango shakes the dirt off him and sadly turns to Baby.

TANGO
I'm sorry, Baby. I tried --

BABY
-- I told you to keep away from Prince. Didn't I?

TANGO
But he was going to hurt you --

BABY
-- Me and Prince have been going at it for years. I can handle him. You can't!

Baby walks away, leaving Baby at the verge of tears.

SCHULTZ (O.S.)
Look, mein furry! Zee puppy is going to cry.

PRINCE (O.S.)
Somethink ve should get use to!

Tango walks away.

SCHULTZ (O.S.)
Ja!

EXT. CHINATOWN STREET - DAY

Decorated storefronts line the streets, filled with colors and crowds. Signs are written in English and in Chinese.

COSTELLO (O.S.)
I don't understand why we're in Chinatown.

Belladonna leads the others through a deserted alley.

BELLADONNA
We have to pass through Chinatown to get to that puppy. We have to pay respect to the local family.

DANTE
Local family? Who's that?

Belladonna stops. The three look straight ahead.

Ahead of them sits an elderly PUG, wearing a bright red silk robe and matching hat. It's ridiculously cute. The pug walks into a dark alley.

BELLADONNA
Let's go.

She follows the Pug. The others nervously follow her.

DANTE
Don't they serve our kind around here?

INT. SHAR-PEI LAIR - MOMENTS LATER

It's a long dark corridor, dimly lit with Chinese lanterns.

DANTE
We could be walking into a trap --

BELLADONNA
-- And we won't hear it coming if you keep talking, will we?

The three enter a large chamber, decorated in silk tapestries and statues of Shar-Peis. Scores of Shar-Peis sit in the room, facing a raised dais. It looks like a kennel at a Buddhist temple.

The pug climbs the dais where PANG and MOTO, two Shar-Peis sit. Pang is old and grey. His skin sags more than the others. Moto is much younger-looking.

The Pug bows to the two. He turns to the others and sits.

MOTO
You may approach.

The Dobermans approach. Belladonna bows; the others follow suit, though not as gracefully. Pang and Moto bow back.

Pang mumbles something. The Dobermans look at each other.

MOTO
My grandfather, Master Pang, welcomes you. It has been many years since the Canine Triad has welcomed the Island Dobermans in its presence.

Pang mumbles some more.

MOTO
He understands you seek a favor.

Belladonna steps forward.

BELLADONNA
I am Belladonna von Feurball,
daughter of Chippy von Feurball.

COSTELLO
(to Dante)
Chippy?

DANTE
(to Costello)
Do *not* go there.

Pang mumbles some more.

MOTO
Grandfather asks why your father is
not here today.

BELLADONNA
My father... is no longer with us.
I now lead the family.

Pang mumbles as he steps from the dais and to Belladonna. His movement is slow and forced, signs of old age.

MOTO
Grandfather says he remembers your
father. He was a good boy. A good
good boy.

Belladonna faces Moto as Pang walks behind her (off camera).

BELLADONNA
Thank you. My associates and I are
searching for a young dog --

-- SNIFF!

Belladonna looks behind her from the corners of her bugged-out eyes. Pang is there, looking at her.

BELLADONNA
(to Moto)
A young dog. We believe he's north
of here. We request permission for
passage through Chinatown.

Pang walks to the other Dobermans, mumbling. His skin rolls around like plastic bottles in the ocean.

MOTO
Master Pang says you are truly the daughter of Chippy von Feurball. Very respectful.

Pang and Costello face each other. Costello looks at the furry pile of wrinkles; he doesn't even have a face. Just wrinkles and a nose.

MOTO (O.S.)
Many would have assumed passage.

Costello raises a paw to Pang's face, lifting a roll of skin, exposing the Shar-Pei's beady eyes. Costello releases the skin. It rolls back into place.

Costello pulls on Pang's face, like it was Silly Putty. The Shar-Pei sits and takes it.

MOTO (O.S.)
Your respectful actions will result in generations of strong bonds and good business.

Moto steps down to Belladonna.

BELLADONNA
May relationships between our families always be strong.

MOTO
I am very confident that --

He looks past Belladonna. Horror shows in his face.

MOTO
-- Grandfather!

Belladonna spins around. She's horrified by what she sees.

ANGLE: BELLADONNA'S POV

Costello stretches Pang's skin to ridiculous portions, all while smiling like an idiot.

EXT. CHINATOWN STREET - MOMENTS LATER

The Dobermans run for their lives, chased by hundreds of barking Shar-Peis, flowing like a wrinkly river. The Shar-Pei sunami eventually ends. After the dust clears, the Pug races down the street, snorting.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - AERIAL VIEW - CONTINUOUS

Manhattan in its grandeur! Tall buildings. The occasional park. Fifty thousand yellow cabs blocking the streets.

A flock of pigeons flies by.

RALPHIE (O.S.)
Hey, is that Jimmy the Grey, down there?

Ralphie and WALLY, another pigeon, look down.

WALLY
Jimmy the Grey? Where?

RALPHIE
Down there, flying over Park Avenue and Fiftieth.

They look down and glide.

WALLY
Looks like him. I heard he got attacked by a cat or something.

RALPHIE
Me too. He shouldn't be flying so soon.

BOBBY, a fat pigeon, flies up to Ralphie and Pigeon.

BOBBY
Hey Ralphie. Hey Wally.

WALLY
Hey Bobby.

RALPHIE
Whoa, Bobby. Looks like you're putting on some serious weight.

BOBBY
Not really. I'm just big feathered.

RALPHIE
If you say so. But next time an old lady throws out fifty pounds of bread crumbs, be sure to invite me.

BOBBY
Har-har-har. Keep that up and I won't tell that I spotted your dog.

RALPHIE
What? Wait. You seen the dog?

BOBBY
I don't remember. My memory gets hazy when my feelings are hurt.

RALPHIE
I'm sorry. I'm sorry. You're not fat.

WALLY
You're big feathered. Not fat at all.

BOBBY
(beat)
I seen him over in Washington Square Park.

RALPHIE
You sure?

BOBBY
Positive.

RALPHIE
Alright, you two go and keep an eye out for him. I got a date with some Dobermans.

The three split up and disappear from view.

EXT. WESTSIDE - BY THE RIVER - LATER

Dante and Belladonna walk along the Hudson River, panting.

DANTE
When did they stop chasing us?

BELLADONNA
About six blocks ago.

DANTE
Those dogs were crazy...

He turns to Belladonna, fear in his eyes.

DANTE
And that pug! That wasn't no dog! It was a football-shaped Terminator!

Belladonna looks around, trying to get her bearings, as Costello drags himself up to them, PANTING the hardest. Dante gets right up close to him.

DANTE
(screaming)
What were you thinking?

Costello cowers.

DANTE
They were gonna help us! And you went and played with their boss like he was Silly Putty!

Dante lets out a FRUSTRATED HOWL.

RALPHIE (O.S.)
You keep screaming like that --

The three look up and see Ralphie perched on a garbage can.

RALPHIE
-- And the Canine Triad will find you guys, again.

BELLADONNA
How did you find us, Ralphie?

RALPHIE
I'm a pigeon, remember?

He waddles along the can's rim.

RALPHIE
Those wrinkly dogs know how to hold a grudge, just so you know.

BELLADONNA
Can you say something useful now?

RALPHIE
I know where your dog is.

The Dobermans step up to him.

BELLADONNA
Where?

RALPHIE
Slow down, Red. What about me? Ralphie's got needs too, you know.

BELLADONNA
What do you want, Ralphie?

RALPHIE
What do I want? All the seagulls out of Staten Island.

DANTE
Come again?

RALPHIE
You heard me. We pigeons were there long before those flying fish eaters came along.

BELLADONNA
If the puppy's where you say he is, you won't have to worry about the seagulls ever again.

RALPHIE
Great. The puppy hangs out at the dog run in Washington Square Park. Four blocks east of here.

He points a wing into the city.

Belladonna steps away, looking eastward.

BELLADONNA
Four blocks east...? Dante, you know what you have to do.

CHOMP!

Dante steps to Belladonna. He swallows something.

A feather sticks from his mouth. Costello points to it.

DANTE
Just 'cuz I can't read the menu, don't mean I can't eat. Where to, boss?

DANTE
East. Washington Square Park.

Costello tries knocking the feather from Dante's mouth. Dante knocks his paw away.

Belladonna trots off, with Dante right behind her. Costello stands there, pointing to his own mouth.

COSTELLO
You got this, er, feather... Dante?
Dante, you got this, er...

He follows.

EXT. DOG RUN - LATER

Tango sits dejected in a a corner. He has no friends in the world, until WHITEY, a Huskie, walks up to him.

WHITEY
Saw what you did there, pup.
Mighty brave of you.

TANGO
You think so?

WHITEY
Also mighty foolish.

Tango looks away in shame.

WHITEY
You familiar with the Iditarod?

TANGO
Di-di-to-rah?

WHITEY
Dogsled race. Brutal. Only the best win. But not the best dog. The best team of dogs.

TANGO
Team of dogs?

WHITEY
Think about it. It'll come to you.

Whitey trots off.

EXT. DOG RUN - NEARBY - CONTINUOUS

Baby and the other elderly dogs sit together in a new spot.

FIDO
That puppy's lucky he didn't get hurt. Prince could've really --

BABY
-- I know. I know. I'll talk to him.

PRINCE (O.S.)
You are in mein shpot, again.

The dogs look. Prince and Schultz stand in front of them.

BABY
Are you kidding me?

SCHULTZ
Nein. Mein furry vants a new shpot... This vun.

EXT. DOG RUN - NEARBY - CONTINUOUS

Tango looks across the run.

INSERT - BABY AND PRINCE

The two are nose-to-nose, growing angry.

BACK TO SCENE

Tango stands, and takes a few steps, desperate to do something. A pack of dogs race behind him.

TANGO
(beat)
Team? A team of dogs!

And he chases the pack, giving it all he's got. He makes his way up the line, passing dogs big and small.

The pack runs by the Bernese, Malamute and St. Bernard.

ST. BERNARD
Look! Future sledder's got game. Let's go!

The four dogs join the pack. Tango catches up to the lead, an Australian Cattle Dog named FOSTER.

FOSTER
(Australian accent)
Hey there, Mate. You're new here, ain't ya?

TANGO
I'm Tango.

FOSTER
Name's Foster. Let's see what you got, Tango.

The pack grows as it twists and turns through the run. Big and small dogs join in the race as Tango takes the lead.

ANGLE: TANGO'S POV

The Shepherd bares his teeth at the angry Bulldog, hackles up. Baby's friends move back, frightened.

Tango increases speed, leading the pack. Glancing over his shoulder, he sees twenty dogs following him.

BERNESE
Arooo! Future sledder!

Tango smiles impishly, running toward Prince. He leaps over the Schnauzer and slides under the German Shepherd, creating a moment of confusion before --

-- Twenty dogs bowl Prince and Schultz over. They fly in the air and land in a cloud of dust. Schultz sits up slowly, shaking his head.

SCHULTZ
Vhat vas zat?

The pair realize they're surrounded by two dozen angry dogs. They freeze.

Tango walks up. He spins around and kicks dirt in Prince's face and walks off. After a moment, the Shepherd BAWLS like a baby. The others cheer.

Grinning from ear-to-ear, Tango strides up to Baby.

BABY
Do you listen to anything I tell you? I told you not to lead a dog pack. And you did!

Tango looks at him, shocked.

BABY
I told you to keep away from Prince. And you didn't! You know what that makes you?

Tango cowers as if expecting to be hit. Baby brings a paw up and rubs Tango between the ears.

BABY (O.S.)
It makes you alright.

Tango looks up and smiles. He sees Baby smiling back and jumps playfully on the Bulldog.

BABY
Hey! Remember the rule about sleeping dogs and lying?

TANGO
What can I say? I'm a puppy!

Baby rolls on the ground, playing with him.

BABY
(laughing)
Alright! Alright! Take it easy!

Wally and Bobby and other pigeons sit on a nearby fence.

WALLY
Yep. That's our dog.

BOBBY
Them Dobermans will be happy to hear this.

WALLY
You think Ralphie was right in dealing with them?

BOBBY
Ehh, Ralphie can take care of himself. I ain't worried. Shame, though...

ANGLE: PIGEON'S POV

Tango and Baby roll on the ground together.

BOBBY (O.S.)
That's one cute puppy.

INT. SANTOS' APARTMENT - LATER

Baby and Christina walk in together. Tango drags himself in, exhausted.

TANGO
Can barely... stand...

INT. SANTOS'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Tango collapses on the floor. Christina unleashes the two and walks of.

BABY
I remember my first pack run. The other dogs are gonna expect you to do it every time now.

Baby disappears into the bedroom while Tango GROANS. The puppy lays there, too sore to move.

Baby trots back in, something in his mouth. He drops it by Tango's head.

The newspaper chew toy. Tango looks at it, surprised.

TANGO
Your newspaper?

BABY
You deserve it, kid.

Tango chews on it once, releasing a loud SQUEAK before resting his head on it.

EXT. KENNEL - NIGHT

It's dark. Vinny and Joe make their way across the lot, sharing a flashlight. Vinny trips, catching himself. His light shines everywhere until he regains his balance.

INT. KENNEL - CONTINUOUS

Vinny and Joe enter, closing the door behind them. They turn the light on. The dogs squint under the sudden light.

VINNY
I can't believe we gotta sneak around like this.

JOE
Hey. Until we get that puppy back, I don't want Mister Carbone seeing us at all.

Vinny grabs a large bag of kibble and walks to Stella's cage. He scoops some out and drops it in her bowl. Most of it bounces from the bowl and onto the floor.

VINNY
He ain't that mad at us.

JOE
He ain't? Let's see. We tell him we got the puppy.

Vinny steps to Dot's cage and drops kibble in. She lays there, getting hit with food.

JOE
He comes over to see it and gets paint on his nine hundred dollar shoes, instead.

Vinny drops kibble in Cinder's bowl. She fervishly snaps at the bouncing pieces.

JOE
You're right. He can't possibly be mad at us.

VINNY
You may have a point.

Vinny pours kibble from the bag, into a large bowl. A Great Dane in the cage scarfs it up.

VINNY
At least Dot ain't sick no more.

JOE
Yeah... Let's finish up. We got another twenty dogs to feed before the sun comes up.

Vinny pours kibble into the next cage, continuing down the line. Dot and Cinder look at each other.

CINDER
You're feeling better?

DOT
I started feeling better right after those Doberman goons left.

CINDER
You think it was them? Even Costello?

DOT
Yes, even... You like him, don't you?

CINDER
He's not like the others. He's nice. Really.

DOT
Are you listening to this Stella? Stella?

Stella sits in her cage, deep in thought.

STELLA
I'm worried about the puppy...

BARKING is heard in the background.

INT. SANTOS' BEDROOM - MORNING

Sunlight creeps through the curtains. Baby sleeps in his bed, a snoring pile of fur.

Tango's head appears, slowly rising behind Baby. His eyes are half-closed and sleepy.

He yawns one of those adorable puppy yawns where his mouth opens incredibly wide and his tongue curls.

He licks his lips and stands up, stretching like a cat. He hops over Baby; his hind paws land on the Bulldog's stomach, waking him with a startle.

BABY
Ooof!

Tango trots off, leaving the bug-eyed Baby in his bed.

TANGO (O.S.)
Morning!

INT. SANTOS' KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Tango scoots up to the food bowls, eating a little from each. He drinks from a water dish.

After a moment, he sticks his head and fore paws in the dish, digging through the water and splashing it around.

He kicks the bowl up, splashing water across the floor. He jumps back and sees Baby next to him.

BABY
Come here.

Baby walks into --

-- THE LIVING ROOM

Baby walks over to the couch. Tango follows.

BABY
When Mike brought me home, I was no older than you.

He struggles up on the couch and plops down on a cushion. Tango effortlessly leaps up and sits next to him.

BABY
We was family. He'd feed me and walk me. And I made sure when he got home from work, he got the best greeting I could give him. And I barked to let him know when the pizza or Chinese food guy was at the door.

TANGO
Where was Christina?

BABY
She came later. And I didn't like it when she did. She was spending so much time with Mike. And she didn't like my hair on her clothes.

Tango listens closely to this puppy page-turner.

BABY
Once day, she was walking me when this chump was bothering her. Me, I took a big bite outta him.

Tango looks at him in jaw-dropping amazement.

BABY
Couple of weeks later, she took me to the vet late at night after I accidentally ate a pair of her panty hose. We became family then.

TANGO
So family takes care of each other?

BABY
That and they share pizza crusts... Point is, it took time for me and Christina to get close.

Tango looks down at his paws in reflection.

TANGO
I don't know where my Mom is. Is she still family?

BABY
Moms are always family.

TANGO
Why do humans take us from our families to be part of theirs?

BABY
I think it's 'cause they need the love that only a dog could give.

TANGO
You think we'll be family some day?

BABY
We're getting there, kid. We're getting there.

The two smile at each other.

BABY
Why don't you get Christina and Mike up? We ain't gonna walk ourselves.

Tango leaps of the couch and races off. Baby lays his head on the couch as Tango's BARKING is heard in the distance.

MIKE (O.S.)
Alright! Alright! We're up!

CHRISTINA (O.S.)
Tango!

Baby smiles from ear-to-ear.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Tango pulls on his leash while Baby and Christina follow.

TANGO
Dog run, Baby! Dog run!

BABY
Slow it down, Tango. Save it for the run.

TANGO
Hooray for the dog run! Let's give it up for the dog run!

As they pass, Belladonna sticks her head out from a bush. Dante and Costello's pop out nearby.

BELLADONNA
There's our puppy.

DANTE
Think we should just grab him? A furry crash-and-dash, so to speak.

BELLADONNA
No. We can't do anything that might hurt him.

COSTELLO
Maybe we should just ask him to come back.

DANTE
(to Costello)
Somewhere, there's a painting of you getting smarter. You know?

BELLADONNA
He's right.

The two look at her, surprised.

COSTELLO
I am?

She follows Tango; the others follow.

EXT. DOG RUN - LATER

Tango runs happily in a pack with half a dozen other dogs. They run by Baby and several other older dogs. OLLIE, an Irish Setter, turns to Baby.

OLLIE
So, how's the puppy been?

BABY
He's a handful. Got a lot to learn.

OLLIE
Teach him to drink out of the toilet yet?

BABY
One day at a time, Ollie. One day at a time.

EXT. DOG RUN - NEARBY - CONTINUOUS

The pack breaks up. Tango stops by a chain link fence. Picking up a small stick, he shakes it around, chewing on it. He turns around and sees --

-- THE THREE DOBERMANS!

BELLADONNA
Hello puppy. Remember me?

Tango looks at them, dropping the stick.

TANGO
(smiling)
I remember you! You were with Stella and Cinder and Dot.

BELLADONNA
So were you. And you're going back.

Tango looks at her, confused.

TANGO
Why?

BELLADONNA
Because we said so. You belong to our bosses --

TANGO
-- I belong to Christina and Mike.

DANTE
Listen, lint ball. You belong to who we say you belong to, capisce?

BELLADONNA
Quiet Dante.
(to Tango)
Who's Christina and Mike, puppy?

Tango turns and points to Christina.

ANGLE: TANGO'S POV

She sits on a bench, reading a book.

Tango turns back to Belladonna.

TANGO
That's Christina. She calls me Tango.

BELLADONNA
Tango? Real precious... Tango, do you like Christina?

He turns his neck, showing off his red collar.

TANGO
You bet! She bought me this collar and a leash. And --

-- Belladonna hits the fence with her paw. The metallic RATTLE startles Tango into silence.

BELLADONNA
If you like this human so much then, you don't want to see her get hurt. Do you?

TANGO
N-no...

DANTE
Then you better do what the boss, here, says. Otherwise, Christina may have an accident.

TANGO
Accident? Like on the rug?

COSTELLO
Yes --

Dante covers Costello's mouth with his paw.

BELLADONNA
We're talking a real accident. The kind where you get hurt.

Frightened, Tango runs off. The Dobermans look at each other.

BELLADONNA
Follow him, but don't hurt him or the human... For now.

EXT. PARK - LATER

Christina walks the dogs along the trail. Tango is skittish. Looking to the side, he sees Belladonna by a bench, staring at him. He shrinks back, walking close to Christina.

CHRISTINA
What's the matter, Tango? Tuckered out?

Looking over his shoulder, he sees Costello standing by a trash can, baring his teeth.

EXT. STREET - LATER

Christina, Tango and Baby leave the park. As they approach the curb, Tango sees Dante sitting on the other side. A car passes between them... and Dante is gone. Tango GASPS.

The three cross, Tango growing more and more nervous as he looks around. His face shows relief only as they approach their brownstone.

His expression quickly changes to alarm.

ANGLE: TANGO'S POV

Dante and Costello sit in the distance, staring at him.

As Baby, Tango and Christina ascend the stairs, Belladonna leaps from the doorway, SNARLING. She bowls Christina over.

CHRISTINA
Aaaah!

Christina hits the sidewalk hard. Baby is knocked over, too, as Belladonna and the Dobermans race away.

Baby gets up, BARKING. He hurries to Christina's side as she slowly gets up. She bleeds from a cut over her eye; her hand is scraped up. Baby licks her profusely.

CHRISTINA
I'm okay, Baby. I'm okay.

She sits up and pets him with her 'good' hand.

CHRISTINA
You okay, big boy? Huh?

She looks at Tango. The puppy is rolled up in a ball on the stoop, trembling out of control.

INT. SANTOS' LIVING ROOM - LATER

Christina sits on the couch, band aids on her scrapes. Baby sits next to her feet. Mike hangs up the phone and exits the kitchen with coffee.

MIKE
Police say no one's seen stray dogs in the area. You sure you don't want to see a doctor?

CHRISTINA
They're just scrapes. I'm just glad the boys are okay.

She looks beside the couch.

Tango cowers in a small space between the couch and the wall. He looks up at her, fear in his eyes.

CHRISTINA (O.S.)
Come on out, Tango. It's okay...

Tango shrinks further back in his spot.

Christina turns to Mike.

CHRISTINA
Look, he's terrified. Poor puppy.

MIKE
Can you blame him? It's going to be short walks until we know that dog is gone.

CHRISTINA
That reminds me. Did we get any calls, you know, about Tango?

MIKE
None.

Tango listens from his safe spot. He can barely see them.

MIKE (O.S.)
Maybe his owner hasn't seen the signs I put up. Or, maybe, he doesn't want him back.

CHRISTINA (O.S.)
That's good, I guess. I've really grown close to him.

Tango's eyes are huge and full of tears.

EXT. SANTOS' APARTMENT - NIGHT

Street lights cut through the darkness. Things are quiet, except for a ghostly chant. TANGO... TANGO...

INT. SANTOS' BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Everyone sleeps in their beds in the darkened room. Tango's blanket is next to Baby's bed. TANGO... TANGO...

Tango's eyes open. He looks around. Everything is still, but the chanting continues like ghostly moans. He gets up and slowly walks into --

-- THE LIVING ROOM

Following the noise to a partially open window. He climbs a chair next to it and sticks his head out.

ANGLE: TANGO'S POV

The Dobermans stand outside, only ten feet away.

BELLADONNA
About time. You ready to come home with us?

TANGO
I am home!

DANTE
Your home is a little crate back in Staten Island, capisce?

INT. SANTOS' BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Christina and Mike lie in bed, wrapped in sheets. Tango's faint barking is heard in the other room.

CHRISTINA
(half asleep)
Tango, go to bed...

MIKE
(half asleep)
At least he's not hiding behind the couch anymore...

EXT. SANTOS' APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Tango stands on the sill.

BELLADONNA
Listen cotton ball. In two days, you're the guest of honor at some kid's birthday party. If we don't get you back, they'll be sizing us up for cement collars.

DANTE
If you don't come back with us, your human's gonna have another accident.

BELLADONNA
And the next one will involve biting.

DANTE
And we got this reputation when it comes to our teeth.

Dante and Beladonna bare their razor-sharp fangs. Tango shrinks back, horrified. Costello looks at them.

BELLADONNA
What'll it be, puppy. Become a plaything for a brat? Or watch your humans become our chew toys.

Tango looks in the apartment and then back to the Dobermans.

TANGO
(long beat)
Alright. But you have to promise to leave my family alone.

BELLADONNA
Fine. Whatever.

TANGO
I... need to do something first.

He turns to the window.

BELLADONNA
You got one minute.

He disappears into the dark apartment.

COSTELLO
That's seven minutes in dog years.

Belladonna and Dante slowly look at Costello. Dante then turns to Belladonna.

DANTE
Technically he's right, you know.

INT. SANTOS' BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Tango tip-toes to his blanket as Baby SNORES. He reaches in and pulls the newspaper squeak toy out with his teeth. He lays it on the edge of the blanket.

Walking out of the bedroom, he stops and looks back lovingly at Christina and Mike, in bed. He slowly leaves.

EXT. SANTOS' APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Tango leaps from the window, onto the concrete guardrail and onto the stairs. He stops in front of the Dobermans.

Belladonna walks alongside Tango, shoving him along the sidewalk. Dante and Costello take up the rear. It's a slow walk for the puppy.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN

INT. KENNEL - DAY

Vinny shoves Tango into his crate. The puppy YELPS as his head hits the bars. Vinny SLAMS the crate door while Joe stacks dog food on the shelf.

VINNY
And that's the end of that.

Tango scratches at the cage door, trying to get out.

VINNY
Fuggitaboutit little dog.

He puts a padlock on the crate door and SNAPS it closed.

VINNY
You ain't getting out again.

JOE
Really. Let's give Mister Carbone a call.

He finishes with the cans and turns to the Dobermans, sitting by the kennel door.

JOE
And after that, I can think of some dogs that are gonna get some big juicy steaks!

The Dobermans ears pick up at this. They smile.

JOE
(almost baby-talk)
Who wants steak? Who wants steak?
(definite baby talk)
I want steak! I want steak!

The three prance around, excited. Joe leaves the kennel, the Dobermans following closely behind him.

VINNY
They deserve it. Nothing's too good for our babies.

Vinny leaves, shutting off the lights and closing the door.

Diffused light passes through the dirty windows, bathing everything in grey. Tango stands next to an empty food dish,

He scratches on the door of his crate. The padlock jiggles, but doesn't open.

TANGO
Come on... Come on...

He pushes against the other crate walls. There's no weakness. He looks through the back and stops.

ANGLE: TANGO'S POV

The Statue of Liberty seems smaller through the broken window.

STELLA (O.S.)
Why do you keep trying to escape?

Tango looks to the side and sees Stella.

STELLA
It's not so bad here. They feed us and take care of us.

He looks back at the statue.

TANGO
What about love? Or family? I want my family!

He rushes the crate door, head-butting it. The crate doesn't move. He shakes his head with a pained expression. That hit was harder than he expected.

INT. VINNY'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

The kitchen is something out of the sixties. The fixtures and furniture are forty years old and dirty. The door opens. Vinny, Joe and the Dobermans enter.

Joe grabs a yellow phone off the wall and dials while Vinny grabs steaks from the lime green refrigerator. Costello and Dante dance around. Belladonna waits, patient and dignified.

JOE
(on phone)
Great news, Mister Carbone. We got the pooch... Yeah, he's fine... You wanna come over?

Vinny and Joe look at each other. The steaks droop in Joe's hands, hanging just out of the dogs' reach.

VINNY
(whispers)
Today?

Joe holds his hand up, motioning for quiet. Vinny waves his hands around, mouthing the word 'why.' Dante and Costello watch the steaks like spectators at a tennis match.

JOE
(nervous)
We was gonna give the puppy a flea bath.

Vinny gives him two thumbs-up, smiling.

Costello slobbers all over the floor. Gallons of saliva! His front paws slip in it.

JOE
We'd hate ourselves if he gave Sophia's cat fleas or... She what? She don't have the cat no more?

He looks at Vinny.

JOE
She fed her cat to her snake?

VINNY
How could a kid whack her own cat?

JOE
Of course you can come by, Mister Carbone. You're always welcome here... An hour? An hour would be fine. We'll see you then.

He hangs up the phone.

JOE
We gotta clean up.

Joe leaves the kitchen, disappearing into the next room. Vinny follows, after throwing the three steaks on the floor.

Dante and Costello approach the meat, licking their chops. They're about to sink their teeth in when --

BELLADONNA
-- You boys forget something?

The two dogs freeze.

DANTE
N-no. We weren't gonna start without you. Were we, Costello?

She steps to Dante's steak and takes a bite. She chews slowly as Dante watches. She swallows with a satisfied look on her face, before biting into Costello's steak.

Costello's lip trembles. She swallows and smiles with an almost reflective expression on her face.

BELLADONNA
Vinny and Joe are good to us.

She picks up the third steak and leaves the room. Dante and Costello look sadly at each other.

DANTE
She took almost a quarter of mine.

COSTELLO
She took nearly a dozen of mine.

DANTE
Yeah. You know, we shouldn't let her -- a dozen?

Dante looks at Costello, confused. The big Doberman sadly eats his steak.

INT. KENNEL - CONTINUOUS

The dogs lie in their cages. Tango chews on his crate door. Stella looks up at him, feeling his sadness.

STELLA
What was it like out there, Puppy?

TANGO
Tango. My name is Tango.

STELLA
That's a nice name. Tango.

His tail wags.

TANGO
It was great out there. So big. So many things to see and smell. The harbor. Trees. Grass. And Baby. He smells like bread.

DOT
Who's Baby?

TANGO
Baby's my friend. A British Bulldog. My owners own him, too.

DOT
I heard about Bulldogs. Very nasty creatures.

TANGO
Not Baby. Well, he was at first, but he changed... He became my family.

He stands up in his crate, looking angry.

TANGO
I have to get out!

He jumps on the crate door, trying to open it. Stella and Dot watch. After a moment, they sadly look at each other.

TANGO
I have to get back to my family!

RUSTLING noise is heard. Tango sees Everette and Stigs climbing through their hole in the wall.

EVERETTE
... so the second guy says, "Rectum? I darn near killed 'em."

Stigs stares at him.

EVERETTE
I darned near killed 'em? I darn near -- come on! That's funny!

STIGS
That's not funny.

EVERETTE
It is funny! It's hysterical. You sir, have no sense of humor.

He looks up and sees Tango in his cage.

EVERETTE
Hey, look who's back.

Stigs looks at the crate.

TANGO
Guys, can you get me out of here?

STIGS
Again? But you'll just climb back in the moment our backs are turned.

TANGO
No, I won't.

STIGS
You say that now --

TANGO
-- The humans put me in here. Please!

EVERETTE
You don't believe him?

STIGS
Occam's Razor. The simplest explanation is the most likely one.

The mice climb up to the crate.

STIGS
The pup climbed back in his own cage. Including the humans only complicates things.

The mice stop in front of the crate.

EVERETTE
How did he lock himself in his cage?

STIGS
I surmise that the humans locked him in after he entered it.

EVERETTE
Ahh! You just complicated your theory by including the humans.

Stigs is lost deep in thought. Everette turns to Tango.

EVERETTE
This may take a while. He gets like this each time he's confronted with a logical fault.

Stigs shakes his head, coming out of his daze.

STIGS
I admit no fault in my logic. To prove my point, I propose we release the pup and see if he returns to his cage. Agreed?

EVERETTE
Agreed.

TANGO
Agreed!

The mice examine the lock. It's a fancy one!

EVERETTE
A Rockwell model G-7 security lock. Very secure.

TANGO
Can you open it?

STIGS
We'll do our best. Everette, we have to go back to our nest and get my henway.

EVERETTE
Right, Stigs. I'll -- what's a henway?

STIGS
About nine pounds when laying eggs.
(to Tango)
And he says I have no sense of humor.

EXT. KENNEL - MOMENT LATER

The mice scurry through tall grass into a nearby hole. Things are heard being moved around, SCRAPING, SHUFFLING, DROPPING. And the occasional CRASH.

The two push a small satellite dish on a roller skate from the hole. Several wires and doohickeys are attached to it. It looks like something a kid slapped together.

The two push it toward the kennel.

INT. KENNEL - MOMENTS LATER

The mice drag the dish through the hole in the wall.

EVERETTE
We're back!

STIGS
And we brought my latest invention. The ST-2000.

TANGO
Es-Tee-Two-Thousand?

EVERETTE
The Shiny Thing-2000! Much shinier than the ST-1800.

STIGS
An electromagnet. Using magnetic waves, it will rip your cage door right off its hinges, freeing you!

Everette stands in front of the device, aiming it at the crate. Stigs presses a button on it. The machine LIGHTS UP and HUMS.

STIGS
Prepare to be amazed.

The dish is jerked off the floor, taking Everette with him. It CRASHES into the front of the crate; the antenna points dangerously through the bars.

Tango cowers in the back of his crate, looking at the front.

ANGLE: TANGO'S POV

Everette is caught between the ST-2000 and the gate, all contorted and uncomfortable.

He and Tango look at each other. Stig's face drops, ashamed.

INT. KENNEL - MOMENTS LATER

Stigs pries the device from the crate with a screwdriver. It falls to the floor with a loud CRASH, spinning to a rest. Everette slowly climbs from the wreckage, staggering.

STIGS
Are you okay?

EVERETTE
Yes, it is a lovely pony.

STIGS
Pony?

Everette tilts his head and shakes it. Springs and cogs fall out of his ear. Stigs races to his invention.

STIGS
Another failure. Why am I not surprised?

EVERETTE
Don't be so hard on yourself, Stigs. Didn't Thomas Edison say, 'for every mistake you make be grateful. That's a mistake you'll never make again?'

STIGS
I think that was from *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang.*

EVERETTE
Dick Van Dyke... A class act!

Stigs climbs back up Tango.

STIGS
I'm sorry Tango. I really am.

TANGO
You tried. Thanks for trying.

Tango lays down, defeated. Stigs shares his pain.

STIGS
I'm not done yet. I'll get you out somehow. I promise you that.

Everette climbs up, nodding enthusiastically.

EVERETTE
And he's a mouse of his word!

Tango smiles at the mice. He turns to Stella; she looks back and forces a smile.

The mice walk to the edge.

TANGO (O.S.)
Uhh, guys?

The two turn around.

TANGO
Could you help my friends, too?

Stella smiles for real, tail wagging.

EXT. KENNEL - NIGHT

High-pitched BUZZING is heard.

INT. KENNEL - CONTINUOUS

Sparks fly from the crate. Stigs and Everette hold a dremel and cutting disk to the lock. Stigs glances at the ST-2000. He turns back to the lock, determined to open it until --

-- The disk shatters; shrapnel flying everywhere. The mice shut the dremel off and put it down. The damage on the lock is barely noticeable.

EVERETTE
Any more cutting disks?

STIGS
None.

They put the dremel down. Stigs sits down, disgusted.

STIGS
I failed again. I'm a big fat failure.

EVERETTE
No you're not, Stigs.

He sits down with him.

EVERETTE
You're not big, 'cause you're only three inches tall. And you're certainly not fat.

Stigs looks at him, annoyed.

EVERETTE
My sister, she was fat. Could eat a whole wheel of cheese by herself.

Stigs' annoyance grows.

EVERETTE
And you're not a failure because you want to help a friend. No one's a failure when they want to help friends.

Everette smiles at him. After a moment, he smiles back.

STIGS
I've been working on the ST-2000 for months. And the Squeakifier-1000 for a year. Both failures.

EVERETTE
It'll come, Stigs. No use banging your head against a brick wall.

Stigs stares at the ST-2000. Slowly, he turns to the wall, by the paint cans. A light bulb appears over his head.

Everette sees the bulb, confused and amazed. He slowly reaches for it. Stigs stands up and it disappears. Everette casually lowers his hand.

STIGS
A brick wall! Of course!

He turns to Everette and dramatically grabs his shoulders.

STIGS
Everette, you're a genius!

INT. VINNY'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

Joe grabs newspapers from the plastic-covered sofa while Vinny pulls laundry from a plastic-covered chair.

VINNY
And that's why Martin Scorcesee doesn't eat at D'Angelo's no more.

JOE
All because of parsley? Who'd a thunk it?

Joe places the paper on a stack by the front door. Vinny throws the laundry in a closet.

VINNY
Never underestimate too much parsley in gravy.

Headlights shine through the windows. Joe looks out, smiling.

VINNY
That him?

JOE
How's that for perfect timing?

EXT. KENNEL - CONTINUOUS

Carbone's limo parks between the kennel and a rusty tractor. Richie and Rocky step from the car and open a back door. Carbone steps out.

EXT. BEHIND THE KENNEL - CONTINUOUS

Stigs stands on a stack of boxes. He holds the ST-2000 against the wall, straining. He wears a makeshift miner's helmet, composed of a single Christmas light, some wiring, a thimble and a battery.

VINNY (O.S.)
Mister Carbone, you honor my brother and me with your presence... again.

Everette wears a similar helmet and pulls some tape from a roll with a loud R-I-I-P! He tapes the ST-2000 to the wall.

EVERETTE
I don't get what we're doing here.

STIGS
The ST-2000 failed earlier because the magnetic pull was greater than the gravitational pull that kept it on the floor.

He RIPS another piece and sticks it on the ST-2000. Stig's arm is caught in the tape.

STIGS
Securing it to the kennel wall provides an anchor.

He yanks his arm free and shakes it to get his circulation going again.

STIGS
The cages are no match for the wall. And the doors will fly off their hinges, freeing all the dogs.

EVERETTE
Brilliant Stigs! More than I can possibly understand.

STIGS
But Stigs, you were the inspiration for overcoming my previous failure.

Stigs hits the switch on the ST-2000. It lights up and HUMS.

STIGS
Now. Prepare to be amazed... for real, this time.

INT. SANTOS' APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Baby lies on his bed, inches from Baby's blanket. The 'newspaper' lays on the blanket.

CHRISTINA (O.S.)
Baby hasn't moved at all since Tango disappeared.

Christina and Mike stoop down and pet the Bulldog's head.

MIKE
I know...
(to Baby)
Cheer up, boy. We'll get him back.

Baby looks at Mike and Christina with big sad eyes. They roll from Mike to Christina as she kneels next to him.

CHRISTINA
We'll find him, Baby. Real soon.

She offers him a biscuit. He ignores it and SIGHS.

She stands and steps over to a computer printer and picks up a poster in the tray.

INSERT: POSTER

It reads 'DOG LOST. REWARD.' It has a photo of Tango on it.

BACK TO SCENE

She looks sadly at it.

CHRISTINA
Mike?

Mike scratches Baby behind the ears.

MIKE
We put flyers up all over the neighborhood. His collar has our number in it.

He gets up and stands next to her.

MIKE
We can't do anything else until tomorrow.

CHRISTINA
I know. But still...

The two look sadly at each other. Mike takes the posters and walks to the door. She follows.

MIKE
I'll try the park again. You stay with Baby.

CHRISTINA
I will. I love you.

MIKE
I love you, too.

He leaves.

Baby SIGHS. He slowly extends a paw onto Baby's blanket.

BABY
Come back, kiddo...

INT. KENNEL - CONTINUOUS

Joe enters the kennel, hitting the lights. The dogs squint under the sudden illumination.

He steps aside as Richie and Rocky walk in. Carbone hesitates, checking the floor for surprises. Vinny and the Dobermans bring up the rear.

Carbone walks through the kennel, looking at all the dogs. Belladonna growls at Cinder as she passes. The Pomeranian shrinks back in her cage.

EXT. KENNEL - CONTINUOUS

The ST-2000 ROARS like a racing car. A nearby junked car slides a foot across the ground, toward the device.

INT. KENNEL - CONTINUOUS

Carbone stops in front of Tango's crate.

CARBONE
Sophia is very anxious to receive her birthday present.

The lock on the crate shakes slightly before being pulled to the kennel's far wall.

VINNY
Allow me, Mister Carbone.

Vinny pulls his key ring from his pocket. He finds the right key and holds it up; the others hang loosely. Suddenly, the keys rise, pointing toward the far wall.

Vinny pushes the ring down. The religious medal around his neck rises. Everyone is confused and amazed at this.

CARBONE
Very cute, Vincent. But I already hired a magician for the party.

As Vinny tucks his medal in his shirt, the keys rise again... as well as everyone else's religious medals.

EXT. MOUSEHOLE - CONTINUOUS

The mice drag a telephone from their hole. Various devices hang from it, like the ST-2000. They load it on the skate.

EVERETTE
But you said the Squeakifier-1000 doesn't work.

STIGS
I've been fine tuning it in my spare time. Unfortunately, I haven't had the chance to test it.

EVERETTE
And now is a good time?

They push the roller skate toward the house.

STIGS
Getting Tango out of his crate isn't enough. We have to get help for him, too. With this, we can communicate with the humans and get that help.

EVERETTE
Amazing!

STIGS
We'll need to attach it to the telephone line at the human's house to contact the authorities.

The roller skate starts slowing down.

EVERETTE
Stig, are we going downhill?

STIGS
It seems that way, but we're not.

He looks around. A panicky look grows on his face.

ANGLE: STIGS' POV

The ST-2000 glows on the kennel wall.

STIGS
The ST-2000! It's pulling on the metal in the Squeakifier-1000. Push, Everette! We must get this to the house before the ST-2000 pulls it away!

The mice struggle, pushing the skate across the lot.

EXT. KENNEL - NEARBY - CONTINUOUS

A nest sits on top of a telephone pole. Gladys sticks her head out. She shakes Abner, sleeping next to her.

GLADYS
Abner! Abner!

ABNER
(sleepy)
Huh? What are you doing? I'm catching an early ferry tomorrow.

GLADYS
Abner! The noise! Do something about the terrible noise!

ABNER
I keep telling you to shut up, but you don't listen.

He looks around.

ANGLE: ABNER'S POV

Stigs and Everette slowly push the skate and Squeakifier-1000 along the ground.

ABNER
(yelling)
Hey! Mice! What's with all the noise?

EVERETTE
We're saving Tango!

Abner turns to Gladys.

ABNER
Tango? What's a Tango?

GLADYS
You would know if you took me dancing more often.

Abner rolls his eyes.

INT. KENNEL - CONTINUOUS

Carbone's religious medal is ripped off his neck. It flies to the far wall and sticks to the bricks. Everyone else's chains follow. Vinny's keys are jerked from his hand.

RICHIE
Something funny's going on.

CARBONE
Ya think?

The Dobermans' chain collars are ripped from their necks. Costello bashfully covers his body.

Carbone's watch is ripped from his wrist. It SHATTERS against the wall.

CARBONE
My watch! That was a wedding present!

He turns to Vinny, furious.

CARBONE
Are you jokers trying to humiliate me? To embarrass me?

His belt buckle is yanked to the wall, breaking his belt. His pants fall, revealing boxers with smiley faces on them.

EXT. KENNEL - CONTINUOUS

Everette and Stigs struggle with the roller skate. Tin cans and other metallic junk past them like Tumbleweeds.

EVERETTE
I don't know how much longer I can hold on, Stigs.

STIGS
I know. But we need to hook up the Squeakifier-1000 to the phone line! For Tango's sake!

INT. KENNEL - CONTINUOUS

Everyone looks around, panicky, as the cages RATTLE. Carbone holds his pants up, looking at Vinny.

CARBONE
I don't know what game you jokers are playing, but I want that dog out of his cage right now!

The door to Tango's crate is RIPPED from its hinges, CRASHING into the wall.

Tango sticks his head out and ducks back in as another cage door flies past him. Richie and Rocky are knocked over by more flying cage doors.

Tango jumps from his crate... and lands in front of the SNARLING Belladonna.

BELLADONNA
Now you're mine, little prince...

Stella leaps between the two, facing the Doberman and baring her teeth.

STELLA
Leave him alone!

BELLADONNA
You're gonna stop me stop me? You and what army?

Stella tilts her head behind Belladonna. The Doberman looks.

ANGLE: BELLADONNA'S POV

Twenty dogs of various breeds step from their cages. And they're pissed!

Belladonna turns back to Stella. A sinister smile grows on her face.

BELLADONNA
Boys, you know what to do.

Dante and Costello nod to each other... and bolt out the door! Belladonna's smile disappears.

STELLA
Let's play, little dog...

She lunges at the Doberman.

EXT. KENNEL - CONTINUOUS

Belladonna and Stella roll out the door, SNARLING in mortal combat. The Jack Russell is lightning fast. And vicious! The humans are chased into the darkness by the other dogs. SCREAMS shatter the night.

Carbone jumps in the air, SCREAMING in comical pain. He runs off, grabbing his ass. His smiley face underwear is visible.

Dot holds a large piece of his pants in her mouth.

CINDER
Good one, Dot!

Dot smiles.

EXT. KENNEL - NEARBY - CONTINUOUS

Abner and Gladys watch the fracas from their nest.

ANGLE: GLADYS' POV

Dante is chased across the lot by Tango and TWO BARKING GERMAN SHEPHERDS.

She shakes Abner's wing, excited.

GLADYS
It's the puppy! It's the puppy!

ABNER
I can see! I have eyes!

He watches Tango.

ABNER
How did he get here? I gave him directions.

He turns to the mice.

ABNER
Hey! Hey mice! What's going on down there?

EVERETTE
We're trying to help Tango!

ABNER
Who's Tango?

Stigs struggles with the skate. Strain is shown on his face.

STIGS
The puppy! We need to attach this machine to the phone line to call for help!

Several dogs race past the mice, nearly running them over. Everette covers his face with his hands until the danger passes. Stella stops by the mice.

STELLA
Need help boys?

STIGS
The ST-2000 needs to be turned off! Outside the kennel.

She looks and sees it, glowing in the wall.

STELLA
I can do that.

She runs off.

EVERETTE
How much further...?

STIGS
Twenty feet maybe. I can see the phone line outside the house!

His feet dig into the dirt as the skate is being pulled back.

Garbage cans bounce pass the mice. The telephone line, from the poles, is pulled toward the kennel.

EXT. KENNEL - NEARBY - CONTINUOUS

Stella races through the mayhem. A long line of dogs chase Vinny and Joe, blocking her way. She effortlessly leaps over them and continues on her way.

EXT. KENNEL - NEARBY - CONTINUOUS

A phone wire SNAPS off the house. The severed end points toward the kennel, only a few feet from the mice.

ANGLE: STIGS' POV

The wire sways just out of the reach of his extended hand. Suddenly the wire lowers toward Stigs' hand. Guided by Abner, who holds it in his claws while flying.

ABNER
Take it already!

It's just out of the mouse's reach. And the skate is slowly rolling backwards.

EVERETTE
Stigs...!

ABNER
I can't keep this up all night.

EXT. KENNEL - NEARBY - CONTINUOUS

Stella stands before the ST-2000, about six feet over her head. It GLOWS furiously and ROARS like a jet engine.

She leaps up. Inches away from it, she's hit by a flying gasoline can, knocking her down.

She shakes it off. Shuffling her paws, he positions herself and leaps. She grabs the device with her teeth and dangles from it. Her eyes dart around, unsure what to do next.

EXT. KENNEL - NEARBY - CONTINUOUS

The skate is being pulled further back. The seagull and mice struggle to meet. Strain shows on their faces.

EXT. KENNEL - NEARBY - CONTINUOUS.

Refusing to let go of the ST-2000, Stella starts digging at it with her paws. Wires and screws and springs are ripped from it. The lights on it FLICKER before turning off. The HUMMING winds down.

Stella pulls the device from the wall and falls.

EXT. KENNEL - NEARBY - CONTINUOUS

The roller skate lurches forward. Stigs grabs the phone line and jams it into the jack port of the phone.

STIGS
Got it!

Abner flies back to the nest. Gladys lovingly hugs him.

GLADYS
You were so brave!

ABNER
Brave nothing! I'm just trying to get some sleep.

EXT. KENNEL - NEARBY - CONTINUOUS

Joe runs from several dogs, snapping at his feet. They pass the mice and their machine.

The Squeakifier-1000 lights up.

Stigs takes the handset from the cradle.

STIGS
Dial the police!

Everette jumps to the key pad. Using all his weight, he presses 9-1-1.

STIGS
Turn the dial to male voice.
Relaxed and confident.

Everette turns a makeshift knob on the phone.

INSERT - KNOB

Handwritten next to the knob are 'MALE, ANGRY,' 'MALE, HAPPY,' 'MALE, RELAXED AND CONFIDENT,' and 'FEMALE TALKATIVE.' Everette turns he knob to 'MALE, RELAXED AND CONFIDENT.'

BACK TO SCENE

Everette turns to Stigs and crosses his fingers.

STIGS
It may not translate what I say
word-for-word, but it should be
enough to get us help.

EXT. KENNEL - NEARBY - CONTINUOUS

Costello is backed into a corner by two huge and angry Great Danes. He looks terrified.

Suddenly, Cinder runs up between the Danes' feet. She gets between them and Costello.

CINDER
Leave him alone!

GREAT DANE
He's one of them!

CINDER
He's with me!

She darts around their legs, SNAPPING and BARKING. The Dane look at the little dog and then at each other. They nervously step back.

GREAT DANE
Alright! Alright!

The Danes leave. Cinder turns to Costello.

CINDER
Are you okay?

COSTELLO
You... you saved me.

The two gaze in each others' eyes as ROMANTIC MUSIC SWELLS.

INT. POLICE STATION - CONTINUOUS

SERGEANT KELLY (60) sits behind the front desk, doodling. The phone RINGS and he picks it up.

KELLY
Fourth precinct. Sergeant Kelly, here.

EXT. VINNY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Stigs screams into the machine's mouthpiece.

STIGS
(panicky)
You've got to help us! I'm a field mouse who wants to report an illegal dog kennel operation!

INT. POLICE STATION - CONTINUOUS

Kelly listens to phone, doodling.

GEORGE CLOONEY VOICE (V.O.)
(over phone)
Good evening Sergeant. This is Academy Award-winning actor and director, George Clooney.

KELLY
(surprised)
George Clooney?

He drop his pencil.

GEORGE CLOONEY VOICE (V.O.)
Your assistance is greatly needed by the Old Gravy Piers --

EXT. VINNY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Stigs screams into the mouthpiece as dogs chase Richie and Rocky in the background.

STIGS
(screaming)
They're keeping these dogs in horrid conditions and one of them is kidnapped! It's pandemonium!

INT. POLICE STATION - CONTINUOUS

Kelly gives his full attention to the phone.

GEORGE CLOONEY VOICE (V.O.)
An unsavory group of men is keeping dogs in squalor. Their barking is interrupting the production of my latest film, 'Harbor Tales.'

KELLY
We'll get right on it, Mister Clooney! Yes sir!

He grabs an old-fashioned microphone from the desk.

KELLY
(into mic)
Calling all cars! Calling all cars! Ten-seventy-five at the Old Gravy Piers!

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Police cars race down the street, lights flashing and sirens WAILING.

KELLY (V.O.)
I repeat: Ten-seventy-five at the Old Gravy Piers! A-list celebrity needs help!

More police cars join in the race. SWAT trucks. Harbor patrol boats. A helicopter.

EXT. VINNY'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

Stigs hangs up the phone. The lights go out.

STIGS
And now we wait.

A pack of dogs, chasing Joe, tramples the mice.

EVERETTE
(dazed)
Or we can get out of the way?

STIGS
(dazed)
Let's do that.

Stigs picks his friend up and helps him across the lot.

EXT. KENNEL - NEARBY - CONTINUOUS

Two dogs chase Carbone into his car. They just miss him as he shuts the door. The two leap on the car.

INT. CARBONE'S LIMO - CONTINUOUS

Carbone sighs in relief.

CARBONE
No dog's gonna get the best of Jimmy Carbone! You hear me?

EXT. FAR END OF LOT - CONTINUOUS

Stacks of tires stand at a high point of the lot. Dante sticks his head out from one stack, nervously looking around.

DANTE
I really gotta get out of this business.

Two Dalmations approach the tires. They knock Dante's stack over, sending him rolling downhill, SCREAMING. The Dalmatians smile at each other before chasing him.

EXT. KENNEL - NEARBY - CONTINUOUS

Belladonna is surrounded by Tango and several other dogs. Belladonna is cut up and dirty. Red and blue flashing lights are seen in the distance.

Stella steps up, wearing the ST-2000 like a hat.

STELLA
It's over, Belladonna!

Tango looks curiously at Stella and her 'hat.' She shakes it off her head.

STELLA
(to Tango)
Sorry.
(to Belladonna)
It's over Belladonna.

BELLADONNA
Talk is cheap, breeder. I'm not afraid of you!

TANGO
Then why is your tail between your legs?

All the dogs look. Belladonna's docked tail hangs low.

A dozen police cars race up to the screen. Trucks from NEW YORK CITY ANIMAL CONTROL follow.

Police officers leap from their cars, pistols drawn. SERGEANT WILLIAMS (50), a burly man, steps from his car.

WILLIAMS
(shouting)
Police! Nobody move! Everyone put your hands over your heads!

A Border Collie and a Golden Retriever, fighting Richie and Rocky, jump off the thugs and disappear into the night. Richie and Rocky slowly stand up, hands raised.

Vinny and Joe come out from behind stacks of wooden pallets.

WILLIAMS
Now, someone tell me where I can find George Clooney!

The mobsters look at each other, confused.

INT. SANTOS' LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mike sleeps on the sofa as Christina talks on the phone, nearby. Baby lies on the floor. The news is on television.

CHRISTINA
We don't know what to do, Mom. We searched the neighborhood three times. Put posters up everywhere.

INSERT - TV

An aerial shot of the kennel illuminated by helicopter searchlights. The scrawl on bottom of the TV reads "DOGS RESCUED."

REPORTER (V.O.)
Police responded to a call at an illegal puppy mill located in Staten Island.

BACK TO SCENE

Baby picks his head up, looking at the television.

ANGLE: BABY'S POV

Tango is restrained in a dog catching pole.

Baby leaps up, BARKING. Mike wakes up, startled. Christina comes into the living room as Baby jumps around. Several other dogs are on the screen.

Christina and Mike look at him.

MIKE
What's gotten into him?

CHRISTINA
I don't know. Guess he saw the dogs on television and he thought they were in the house.

Baby continues BARKING in front of the television. He stands on his hind paws and leans against the screen. Mike hurries to his side and pulls him down.

MIKE
Off the teevee, Baby. You'll knock it over!

INSERT - TV

A close up of Tango being placed in a cage in the animal control truck.

BACK TO SCENE

Christina and Mike stare at the television, amazed.

CHRISTINA
Is that Tango?

Baby BARKS excitedly, squirming in Mike's arms. Mike and Christina look at each other, amazed.

EXT. KENNEL - CONTINUOUS

POLICE OFFICERS slap the cuffs on Carbone and lead him away.

CARBONE
I want my lawyer.

POLICE OFFICER
You should your tailor.

The second police officer CHUCKLES, looking at Carbone's ripped pants. Smiley faces are everywhere.

EXT. KENNEL - NEARBY - CONTINUOUS

Vinny and Joe are led away in cuffs.

VINNY
I can't believe that we got rescued by cops.

JOE
Me neither. I'm so conflicted.

EXT. KENNEL - NEARBY - CONTINUOUS

Dot is carried into a cage in an animal control truck and locked in with Stella. The dog catcher walks away.

DOT
Rescued from one cage only to be put in another.

Tango lies in the next cage, looking confused.

STELLA (O.S.)
Quiet, Dot.

DOT (O.S.)
I just don't see the difference.

Tango lays his head down, defeated.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. DOG POUND - CAGE - DAY

Tango lies in the pound cage, one of a hundred in the large room. Scores of BARKING DOGS are heard.

Stella and Dot sit in the adjacent cage. Belladonna and Dante share a cage opposite them. Cinder and Costello happily share another cage.

A nearby wall clock reads 9:00.

BELLADONNA
Nothing's changed. You're all still in cages.

STELLA
(smiling)
You're in a cage, now. That's a change I can live with.

A nearby door SQUEAKS open. Baby rushes in, dragging his leash behind him. He runs straight up to Tango's cage.

TANGO
Baby! You're here!

The two jump up on the cage door.

BABY
We're busting you out, kid.

The two smile at each other as Christina and Mike rush to the cage and stoop down to Tango's level.

CHRISTINA
Tango! Thank goodness you're safe!

MIKE
Hey puppy. Glad to see us?

Tango happily BARKS, jumping around the cage. Christina and Mike turn to a nearby DOG CATCHER (35).

DOG CATCHER
Good thing his collar had your phone on it. Makes my job easier.

He opens the cage. Tango and Baby jump around, playing.

TANGO
I really missed you, Baby.

BABY
I missed you too, kid.

Tango looks at Stella, who stands against her cage. He steps over to her and presses a paw against her gate.

TANGO
Stella, I'm sorry I --

STELLA
-- You got your family back, Tango. Don't ever lose them again.

TANGO
I wish you and Dot and Cinder could come with me. I wish you could all be part of my family.

Dot and Stella smile.

STELLA
We are, Tango. We are.

Christina turns to the Catcher.

CHRISTINA
What's going to happen to these other dogs?

DOG CATCHER
These guys? Phone's been ringing off the hook since they were on the news last night.

Tango, Dot and Stella smile at each other.

DOG CATCHER
Come on, you have to fill out some papers before you can take your little guy home.

Christina pulls a red leash from her pocket and puts in on Tango. He licks her face.

CHRISTINA
Come on, Tango.

Tango is led away. He looks over his shoulder as he leaves the room, and sees Stella smiling at him.

INT. DOG POUND LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

The lobby is filled with noisy people. A POUND WORKER (30) stands on a chair, waving to them.

WORKER
People! If you're here to adopt one of the Old Gravy Pier dogs, you gotta fill out a blue form!

He holds up blue sheets of paper. People snatch them from his hand.

WORKER
Take it easy!

Tango walks by all this, smiling.

WORKER (O.S.)
Alright, let's not go ripping my fingers off, okay? Hey, who took my wedding ring? That ain't right.

EXT. NEW YORK HARBOR - DAY

Sunlight glimmers off the water. Boats make their way across like they don't have a care in the world. A ferry boat chugs along, passing Liberty Island.

EXT. FERRY - CONTINUOUS

Christina and Mike stand arm-in-arm on the bow of the ferry. Baby and Tango are next to them, leashed.

Tango sticks his head out between the guardrails, staring at the Statue of Liberty. Baby notices this.

BABY
What'cha looking at, kid?

TANGO
They call it the Statue of Liberty.

BABY
Statue of Liberty? Catchy name.

TANGO
It represents freedom.

BABY
Oh...

TANGO
I always thought that freedom meant just being out of a cage. But now I know it means more. Freedom means being happy.

The ferry continues on its way, toward Manhattan.

TANGO (V.O.)
And you can't be happy unless you're with a family that loves you. You know what I mean?

BABY (V.O.)
Yeah. I think I do.

TANGO (V.O.)
I really missed you Baby.

BABY (V.O.)
I missed you too, Tango... But if you tell anyone, I'm gonna deny it. Understand?

TANGO (V.O.)
(laughing)
Yeah. I understand...

Tango's laughter continues.

Baby's laughter is also heard.

FINAL FADE OUT