

**Starving**

By Henry Rothenberg

## Scene 1

TIME: Half a year ago, 6:00 p.m.

PLACE: The forest by an unknown city.

AT RISE: Bailey (a year-old abandoned pitbull) is sniffing the ground ahead of him. He is surrounded by trees and bushes, all stunning shades of green and red. There is a stream nearby, and you can hear the faint sound of the running water.

*Suddenly, BAILEY lifts his head and perks his ears. He turns his head to look to his left and sprints forward. He runs for less than a minute, and when he stops he's in a clearing that gives way to a muddy ditch. In that ditch, a little puma cub hisses into the air, his back two paws stuck in the mud. BAILEY, without a second thought, leaps down into the ditch and, careful not to get stuck too, walks over to the cub.*

BAILEY: Calm down. I'm going to help you get unstuck. Just don't move.

*The cub's back is to him, so BAILEY grabs him around the neck with his jaws, as he's seen others do, and lifts him to the edge of the ditch. Then, he cautiously jumps back up the side of the ditch, and starts to walk away, seeing that the cub is safe. As he leaves the clearing, he hears leaves rustling and turns around. The cub is there. BAILEY gently nudges the cub back in the direction of the ditch, and once again walks away. Once again, when he turns, the cub is there. He tries, again and again, but every time, the cub is still following.*

BAILEY: *(he thinks for a moment)* If you stay with me, I get to name you. Okay? *(The cub ignores him and comes closer)* It's settled. You're... *(he pauses)* BRADY! *(playfully)* You remind me of myself. You don't have to fend for yourself anymore. I'll keep you safe.

## Scene 2

TIME: Now, noon.

PLACE: The forest by an unknown city.

AT RISE: Bailey is running around Brady is in a clearing with bushes and trees all around. Brady is now much bigger than he is, almost five feet long, with sleek black fur and ribs showing. Brady pounces on Bailey and they both go rolling through trees and bushes until they hit a trunk and leaves cascade down on them.

BAILEY: Ugh. That hurt.

BRADY: *(indignantly)* HAH! You think it hurt you?! What about me? *(He slowly gets off of BAILEY, shakes the leaves off his back, and walks back to the clearing)* Now I'm

hungry. I'm gonna get something to eat.

*As BRADY leaves, Bailey gets up too and watches him. As he slowly slinks away, BAILEY notices his ribs and starts worrying.*

### Scene 3

TIME: 3:00 p.m.

PLACE: The forest by an unknown city.

AT RISE: Bailey paces in the clearing that they've made their home, talking to himself.

BAILEY: *(whispering to himself)* He's getting skinnier and skinnier every day. I shouldn't be able to see his ribs, yet I can! What should I do? What should I do?! *(He looks up as he hears BRADY coming back from wherever he was, and quickly finishes his talk)* We're going to get him to safety. We're gonna go to the city and get a human to care for him. Humans are rich, right? They should be more than capable to feed a puma. *(justifying it to himself)* But that's all they would do. They would feed him. I would take care of him otherwise.

*BRADY emerges from the thicket with a small white animal, a rabbit, in his mouth. He drops it by BAILEY's feet.*

BRADY: You want some? I got it just a few minutes ago. Still fresh!

BAILEY: *(hesitantly)* I would, but don't you think you should eat it? You're getting awfully skinny.

BRADY: Meh. I'm fine.

BAILEY: *(he pauses to consider if he should keep going)* I was thinking we could move. Like maybe to a new area. We're both still puppies, so it should be fine for us to adapt. I was thinking maybe the city!

BRADY: *(laughing to himself)* Two things. One: I'm a cub, not a puppy. And two: Sure. It's really boring here.

BAILEY: *(smiling)* I'm sure you'll like the city much more. I heard that they feed animals like us every day, and we don't even have to do anything for it!

BRADY: It sounds too good to be true.

BAILEY: Hopefully not.

BRADY: Hah. Yeah. Hopefully not.

Scene 4

TIME: 6:00 a.m.

PLACE: The edge of the forest by an unknown city.

AT RISE: The sun is rising behind Bailey and Brady, coloring the sky with red, pink and orange. Brady walks behind Bailey, through the final trees of the forest, and they emerge onto a freeway, no cars in sight.

BRADY: Wow. Look at that. Hard grey dirt.

BAILEY: I think that's concrete.

BRADY: How do you know that?

BAILEY: I used to live in a city.

BRADY: You did?! Why didn't you tell me?

BAILEY: You never asked!

BRADY: *(frustrated)* Fine.

*They cross the freeway in silence until BAILEY feels bad and continues his story.*

BAILEY: I wasn't born out in the forest. I was born in the city, and I was under the care of a human. I don't remember how many siblings I had, but there were a lot. I don't remember my mother either. I think the human moved her and my siblings somewhere else. I lived with him for a few months, but all of a sudden he got really mean and kicked me out. I was a three month old puppy in the middle of a city! I don't remember all the details, but I came out to the forest and found you about seven months later.

BRADY: *(quietly)* I'm sorry.

BAILEY: It's fine. You were abandoned too. And you were even younger. But I know how nice a human can be, even if after a while they turn bad, and they're going to take care of you.

BRADY: Good plan. I can get fat and lazy!

*BAILEY laughs. Then, all of a sudden, BRADY falls. He gets up quickly, thinking he can play it off as a slight misstep, but BAILEY notices. He lets it slide. Then BRADY falls again. And again. On the third fall, BAILEY rushes over to him and picks him up. BAILEY is worried BRADY is weak from hunger.*

BAILEY: What's wrong?

BRADY: (*uncomfortable*) I fell. Must've slipped.

BAILEY: Three times? (*sarcastically*) Yeah right. Come on. We should hurry up.

BRADY: Be right there. (*he gets up and paces after BAILEY*)

### Scene 5

TIME: 1:00 a.m.

PLACE: The outskirts of the unknown city.

AT RISE: Brady and Bailey look down at the city from the top of a nearby hill. Bailey starts down the hill. With a breath to prepare and calm himself, Brady follows.

*They stop at the bottom of the hill, where the green grass of the forest meets the cold concrete of the city. They start forward and as they cross a street, an enormous truck honks at them, scaring BRADY. He bolts and BAILEY chases after him.*

BAILEY: Wait! It was just a truck!

*BRADY hears him and slows down. Finally, he stops in front of a market.*

BRADY: What's a truck?

BAILEY: That thing that scared you.

BRADY: Very descriptive. (*He looks back toward the market and seems to forget the conversation at hand*) Let's eat. I smell something really good.

BAILEY: Good idea. And since it's still dark out, no humans will be out either.

BRADY: (*confused*) But I thought we want humans.

BAILEY: Yes, but they'd stop us from getting food unless they give it to us. It's confusing. They think they're in charge of everything.

*They enter the store and find a whole section of fruits. BRADY dives in gobbling food up like animals while BAILEY watches and laughs. Then, he brings BRADY to the meat section and they fill themselves up.*

### Scene 6

TIME: 8:00 a.m.

PLACE: The market in the unknown city.

AT RISE: Bailey and Brady are both asleep in the corner of the market. A human comes in with keys and, seeing them, starts to scream, waking them up. They get up drowsily and start walking toward the human. The human screams again and runs away.

BAILEY: Brady! Get the human. We want a human to care for us. This might be the one!

*BRADY leaps off a counter and pounces on the human, who is knocked to the ground and screams more.*

BAILEY: Ok. From what I can tell, this human is a woman, and a very loud one.

*Abruptly, three men come in the front of the store, running, alerted by the woman's screaming. They see BRADY on top of her, and they come running forward. BRADY freaks out and jumps off the woman to be next to BAILEY, who runs out, with BRADY close behind.*

BAILEY: Well, I don't think our first encounter with a human went exactly as planned. They're supposed to like us. Not be afraid of us. This is gonna make our job much harder.

BRADY: But we ate well.

BAILEY: Yes we did.

*They start walking toward an alley and behind them, they hear another scream. They turn around and see another human. They approach him, and he falls to the ground, as if dead. Seeing this, BAILEY and BRADY take off.*

### Scene 7

TIME: 9:00 p.m.

PLACE: The center of the city.

AT RISE: Bailey and Brady are walking down another alley, exhausted from the day's

events. They see an open door and walk towards it.

BAILEY: Should we try to get another human to take us?

BRADY: Sure. At worst, we'll just have to run again.

BAILEY: True. I'm starting to get used to their odd behavior.

*They enter the doorway. Slowly, they creep through the halls, on the balls of their paws, and find no one there. They quietly pace to the end of the hall and lay down for the night. At around midnight, BRADY wakes up. He hears another noise from the other side of the hallway: quiet shuffling of feet.*

BRADY: Did you hear that? What do you think *that* was?

*Before BRADY can think better of it, he gets up to investigate. He pushes open the door to the other side of the hallway with his nose and enters. A human is sitting in a rocking chair, looking at a glowing tablet.*

BRADY: *(to himself)* Does this guy look rich enough to take care of me *and* Bailey? I hope so. Otherwise we'll just have to keep looking. Bailey has way too much responsibility. He should just be able to relax and rest.

*The man looks up and, as seems the custom of seeing a puma, screams. Quickly though, he quiets. BRADY, used to the screaming now, hasn't budged. Seeing this, the man takes on a pale shade of green and gets up, spreading his arms the way you would to scare off a bear. After a few minutes of this, BRADY lies down. The man takes this as some sign of submission, and he puts his hands down and cautiously walks towards BRADY, with his hands outstretched. As soon as the man is within distance, BRADY gets up and bares his teeth. The man is taken aback and falls to the floor, surprised. BRADY pounces and puts his front two paws on the man's chest, holding him in place.*

*Lights down on BRADY's location. Lights up on BAILEY's location.*

### Scene 8

TIME: 5:45 a.m.

PLACE: The center of the city in the seemingly abandoned house.

AT RISE: Bailey wakes up and looks around. At first he doesn't realize where he is, but he quickly remembers. He rubs his eyes with his paws to get the fuzziness out of them and looks around again. He doesn't see Brady. He gets up, eyes wide, and barks.

BAILEY: (desperately) BRADY!!

*From down the hall, he hears a reply.*

BRADY: (tiredly) In here!

*Lights up on BRADY's location. BAILEY trots down the hall and enters the room. He takes everything in. BRADY on top of the human male. The human looks terrified and confused. BAILEY walks over to them.*

BAILEY: Brady, get off the poor guy. He must live here. Nice job though, finding us a human. How long have you been here?

BRADY: I think around midnight or something like that. I'm very tired at least. (BAILEY moves to take the human from him) Thanks.

*Instead of getting on top of the human, BAILEY sits to the side and watches. The human cautiously gets up and, seeing a dog, his face brightens. He opens his mouth and strange noises come out. BAILEY recognizes the sounds from when he was a pet, but he doesn't know what they mean. The man looks slightly more happy now and moves about the room more freely.*

BRADY: What's he saying?

BAILEY: I don't know. He's speaking the human language, but I wasn't a pet long enough to know how to speak it.

BRADY: What's a pet?

BAILEY: It's what I was when I was in the city. I was my owner's pet. I got fed and bathed and got to play all day. I learned tricks and I got fed every time I did one. That's what we're trying to get from this human.

BRADY: If all it takes is learning tricks, that sounds really fun.

*They both look back at the man, who is slowly walking around the room towards them, and watch. The man arrives to BAILEY and tentatively reaches his hand out, which BAILEY puts on his snout. He still shies away from BRADY, but he seems comfortable with BAILEY. BRADY leaves the room to get some sleep and the second he's gone, the man lets out a sigh and relaxes. More strange sounds come out of his mouth as he tries to talk to BAILEY and BAILEY wags his tail, thinking that by acting happy, the man would like him more. The man pats his head and lifts something out of his clothes. It's the glowing tablet. He looks at it and touches it. He puts it up to his ear and starts to talk again. BAILEY tilts his head to the side, confused.*

BAILEY: Y'know, I don't think I like this guy anymore. Even *he* doesn't like Brady. He's not gonna care for us both. But he does have good judgment. He likes dogs more



than cats.

### Scene 9

TIME: 6:15 a.m.

PLACE: The center of the city in the seemingly abandoned house.

AT RISE: Bailey is watching the man, who, after putting the tablet back in his pocket, is looking relieved and happy. Brady is in the room across the hall, sleeping.

*BAILEY hears a rumbling sound and growls. The man seems startled and looks out of the window. He lifts the curtain and waves. BAILEY can't see, so he looks around and runs to the door. BRADY comes in, awakened by the rumbling noise. Together, they walk to the entrance to the house. Outside is one of those big trucks, filled with humans wearing weird looking clothes. BRADY backs up and BAILEY follows. Seeing them, one human, a woman, looks back at the others and yells. They all turn towards the animals and one takes a net from the truck. BAILEY runs.*

BAILEY: RUN BRADY! I THINK THEY WANT TO ATTACK US!

BRADY: Why? We haven't done anything!

BAILEY: I DON'T KNOW! JUST RUN!

*BRADY sprints ahead and turns back.*

BRADY: Why are you yelling? *(his eyes widen in surprise)* Are you scared of them?

BAILEY: *(panting)* YES! When my old owner kicked me out, I was with people like these for a while before I escaped.

BRADY: You had to *escape*?!

BAILEY: Yes. NOW RUN!

*They turn back after talking, still running, and see no one. They reach the end of the alley and turn to the left, right into the back of another parked truck. The humans turn around and start yelling again, pointing at BRADY. BRADY and BAILEY take off running again, in the opposite direction.*

BAILEY: Wait! If we go straight, that'll lead us right to them! Turn now. Into the doorway.

*They turn into the abandoned house again and keep running down the hall. They pass the room where they found the man and run straight. BAILEY sprints ahead and without pause, crashes*

*through a window. They emerge on a street. BAILEY looks around and runs to his right. BRADY follows.*

### Scene 10

TIME: 6:50 a.m.

PLACE: The edge of the city.

AT RISE: Bailey and Brady are out of breath and stop. There's no sign of the pursuing humans. Bailey looks back at the city and sighs.

BAILEY: I'm sorry. I thought this would turn out much better.

BRADY: Thanks. *(short pause)* Let's go.

*BAILEY and BRADY start running again, this time slower. BRADY's stomach gurgles and they stop.*

BAILEY: Well this doesn't help. *(quietly listing off the bad things that've happened)* We haven't eaten since yesterday morning, plus, we've been running all of this morning. We came to get more food, and now we're hungrier than ever. I'm so sorry Brady. Let's go back to the forest.

*BRADY listens but doesn't respond. He looks at BAILEY as if to say "Really?" And starts walking to the right, away from both the forest and the city. BAILEY catches up.*

BAILEY: BRADY! *(exasperated)* What are you doing?!

BRADY: You want us to go back to where we decided to leave. That wouldn't help us. We were slowly starving there, and we're slowly starving here. I'm going to the other forest. You can see it from here.

*BAILEY strains his eyes and makes out blurry green trees in the direction they're headed.*

BAILEY: *(submissively)* Fine. Let's go.

### Scene 11

TIME: 8:00 a.m.

PLACE: The new forest.

AT RISE: Brady is out hunting, already used to the new forest. There's food everywhere!

Bailey is standing on a rock out in the middle of a stream, lapping up water with his tongue. As he heads back to shore, he slips on a rock and gets stuck in the mud. He barks, hoping Brady will hear.

BAILEY:     *(half-laughs, half-sobs to himself)* Wow. It would suck if I just got stuck here and he couldn't find me. After all this.

*Quickly, after only a few minutes of barking, BRADY arrives. BRADY, without a second thought, leaps down into the stream, and, careful not to fall in too, walks over to BAILEY. His back is to BRADY, so he grabs him around the neck with his jaws, as he's had others do to him, and lifts him to the shore. Then, he cautiously jumps back to the shore, and starts to walk away, seeing that BAILEY is safe.*

BRADY:     *(laughing)* Just like when you saved me.

**END PLAY**