

"MAN'S BEST FRIEND"

by

Le Han

FADE IN:

INT. APARTMENT/LIVING ROOM - DAY

In the corner of an old-fashioned living room, a small pug is sleeping on his bed. He is snoring gently. After one or two minutes, he wakes up, gets off the bed and slowly stretches his short back. He walks sluggishly toward his food bowl lying on the wooden floor.

He eats his breakfast (cheap commercial canned food), then drinks some water from the ceramic bowl nearby. Not very tasty, but at least it is filling. He is full now, all ready for a new fresh day.

But, like most of his typical days, he climbs back into the warm, cushiony bed and sleeps until noon.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. APARTMENT/LIVING ROOM - DAY

A thin, old gentleman enters the room. The pug is still daydreaming on his bed, and pays little attention to his owner. The man puts on his jacket and hat, grabs the leash then calls out to the lazy pug.

MAN

Buddy!

Buddy grudgingly rolls off his bed. They go for a walk.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - DAY

Buddy and the old man are walking down the street. They walk quietly, side by side. Buddy is having fun investigating every object he comes across lying on the pavement. Then he notices something. At the far end of the road, someone is running toward them.

A young woman, in full exercise gear, is jogging. She is not alone. Sprinting alongside with her, is a Great Dane, on leash.

Buddy has never seen such a dog in his life. He starts to admire the physical look of the Dane. This Great Dane's color is harlequin: pure white with black torn patches all

over his entire body. He has a massive head with two impressive cropped ears. His muscular chest is pumping comfortably. His big dark paws are thumping heavily on the ground. A magnificent creature. Comparing to the great Great Dane, Buddy might as well be an entirely different species. He's small, short, and fat.

The young woman and the Dane run past Buddy and the old man. She smiles at them cheerfully, the old man nods in return. When they resume their walk, Buddy looks worried and confused.

One has to wonder, what can a dog possibly be confused about?

MAN

Now that's a dog.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. APARTMENT/LIVING ROOM - DAY

We are back in the living room, Buddy is sleeping again, this time on the floor. He wakes up, stretches his back, then goes eat his breakfast.

When he finishes, he takes a dump right on the living room's carpet, then scratches the ground with both of his hind legs. His action serves little purpose in this surrounding, yet he does it anyways. Buddy races back to his bed. There is sleeping to do.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Buddy is spending time with his owner. The old man is training him. Nothing complicated, just basic obedience lesson. Buddy is a very forgetful student.

MAN

(happily)
Okay boy, come on, **SIT!**

We hear a "**CLICK**" as the old man clicks on his "clicker".

(Clicker is basically a tool to condition dogs when giving them order. It works well on Buddy)

Buddy sits.

MAN (CONT'D)
Very good, here.

He gives Buddy the treat. Yum!

The old man shows his hand.

MAN (CONT'D)
Okay, hand.
"CLICK"

Buddy raises his paw. The old man shakes it.

MAN (CONT'D)
(gives treat)
Good boy. Again.

Buddy puts out his paw automatically. His owner shakes it, then gives him his treat.

MAN (CONT'D)
Now, roll over. Roll over.
"CLICK"

Buddy starts to lie down, then roll his body over once, then twice. He stops, looks up for approval.

MAN (CONT'D)
And again.

Buddy does what he is told.

MAN (CONT'D)
Good, good. Okay, up, up.

Buddy gets up, waits for his last order.

The old man put together his index and middle finger to imitate a gun. He playfully points his "gun-finger" at Buddy's forehead.

Buddy patiently wait for the climax.

MAN (CONT'D)
(dramatically)
BANG!

Buddy drops to the floor, playing possum.

The old man laugh heartily and applause Buddy.

MAN (CONT'D)

Okay, okay, who's a good boy.
Who's a good boy. Here you go.
Here you go.

Buddy chews on his treat happily. He doesn't care much about the exercise. He never does.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. APARTMENT/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Another day for Buddy. He wakes up, stretches his short, fat back. He comes right for the food bowl, boy, is he hungry. Those obedience lessons sure are tiring.

But the bowl is empty. No breakfast today. Buddy is inconsolable. He drinks lots of water instead and get back to bed.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

The owner's wife, Mrs. **Mary** is carrying Buddy under her arm. She looks like your typical grandma. She is wearing a wool, green jacket and carrying an old handbag. She is taking Buddy to **FLUFFY PUPPY**-the local pet shop in town. It's shopping time.

INT. PET SHOP - DAY

The staffs greet Mary as she walks in the shop. Everybody are nice and polite. It is very bright in here, it can pass for one of Macy's fashion outlet. All sorts of pet product you can think of, you can find them in here. The catch is they are quite expensive.

Mary walks by the "**ADOPTION CENTRE**" section, where abandoned pets are kept for rehoming. Some cats, mostly dogs. They have all kinds: one pit bull, lots of poodles, some are mixed breed. Not many black dogs, they are not popular.

Buddy watches the dogs sleeping behind the glass doors, lying on pile of crumbing newspaper. They are all housed individually. Each have a water dispenser and a metal bowl. Most have letters pinned on their enclosure, stating

their names, hobbies, and wishes to be taken. Buddy don't know this, but they all living on borrowed time.

CUT TO:

Mary now reaches the **DOG'S LEASH SECTION**. Buddy is sitting beside her. She is choosing a new lease for him. She tries a couple of leashes on him, finally settle for one. Mary glances automatically at the tiny price tag. It costs twenty four dollars and sixty night cents. She put it in her shopping cart.

CUT TO:

They walk by the **TOY SECTION**. Mary does not buy any for Buddy.

At the **SHAMPOO SECTION**, she picks out a bottle. It costs ten fifty. Each time Mary takes a peak at the price tag, we hear a "KACHING" sound effect.

CUT TO:

They are now at the most popular section of the shop. Aisle D2: **FOOD SECTION**.

A SEA OF DOG'S FOOD, **BAGS AND CANS**. We see canned food, dry food, frozen food, biscuit and bakery, bones and jerky... Labels are all over the place: grain free, natural chicken, organic beef, reduced fat, raw...

Mary selects three "10 lb" bags of dry food and ask for the staff to help her putting them in her cart.

She pushes the cart (Buddy now's riding in it), to the register. A cheerful middle age lady greets her.

CASHIER

(makes silly face to
Buddy)

Hello, oh, look at the little guy.
How are you?

Buddy licks her hand.

CASHIER (CONT'D)

He's lovely, isn't he? Okay,
that's gonna be all for you today?

MARY

Yes.

CASHIER

(scanning the goods)
 Alright, three bags of organic dried food. Oh I am so glad you buy these expensive brands, they are way better than the cheap stuff. I buy this brand myself for my dog at home. These are the good stuff. Okie dokie, one leash, one bottle of shampoo. Your total would be two hundred and twenty four.

MARY

Alright.

She hands the cashier her card.

CASHIER

(salesly)
 Thank you. You're all set. We have a special promotion next week if you like to come in.

MARY

(patient)
 I'll look into that. Thank you.

CASHIER

Bye bye now, little guy. Come back soon.

Mary pushes her cart out to the parking lot. She puts the bags in the backseat of the car and places Buddy in the passenger seat. They head home.

INT. CAR - DAY

Buddy looks out of the car window. He has already forgotten what he had seen. Probably best.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. APARTMENT/LIVING ROOM - DAY

It is another morning for Buddy. He wakes up and races to the bowl. Yay! Fresh dry food. He has not tried this type before. He wolfs down his breakfast, drinks some water, then wander around a bit.

Buddy hears barking outside. Quickly he jumps on the couch, pushes the curtain outtta the way with his flat nose and looks through the glass window to investigate. Sure enough,

there is another dog outside. And it is a she. A Pekingese. She is wearing a pink sweater with white polka dots. Her owner, a scrawny kid, is talking to Mary and her husband. Buddy gets excited, he barks and scratches the glass with his chubby paws to get the Pekingese's attention. AND SHE LOOKS UP, even wags her silky tail. Buddy is overjoy.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

It is drizzling outside. The fireplace is burning bright. Buddy is not in the living room.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN/DINING TABLE - NIGHT

Completely darkness. No Buddy.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM/HALLWAY - NIGHT

There is Buddy, he is sitting in the hallway, outside of the master bedroom. The bedroom's door is slightly open. We can hear argument. Buddy is sitting in semi-darkness, illuminated by the gloomy bedroom's light that shines through the gap. He is listening. The old man and his wife are arguing back and forth. Their voices are getting louder and louder that we can hear them clearly now.

MAN

... It's best to fix him, Mary, it will do him good.

MARY

No, I don't want you to do it. He doesn't need to be fixed.

MAN

It will improve his behavior. He will be more tame. It would be easier to train him once he's fixed.

MARY

What's about his health? You fix him, and he gets extra problem. He could get diabetes, he could get fat, or cancer. Is that what you want?

MAN

He won't get any of that if they do him right, I told you.

MARY

And besides, I think it's just wrong to do it. God made him the way he is and there is nothing he could do about it. It's cruel to interfere.

MAN

Mary, the whole point of fixing dogs is keeping their number down... to a manageable figure. Do you know how many dogs they gas a year because people don't like to fix their pets?

MARY

(silent)

MAN

Mary, it's for their own good. It's essential for them. We should be responsible owner and do the right thing. It will not affect his health, I promise.

MARY

Alright, you do what you think is best for him, Stephen.

Now we know his name- Stephen.

STEPHEN

Thank you, dear.

The debate is over. Stephen stands up and closes the bedroom's door. The light shines through the hallway is cut off. Buddy sits alone in the dark.

It's raining cats and dogs outside.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. APARTMENT/LIVING ROOM - DAY

An old mantel clock is chiming loudly. It is 4 P.M.

Buddy is awake, he is sitting in the middle of the living room. He is staring at some painting on a wall. His food and drink are untouched. It seems many years have passed, since some furniture are missing, but we are not certain.

Stephen and Mary enter the room, they walk past Buddy. Buddy keeps on staring at the painting.

Stephen and Mary sit down at the dining table. They are having evening tea (Black Lapsang and Custard Creams biscuit). Mary is pouring the smoked tea into Stephen's cup.

STEPHEN

Thank you

He takes a sip. Too hot.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)

(stirring the tea)

... so you talk to him?

MARY

He said he can't make it today. So we reschedule for next week.

STEPHEN

Monday?

MARY

Wednesday.

STEPHEN

Hmmm... well, it's kinda sad that he's not gonna be around us anymore.

MARY

(matter-of-factly)

It doesn't eat anymore Stephen, it's time.

(beat)

We can get another one.

Stephen looks at his wife, then says.

STEPHEN

I rather we do it at home.

MARY

That's way too expensive. Steve. I'd rather drive him to the vet. Plus, we have to pay extra to dispose his body.

(beat)

You can try the shelter, see if they have any option.

STEPHEN

They only gas them over there. I guess it's cheaper, but...takes a while for them to die.

MARY

We just stick to the old plan, then.

STEPHEN

Yeah, poor thing.

They eat their biscuits in silence. Then Mary speaks.

MARY

The guy at the vet told me something interesting. He said people can clone their dog now.

STEPHEN

Clone? How?

MARY

He said, when it's dead, don't bury it yet, wraps its body in a blanket and put in the cooler. When you're ready, take it to the lab, there they cut out a piece of his stomach and preserve it.

STEPHEN

What they do with it?

MARY

Well, the piece of flesh has the dog's DNA in it, so I guess they can remove the cell and mix it with the egg to create the embryo, Then transfer the embryo into another "mom" dog and she gives birth to the clone.

STEPHEN

You're kidding!
(beat)
How much does it cost?

MARY

The website says it costs sixteen hundred dollars to preserve the piece alone. As for the whole deal, somewhere around fifty thousands.

STEPHEN

Fifty thousands?

MARY

(casually)

For dog. Cat is twenty-five.

STEPHEN

Will it be the exact dog?

MARY

It should. It's his clone.

STEPHEN

No, I mean it's obviously not the same dog that died, they can't bring him back right?

MARY

I think it's more like an identical twin. Their DNA are the same.

STEPHEN

What about personality?

MARY

Might be different.

STEPHEN

So, the clone might behave like an entirely different dog?

MARY

It's possible.

STEPHEN

Then what's the POINT?

MARY

NOTHING. I suppose some folks had difficult time saying goodbye to their pets. So it has sentimental value in maintaining the illusion.

STEPHEN

Crazy business.

MARY

Well, that's the world we live in now.

STEPHEN

Might as well get another dog.

MARY

I think it is fascinating.

STEPHEN

We don't have that kind of money.

The two continue their discussion over the pointlessness of the cloning business.

Meanwhile, Buddy is sitting alone in the living room. We finally get to see what he's been looking at. He is looking at a portrait of a TIMBER WOLF. It's a very realistic portrait.

Buddy doesn't have much longer to live. Death is drawing near now. One could argue that death is his only chance to freedom, in this cycle. To be freed from the cruel system of selective breeding that allows his suffering, to be freed from all the conditioning training that he has to go through, to be labeled as a "good dog". To be freed of the ruthless exploitation that he and his kind has to endure in the commercial world, where profit matters most. To be freed of facing the cold-blooded "pet population control".

Even now, in the face of Death, this new invention, the business of cloning technology could allow him to be reborn, to serve his Master until the end of Time.

There is no escape.

Outside the glass window, the sun is set.

FADE OUT:

THE END