

Interview at the Dog Pound

As a journalist, I decided to go to the dog pound, and interview some of the inmates. I wanted to know what it was like in there from their perspective. What follows is not for the faint of heart.

I entered the building, and one of the workers accompanied me to the holding area. This is where dogs are kept before they are allowed up for adoption IF they are allowed up for adoption. If the dogs are found to be aggressive in any way, euthanasia is employed. Fortunately, if fortunately is the word to be used here this is a Canadian establishment, and they use lethal injection, not a gas chamber.

The pound worker led me past a big steel door that says Employees Only. What is in there? I asked. From the look he gave me, I knew that this is where dogs go in, and never return.

We moved on to a row of kennels. The dogs were barking loudly, there was the acrid smell of urine and feces, and a feeling of despair seemed to permeate the room.

Go ahead, the worker said. They're all yours.

Pete

I looked into the first kennel, and saw only the back of a medium sized dog who was curled up in the corner of his kennel, shivering. He was mostly white, with some black spots. Hello? I said. May I come in? He lifted his head, as though it weighed more than he could bear. When he looked at me, I could see he was a Pit bull. His eyes were gentle, but filled with grief.

Enter, was all he said.

I stepped in, closing the gate behind me. He put his head back down, facing away from me. I crouched down a few feet away.

My name is Pete. Petey my Master called me, he said, still not looking at me. Why are you here Pete? I asked.

I am here because Master cannot afford to move to another province. I am here because someone with power said I am vicious, and a killer. Someone who had never met me. Master took me for a walk one day, and some lady started to scream when she saw me. I got frightened, and barked at her. The dog police came, and they took me away. I have been with Master for 10 years. The last time I saw him, he just held me and cried. He kept telling me he was sorry. I worry for him. Whatever will he do without me? Pete shivered even more.

A tear slid down my face. I am supposed to remain objective, but this was wrong so wrong.

Thank you Pete. I said. He said nothing as I got up and left his kennel.

Popper

The kennel next to Pete held a very young looking dog. Pure Border Collie by my guess. He stood on his hind legs, looking at me through the gate.

Hello. My name is Popper. He tilted his head. Are you here to take me home?

No, I'm sorry, I replied. But I would like to talk with you.

Sure. What would you like to talk about?

Popper, how did you come to be in this place? I asked.

Popper dropped down from the gate, with a perplexed look on his face. He walked to the back of the kennel, then back to the front. I noticed he had one blue eye, and one brown. He was quite beautiful. His black and white coat was shiny and thick.

I am not certain WHY I am here. I think maybe my family will come back for me. They bought me when I was only 6 weeks old. I remember they said how smart Border Collies are, and how it would be so easy to train me. They were very excited at first. The little ones played with me all the time. But the trouble with little Masters is, they refuse to stay in a group. I constantly had to nip their heels to keep them together. He looked confused. Why won't they stay in a group? he sighed. So I did what I thought I should do. I am not quite sure why the little ones screamed when I did my job, but they did, and the Masters got very angry at me. They also got angry when I had to relieve myself, and did so in the house. I am not sure where they expected me to go. All they said was that I was the smartest breed in the world, and I should just KNOW better. Then they left me in the yard for a month or so.

I got bored a lot, and I dug holes in the grass. The next thing I knew, the Masters brought me here.

Popper jumped back up on the gate, his white paws protruding through the links. He looked at me with his lovely eyes, and asked Will you please let them know I want to come home? Please tell them I promise I will be good?

I will Popper, I said.

Spartan

My heart was breaking. I was beginning to regret coming here, but their stories had to be told. I moved along. The next dog I saw looked to be easily 100 lbs., a Rottweiler. He was handsome indeed, except for the scars on his face and back. He tilted his head, and looked me right in the eyes.

Hello. Who are you? he asked.

I am a reporter, I replied. May I speak with you for a little while?

Most certainly. My name is Spartan. You can come in, I won't bite, he said.

Thank you Spartan. I will.

I entered his kennel, reached out and stroked his giant head. He made a loud grumbling noise, and closed his eyes.

Spartan, why are you here?

Before he could answer my question, he was suddenly in the grip of a nasty coughing spasm. It sounded painful.

Please excuse me, he said when it passed. Kennel cough. It seems all of us who come in here get it.

Why am I here? Well, about two years ago, I was born in the backyard of some person I can't even recall. I had 11 brothers and sisters. I recall a day when a big man came and gave that person some money, and took me away from my mother. They had to chain her up, as she was very angry that he took me. They chained her and beat her. I came to know the man by the name of Jim. I overheard him telling his friends that I would grow up to be big and mean like my mother. But as I grew older, all I wanted to do was play and be friends with everyone. Jim said I needed to be taught how to be mean, so he chained me up in the yard. No more house for me, he said, I was too spoiled. When people came by to visit, I was so happy to see them. I wanted them to come and play. But that made Jim angry, so he beat me with sticks and chains. When he came near, I would roll onto my back so he would know I wasn't a bad dog. That made him beat me more. Spartan's eyes clouded with grief. Then he brought me here.

I reached out and stroked Spartan's massive gentle head once more. I am so sorry Spartan. Some people are just plain evil. I gave him a kiss and left his kennel.

As I walked away, Spartan called out, What will happen to me, nice lady?

I shook my head. I can't say Spartan. Maybe someone kind will come and get you. We can only hope.

Patsy

I walked a little further down. I could see a shape moving at the back of the next kennel. Hello? I called out. Suddenly the shape lunged at the gate in a fury, barking and gnashing its teeth. I stumbled backwards, and crashed into an adjacent kennel. The other dogs began barking loudly and jumping at their gates.

Don't go near her, a small female voice came from behind me. She's mad.

I gathered myself back together, and saw a little Jack Russell Terrier behind me.

Thanks for the warning, I was still trembling. Across the way, the other dog, apparently a Husky and German Shepherd cross, was glaring at me, lips curled back revealing brown stained teeth. Her ribs and hips showed through her dull, matted grey coat.

The little dog invited me into her kennel, and I gladly went in.

Who are you?

My name is Patsy. The little brown and white dog held a paw up to the gate in greeting.

My owner surrendered me. She said she wanted a cute little dog like the one on the TV show, Frasier. She didn't bother to look into the type of dog I am. Patsy heaved a sigh.

I suppose she expected me to just lie about and only need a short walk each day, just like Eddie, but my energy was so high that I needed to run and play. She glanced at her surroundings. Now I am here. I suppose it could be worse. I could be like her. Patsy looked towards the still growling dog across the way.

What happened to make her so vicious? I asked.

From what we could gather, she replied, she was found tied in a back yard. She only had a three foot chain. Some days there was no water. Rarely was there any food. One day a nice neighbor came by and brought her some meat. By then it was too late. She was already mad. She broke off her chain, and bit the poor man badly. We know she will be going behind the steel door. I am sad to say, I think it will be best. Perhaps then she will know some peace.

Just then, the door at the end of the building opened, and a woman stepped inside. All the dogs began to bark wildly, then one by one, they went quiet.

I whispered to Patsy, Who is that? Why have all the dogs gone quiet?

Patsy breathed deeply through her little nose, and closed her eyes. SHE is a Rescuer. Can't you smell it? she asked.

Smell what? I was confused.

Compassion. Love. Sorrow. It emanates from her pores. She is here for one of us, but nobody knows who just yet. Patsy looked hopeful.

The Rescuer moved from kennel to kennel, looking at each dog. I sat quietly watching. I could see tears in her eyes as she made eye contact with each one. She stopped at Spartan's cage and spoke quietly to him.

No more beatings my man. No more. You are coming with me. From here on in, it's all going to get better.

The Rescuer produced a leash, opened the kennel door, and took Spartan away. As he walked beside her, his little stubby tail wagged with delight.

Patsy sighed again. I could see the disappointment in her eyes, and it grieved me. They all had the same look, as they watched The Rescuer depart.

I am so sorry Patsy, I said in a whisper. But you are a little dog, and everyone loves little dogs. I am convinced you will be rescued soon. Patsy's brown eyes twinkled at me, a little bit of hope returning.

I had heard and seen enough. I needed to tell people how it was for these unfortunate creatures. They were all here through no fault of their own. I stood to leave. I passed by many other dogs I did not interview, looking at each one, wishing I could take them all home with me and give them the love they deserved.

I stood by the door taking one last glance back, when it opened, and one of the pound workers came in. His face was drawn and sad. He walked by without a word, and stopped at Pete's kennel. I heard him take a deep breath, then he paused, and opened the kennel door.

The words were muffled, but I am sure I heard him say I'm sorry old boy.

He came out, with Petey in tow. The old dog's head hung down in resignation, and they both disappeared behind the big steel door.

(Forwarded with consent) by Cindy Knox Brandywine Boxers