

BLACK

SUPER:

Fe·ral/adjective: (especially of an animal) in a wild state, especially after escape from captivity or domestication.

FADE IN:

EXT. ABANDONED HOUSE - UNDER PORCH - DAY

ROCKY, a gentle giant of a Bernese mountain dog, lays deep in a dug out dirt hole beneath the porch of an abandoned house.

His fur is matted, the white pieces so caked with dirt, it's hard to make out his breed.

MEL (V.O.)

Dogs are funny things. Their whole existence is to please, to bring joy, to love.

Rocky stirs awake, shaking off his sleep. With a big yawn, he rises and edges out from under the porch.

EXT. ABANDONED HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

Rocky slowly pokes his head out from beneath the rotting wooden stairs and peers through the opening, looking up and down the street.

Finding it empty, he slowly moves around the staircase, only his head appearing. After one final look, he cautiously trots into the front yard.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Rocky makes his way out of the front yard and onto the sidewalk, where his cautious trot becomes a smooth stride.

Most of the houses he passes are barely standing, rotted from the inside out.

Rocky comes to the end of the sidewalk and stops. He hesitates on the corner. He slyly looks around in each direction, then slowly crosses the road to another abandoned house.

EXT. SECOND ABANDONED HOUSE - DAY

Rocky's gait is hurried in fear, his tail is tucked between his legs, his ears alert.

A large CLANG from metal garbage cans startles him, and makes him stop dead in his tracks.

He frantically looks in the direction of the noise. He sees TWO GARBAGE MEN tossing cans as they load up the truck. They spot him and approach, calling out to him.

GARBAGE MAN #1
Hey, buddy. Here boy.

GARBAGE MAN #2
Come on fella.

They continue walking toward him, Garbage Man #1 with a lid still in his hands.

Rocky remains still.

Panic rises in his eyes the closer they get.

As Garbage Man #1 reaches to touch him, Rocky backs away, GROWLING.

The men jump back in fear.

Rocky GROWLS and BARKS as he backs away. The men get angry and Garbage Man #1 throws the lid at the dog, striking him in the face.

Rocky YELPS, the men LAUGH. Rocky breaks into a full sprint, then dives under the porch of the second abandoned house.

GARBAGE MAN #1
Damn dog.

GARBAGE MAN #2
Don't know what's good for him.

The garbage men return to their task.

EXT. SECOND ABANDONED HOUSE - UNDER PORCH - DAY

A panting Rocky takes shelter from the men. He quickly lays down in a lump placing his head on his paw, his soulful eyes dripping with sadness.

MEL (V.O.)
How quickly that purpose can be
shattered.

EXT. SECOND ABANDONED HOUSE - UNDER PORCH - LATER

Rocky lays in the same position.

He gently lifts his head, listening to the sounds around him. Not hearing any humans, he rises and slowly moves out from under the porch.

EXT. SECOND ABANDONED HOUSE - DAY

Rocky stops for a beat outside of the porch, looks around him, then turns towards the back of the house.

EXT. SECOND ABANDONED HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY

Rocky enters the backyard and heads straight for a door that's ajar, going down the stairs inside.

INT. SECOND ABANDONED HOUSE - BASEMENT - DAY

It's dark with only shards of sunlight peaking through the rotted boards of the house.

Rocky knows where he's going, trotting down the path his paws have made over time.

He turns a corner revealing RUBY, a skinny milk-filled yellow lab, five puppies on one side and a new dish of food on the other.

Rocky leans into Ruby sniffing her snout, then moves to the container of food where he eats a couple mouthfuls before leaving the rest.

He moves toward the puppies, sniffing a few, then settles down across from Ruby.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - FIELD ACROSS SECOND ABANDONED HOUSE - DAY

MEL moves from behind her telescoping camera lens, looking to CONRAD with a smile.

MEL
He made it. He's with Ruby and the
pups now.

Mel is in her 40s, a rough life seen in the crinkles on her face and the scar under her eye. She's a survivor, but one with a compassionate heart. Conrad, 6, is tall and skinny for his age with an inquisitive mind.

CONRAD

How'd you know she'd take it - the food?

MEL

I've been coming out here for weeks now. Slowly earning her trust. I've seen them together walking about. I finally found the puppies yesterday. Now that we know they're here, we'll come back and set some traps.

She picks up her camera and heads back across the field, Conrad on her heels.

CONRAD

Set traps? You're not gonna kill them are you?

MEL

(laughs)

Of course not. We trap them so we can take them to a safe place. This isn't the best part of town, and if certain people got wind of the puppies, they might steal them.

CONRAD

For like, dog fighting?

MEL

Well, yeah, that, or puppy mills.

CONRAD

That's where they make the girl dogs keep having puppies, right?

MEL

Right.

(beat)

I wish you didn't know so much.

CONRAD

Why? I thought you liked that I'm smart.

At their car, she stops and turns towards her son.

MEL

I do. I just wish you didn't have to know about these things. I really wish they didn't exist.

CONRAD

Maybe one day?

MEL

Yeah, maybe one day. Come on, kiddo, let's head out.

Mel opens the back passenger door to her car and helps Conrad in. She buckles him up in his booster seat then shuts the door.

Taking one last look toward Rocky and his family, she opens her door, gets in the driver's seat, starts the car, and pulls away.