

A Dog, A Cat, and a Bird Contemplate Quarantine

House pets embrace the new reality of sheltering in
place during the pandemic. . . .

by Christina Hamlett

Characters

THE DOG, a happy-go-lucky people-
pleaser

THE CAT (“there’s a reason
Egyptians worshipped us”)

THE BIRD, a limited view but a
dreamer nonetheless

TIME: *Present day.*

SETTING: *A modern living room, minimalist or detailed. The furniture is aligned center stage—a big, lumpy chair for the dog, a tapestry chaise for the cat, a high stool or ladder for the bird.*

AT RISE: *CAT is reclining on chaise and aimlessly batting a plastic fish toy on the end of a short fishing rod. BIRD stretches, preens, and examines its claws. After a moment, the excitable DOG enters right, unclips a leash from its collar and happily jumps into the lumpy chair.*

DOG: Bowzers wowzers! That was The Best.One.Ever.

CAT (*Indifferently*): What was the best? Where have you been?

DOG: I told you when I left. Karen took me for a walk.

CAT: Isn’t that like the bazillionth one you’ve been on today?

DOG: Nope. Only 17. If it doesn’t rain, we can get in three more before dinner!

CAT: If you keep it up, you’ll be thin as a greyhound.

DOG (*Proudly*): And built for speed!

CAT: Good. The faster to get out of my space.

DOG: Why are you so grumpy? Walks are fun and healthy exercise.

CAT: Nothing is fun and healthy if it’s in excess.

DOG: You mean like playing with that stupid fish toy all day?

CAT: Karen left me no choice after she moved the aquarium.

DOG: If you're bored, you could always talk to the bird.

CAT: Oh *puhleeeze*. I'm not that bored.

BIRD (*Perking up*): Excuse me? Bird in the room!

DOG: No need to get your feathers ruffled. It was just a joke.

CAT: No, it wasn't.

BIRD: When do we bail? When do we bail?

CAT (*To DOG*): Now see what you've started? We'll get no peace the rest of the day.

DOG (*To BIRD*): Why would you want to bail? You have a beautiful home. We all do.

BIRD: But at least you two have doors to go out of and windows to look through. My only entertainment is when Karen puts down fresh newspapers on the floor of my cage.

CAT (*Snorting*): Lotta good that does if you can't read.

DOG: What are you talking about? Who do you think reads me my horoscope and the weather report every morning?

CAT (*To BIRD*): I suppose you also know how to write?

BIRD: Of course I do. If I had my own typewriter, I'd have a string of best-selling novels by now.

CAT: And how would you accomplish that without opposable thumbs?

BIRD: Same as all great writers. The hunt and peck method. (*Bobs head as if typing*)

CAT (*Shrugging*): I could write books if I wanted to.

DOG (*Puzzled*): I don't see how.

CAT: I'd hire a secretary. Like the saying goes, "Cats have staff and dogs have"—oh, who cares?

BIRD: Owners? Dogs have owners?

CAT: Yeah, whatever. So when does the newspaper say the quarantine will be over?

BIRD: Not for a while.

CAT: How long's that?

BIRD: A while longer.

DOG: Well, I don't know about you but I like having Karen around all the time. For me, it was always the longest day every time she went off to work. I couldn't wait for her to get home.

CAT: That's because everything is seven times longer for a dog. When she left for the day, you thought she was gone a whole week.

DOG: Exactly! And now we go for walks and she doesn't mind if I take a long time leaving messages and barking at squirrels and she even put a pillow under her desk so I can take naps while she works.

CAT: You took naps all day when she was gone. What's the diff?

DOG: The diff is that those were alone naps. These are together naps. There's a difference.

CAT (*Yawning*): You're so easily entertained.

BIRD (*To CAT*): From where I sit, I don't see that your own life has been that upended since Karen has been home.

CAT: Oh, but it has. You have no idea.

BIRD: How so?

CAT: Because day and night I used to stealthily prowl the dense undergrowth of the jungle, ever vigilant, ever alert, ever ready to pounce on lesser creatures that crossed my path!

DOG: I really don't think shag carpeting qualifies as dense jungle undergrowth.

CAT: Then why does Karen have to keep bringing out the vacuum monster to keep it at bay? (*DOG gasps; even the mention of vacuum monster is mildly terrifying.*)

BIRD: And who are these lesser creatures you're talking about?

CAT: I'm glad you asked. There's a picture of one hanging in your cage.

BIRD: No, there's not. That's just a mirror.

CAT: I rest my case.

BIRD: You know, just because I'm a bird doesn't mean I don't have dreams.

DOG: What kind of dreams do birds have?

BIRD: Well, I dream that someday when Karen has opened the door to my cage, I could fly out and ride around on the ceiling fan. And then maybe I could fly into the other rooms just to see what's in them. The bookcase looks interesting, too. I could see if there are any nov-

els written by birds. But you know what would be the most fun? I'd fly over and sit on one of the speakers when Karen is listening to Broadway show tunes and I'd close my eyes and sway and let the beautiful music flow all the way through my feathers.

DOG: And then what would you do?

BIRD: I'd fly back into my cage, eat some bird seed, swing on my swing and wait for Karen to put my blanket over the top for a good night's sleep.

CAT: You wouldn't want to just fly out of the nearest open window and never come back?

BIRD: Once upon a time maybe. But when you have imagination—and when you know how to read—there's no telling how far you can go without ever leaving home.

DOG (*To CAT*): What about you? What do cats dream about all day?

CAT: Cats dream about the long-ago time when ancient Egyptians used to worship us and pharaohs asked our advice on where to build their pyramids. We were the wisest, bravest, most beautiful and most revered creatures in the world. If put to a test, there is nothing that a felis splendiferous cannot do!

BIRD: Except learn how to operate a can opener.

CAT: Oh arghghgh! Did you have to go and remind me I'm hungry? Where's Karen with my lunch? Ever since she's been home, it's like she can't remember the hour of the day or the day of the week. (*Notices DOG is grinning*) What are you grinning about? Food deprivation is a very serious subject.

DOG: I was just thinking this is really nice.

BIRD: Come again? What's really nice?

DOG: The three of us just sitting and talking and really getting in touch with our feelings.

CAT (*Sharply*): Cats don't have feelings. Cats have moods and mine is to tell you to shoo, shoo, go away now.

DOG: But don't you want to hear about my dreams?

CAT: Not really.

BIRD: Well, I would. Go ahead.

DOG: Dogs dream about making their people happy and protecting the house and getting tummy rubs and squeaky toys, and rolling in things, and lying in front of a fireplace, and howling at the

moon, and running through sprinklers, and playing with kids, and being a good listener.

CAT: And then what?

DOG: And then we get to wake up and do all of that stuff for real. Livin' the dream, baby! Livin' the dream! (*Someone whistles offstage. DOG jumps up and clips on leash.*) Oooh, walkies! Gotta go! (*DOG runs off right. CAT resumes batting the fish and BIRD resumes preening.*)

CAT (*After a moment*): I'm bored.

BIRD: Want me to read you the business section?

CAT: Oh *puhleeze*. I'm not *that* bored. (*The lights go down and fade to black. Curtain*)

THE END

PRODUCTION NOTES

A Dog, a Cat, and a Bird Contemplate Quarantine

CHARACTERS: 3 male or female.

PLAYING TIME: 10 minutes.

COSTUMES: Costuming may be as simple or elaborate as the budget dictates, i.e., collars and ears for Dog and Cat, a feathered headpiece and plastic beak for Bird.

PROPERTIES: Dog leash, plastic fish toy

on the end of a short fishing rod.

SETTING: A modern living room, minimalist or detailed. The furniture is aligned center stage—a big, lumpy chair for Dog, a tapestry chaise for Cat, a high stool or ladder for Bird.

LIGHTING: No special effects.

SOUND: Offstage whistle.