

CANIS/CATUS

A Ten Minute Play by Anna Shafer

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CHARACTER BREAKDOWN

JASPER: A dog. Male/Non-Binary. Any age/ethnicity.

DUKE: A cat. Male/Non-Binary. Any age/ethnicity.

A NOTE TO THE DIRECTOR

A slash (/) indicates an overlapping line.

While human actors will play animals, they should not necessarily *play animals*. That is, they should not make any attempt to dehumanize themselves. Treat these animals as people -- people who just happen to be animals.

Lights up on JASPER, sitting on an armchair, fiddling with a laptop. He opens up his Zoom application, muttering to himself.

JASPER

Is this...

How does this thing...

JACK!

HOW DO I GET THIS FUCKING THING TO CONNECT TO --

Oh hold on...

Okay

"Use computer audio"

JACK!

NEVERMIND!

I GOT IT!

Okay and now I just...

Finally, Zoom connects JASPER to his meeting, as lights come up on DUKE, situated competently at a desktop computer.

JASPER (CONT'D)

Oh!

DUKE

Oh.

Okay...

JASPER

Well this is

Uh

This is awkward

DUKE

No kidding.

JASPER

I'm sorry, I thought this would be more /uh...

DUKE

/Yeah

JASPER

Like just...
Just other *dogs*

DUKE

Wow
You really know how to flatter a cat

JASPER

The website made it seem like
I mean when I got your message
And don't get me wrong!
I was thrilled to get your message on */Petter Days*

DUKE

/Sure

JASPER

It just...
"Duke wants to chat"
Kinda made it seem like you were

DUKE

What?

JASPER

I mean...

DUKE

What?

JASPER

A dog.

DUKE

(Clearly offended)

I'm sorry, I don't mean to be rude

Or whatever

But what on earth about "Duke wants to chat"

Made you think I was a dog?

JASPER

You're joking...

DUKE

Why would I be joking?

JASPER

Duke?

DUKE

Yes.

JASPER

DUKE?

That is clearly a dog's name!

DUKE

I mean...

Clearly not!

JASPER

Oh come on

DUKE

What?!

JASPER

How many other cats do you know named Duke?

DUKE

I refuse to participate in this...

This species-ist debate /about

JASPER

/Me?!

I'm the species-ist one?!

DUKE

I mean...

Yes!

JASPER

I've just never met a cat named Duke before is all.

DUKE

So you know many, then?

JASPER

Many...

DUKE

Cats.

How many cats do you know?

And not like,

"Oh, the house next door has a cat I've seen through the window" or any of that bullshit

I mean how many cats do you actually *know*?

JASPER

Well...

DUKE

Go ahead.

JASPER

Well I guess

Technically...

(*Muttering inaudibly*) *I guess you are the first one I've really met*

DUKE

What was that?

JASPER

OKAY!

Yes!

I admit it!

You are the first cat I've ever really met!

Okay?!

Are you satisfied?!

DUKE

So if you do the math...

And stop me here if I'm getting ahead of myself

If you do the math,

With me being the only cat you have ever actually met,

Then you could say that, in fact,

100% of the cats you know

Are named/ Duke

JASPER

/Duke

Okay yes fine

I'm sorry

Jeez

DUKE

Thank you.

JASPER

God, you're pretentious, aren't you?

DUKE

If by that you mean I don't sit around licking my balls all day, then

Yeah.

I'm pretentious.

After a loaded beat, JASPER begins to laugh. It starts as a chuckle, and builds until he is bent over in his seat. DUKE begins to laugh with him. They laugh for

*a while. It's nice. The laughter dies out.
A slightly awkward beat.*

JASPER

So
What brought you to *Petter Days To Come*?
I mean you don't really seem like the support group type.

DUKE

I mean
The same thing as everyone else, I guess.

JASPER

The /virus?

DUKE

The fucking virus.

JASPER

It's brutal, man.

DUKE

It really is.
I mean it really, *really* is.

JASPER

The humans are going nuts about it!

DUKE

Tell me about it!

JASPER

They laugh and laugh when I run under the bed during a thunderstorm...

DUKE

Or when I jump at the vacuum cleaner...

JASPER

The vacuum cleaner!

Fuck, I hate the vacuum cleaner!

DUKE

It's absolutely barbaric.

JASPER

And yet, god forbid a little virus comes around...

DUKE

And they launch into full scale panic!

JASPER

I know!

At a tiny little virus!

DUKE

THANK YOU

JASPER

And I mean...

What even *is* a virus?!

DUKE

I have absolutely no fucking clue!

More laughter from JASPER and DUKE.

DUKE

But yeah, anyway...

My human just

You know

Being *around* all day

It's driving me insane.

JASPER

I hear ya

DUKE

That's a little surprising coming from you.

JASPER

How do you mean?
You just met me like
Five minutes ago.

DUKE

No, I just mean...
I mean aren't dogs supposed to love their owners?
"Man's best friend" and all that?

JASPER

Oh, no, don't get me wrong
I LOVE Jack

DUKE

Right...

JASPER

I absolutely love the guy.
But I just...
I mean
Time apart is healthy!
Absence makes the heart grow fonder, you know?

DUKE

Oh
I know.

JASPER

I need my alone time!
I've got my own shit to do!
Contrary to Jack's belief, I don't just sit around all day waiting for him to get home.
Like, yeah, that's totally part of it, but I mean I keep a pretty tight schedule.
Sniffing stuff, checking out the trash can, guarding the house from those nasty squirrels
who are always poking around the tree outside, I mean
Come on!
I've got a lot to do, and I can't really do it with him calling me all the time, taking me out
on runs

(He suddenly decided he *loves* exercise by the way)
 And he's always telling me to hush!
 "JASPER, HUSH!"
 Hey Jack!
 Right back atcha, pal!
 God!

DUKE

Look, man, I get it.
 You're talking to the *king* of Alone Time.
 I mean we cats basically invented it as a species.

JASPER

HA!

DUKE

I sleep 20 hours a day, Jasper.
 20 hours, or I'm a total asshole.
 And, you know, I can't really get my 20 hours with Sheila
 (That's my human, Sheila)
 Just absolutely berating me every time she wants a "companion"
 During her fucking "virtual meetings."
 And at first I tried to be really understanding.

JASPER

Uh huh.

DUKE

What's a few extra scratches behind the ears now and then?

JASPER

Sure!

DUKE

But it's been weeks.
Weeks.
 I don't know how much longer I can take constant interruption of my prime sleeping
 hours and jazz blaring out of the speakers whenever she tries taking another crack at
 homemade bread.

JASPER

Jack gave up on the bread thing last week.

DUKE

Lucky you.

JASPER

Eh.

I kinda miss it. I always got the scraps.
And I'd take carbs over cardio any day.

DUKE

Yeah, looks like it.

JASPER

Hey!

Give a dog a break.

DUKE

You're right, you're right, I surrender.

God.

It feels good to vent.

Thank you.

I think I really needed this.

JASPER

Me too.

I'm sorry about before.

With all the...you know

DUKE

No, don't worry about it.

I'm sorry too.

This is all so new, you know?

JASPER

I know.

A beat. It's a little sad.

DUKE

Hey.
I mentioned jazz before...

JASPER

Yeah?

DUKE

Well Sheila loves jazz. I mean she's kinda obsessed.
Anyway, I'm named after some human jazz hot-shot.

JASPER

Okay...?

DUKE

All I mean is...
You were right before.
Not a lot of cats out there named Duke.

JASPER

Tell that to all the cats I know.

They share a laugh.

END OF PLAY