Pets in Quarantine

By Stephen Murray

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Pets in Quarantine

Synopsis:

It is the spring of 2020. Humans are staying home, practicing social distancing to slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus. The pets of these humans are confused. Their lives have been changed by the sudden constant presence of their human companions. Eight pets tell their stories of confinement. This play is designed to be performed online. Actors can portray the animals with their faces visible on conferencing software or choose an avatar image of the animal they are playing.

Cast:

1 human, 4 dogs, 2 cats, 1 goldfish, and 1 lizard

3 m, 5 w, 1 flexible

Paige Turner (W) – television journalist

Nefertiti (W) – A Siamese cat, princess of her domain

Rex (M)- an old Bassett Hound

Annabelle (W) – a goldfish

Claudette (W) – a stylish standard poodle and show dog

Hans (M)– a German Shepherd, a security dog

Oreo (Flexible) – A tuxedo cat who wants to take over the world

Ruby (W) – A Yorkshire Terrier, loyal and affectionate to her owner

Tad (M)– a lizard uncomfortable with change

Pets in Quarantine

PAIGE TURNER: Good evening, I'm Paige Turner, and this is *News Time*.

(Theme music plays and the logo of "News Time" appears. If you can do the computer graphics, great. If not, a fun, campy, touch would be to have PAIGE hold up a piece of paper to the camera with a hand-drawn logo for the show while playing theme music on a kazoo.)

PAIGE TURNER: *(Cont'd.)* Tonight, on *News Time*, it's the top news story of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic. A global health crisis impacting millions of people. But people aren't the only victims of this crisis. What about the millions of animal companions that share our homes with us? How has this crisis affected them? Tonight, we investigate "Pets in Quarantine!"

(More "theme music" and a graphic that says, "PETS IN QUARANTINE.")

PAIGE TURNER: *(Cont'd.)* "Stay at Home" is the advice given to millions during this crisis. Our pet population is accustomed to the commands "Stay" and "Go Home." But our fuzzy friends have had their lives turned upside down with their human companions becoming a constant presence. *News Time* has assembled eight pets, each appearing remotely, to give us some perspective on the animal point of view. First, we go to Ruby, a Yorkshire Terrier. Hello, Ruby.

RUBY: Hi! Hello!

PAIGE TURNER: Ruby, can you please tell our audience how things have been for you lately?

RUBY: I'm having the best time ever!

PAIGE TURNER: Ruby, we're in the middle of a global health crisis. How can this be the best time ever?

RUBY: Well, it is the best time ever. Mom has been home a lot lately. It's kind of like the weekend, but it doesn't end. I used to wait at the window for her to come home every night. Just aching for her to arrive. Now, I don't have to wait. She's always here. My mommy is here! We are having so much fun together! We play tuggie, and fetch, and we go for walks. She must finally realize how much I miss her when she goes away. We are best friends!

PAIGE TURNER: Thanks, Ruby. You're a good girl.

RUBY: I'm a good girl!

PAIGE TURNER: Now for some feline perspective, we go to Oreo, a tuxedo cat in quarantine. Can you hear me, Oreo?

OREO: Yes, I can hear you, human.

PAIGE TURNER: Oreo, how has this crisis affected you?

OREO: This is an absolute catastrophe! The humans are ruining everything! I have been studying them, watching their every move. Learning everything I can about their routines and their tendencies so I can devise the perfect plan for their demise. 7:15 a.m every Monday through Friday, the big one leaves the house, not returning until between 5:45 and 6:05 p.m. The small one exits the house at 7:45 a.m., occasionally re-enters at 12:10 for one half hour, and returns at 4:30 p.m. The time they are gone is mine to plot and scheme. My personal time to research, sharpen my claws, take 3 or 4 power naps, and hatch my evil plan. I was nearly ready to put my brilliant plan into effect. Then, all of a sudden… they didn't leave!

PAIGE TURNER: So you're saying that the humans have upset your routine?

OREO: Of course they have upset my routine! In fact… wait a minute. You're one of them. I shouldn't be telling you anything! How do I shut this thing off? *(OREO disappears.)*

PAIGE TURNER: We seem to have lost contact. I guess we will come back to Oreo later. Our next guest is a security dog, Hans the German Shepherd.

HANS: Good evening, Miss Turner.

PAIGE TURNER: Hans, give us your perspective on this situation.

HANS: Certainly. Oh, wait, just a moment*. (HANS disappears from the screen, but we hear his off-camera audio.)* Woof! Woof! Go away! This is private property! Woof! *(HANS returns.)* Terribly sorry. There was a squirrel in the yard.

PAIGE TURNER: Of course. Hans, you were about to tell us how this crisis has impacted you as a security dog.

HANS: Yes, I take my job very seriously. Security is my life's work. It is my mission each day to secure the perimeter. I make certain nothing unusual occurs, and if it does, I sound the alert! There have been regular intruders to the perimeter. Once a week, before leaving for his mission, Master places several treasures into a large plastic can and puts it outside the house for me to guard. Without fail, intruders come in a large vehicle to steal these treasures! I sound the alarm! Woof! Woof! The thieves drive their vehicle away, casting aside Master's treasure can. Master returns to discover his treasure can empty and woefully brings it to the house. Now, Master is staying home. I think he is finally taking my reports seriously. This week, we will thwart the thieves.

PAIGE TURNER: Good luck with that, Hans. You may have seen our next guest on TV. She appeared most recently in the winner's circle of the Eastminster Dog Show, everyone's favorite standard poodle, Claudette!

CLAUDETTE: Bon jour, my darlings! I am Claudette! Oui, the famous Claudette, champion, five time best of breed, twice best in show. I am the standard poodle that exceeds the standard!

PAIGE TURNER: Claudette, as a canine celebrity, how is this situation affecting you? What would you like to say to your fans?

CLAUDETTE: Oh, oui, I have many, many fans! Hello world, hello fans, it is moi! I am very happy to announce that I have a new endorsement deal with Canine Crunchies. Although, I must confess, I do not care much for the crunchies. Some fresh chicken or steak is much more my style. Ah, but the Crunchie people, they adore me. When I arrive for a photo shoot they treat me like royalty. I am also a great actress. It takes amazing skill to look at those dry, brown, cardboard-like bits as if they are gourmet cuisine. Trust me, I have eaten cardboard, and these aren't much better. Such is my existence. It is my lot in life to be a celebrity. Recently, my staff has been much more present in my life. Perhaps it is because the big show is coming. They seem a bit stressed, but it is for nothing. I am Claudette, I will win! Still, I enjoy having my entourage about. They love me!

PAIGE TURNER: We all love you, Claudette! Now for a point of view away from the world of mammals. Here's Annabelle the Goldfish! Hello, Annabelle!

ANNABELLE: Hi.

PAIGE TURNER: Annabelle, how have things been for you? What is your day like?

ANNABELLE: I swam today. I swam yesterday. I'll probably swim again tomorrow. I've been going clockwise for the past couple of weeks. Yep. Clockwise. I'm thinking I might change things up tomorrow and go around the tank counter-clockwise. Yeah… Whoa, what am I thinking? That's crazy talk! I mean, the bubbles only go in one direction. You can't go against the bubbles, that's not right. Counter-clockwise? Ha, ha, ha. Of course, I can't tell time so who really knows what direction a clock moves anyway? The faces are at the glass again. What's going on?

PAIGE TURNER: OK, Annabelle, we'll let you figure things out. Let's get another point of view from a cat, we now welcome Siamese Cat, Nefertiti.

NEFERTITI: What do you want?

PAIGE TURNER: It's Paige Turner with *News Time*. We want to know what your life is like right now.

NEFERTITI: My life is in complete disarray. Nothing is right.

PAIGE TURNER: Could you please elaborate on that, Miss Nefertiti?

NEFERTITI: The left side of the couch in the living room is my personal spot in the early afternoon. The sunbeam comes through the window just right and makes a perfect warm spot for me. It is a ritual I treasure. Today, one of the humans was in my spot. I mean, how dare she? I boldly approached her to take my rightful spot and was abruptly cast aside. She said something about not wanting me to be in the way while she was "Zooming." Well, she just sat there in MY spot for over an hour! She stayed in the same place. She didn't move. How is that "Zooming"? I mean that is pretty pathetic zooming if you ask me. When I think of zooming, I think of how I feel when a cucumber mysteriously appears behind me while I am eating. That will get me to zoom every time. Where do those cucumbers come from? Oh, and the small humans are here. Usually, they are at a place called "school" but now they are here. My routine is thrown off by these smooth-skinned giants. I wish they would go away… except to feed me… and scratch my ears… and to make that strange red dot appear.

PAIGE TURNER: It's nice to know that humans have some usefulness to you. We move now to another part of the animal kingdom. Here's Tad the Lizard! *(There is no response.)* Are you there, Tad?

TAD: Yes, I am here.

PAIGE TURNER: I thought we had lost the connection for a moment.

TAD: I didn't realize I was supposed to respond. I usually just stay in one place and stare.

PAIGE TURNER: We would like to hear from you about the current crisis from the lizard point of view.

TAD: Well, when you stay in one place motionless as often as I do, you get plenty of time to observe your surroundings. That's how we lizards roll. I pretty much know every square inch of this place. It's comforting to me having the same background to my life each day. It's nice to know what to expect. Lately, things have been strange. The humans have been around far more frequently. They seem restless, they're not quite themselves. One of them stared into my home for several minutes as if they expected me to do something. I didn't want to reward the creature for such an intrusion, but I admit it, I blinked. It threw my whole schedule off. I wasn't going to blink for another 2 hours. Suddenly, all is chaos.

PAIGE TURNER: Oh, my! You hang in there, Tad! We have one more guest to check in with, Rex the Bassett Hound! Hi, Rex!

REX: Hello, Paige Turner! I've seen you on TV.

End of Freeview

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