

THE HEALING POWERS OF DUDE

Written by

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ACT ONE

EXT. PARK - DAY

A group of dogs, wearing "Service Dog In Training" vests, stand in a row. Across the way is a TRAINER (holding bacon treats) and a golden retriever, REGINALD (think the voice of Liam Neeson). An obstacle course is between them.

(NOTE: When Dude and Reginald talk, their mouths don't move and no humans can hear them.)

REGINALD
And last up, we have...
(sighs)
Dude.

A scruffy terrier steps forward. This is DUDE (think the voice of Jason Mantzoukas).

DUDE
That didn't sound very enthusiastic.
Let's do it again, but this time I'd
like to come out to Beyonce's
"Formation."

REGINALD
Just go.

Dude begins guiding a BLINDFOLDED MAN through the obstacle course.

REGINALD (CONT'D)
Remember, a service dog's job is to
always stay by their human's side. To
not get distracted--

DUDE
So, like how many treats am I gonna
get after this? Three? Eight?

Suddenly, the blindfolded man Dude's guiding slams into a tree! The trainer runs over, as Reginald shakes his head.

DUDE (CONT'D)
Or one? One is good.

REGINALD (TALKING)
I hope you realize the humans are
going to send you back to the pound.

DUDE
What!? No, I can't go back. Those
flea baths are traumatizing.

Dude jumps up and down excitedly near the humans. But they ignore him and continue discussing.

DUDE (CONT'D)
Time to bust out the secret weapon.

Dude opens his eyes wide and starts to whimper.

REGINALD
Groveling? You make me sick.

DUDE
A dog's gotta do what a dog's gotta do.

The humans turn and pet Dude, who licks their faces.

TRAINER
Well, he's no service dog. But he's got a friendly demeanor. Maybe he'd make a good emotional support animal?

DUDE
Yes! I'd be a great whatever that is!

BLINDFOLDED MAN
Just need to match him up with the right person...

INT. CAR - DAY

CLOSE ON: NOAH FERRIS, your typical twelve-year-old boy: kind, average smarts, overactive imagination. He sits in the back of a car staring out the window at Palmetto Middle School. A sign reads, "Welcome New and Returning Students!"

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
Noah... Noah?

Noah turns and we see KAREN FERRIS (in control, to the point, Noah's loving mom), MARVIN FERRIS (a bit of a goof, means well, Noah's devoted dad) and EMBRY FERRIS (9, outgoing, blunt, Noah's sister).

MARVIN
You sure you don't want me to walk in with you?

EMBRY
Why don't you just carry him in like a baby and give him a pacifier? Come on, Dad! You'll scar him for life.

NOAH
You guys, I've been prepping for this all summer. Dr. Maan thinks I'm ready to go back to school and so do I. Plus, I'd really like to make some friends that aren't related to me.

MARVIN

But we'll still always be *best* friends, right?

NOAH

Of course, Dad.

(psyching himself up)

Okay. This is my "everything's fine and I don't have social anxiety disorder" face.

Noah does a very awkward smile. There's a long beat.

NOAH (CONT'D)

That bad?

KAREN/MARVIN/EMBRY

Noooo./Totally normal looking./Never do that again.

NOAH

I'll just stick to my regular face.

KAREN

The map to homeroom is in the right side pocket of your backpack, so it's easily accessible.

Noah nods and pats the pocket.

EMBRY

Also, don't forget to repeat the mantra I made up for you: This is going great. Nobody's looking at my weird shaped head.

NOAH

Definitely won't be saying that. But thanks, Embry.

MARVIN

And remember. When you feel a panic attack coming on just take deep breaths like this...

The whole family, including Noah, does an exaggerated and silly looking inhale, followed by a long exhale.

MARVIN (CONT'D)

What am I going to do with all my free time now that I'm not your homeschool teacher?

KAREN

Well, you can finally organize your art stuff in the garage, fix the leaky faucet, or--

MARVIN

Karen, we're focusing on Noah right now.

Noah starts opening the door. He stops and turns.

NOAH

I'll see you guys after school.

KAREN

We love you--

KAREN/MARVIN/EMBRY

This much!

They all hold out their arms as wide as they can. Noah looks at his supportive family. He grabs his backpack and steps out, closing the door behind him.

EXT. PALMETTO MIDDLE SCHOOL - CONTINUOUS

Noah surveys the courtyard buzzing with students.

CHYRON: MONDAY

NOAH

(to himself)

This is going great. Nobody's looking at my weird shaped-- Ugh, Embry.

(shakes it off)

Okay. First step, get inside school. Second step, find my homeroom.

Noah walks slowly, doing his controlled breathing.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Just keep walking.

A student taps Noah on the arm. Noah whirls around.

FEMALE STUDENT

Do you know where room 112 is?

Noah freezes right in front of the handicap ramp. His heart pounds, his breathing gets shorter. The student gives him a concerned look. Before Noah can find a way to respond, his head starts to inflate.

NOAH

(feeling his head)

No, no, no. This can't be happening.

But to everyone else, Noah's head looks completely fine. That includes AMARA (12, tough, intensely driven, in a wheelchair), who's trying to get by.

AMARA

Excuse me?

The girl that tapped Noah's shoulder scoots out of the way, but Noah doesn't budge. His head continues to expand.

NOAH

My head's ballooning!

AMARA

Not sure what that means... but it would be great if you ballooned somewhere else.

Noah can't hear her. He's too busy feeling his giant head.
Amara, annoyed, starts to turn around.

AMARA (CONT'D)

(grumbling)

I'm just a girl in a wheelchair trying to get an education.

Noah's head reaches its max and... POPS! We then quickly see it back to normal.

NOAH

I can't do this!

Noah rushes past Amara and runs back toward his car.

AMARA

Oh, now you move!

Noah opens the car door and hops into the backseat.

NOAH

Floor it, Mom!

KAREN

Noah, just take a breath...

Noah looks like he's about to hurl.

EMBRY

He said floor it, Mom!

Karen, realizing it's past the turning back point, nods and puts the car in drive.

INT. FERRIS HOUSE - LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN - EVENING

Noah paces in the living room, while Marvin and Karen watch him from the kitchen. Karen fills a glass with water.

MARVIN

We can just go back to home schooling.

(MORE)

MARVIN (CONT'D)

I've really perfected my technique over the last two years. I even do this great Adam Sandler bit where he's trying to do long division.

KAREN

No offense, but Noah doesn't want to be stuck at home with his dad anymore. He wants a social life.

MARVIN

(bad Adam Sandler voice)
Three hundred divided by fifteen equals zippity-doo--

Karen covers Marvin's mouth to silence him.

KAREN

No wonder Noah hates math.
(then)

You ready to go back in there?

Marvin nods and follows Karen into the living room, where Noah continues to pace.

KAREN (CONT'D)

Noah, sit before you start a rug fire.

Noah plops on the couch. Karen sits and hands him the water.

KAREN (CONT'D)

I know this morning was rough. But we knew it wasn't going to be a walk in the park.

Embry looks up from her phone in the corner.

EMBRY

To be fair, he's also afraid of walks in the park.

NOAH

Only when it's crowded!

MARVIN

Embry, don't you have that play date to go to?

Embry nods and grabs her unicorn purse.

EMBRY

I'm teaching the neighbor kid how to accessorize. He thinks Band-Aids are a fashion statement. Don't wait up!

She leaves.

KAREN

I think we have to consider the other option Dr. Maan suggested...

NOAH

Getting an emotional support dog? No way. That'll make me stand out at school even more.

(then)

I guess not more than me screaming that my head's turning into a balloon...

MARVIN

You know what's great about homeschool? You can scream as much weird stuff as--

Karen shoots Marvin a look. He stops. She turns to Noah.

KAREN

How badly do you want to go back to school?

NOAH

(sighs)

A lot. But I just don't feel like I'm an emotional support dog kinda guy.

Karen looks to Marvin for help.

MARVIN

Well... I didn't think I was a French tuck kinda guy until your sister suggested it. But look at me now!

Marvin shows off his half-tucked shirt.

KAREN

Sweetie, we promise we'll find the best emotional support dog out there.

INT. CAR - MORNING

Dude sits in the backseat of the car, licking his crotch. Noah's next to him, looking down in disgust.

NOAH

This is the best emotional support dog out there?

Marvin, in the front passenger seat, turns and sees Dude.

MARVIN

All dogs do that.

(beat)

Well, maybe not that much.

KAREN

It was a little tricky to get an emotional support dog this fast. I may have had to threaten to sue a few people--

NOAH

(mortified)

Mom.

KAREN

Regardless, Dr. Maan said Dude came from a highly renowned service dog school, so I'm sure he'll be able to hit the ground running.

Dude stops licking, his left hind leg still in the air.

DUDE

Whoa, lady. I honestly have no idea what I'm doing. I just didn't want to go back to the pound. But how hard could this emotional support gig be? I let you pet me when you're feeling down, you give me treats.

(then, looking around)

Please tell me you have treats.

Karen pulls up in front of the school. Both parents turn and smile at Noah.

KAREN

Kiddo, my gut is telling me Dude is the answer. And you know what I always say about my gut?

NOAH

That it can't handle dairy?

KAREN

Yes. But also that it's never wrong.

MARVIN

Just remember to pet Dude and let him give you kisses whenever you're feeling anxious.

Noah looks back at Dude, who's returned to licking himself.

NOAH

Not sure I want that tongue anywhere near me.

KAREN

That's the spirit!

EXT. PALMETTO MIDDLE SCHOOL - MOMENTS LATER

Noah, holding Dude, stands outside, staring at the school.

CHYRON: TUESDAY

DUDE
Schmancy. I bet they serve some
gourmet lunches up in this joint.
Like mac and cheese with peas in it.

Noah, breathing slowly, starts walking toward the school.

NOAH
Okay. I can do this. It can't go
worse than yesterday, right?

DUDE
What happened yesterday?

NOAH
It can only get better. Nothing bad's
going to happen to my head.

DUDE
Um, you're starting to really freak
me out about yesterday...

NOAH
First step, get inside school.

Noah walks up the stairs. He opens the door and enters.

INT. PALMETTO MIDDLE SCHOOL - CONTINUOUS

Noah observes the bustling hallway.

NOAH
Whoa. I did it.

DUDE
That's all you were worried about?
That was easy! I knew I could handle
this job.

NOAH
Second step, find my homeroom...

Noah pulls out the map from his bag pocket and looks around.

INT. CAR - SAME TIME

The car is now parked across from the school. Karen's hands are clutching the wheel, as she stares at the school doors.

KAREN

They're inside! I knew this would--

Marvin pulls out two fast food bags from under his seat.

KAREN (CONT'D)

What is that?

MARVIN

Burgers. You know I eat when I'm nervous.

Marvin takes out a burger and stuffs it in his mouth.

KAREN

How long have those been under the seat?

MARVIN

(mouth full)

Only twelve hours. Want one?

KAREN

No.

Karen looks at the school anxiously. Then back to Marvin.

KAREN (CONT'D)

Is there one without cheese?

Marvin hands a burger to Karen, who takes a big bite.

KAREN (CONT'D)

(mouth full)

This tastes awful.

Marvin nods. They both keep eating.

INT. PALMETTO MIDDLE SCHOOL - SAME TIME

Noah's looking at his map when, out of nowhere, SIMON (12, a McLovin' from Superbad type, unnaturally confident) rapidly approaches.

SIMON

Hey! Cool dog!

Simon starts to pet Dude on the head, which makes Noah very uncomfortable.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Name's Simon, but everyone calls me Turbo.

DUDE

Yikes. Everyone must hate you.

Simon waits for Noah to respond, but Noah can't speak.

SIMON
So, you a sixth grader, too? I didn't know middle school was so huge. I totally got lost finding the cafeteria yesterday and had to eat a pack of gum for lunch.

Noah's heart starts pounding. He looks around for an escape. But Dude's really enjoying the head scratch from Simon.

DUDE
A little to the left... Boo-yah!
There it is!

SIMON
Between us, I heard the only way to survive middle school is to start a fight with the biggest eighth grader you can find.

Other kids notice there's a dog and start to swarm around Noah. They reach in and pet Dude.

DUDE
Easy, easy. There's enough of me to go around.

NOAH
(sotto)
It's just kids being friendly. It's okay. Nothing bad is happening.

SIMON
Did you say something?

Suddenly from Noah's POV... the kids morph into ZOMBIES! There are loud groans, as they reach their hands wildly toward him!

NOAH
They're going to eat us alive!

Noah crouches down on the floor to protect himself from the mob. Dude, now on the ground, rolls over to get his belly rubbed and looks at Noah.

DUDE
They can't scratch your belly if you sit like that.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
Everyone move back.

Noah slowly looks up to see PRINCIPAL MEYERS (40s, male, uptight). He's nudging the "zombies" out of the way.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
Noah, why don't you come to my
office.

Noah eagerly nods and gets up.

DUDE
Okay, cool. I'll just meet you later--
(gets picked up by Noah)
Or I'll go with you now.

INT. PRINCIPAL MEYERS' OFFICE - DAY

Noah, with Dude on his lap, sits across a desk from
Principal Meyers.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
I know you've had a rough start so
far, but I promise you're going to
love it here at Palmetto. We're a
Gold Ribbon school, which means --
hashtag humblebrag -- we're the best.

DUDE
That was a straight up brag.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
Noah, I need to confess something to
you... I'm more of a *cat* person.

We POP OUT to REVEAL: an office FILLED with twenty different
photos of the same Scottish Fold cat (large bug eyes and
folded down ears), as well as tons of first place cat show
trophies and ribbons.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS (CONT'D)
That's Lord Dingwall.

NOAH
So... cute.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
He's the top Scottish Fold in the
state.

DUDE
He looks like he eats his own poop.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
Anyway, when your parents called me
and said you'd be bringing in an
emotional support *dog*, at first I was
like, "Nooooo!" But then I had a glass
of wine -- fine, three glasses -- and
came up with a plan.

NOAH
Okay...

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
Since dogs aren't as intelligent as cats they tend to need stricter guidelines.

DUDE
I once saw a cat chase a laser pointer out a third story window. He survived. But he's still dumb.

Meyers looks at his computer.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
So, I've compiled a list of rules for... Doody?

NOAH/DUDE
Dude./Dude!

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
Wonder how he got that fun name...

FLASH TO:

BEGIN MONTAGE:

A. Dude grabs a sandwich off a bench from a COLLEGE KID.

COLLEGE KID
Dude!

B. Dude finishes pooping on the sidewalk. A SKATEBOARDER steps in it.

SKATEBOARDER
Dude!

C. Dude humps a stuffed animal outside a toy store. A TEENAGE BOY looks grossed out.

TEENAGE BOY
Dude...

BACK TO:

INT. PRINCIPAL MEYERS' OFFICE - SAME

DUDE
Yeah, that was just a phase.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
 (looking at computer)
 Anyway... rule one: no peeing on
 school property. Rule two: no
 barking. Rule three: no growling.

NOAH
 Um, exactly how many rules are there?

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
 (scans list)
 About fifty.

Noah gulps.

PRINCIPAL MEYER
 Rule four: no chewing school
 property...

Noah's breathing is growing more rapid. Suddenly, an alarm, like that on a submarine, starts going off in Noah's head. He puts his hands over his ears, but it won't stop.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
 Rule five: slobber shall remain in
 dog's mouth. Rule six...
 (noticing Noah)
 Noah? Are you okay?

NOAH
 I'm fine. Why do you ask--

Noah quickly covers his mouth. His face has a greenish hue.

DUDE
 I know that look...

Dude hops off Noah's lap. Meyers reaches for the trash can.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
 If you're going to throw up just aim
 away from--

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Outside Principal Meyers' office door, we hear a scream.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS (O.S.)
 My South County Best Ears trophy!

INT. FERRIS HOUSE - NOAH'S ROOM - AFTERNOON

Noah, wearing headphones, sits behind a drum set, banging away to Metalcore music. Dude lays on the floor licking at the inside of a dog toy. Embry enters and waves in Noah's face. He stops drumming and takes off his headset.

NOAH
What do you want, Embry?

EMBRY
Where do I begin? I'd like your room
because it's bigger. Mom to stop
wearing leggings...
(off Noah's look)
I just wanted to see how school went.

NOAH
Well, I was attacked by zombie kids
and I threw up on the principal.

Dude looks up from his toy.

DUDE
I've seen a lot of vomit in my day
and that was by far the most.
(then)
Now, can someone help me get the
peanut butter out of this doggy
torture device?!

EMBRY
Honestly, that's better than I
thought it would go.

NOAH
Your faith in me is inspiring.

EMBRY
I'm sure kids at school went all
zombie on you because they were
excited to see Dude. You did say you
wanted to make friends...

NOAH
Yeah, like one or two. Not thirty!

DUDE
I can try to tone down the charm.
(then)
Who am I kidding? That's impossible.

EMBRY
You know, I think I may have a way to
help Dude blend in...

NOAH
How?

Embry goes over to Dude, blocking Noah's view.

DUDE (O.S.)
Get this kid off of me.

Embry steps back. Dude is now dressed in a tux and top hat.

EMBRY

What do you think? I've decided to start a fancy clothing line for dogs.

NOAH

Take that off him now.

EMBRY

I just don't want you to give up yet.

NOAH

I'm not. I'll come up with my own plan.

Dude catches himself in the full length mirror.

DUDE

Man, if the boys at the pound could see me now... they'd be so jealous!

INT. PALMETTO MIDDLE SCHOOL - MORNING

Noah, wearing sunglasses and a hat, appears in the school door window. He takes a deep breath, fogging up the glass.

CHYRON: WEDNESDAY

He then cautiously enters, seemingly without Dude. The hallways look less crowded.

NOAH

Coming in early was definitely the right move. Now, which way was homeroom again...

Noah takes the school map out of his pocket as Dude's head pops out of his backpack.

DUDE

Ugh! I can't do it! It smells like cheese in here!
(sniffs)
Oh wait, that's me.

Noah sees Dude's head is out.

NOAH

Dude, get down.

Noah tries to shove Dude back in his bag, but--

SIMON (O.S.)

Hey! Dog guy! Wait up!

Noah looks up and sees Simon heading toward them.

NOAH
Not today, Turbo.

He then darts behind some students into a classroom.

INT. PALMETTO MIDDLE SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

Noah closes and locks the door. He lets out a sigh of relief.

NOAH
I think we lost--

AMARA (O.S.)
Hey there.

He turns around to find Amara glaring up at him.

AMARA (CONT'D)
You're the kid who wouldn't let me up
the wheelchair ramp.

NOAH
(cowering)
Are you sure it was me? I have very
generic features.

The backpack shifts around as Dude moves.

DUDE (O.S.)
Hello? I'm getting tangled in here.

AMARA
Don't play dumb!
(pinning Noah against wall)
Just because I'm in a wheelchair
doesn't mean you can pretend I don't
exist! What makes you think you can
treat people like that?!

NOAH
Um... Well... I...

AMARA
What? Spit it out!

NOAH
(blurts)
I have social anxiety disorder!

AMARA
Oh.

Amara's face slowly goes from surprise to a smile, which erupts into full on laughter.

NOAH
You're laughing at me?!

AMARA

No. Behind you.

Noah turns to discover that Dude has popped out and is now wearing a pink glittery cowboy hat with blonde hair (another Embry original). Noah bursts out laughing.

DUDE

What?

(sees reflection in window)

A tuxedo is one thing, but this is just demeaning.

Noah takes the backpack off and pulls Dude out.

AMARA

So... is he your emotional support dog?

NOAH

Um, yeah... How did you know?

AMARA

After my aunt's boyfriend dumped her, she got an emotional support pig. It poops on everything.

NOAH

Dude poops a lot, too.

DUDE

That is personal information! You're lucky I can't tell her about your ear wax vacuum.

AMARA

Sorry I yelled at you.

NOAH

It's okay. You didn't know. Most people just assume I'm shy or clueless.

AMARA

Most people assume I'm not good at... anything.

(intense)

But I'm pretty much the best at whatever I set my mind to.

NOAH

(intimidated)

I totally believe that.

AMARA

So was it your anxiety that made you run in here?

NOAH
It was that Turbo kid.

AMARA
Turbo?
(then)
Ooohhh... you mean Simon. He's in my
homeroom. Super annoying. I purposely
run over his feet every time he tries
to talk to me.

NOAH
(laughs)
Nice.

Dude is still staring at his reflection.

DUDE
On second thought... I'm kinda
diggin' this look.

Suddenly, there's a knock at the door.

MALE STUDENT (O.S.)
Hey! Why is the door locked?

Noah's smile quickly fades. Amara checks her phone.

AMARA
Oh, the bell's about to ring. You
should probably unlock the door.

But as the knocking continues, Noah starts backing away from
the door. From his POV, the knocking turns to LOUD THUMPS.

MALE STUDENT (O.S.)
(deep growl)
Let. Me. In!

NOAH
(picking up Dude)
I just remembered I have... jury
duty.

AMARA
What? I'll just open it.

Noah bumps into a desk just as the DOOR FLIES OPEN REVEALING
A GIANT OGRE'S FOOT.

AMARA (CONT'D)
Alright, well I'm gonna head to class
if you want to...

Amara turns to where Noah was standing. But Noah's gone. A
back window has been propped open.

INT. ROSIE'S CAFE - MORNING

An eclectic cafe covered in family photos and art. A few patrons move past Noah, who sits alone in a secluded corner booth. Across from him is Dude, with a bowl of water.

CHYRON: THURSDAY

NOAH

All right, Dude. Going early almost got us squished by an ogre, so today's plan is as soon as we see the courtyard empty...

Noah points out the big front window. The middle school's right across the street.

NOAH (CONT'D)

... we'll rush over. Then we make it inside and slip into homeroom just before the bell rings.

GRANDMA ROSIE, a stylish woman in her sixties, walks over with a plate of pastries. She places them in front of Noah.

GRANDMA ROSIE

Here ya go, my numero uno.

NOAH

Thanks, Grandma. But I think my stomach's too jumpy for food.

GRANDMA ROSIE

Then don't eat them. I only spent all morning baking them just for you. Go ahead. Throw them in the trash...

DUDE

Talk about a guilt trip.

Noah quickly takes a bite.

GRANDMA ROSIE

Aw, such a good boy.

Grandma Rosie pats Noah on the cheek and then crosses off.

DUDE

(re: pastries)

You gonna toss me one of those bad boys or do I have to snatch one?

NOAH

(seeing something)

Oh no.

Dude follows Noah's look and sees Simon outside. Noah quickly covers his face.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Please don't see me. Please don't see me.

Dude, using his paw, does the same.

DUDE

Please don't see him. Please don't see him.

But then, from outside...

EIGHTH GRADER 1 (O.S.)

Come back here, *Turdo!*

Noah slowly looks up to see that TWO BIG EIGHTH GRADERS (one girl and one boy) have caught up to Simon. They start pushing him back and forth.

SIMON

Guys, guys. I was just joking around. You both look *nothing* like my Great Aunt Cora.

NOAH

Wow. He actually picked a fight with the biggest eighth graders he could find.

As Simon continues to get pushed...

EIGHTH GRADER 1

Let's see what you got in here...

He takes off Simon's backpack, unzips it and dumps out: action figures, comic books, a roll of toilet paper...?

SIMON

The school only has one-ply. And like my mom says, I have a sensitive tush.

EIGHTH GRADER 2

I'm surprised you don't wear diapers.

Back inside, Noah's starting to sweat.

NOAH

He really needs to learn to talk less. I kinda feel bad for him...

DUDE

He gave himself the nickname *Turbo*. He had to see this coming.

The eighth graders start ripping up Simon's comic books.

NOAH
 (standing)
 I should do something.
 (sits back down)
 I can't do something.
 (upset)
 I think I'm going to throw up.

DUDE
 Not on the pastries!

Dude sees how hard this is for Noah.

DUDE(CONT'D) (CONT'D)
 Ugh, fine.

Dude runs outside.

EXT. ROSIE'S CAFE - CONTINUOUS

Simon spots Dude running up to them. He smiles.

SIMON
 Hey!

EIGHTH GRADER 1
 This your dog?

SIMON
 He's a... friend.

DUDE
 Whoa. I barely know this kid. I just
 let him scratch me once.

EIGHTH GRADER 2
 (laughing)
 His only friend's a dog.

DUDE
 A dog who drank a lot of toilet water
 this morning.

Dude holds up his leg and starts PEEING all over Eighth
 Grader 2's shoe!

EIGHTH GRADER 2
 Ahhh! Gross!

Through the cafe window we see Noah look on in disbelief.
 Eighth Grader 1 starts laughing. Dude shifts his stream
 toward Eighth Grader 1's feet.

EIGHTH GRADER 1
 These shoes cost two hundred dollars!

DUDE
Shame on your parents.

As Dude keeps peeing, the eighth graders drop Simon's stuff and run away. Simon yells after them.

SIMON
I lied! You both look like my Great Aunt! And she's not known for her looks!

INT. ROSIE'S CAFE - MOMENTS LATER

Simon, holding Dude, enters the cafe and walks up to Noah, who shifts uncomfortably in his seat.

SIMON
Hey, thanks for sending your dog out. I mean, I totally had it under control... but thanks.

Simon gives Dude to Noah and sits down across from him.

NOAH
Oh. Sure. Um...
(covering)
Good boy, Dude. It went exactly as we planned.

DUDE
We? When were you part of--

Noah scratches Dude behind his left ear.

DUDE (CONT'D)
Oooh, that's the spot.

SIMON
You know, I thought maybe you hated me for what I did yesterday. And the day before.
(off Noah's look)
Amara told me about your social anxiety and to stop yelling at you.

NOAH
She did what?!

SIMON
Shoot, I think she also said I wasn't supposed to tell you that she told me about your anxiety--

NOAH
It's okay. Just stop saying that word.

SIMON
Anxiety?

NOAH
Yep. That one.

Simon nods and does the "zipping his lips" motion. He then quickly unzips them.

SIMON
(re: pastry)
You gonna eat that?

He grabs one of Noah's pastries and shoves it in his mouth.

DUDE
I save this kid's butt and he eats my food.

Dude starts to whimper. Noah notices this and gives him the other pastry. Dude devours it. Simon looks at his phone.

SIMON
You know, if we hurry we can still make it before homeroom starts.
(off Noah's hesitation)
I promise I won't be loud or make a scene. We'll just be two, super chill amigos walking to class together.

NOAH
(taking this in)
Amigos?

SIMON
That means friends in Spanish.

NOAH
Yeah, I know what "amigos" means.
(beat)
I guess I can walk in with you.

SIMON
(loud)
Awesome!
(catches himself, whispers)
I mean... awesome.

Noah and Simon grab their bags. Dude looks up. He has powdered sugar all over his face.

DUDE
We're letting this loud mouth join our pack? That's setting a very low bar--

Noah and Simon are halfway out the door.

DUDE (CONT'D)
Hey! Wait for your alpha!

Dude runs after them.

INT. CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Karen's in the driver's seat, Marvin rides shotgun. Karen's phone dings and she looks at it.

KAREN
Mom says Noah left the cafe.

MARVIN
And he's with another kid!

KAREN
How do you know that?

MARVIN
They're right there.

Marvin points out the windshield. Karen spots Noah and Simon. She grabs Marvin and yanks him out of sight. After a beat, they slowly sit up. Marvin is now chewing something. Karen stares at him.

MARVIN (CONT'D)
I forgot there were fries...

INT. PALMETTO MIDDLE SCHOOL - MOMENTS LATER

Noah, holding Dude, and Simon head down the hall. Noah takes deep breaths. Each step is clearly a task.

SIMON
We can walk even slower if you want?

Simon starts walking in slow motion. Some kids stare.

NOAH
Just walk normal.

DUDE
I tried to warn you...

SIMON
What does having the "A" word feel like?

NOAH
Well, right now my brain is throwing out a million different ways this walk to class could go horribly wrong.

SIMON
Whoa. You're just like Dr. Strange.

NOAH
More like...
(trying to make joke)
... Dr. Anxiety.

SIMON
Oh, so *you* can say the word?

NOAH
Yep.

SIMON
Okay, cool. Just feelin' out the
parameters.

Out of nowhere, Amara wheels in front and cuts them off!

AMARA
Hey!

NOAH/SIMON/DUDE
Ahhh!

DUDE
I would've peed myself if I wasn't
already on empty!

AMARA
You headed to homeroom? Can I roll
with you guys?

NOAH
Um... sure.

As Amara and Simon go ahead, Noah hangs back with Dude.

NOAH (CONT'D)
Might actually make it to step two
today, Dude.

Noah pats Dude's head and puts him on the ground. Amara and
Simon turn back to wait for Noah, who runs up.

SIMON
I can't wait for you to meet Mr.
Fleckberg. Just so you're fully
prepared, he has a crazy beard that
always has random stuff stuck in it.
Yesterday, it was a stapler.

AMARA
You're exaggerating.

SIMON
Fine. It was a *mini* stapler.

Dude watches Noah interact with his new friends. Noah almost seems at ease.

DUDE
Looks like I may be cut out for this
after all. I wonder if there's an
award for best support animal?

Dude's about to catch up with Noah when he spots someone's lunch on the floor by a locker.

DUDE (CONT'D)
Oooh... What do we have here?

He runs over to inspect it.

NOAH
(sweating)
Are... are we getting close?

SIMON
Yep. It's just down the hall.

NOAH
(pulling on shirt)
Feels like the AC is broken in here.

AMARA
You okay? You're sweating. A lot.

NOAH
I just need to keep breathing...
Maybe I should hold Dude.

Noah looks down for Dude. But he's not there.

NOAH (CONT'D)
(panicked)
Dude? Where's Dude?

AMARA
I thought he was right behind us...

Over by a locker, Dude has his head inside the lunch bag.

DUDE
Turkey sandwich, BBQ chips,
cookies... celery?!

NOAH (O.S.)
(faint)
Dude?

DUDE
I'm over here, Noah! You're not gonna
believe it. This kid brought celery!

Dude tries to get the bag off, but it's stuck on his collar.

DUDE (CONT'D)
That's not good.

He paws at the bag to get it off. It's not working. So naturally, he starts freaking out.

DUDE (CONT'D)
I'm stuck! Help!

He starts backing up and swinging his head around wildly. Unbeknownst to him, he's heading right toward a ladder. A custodian stands on top, adjusting a banner.

SIMON
Uhhh... I found Dude.

Simon points. They all turn and watch as Dude bangs into the ladder, causing the custodian to lose his footing. He then grabs onto the banner and swings -- Tarzan style -- into Principal Meyers, knocking him and the coffee he's drinking to the ground!

STUDENTS
Ohhh!!

Principal Meyers, drenched, slowly stands up. He spots Dude, who has finally managed to get the bag off his head.

PRINCIPAL MEYERS
Rule fifty one: dogs must be on a leash, so they don't bump into ladders, causing the principal to spill hot coffee all over himself!

DUDE
Is that rule necessary? I can't imagine this exact scenario ever happening again.

Noah looks around as the crowd of students begin to whisper. Some of them point toward Noah. This is his worst nightmare come true. Dude, not really getting it, walks up to Noah.

DUDE (CONT'D)
Can you believe, Meyers? What a lame--

Tears have begun welling in Noah's eyes.

NOAH
Where were you?

DUDE
I-- there was a lunch bag...

Noah turns and runs out of school. Dude sighs.

INT. FERRIS HOUSE - NOAH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Noah's face down on his bed. Marvin and Karen sit beside him.

KAREN
I'm sure Dude didn't mean for all
that to happen.

NOAH
(pops up)
He abandoned me for a sandwich!

MARVIN
What kind of sandwich?
(off their looks)
Not important.

The door opens as Dude sticks his head in.

NOAH
I thought we were starting to make a
good team. I thought he cared about
me. But all he cares about is
himself. And sandwiches! I never want
to see him again!

Dude is clearly stung by Noah's words.

DUDE
It was a roasted turkey sandwich on
ciabatta with garlic aioli. And I
didn't eat it. Just thought you
should know.

Embry enters behind Dude.

EMBRY
There you are.

Everyone turns and sees Embry, now holding a tiny punk rock outfit in front of Dude. Noah looks down at Dude and realizes he heard him yelling.

EMBRY (CONT'D)
What do you guys think? It was either
this or glam rock. Should I add a
little mohawk?

MARVIN
Em, you know how I feel about mohawks
-- I love them -- but your brother
needs a moment.

Embry, getting it, nods and leaves. Dude, head low, scurries out behind her. Noah lets out a groan and buries his head back in his pillow. Karen rubs his back.

KAREN

Do you remember the skate park?

MARVIN

Aw, he was so cute on his little skateboard! And those teeny knee pads--
(off Karen's look, serious)
Continue.

KAREN

(to Noah)

We went to that skate park every day for a week until finally you felt comfortable enough to skate in front of the other kids.

NOAH

(looks up)

I fell a lot. I still have a scar.

Noah holds up his scarred elbow.

KAREN

But the important thing is you always got back up. That scar is a reminder that you can do anything you set your mind to.

(then)

Okay, that sounded super cheesy. But it's still true.

MARVIN

Your mom's right. You're stronger than you know. And you'll regret it if you don't finish out the week.

NOAH

I guess... But if tomorrow is another total disaster, can I go back to home schooling?

Karen nods.

MARVIN

I should probably let you know now that my math skills don't go past fifth grade. So...

(bad Adam Sandler voice)

Give it your best shot!

NOAH

(to Karen)

He keeps doing that voice. I have no clue who it is.

Off Marvin's dismayed expression...

INT. FERRIS HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

Dude's staring out an open window.

DUDE

I knew it was only a matter of time before this happened. Humans are always quick to kick you out when you don't act "perfect" or when you poop on their fancy new rug.

(sighs)

I'm just not built for this goodie goodie life. Okay, open road. Watch out because here I come!

Dude hops up on a chair and dives through the window, but halfway through he gets stuck.

DUDE (CONT'D)

Well, this is awkward.

Dude finally gets free and lands with a painful thud.

DUDE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Open road, here I come!

INT. PALMETTO MIDDLE SCHOOL - MORNING

The door slowly opens. Noah enters and sees Amara and Simon down the hall talking.

CHYRON: FRIDAY

Amara spots Noah. She wheels over, followed by Simon.

AMARA

Hey. I thought there was no way you'd show up today.

NOAH

Why? Because I totally humiliated myself in front of the whole school?

(off their looks)

That was meant to be a joke.

Amara and Simon give him an awkward laugh.

SIMON

(looking around)

Where's Dude?

NOAH

Um... honestly? I have no idea. I was really upset last night and I think he sensed it. We couldn't find him this morning. My mom thinks he's just hiding in the house somewhere.

AMARA

I'm sure he'll turn up...

SIMON

I don't know. My cousin Tony lost his dog and they never--

(Amara elbows him)

Never... had to look for him because he died.

NOAH

Wow. I thought you were gonna save it, but you made it worse.

AMARA

(changing subject)

Well, I think it's cool you came back.

NOAH

Thanks, but yesterday reminded me why I'm not cut out for real school.

SIMON

I think you're looking at yesterday all wrong. You're the kid who humiliated Principal Meyers! That gives you some major street cred.

AMARA

Speaking of...

Noah follows Amara's stare. Walking toward them is Principal Meyers, holding a coffee and wearing a yellow rain poncho.

NOAH

(anxious)

Is there a back door I can sneak out?

AMARA

Yeah. This way.

Amara leads them around a corner and down a hallway.

SIMON

I wonder what weird thing is in Mr. Fleckberg's beard today. My money's on gum.

AMARA

You need to let this beard obsession go.

SIMON

Let it go? It's the best part of school!

INT. CAR - SAME TIME

Karen and Marvin are in their usual spots in the car.
Karen's looking at a "Find My iPhone" tracking app.

MARVIN

I can't believe he doesn't know who
Adam Sandler is. We've clearly failed
as parents.

KAREN

Look!
(pointing to phone)
He's halfway into the school!

MARVIN

That's awesome!
(then)
Wait. You have an app that tracks
Noah's phone?

KAREN

It actually tracks everyone's phones.

MARVIN

So... you know where we are at all
times?

KAREN

(sly smile)
Yep.

MARVIN

Okay, good to know.
(looks at phone)
Go Noah!

INT. PALMETTO MIDDLE SCHOOL - MORNING

Noah, Amara and Simon stop near the exit doors.

NOAH

Thanks for showing me the way out.

AMARA

No problem. Sorry you have to go.

SIMON

Hopefully, we see you around. Maybe
at your grandma's place? Just next
time order the cheese Danish. I like
that one the best.

NOAH

Ha, okay. Well...
(gives them a double finger
point)

(MORE)

NOAH (CONT'D)
 ... check ya later.
 (then)
 Please forget I just did that.

They all smile. Noah is about to head toward the doors...

SIMON (O.S.)
 Hey, Noah.

Noah turns back.

SIMON (CONT'D)
 (pointing)
 I know you don't care, but that's our
 homeroom.

Noah looks into the almost full classroom directly across
 from him.

NOAH
 (sotto)
 Second step... homeroom.

The bell rings. Noah jumps. Kids rush past. Noah looks from
 the outside doors back to the classroom. His breathing
 accelerates. He starts to see everything in slow motion.

AMARA
 (slow motion, concerned)
 Noah?

SIMON
 (slow motion)
 You look weird...

Noah tries to take a step, but then he finds himself stuck.
 He looks down and realizes that the floor has become
 quicksand. And he's sinking!

NOAH
 Dude!

EXT. STREET - SAME TIME

As the sound of Noah's voice echoes, we see Dude walking
 down the street.

DUDE
 This was totally the right move. I'm
 sure Noah hasn't even noticed I'm
 gone. Now... let's find some bacon.

Dude surveys the people around him, including a Hasidic
 Jewish man pushing a stroller.

DUDE (CONT'D)
 Not from that guy.

He keeps looking when he sees Reginald (golden retriever from the first scene) guiding a BLIND MAN toward him.

DUDE (CONT'D)
Of all the days...

Dude quickly hides behind a woman with shopping bags, who almost immediately starts crossing the street, leaving Dude exposed. Reginald stops right in front of him.

REGINALD
Dude?

DUDE
Reginald. Did you do something new with your fur? It looks great.

REGINALD
(looking around)
Where's your human?

DUDE
Oh, well, the thing about that is... I kind of just ran away.

REGINALD
I knew you wouldn't make it as an emotional support dog. Humans are such suckers.

DUDE
I'll have you know I was actually a pretty good emotional support dog.

REGINALD
I doubt that.

DUDE
Okay, at first I stunk. But then I kinda got the hang of it. I made Noah feel better when he started to panic. Oh! And I even helped him make friends. This cool girl named Amara. And this other guy... Turbo, who we're not a hundred percent sure about... But I did that.
(looks down)
And then I screwed it all up and now he wants nothing to do with me.

REGINALD
So you left him.

DUDE
Of course I left him. Did you hear what I just said? He wants nothing to do with me!

REGINALD

Did it occur to you that him pushing you away is really him telling you he needs you now more than ever?

DUDE

Ha, okay. That makes zero sense.

REGINALD

If you paid attention at all during our classes--

DUDE

I did not--

REGINALD

Then you'd remember that I said a service dog must stay by their human's side no matter what. You might not be a service dog, but the same thing applies. Your job is to anticipate your human's needs. Become one with them.

As Dude takes this in, he notices that Reginald's blind human is about to walk into traffic.

DUDE

You better check your man.

Reginald turns and barks loudly just before the man steps into the street. The man returns to Reginald's side.

REGINALD

Why am I even wasting my time telling you this? You're way too selfish to care about anyone else.

DUDE

You know what, Reg? That's where you're wrong. I was too selfish. But not anymore.

Dude turns and runs back down the street.

DUDE (CONT'D)

I'm coming, Noah!

REGINALD

(watching Dude go)

Well done, Reginald. You are the best service dog--

(sees something)

Darn it!

The blind man has started walking toward traffic again. Reginald runs out and stops him before he gets hit.

INT. PALMETTO MIDDLE SCHOOL - MOMENTS LATERNoah is still sinking into the quicksand.

NOAH
I'm sinking!

From Amara and Simon's POV, everything looks normal.

AMARA
Do you see him sinking or...?

SIMON
Maybe it's a new slang? Like when
you're super into something?
You're... *sinking*?

INT. CAR - SAME TIME

Karen looks at her phone. The Noah dot's stagnant.

KAREN
He's right by his homeroom, but he
hasn't moved. Move, Noah! Come on!

MARVIN
Your phone's probably frozen. Let me
smack it against the dash.

Marvin reaches for the phone, but Karen slaps his hand away.

INT. PALMETTO MIDDLE SCHOOL - SAME TIMENoah's now waist deep. As the quicksand creeps closer toward his chin, Noah's expression is that of someone who's all but given up. Until...

AMARA (O.S.)
Look!

Noah looks up. It's Dude! He's running down the hall toward Noah. Kids excitedly reach down to try and pet him, but he dodges their grasps. Another student drops a bag of chips from a vending machine. The chips spill out in front of Dude, but he stays focused and jumps over them. He gets a few feet away from Noah and stops. They look at each other, locking eyes. In this moment Dude and Noah become one. Dude's POV shifts... he sees the floor transform into quicksand and that Noah is shoulder deep!

NOAH
Dude! You came back.

DUDE
I got you, buddy!

Dude looks around for a way to help Noah. He spots the banner the janitor ripped down yesterday sticking out of a trash bin and yanks it out with his mouth. He then drags it over to Noah, who grabs the other end. Dude pulls with all his strength and rescues Noah out of the quicksand into...

INT. PALMETTO MIDDLE SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

Noah's on the floor with Dude, who's licking Noah's face.

NOAH
Thanks, Dude.
(then)
I really hope you haven't licked your
butt recently.

DUDE
I swear I'll never leave you again.
(then)
And I have.

INT. CAR - SAME TIME

Karen and Marvin celebrate!

KAREN
He's in! He did it!

MARVIN
Woo hoo!

INT. PALMETTO MIDDLE SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - SAME TIME

Noah and Dude are still on the floor when...

MR. FLECKBERG (O.S.)
Noah Ferris?

They look up to see MR. FLECKBERG (30s, huge mountain man beard with paperclips stuck in it) and an entire class staring at them, confused.

NOAH
(weakly)
Here.

Noah and Dude look at each other.

DUDE
Step two, get to homeroom. Step
three... survive middle school.

END OF SHOW