

PLEASE TAKE CARE OF ME!

Robert, human actor.

Heather, Sophie, Midnight, puppets.

Heather's garden.

R: Hello kids! My name is Robert, and I am going to see my good friend, Heather. (*Calls out*) Heather! Heather! Are you there? ...Heather! (*Looks to the right and the left*) Looks like nobody's home. Hmm. (*To the audience*) Hey kids, have you seen Heather? She's about this high, with red hair and long braids. She's really, really sweet, too. Have you seen her?

Heather pops up behind him as Robert is describing her. Kids in the audience are pointing her out. She dives back down before R can see her. R looks behind him to see that she is not there.

R (*to the audience*): What? Are you guys playing a trick on me? I don't see her.

Heather pops up again for a second. Kids point her out, but she dives back down.

R: What? Again? But I don't see her. Where? Where?

Heather pops up again, and this time stays up. R turns around to see her, and they both laugh.

R: Oh, Heather. There you are!! Good morning! I'm so happy to see you.

H: Good morning, Robert. So nice to see you, too! I was making cookies - would you like one?

R: Do I ever say no to your cookies, Heather?

Heather giggles and lifts the bowl of cookies up for Robert. He takes one.

H: So Robert, how've you been? I haven't seen you in a while!

R: Well, you won't believe this, Heather: I got a little dog!

H: A dog? You got a dog? Wow, Robert! That's soooo cool! (*with great excitement, very fast*) Boy or a girl? Boy or a girl?

R: A girl.

H: A girl! You've got a little girl? WOW!! (*Pause*). So...? What color? What color?

R: She's black and white.

H: Oh, a little black and white doggie. (*Pause. Then very fast*) So...? What's her name? What's her name?

R: Sophie.

H: Sophie! That's such a great name! (*Pause*) Where did you get Sophie from?

R: Well, my neighbor moved and didn't want to take her.

H: Oh, how sad! (*Happily again*) But how wonderful that you saved her and gave her a home! You are a super-duper cool person, Robert! Here! Have another cookie!

He takes another and starts eating.

H: So...I can only imagine how much fun you and Sophie are having together! Am I right? Am I right?

R: (*Happy, but also a little sad*) Yes, we do.

H: (*fast, impatiently, not having registered his sadness*) So...? Tell me, tell me! What's your favorite game with Sophie?

R: (*as before*) I go to the backyard and play ball with her before dinner time.

H: That's sounds like fun! Dogs love playing with a ball! That's wonderful Robert!

R: (*sad, worried*) But there is a big problem, Heather. (*pause*)

H: There is? What??

R: Well, Sophie barks too much!

H: Dogs bark for all sorts of reasons, Robert. That's just how they talk! You know, those *may* just be *love* barks. Maybe she's just telling you that she's thrilled to have a friend like you!

R: Really?

H: Yeah, *maybe*. So anyway, tell me more! What about at night? Where does she sleep? (*R opens his mouth to answer reluctantly, but she continues without noticing*) Oh wait, wait, wait - don't tell me, don't tell me. I can see it, I can see it: at night she sleeps with you, in your bedroom, right next to your bed, on her own fluffy little doggie bed! Ahhhh.

R: No, not exactly, Heather.

H: Oh, well then, I know, I know. Must be in the *living* room, right next to the couch on the warm, soft rug.

R: No, Heather, it's not...

H: (*Disappointed*) Oh, well then is it,.... the kitchen?

R: No....

H: (*More disappointed*) Or... the bathroom? (*Pause. Then, as if having had a brilliant idea:*) Oh, I know where. I've got it! Sophie sleeps in your *parents'* bedroom. They love her sooo much that they want her sleeping right next to *their* bed. Am I right?

R: No, actually....(pause)... my parents won't let Sophie in the house.

H: (*taken aback*) WHAT? They won't let her in the house? But WHY?

R: (*imitating his parents*) "Because dogs don't belong in the house. Period."

H: (*upset*) Oh no! But why?

R: (*still in parental voice*) "Because I said so." (*in normal voice, apologetically*) So we bought her a little dog house. And I feed her every morning and every night. And I make sure she always has fresh water.

H: Good job, Robert. At least you're making sure she has plenty of food and water, and a place to stay dry. That's important.

R: But she still won't stop barking. Day and night: bark, bark, bark. I don't know why. Some of the neighbors have started complaining. And my parents are getting angry. And now they're thinking of giving her *away*.

H: *Giving her away?* Oh, no, Robert! Don't let them do *that*!

R: I know Heather – but I don't know what to *do*!

H: (*walks back and forth*) What to do? What to do? What to do? There must be something we can do! (*Stops*) Wait! I have an idea!!

R: An idea? What is it?

H: Well, you're parents are upset because Sophie's barking too much, right?

R: Right....

H: Well then, we have to ask Sophie *why* she's barking so much!!

R: But Heather, how can we do that?

H: It's easy, Robert.

R: Easy?

H: Yeah! I know a very special magic spell!!

R: A magic spell??!

H: Yeah!! My cat Midnight taught it to me a few years ago, when I rescued him.

R: Wow!

H: Ready?

R: Sure am!

H: OK. Here it goes!!! Animal-lee, animal-loo, here's a magic wish for you! Abracadabra, abracadow, you now understand bow wow and meow!

Then two barks are heard.

H: Did I hear a dog? Hmm. I think I did! Let me go check! (*H disappears. Another bark is heard.*)

R: I think I heard a dog, too! Sophie? Is that you? (*looks around*) Sophie?

Two more barks are heard. Sophie appears.

R: Sophie! Wow!! How did you get here?

S: I... don't know. It just happened so fast!

R: Sophie, you can speak!!

S: So can you!

R: No, that's not what I meant. I mean I can *understand* you! We're talking!

S: And boy oh boy, it's a good thing we are because I have a lot to tell YOU!!!

R: I can't believe this! I was just telling Heather all about you, and how much I love you, and how much -

S: How much I bark all the time, right?

R: Yeah. That's it.

S: And you want to know *why* I've been barking so much, right?

R: Yes! I really want to know, Sophie, because my parents are very upset and they are thinking of...

S: I know! They're thinking of giving me AWAY!!! (*begins to cry*): Oh, Robert. I bark a lot because I'm so lonely in the yard... And it gets wet and cold out there at night. I'm all alone. And I want to be inside with *you*!

R: You do? (*He embraces her.*)

S: Yes!! You're my family. And I love you.

R: Oh, I love you, too, Sophie. (*He kisses her and begins to pet her. Sadly:*) If only I could convince my parents...

S: Well, why don't you tell them I promise to stop barking.? Tell them if they let me sleep inside I won't bark any more.

R: Hmm. You know what, Sophie? That just might work. That's something they might understand. I'll go tell them right away!

R begins to walk away.

S: Great!! Oh, and one more thing, Robert....If you really, really love me, then please take me to the animal doctor to be fixed.

R: Why do you need to be "fixed"? Are you broken??

S: No! (she giggles). Being "fixed" is when an animal can't have babies any more. It's called *spay* for a girl animal and *neuter* for a boy animal.

R: But that sounds awful! Why would I do *that* to you?

S: It's not awful at all, Robert. In fact, I'll be healthier, and I'll live longer, and that means we'll be together more!

R: But... but I heard that the dogs who get "fixed," become fat and lazy. The same thing happens with cats. They're not buff anymore.

With a drum roll, Midnight rushes in, doing summersaults. He is insulted.

M: (*facing off Robert*) Cats, dude? Did I hear something about "buff cats"? (*He does another summersault*).

R: Midnight!! Where did you - ? And I can understand you too, just like Sophie!!

M: Tell me, dude, do I look fat and lazy?

R: You, Midnight? Never!

M: Well, I'll tell you a secret...(he gestures for Robert to come in closer): I'm fixed!! (*Robert gasps*). You want to know why? The people who had my mom and dad wouldn't fix them. They said it would not be natural. But when me and my brothers and sisters were born, no one wanted us. They couldn't find us homes. So the people left us in the street, dude. No food. No water. No home. Mommy Heather found me in the street.

R: Oh, Midnight! I had no idea! (*Turns to Sophie*) But Sophie, if you get fixed, you won't be able to have babies!

S: That's okay, Robert. It's better that way, because there just aren't enough homes for all the doggies who are born!

M: Or for the kitties.

R: Oh. *(pause)* I didn't know that. *(pause)* That's so sad. Okay, we'll get you... "spayed," Sophie. Is that the right word?

S: Yes, it is. I love you, Robert. Come here, you! *(R comes closer and she gives him a lick and kiss)*. Well, I'm gonna go find my ball so we can play!

R: Okay, Sophie!

Sophie exits with a bark.

R: Hmm... *(tries to digest what S said, delivered slowly to the audience)* There just aren't enough homes for all the doggies and the kitties who are born. *(Pause)* I never knew that. Did you know that, kids?

M: *Well, now you do!*

Midnight disappears. Meows are heard in the distance as Midnight leaves. Heather pops up.

R: *(surprised)* Heather! I talked to Sophie. I even talked to Midnight.

H: You did???

R: Yeah!

H: So, did you ask Sophie why she barks?

R: Yes, I did.

H: And what did she say?

R: That she's barking because she feels lonely and wants to come inside the house.

H: Well, that makes sense.

R: And she also told me she wants to be fixed.

H: That makes perfect sense too, Robert. That's an important part of taking good care of your animal friend.

R: You're right!

H: And don't forget to get her a collar with a tag on it!

R: A tag? What's the tag for?

H: The tag should have your phone number on it, in case Sophie ever gets lost!

R: Okay, I'll get her a collar and a tag, and will get her fixed too...

H: Great!

R: But Heather, tell me, this "fixing" thing... It's not painful or anything, is it...?

H: Oh no, not at all! And on top of it all, Sophie will be healthier and live longer too!

R: Wow! Heather! That's exactly what Sophie and Midnight told me.

H: Well, you know what Midnight and I always say? (*Midnight appears and joins her*).

H and M: Spay and neuter makes them cuter! (*Start to dance in a funny way*) Spay and neuter makes them cuter! Spay and neuter makes them cuter! Spay and neuter makes them cuter!

Midnight exits singing "spay and neuter makes them cuter!".

R: You know what Heather?

H: What?

R: You are a silly girl, that's what!

H giggles.

R: I'm gonna run home right now and tell my parents what I learned. Goodbye, Heather.

Festive music begins.

H: Goodbye Robert. Give Sophie a big kiss for me!

R: I will, Heather, I will. Bye!

H: Bye kids!!

Robert walks off. Heather walks off, dancing. With the music still on, Midnight brings up a sign that says THE END. Sophie joins him. They dance until the music begins to fade. Then they both exit, descending.

EPILOGUE FOR THE VIDEO (after credits)

H: Hi kids. It's me, Heather. We hope you enjoyed the play! Sooo... here are some important things that Midnight and Sophie taught us today: Fix your animal friends!
(Flash caption: FIX YOUR ANIMAL FRIEND!)

M,S (pop up under the caption): Spay and neuter makes them cuter! Spay and neuter makes them cuter! Spay and neuter makes them cuter!

H: Bring your animal friend inside – especially at night! (Flash caption: BRING YOUR FRIENDS INSIDE – ESPECIALLY AT NIGHT!)

M: It gets cold out there, dude!

S: And very lonely!

H: Give them fresh water and food every day! (Flash caption: GIVE THEM FRESH WATER AND FOOD EVERY DAY!)

M: I'm a growing boy, dude!

S: And I love to eat!

H: Play with your animal friends! (Flash caption: PLAY WITH YOUR ANIMAL FRIENDS!)

M,S: We just loooove to play!

H: Put a collar with a tag on your animal friends! (Flash caption: PUT A COLLAR WITH A TAG ON YOUR ANIMAL FRIENDS!)

M (holds up a dark green collar) Like this!

S (holds up a hot pink one) I have a pink one!

H: Wow! Those colors are sooo cool! Well, thanks for listening, kids! And take good care of the animals. Good bye, now!

M: Bye!

S: Bye!