

PSYCHOCAT

A short play by

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Cast:

DOG: male, sausage dog in a padded vest, has an Aussie accent

CAT: female, quite ordinary domestic cat without any collar, has a short chopped off tail, has a bit of a European accent

MISS KLEIN: The owner of the cat and the Hat and Pet Shop, she has black hair with some grey in it, in her fifties, wears plain black clothes, looks quite ordinary, also has a European accent

DOG OWNER: Chubby woman, big puffy blonde hair,

CUSTOMER: Skinny woman with thick framed glasses, not matching clothes

Place:

The Hat and Pet Shop in Hawthorn, Melbourne. Half of the shop has hats on stands and on the wall, the other half has funky pet accessories and toys.

Time:

November 2007, a Thursday afternoon, 4:30pm.

PSYCHOCAT

The Hat and Pet Shop. The Cat sleeps in the shop next to the door. She is situated in the front of the stage. Miss Klein is fiddling with something behind the counter at the back of the stage.

The door rings didong-didong and the Dog-owner walks in with the Dog.

Dog owner: G'day!

Customer puts the dog down at the door and ties his leash up to a hook that is purposely put there for people to leave their pets there.

Miss Klein: Good afternoon! How may I help you....

The women's voices fade away. The Dog owner walks to the back of the stage where Miss Klein is and they engage into a conversation. Miss Klein is helping her pick out hats and the Dog owner is trying them on all throughout the play in the background.

Dog: Wooff!

Cat: *(continues to sleep)*

Dog: Wooff!

Cat: *(continues to sleep)*

Dog: Wooofff???

Cat: *(raises its head and with a bored voice)* Mioff.

Dog: Mioooffff??

Cat: Mioff.

Dog: Alright. I say wooff, you're supposed to say Miaow, hiss at me, fluff your tail, and try to scratch me with your claws...

Cat: Yepp, that's what cats usually do.

Dog: So, why don't you do it? Wooff!!!

Cat: Is not it obvious? Because I am not a cat.

Dog: Well, you certainly smell like one, therefore you are one. Wooff!

Cat: Mioff.

Dog: Rightio. If you aren't a cat, then what are you?

Cat: I am a dog.

Dog: A...dog? Crikey!? That can't be. (*It starts sniffing itself*)... I smell like a dog, therefore I am a dog. (*It starts sniffing the cat.*) You smell like a cat, therefore you're a cat. And you're supposed to say Miaow and...

Cat: Okay, okay. I am not totally there yet.

Dog: What do you mean you're not totally there yet?

Cat: I am still working on it.

Dog: On what?

Cat: Like on barking and stuff. And in general: to be a "hot" dog like you.

Dog: A sausage dog like me?

Cat: Yes, a Dachshund or a German Shepherd or whatever a Chihuahua...it really does not matter! I would even be happy to become an underdog!

Dog: Whoa, hold on a minute! I'm still trying to work out here how you can be working on becoming a dog? I thought that somebody either is a dog, or is not a dog, but....?

Cat: Come on! Where do you live? In the boonies? That is soo last year. Nowadays you are what you believe you are. Therefore, species is a state of mind, so I have started to believe that I am a dog.

Dog: State of mind? I think you've lost your mind. Are you into the occult or something? We are born to be what we are born to be. I was born to be a dog; therefore I'm a dog.

Cat: Oh, if I were just given a chance to be born again....!

Dog: Born again? Listen, my owner works with a group of two-legged who claim to be born again. He's a pastor not far from here at St Columb's. His office hours are....

Cat: You idiot! How could I show up in his office and talk to him? I am not yet a dog, no longer a cat, but still an animal!

Dog: Alright, alright, I was just trying to help. But I'm still confused, why are you so keen to become a dog? You reckon our life is so easy? In this dog-eat-dog world? I mean, are you at all prepared to be called a bitch?!

Cat: Oh, they could call me whatever. I would rather be a bitch than a pussy....

Dog: Ha! I reckon you're the weirdest cat...or dog, whatever...I have ever come across. How come I haven't seen you around here? You the shop-owners' cat?

Cat: Mind you, I am her DOG! We moved here last Spring from Transylvania. One afternoon Miss Klein got a phone call from her dying Aunt, who previously owned this shop and she asked her to move down here to take....

Dog: Ah, that's right! You know, I come here every year with my owner's misses to pick out a hat for her for the races. We always used to be served by an old sheila. Boy she smelled like ham 'n' eggs. Is she dead, is she?

Cat: As you say. Miss Klein took care of her until she died about six months ago and then we took over the shop and the house. As you see, for Miss Klein this move meant a chance for a new life. She is a spinster. No family. So she brought me along. Little did I know that her new life basically will end mine....Oh I wish that I would've died in the cold belly of that iron bird and that my paws would've never touched the soil of this terrible land...

Dog: What are you saying ya woose? I've heard the two-leggeds say this is the best country in the world. There's plenty of everything here: jobs, food, beer,

vegemite. Plenty of Chum, if you ask me. This is heaven mate! There is equality, democracy, animal rights, human rights, and we are all young and free with a chance for a fair go!

Cat: Animal rights? Ha! Fair go?? Yeah right! In this country I am not even sure if they qualify me to be a cat and they surely do not acknowledge my will to become a dog. So where do you think the fair go is?

Dog: I acknowledge you to be a perfectly good cat. You're bit of a psychocat, but still a cat...

Cat: Oh come on, just admit it! I just do not fit the Aussie definition of "feline"? I know it already. Ever since I came to this country I struggle with identity crisis and image disorder.

Dog: Oh listen, you're doing my head in! You smell like a cat, so you are a cat. You do sound a bit strange, like you have an accent or something, but in my eyes you're still a cat.

Didong-Didong. The door rings when a new customer arrives. The owner of the sausage dog and Miss Klein are still engaged in a conversation about hats and take no notice of the new customer, who sneaks in and starts looking at the pet stuff.

Cat: *(Leans close to the Dog and starts whispering.)* See, that two-legged woman, the one who just came in. She often comes in and buys all kinds of crap for her cat Fairy-floss. Sometimes she brings Fairy-floss along. Uhhh even the thought of that defenceless furrball sends shivers down my spine!! Because of women like this, my species is doomed to suffer in this country....

The cat creeps closer and closer to the Customer and makes strange sounds that are mixed between miaowing and barking. Customer takes no notice of the cat.

Cat: Mioff! Mioff!

Dog: *(Laughing.)* Grouse! This is getting bizarre. I had no idea I was up for such entertainment when I volunteered to come along to buy a hat. Ha-ha! *(Dog yells after the cat.)* Hey you, come on back here! Stop! You'll get yourself into trouble. Come here and finish what you were saying!

Cat: *(Returns to the door where the Dog is placed. Dog is still laughing. Cat is panting.)* I do not think this is funny at all! You shouldn't be laughing at this. All in all, your country owes me an apology.

Dog: For what?

Cat: For stealing my species from me. Apologize for the mistreatments?

Dog: Ehhh...what?

Cat: Look at that woman! Look at the stuff she is picking up! A pink collar for her white furrball. Uhhh...Yuck! Oh, those spoiled pussies with fancy collars and ribbons, shame triggers my bones when I think of them...

Dog: Isn't that what being a cat is about? You know, cute and fluffy and....

Cat: Oh, dear! Did you not hear that we are from the same family as the tiger? We have ancient predator blood flowing in our veins? The two-leggeds of this country turned cats into living lap-warmers!

Dog: Well, why do you think your owner keeps you if not for your purring and snuggles?

Cat: Miss Klein? She does not except that from me you can be sure of that. Where we come from cats have a purpose driven life. Our masters entrusts us the pantry to hunt down the mice. We get rewarded if we bring our pray to our masters' doorstep. Oh, I used to love catching mice, used to juggle them while they were still alive. They would get so stressed striving for their lives that their blood sugar would go up. Oh, their flesh was the sweetest delicacy ever!!!

Dog: You gruesome Transylvanian vampire! That sounds awful! You bit into their hairy, raw flesh...ohh please....I really hope you aren't into these occult practices here? Because soon the RSPCA will be on your back and you'll be up for a big fine....

Cat: RSPCA...ha! Got no respect for them. They tattoo numbers into animal's ears. Like in a concentration camp! I am telling you they're into dirty business. They castrate our tomcats and spay us. Just like in a factory, they deprive us from our species' reproductive organs to create the ultimate alive infertile tamagochies for the two-leggeds.

The Customer goes up to the counter in the back of the stage and purchases a new pink collar for Fairy-floss. She leaves. The cat continues with her monologue, while the door rings.

Didong-didong...

Cat: Where I come from I used to sit up on the fence at nights singing to the full-moon, waiting on the tomcats to gather around me and fight for my honour. You get none of this here. These cats have no hunters' blood, no desire to spread their genes. They don't even have genders. I don't even know what they are anymore.

Dog: Sniff them! If they smell like cats, they surely are cats.

Cats: Cats?? Maybe plush figures?! They eat canned food for heaven's sake! Fake meat in jelly? They get punished if they catch anything! Their claws are manicured, so they can't climb trees. They shit in fragranced boxes. I don't want to live like this pooch! So I have to depart from my 'catness'. I can't belong to a species that gave up all it was created for just to please the two-legged. I saw the dogs here though. You have it better! You're let loose in parks! You can work on farms with the police and lead the blind! So, I'm

trying to be a dog with all my might. I managed to get my tail shut into a door so it got broken off. I'm learning to wag it like dogs. I'm good. Look!

Cat gets up wagging her tail.

Cat: I've also started to work on my barking technique by watching Inspector Rex. I stayed up all night practising. Listen to this: Mioff!!! Mioff!!! When I've first heard we are moving to Australia I was anticipating some sorta trouble. Is not this a convict country? I expected some roughness. But all I got was spoiled pussy cats with no purpose....MIOFF!!!!

Dog: Now listen here! I've been sitting here patiently, listening to your whining and now it's my turn to tell you a thing or two about my part of the world! So what do you think we dogs are doing? You reckon that our life is golden, like the retrievers' fur? Do you think I live like the wolves in the movies? Look at me! Here I am in a little padded vest. Every morning I have to jump on my two back legs to beg for my daily portion of Chum. Then, I lay in a basket all day chewing on some rubber toys waiting for my owners to come home and take me for a walk. The two-leggeds on the streets pat me with their stinky palms and babytalk to me: 'poochy'! 'cutey'! I have constant spine injuries because I am short-legged and, more or less, come on! I look like a stuffed stocking! They call me a sausage dog for heaven's sake! The only joy left for me in this world is to bark at cats and have them miaow back, fluff their furry tails, hiss at me and run away. And here I am listening to some sort of immigrant cat, bashing my country and our cats. These 'pussies' make me feel like a dog! A big dog! And you here, you refuse to miaow back at me. Now that is it! Wooff and wooff and wooff! And don't you dare....WOOFFF!!!

Cat: *(Gets up and starts running away!)* Miaow!!!

Dog: I'll cure your identity crisis in a second! I'll show you why I'm called a dog and what you're meant to be!!! WOFFFF!!

Cat: MIAOW!!!!

Dog: In the name of all the cats of this country I wooff you!!! Don't you dare bash them! You tall puppy! You think you're any better! You're just a simple, ordinary cat like them!

Cat: Miaow!!!

Cat runs to the owner, hides behind her legs, Hats are flying everywhere. One of the hat racks falls over. The dog continues to chase the cat around for a while.

Miss Klein: Oh, no!!! Please do something with your dog! Oh what a mess!

Dog owner: I am truly sorry. Pepperoni! Come here my dear! He never does this....

Cat: MIAOWWW!!!!

Dog: WOFFFFF! WOFFFF!! WOUFF!!!!

Dog owner: I apologize...honestly....Hussh! You embarrass me ! Hussh!

Dog: *(Laughs quite insanely.)* Hahahah! Yesss!!! WOOOOF!!!

Dog owner and dog leaves the shop. The dog is still laughing.

LIGHTS DOWN.