DUE for DESTRUCTION



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Nelson Literacy Directions

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Due for Destruction

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Meet the Characters

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Brooke

A volunteer at a dog shelter.



Karl

Brooke's father.



Dog 51

A dangerous dog housed at the dog shelter.

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Dear Reader

I once adopted an abandoned dog. When she first came home, she was aggressive and had a lot of problems with her behaviour. I wondered if I'd done the right thing. But, with love and care, she slowly improved.

What happened to her? She's still here, sitting at my feet as I write this. Everyone, and everything, deserves a second chance, don't you think?

John Parsons, Author

A Cutaway View of the Dog Shelter



1. The office
2. The front door
3. The corridor of cages



1 Visiting Day

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Gritty. Grimy. Grey. For three days, the relentless northwesterly had blown an air of irritation through the city. Brooke gazed out the grimy window of the bus. Grey concrete and steel, passing in a blur. She thought about her father, Karl.



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The orange shirt. His orange shirt. Ever since she could remember, she'd always seen him in faded blue denim. And an orange shirt. Over the years, his face had gradually grown wearier and more lined and his eyes had become duller, somehow colder.

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As the bleak years passed, the contrast between his face and the bright orange shirt grew stronger.

Brooke's thoughts were disrupted as the bus driver suddenly slammed on the brakes. Brooke lurched forward. Passengers jolted, annoyed, grumbling. It was the evening rush hour, and during this frustrating time of the day the journey from the prison to the dog shelter where she worked took three buses. Three buses – punctuated by twenty-minute waits between buses in rundown, graffitied neighbourhoods. There, even the fluorescent spray paint looked tired and fed up. Bus time. Time to reflect on the emptiness that the hustle and bustle of life on the other thirty days of each month disguised.

Visiting days. Always the same. The bus driver tentatively headed towards a set of traffic lights and Brooke returned to her thoughts.



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At first, Brooke and her mother had studiously visited Karl every month, but her mother's willingness to visit the prison had drained away with the passing years. Now, Brooke visited alone. At least, she reflected, the days of the depressing bus journeys were almost over. Next month, her father would be released. Free.

There wasn't much conversation between Brooke and her father in the visiting room. With both of them living in vastly different worlds, there never seemed much to say, even though the two worlds were about to become one. For an hour each month, the small talk – the things people chatted about each day – seemed irrelevant. She'd asked him about his plans for next month, but he'd just shrugged. What plans could he make?

And, at the end of each visit, when she stepped back into the outside world, Brooke was filled with a mixture of relief and sadness.



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The bus pulled up parallel to a set of double yellow lines. Only one more stop, thought Brooke. On days like this, she was glad she worked night shifts at the dog shelter. Once the day workers departed, there was no one else at the shelter. Unlike humans, the abandoned and stray dogs she worked with didn't chatter idly. And, Brooke thought with the first smile of the day, they were always pleased to see her. No matter how badly they had been treated in the past, their eyes and tails always seemed alive with hope and expectation the moment she walked down the corridor housing the cages.

The bus growled stubbornly through the traffic towards Brooke's destination. No passengers got on or off at the next stop. As the driver pulled away from the kerb, Brooke reached up and pulled the cord strung from the roof of the bus, and a buzzer sounded at the front of the vehicle. The driver slowed, negotiated a corner and swooped the lumbering vehicle in to the next bus stop.

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Brooke waited for the automatic doors to open and took a deep breath to clear her head. It was time to rejoin the real world, a world of water bowls, cages and abandoned dogs. She stepped off the bus onto the pavement and, in the evening twilight, headed towards the shelter entrance.

