

[SOUNDBITE OF DOG BARKING]

KAROL BALLARD: Lex, speak! Speak! Speak! Good boy!

NARRATION: That's the sound of a bark that belongs to a very special dog—a dog named Lex. While many other dogs may content themselves with just being man's best friend, Lex does that and more—he also works a job as a model. I first became aware of Lex's existence in some clothing advertisement in a magazine. The ad was for human clothes, not dog clothes, but there the dog was, standing confidently next to a man in preppy clothes in the outdoors. The dog had quite the striking appearance; he was a large border collie with one brown eye and one blue eye and adorable speckles on his snout. Sometime later, as I was mindlessly looking through some deals in the Sunday circular, I came across another clothing ad which featured a dog. I studied the photo for a bit and realized it was the same dog I had seen some weeks earlier. Then, the following week, I saw the same dog yet again in an ad. Full disclosure: I love dogs, so as I connected the dots between these advertisements, I grew curious and I eventually did some research and found the dog's Facebook profile. Yes, the dog has a Facebook account. I sent a message to Lex and was ultimately put in contact with Lex's personal assistant.

KAROL BALLARD: My name is Karol Ballard, I am the personal assistant and public relations director for Lex Woofer, who is a dog model.

NARRATION: Just to be clear, Lex's full name is Lex Woofer, not to be confused with Lex Luthor. I just had to ask Karol about the name.

KAROL BALLARD: We were the third owners of Lex, which absolutely blows my mind because he's just the most outstanding dog I think I've ever met, and he was from day one. The first people called him Lexington, or Lexie, and the second couple that we actually got him from were trying to call him Micah, but we noticed that he wasn't responding to Micah at all. He's just like, whenever they would call for Micah, he's looking around like, Micah's gonna get in a lot of trouble if he doesn't answer these people.

[SOUNDBITE OF LAUGHTER]

KAROL BALLARD: So we figured out he really liked his name, which was Lex. It was, what, 2006, and I think *Superman Returns* had come out, so every time we'd walk him, people would ask what his name was, and we'd say, "Lex," and they'd go, "Oh, like Lex Luther!" and it kind of evolved into, "Well, kind of, but Lex Woofer, because he's a dog and he's a good guy."

NARRATION: So exactly how does a dog end up with a career as a model? Well, for Lex, it was about having the right connections. Also, living in southern California and having some acting experience probably didn't hurt either.

KAROL BALLARD: I was training him. I was taking him to work. I am a producer, and I was producing a short film, so he was my set dog. Well, the actress on this short film—Concetta Tomei, she's a character actress, she's awesome—loves animals. She saw Lex and said, "He has to be in this scene with me." So we let him be in the scene. He

was a natural at it. He loved it. He seemed so proud of himself afterwards, so I phoned up some people that I had met when we did a werewolf film—some animal trainers. And one of them, Sarah Clifford, became our studio teacher, and she needed a border collie in her stable, so we decided to see if Lex was going to be suitable for that. One time she sent us on a modeling call, and she said, “It’s only a hundred dollars,” but she said, “I know you want to get some modeling on his resume,” so we took the drive out there. And when I got there, it was really quite a setup, and I asked the producer who was doing the shoot, I mean, what was it for? Because I had thought it was going to be a student film or something. And he said it’s for Ralph Lauren, and I went, “Okay,” you know, just kind of played it cool. I mean, this is Lex’s first real modeling job, but I mean, he nailed it. And the first series of shots that they did, they ended up using.

NARRATION: And since that first job, Lex seems to have really gotten the knack of modeling. He’s a natural.

KAROL BALLARD: We were doing a shoot in Santa Barbara, and we usually didn’t travel that far, but I mean, this place was absolutely gorgeous that we went to. So I got on set, and the producer came up to me, and she said, “Oh, good! It is you!” She said, “I want you to know I asked for him by name. I want to get that dog that knows how to back up on command because we don’t have time to fuck around.” And I went, “Oh, okay, well, you know, thank you, you know, for thinking of us.” She said, “Well, time is limited. We don’t have time to fuck around.” I said, “Got it, cool.” So we were on this shoot for most of the day, and we had a couple of shots with Lex, and you know, you have to be ready for when either the producer or the photographer has a whim and that’s what they want, so you know, we hang out by where they’re shooting. Well, I had to go to the bathroom, and I ask one of the associate producers, I said, “Is now a good time? I need a restroom break.”

NARRATION: The associate producer told Karol that it’s fine; the producer and the photographer were looking at a new batch of photos anyway and they’d likely take some time to finish going through them.

KAROL BALLARD: So, a lot of trainers keep their animals in a cage or a crate, but I always kind of had Lex loose, just because he’s cool. So we went over to where the porta potties were, not far from where they were shooting and looking at the photos. So I was—I told Lex to wait outside, I was in there, and like midstream, I hear, “We’re ready for the dog!” And I’m like, “Oh, my God!” So I’m trying to get out of there just as quickly as I can, and I finally do, and I come out, and there’s no—Lex isn’t there! And I’m like, “Oh, my God! He never leaves. He always stays when I tell him to.” And so I went over to where they were shooting, and there was he was with the model, and I’m just—I am so sorry, you guys, I’m so sorry if I held things up, and they said, “Oh, no, as soon as we said we’re ready for the dog, he came running, and I pointed to where I needed him, and that’s where he was.”

[SOUNDBITE OF LAUGHTER]

KAROL BALLARD: So I said, “Well, heck, next time I’m just going to drop him off and go shopping or something.”

[SOUNDBITE OF LAUGHTER]

NARRATION: So with Lex's expansive range of work, you just might have seen his image somewhere, perhaps when looking at a magazine.

KAROL BALLARD: So he's been in *People Magazine*, *Sports Illustrated*, let's see, *In Style*, and *Men's Health*, that I've found because I have to just kind of come across any ad that he's in. They don't tell me. They hire me, and then it's just like, okay thank you. Like, one time I was stuck in an airport and I was just thumbing through a magazine, and like, "Oh! There's my dog!"

NARRATION: And perhaps, you might have even seen him in some grander locations.

KAROL BALLARD: We live in LA, so we were over in West Hollywood, driving on the way back. Well, on Sunset Boulevard, there are all these billboards of everything that's cool. You know, movies, clothes, actors, anything, you know, in the show biz sort of world. And I was looking up and wistfully thinking, "You know, we had a really good career, but we've never gotten a billboard that I know of." I mean, if we had one in Europe, I never saw it, of course. So driving along a little bit further and going on Laurel Canyon Boulevard, and I look up, and I see a billboard, and I think, "Huh, that looks just like a photo that Lex did a couple years ago," and then—my spouse was driving—and I just went, "It's Lex! Pull over! Pull over! Pull over!" I mean, I totally fangirled because here I was thinking that we'll probably never get a billboard. I mean, who gets a billboard? Not many dogs do get a billboard, but there was he was, and it was on Laurel Canyon, you know, one of the coolest main streets.

NARRATION: I think there is something endearing about knowing that I live in a world where a dog who didn't find his permanent family until his third try ended up a successful dog model for countless advertisements, and at least one billboard. At present, Lex has been working as a model for almost a decade, which would allegedly be the equivalent of seven decades in dog years. So now, Lex is enjoying his free time in semi-retirement. As Karol puts it, Lex photographs young but moves elderly.