

To the Atlanta Humane Society and
CrisisDogsNC, for connecting me with
my two best doggy friends.

C.S.

Dedicated in loving memory
to Paca, our first dog, who shared
her too short life with us.

L.U.



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A WORLD OF DOGS

A celebration of FASCINATING FACTS and
AMAZING REAL-LIFE STORIES for DOG LOVERS



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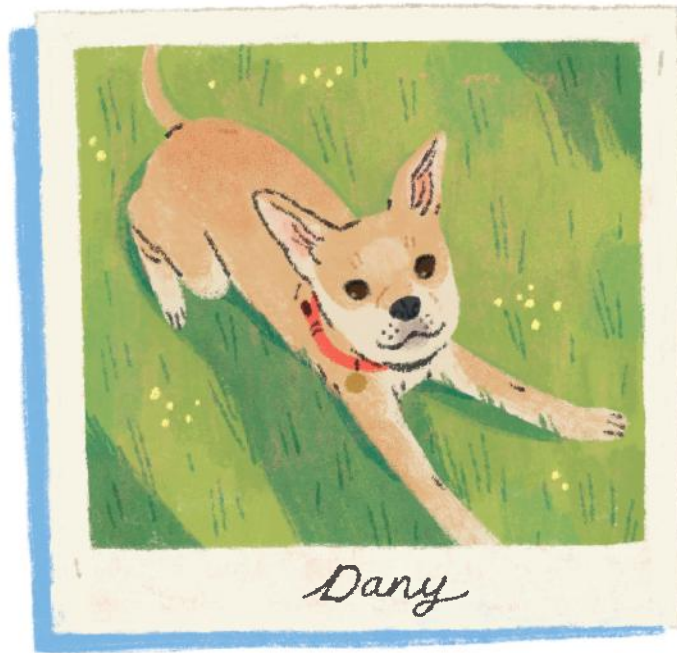
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A DOG IS FOR LIFE . . . EVEN WHEN IT'S A DINGO!

Have you ever heard of the American Dingo? Neither had I . . . until I accidentally adopted one. In many ways, Dany was the typical puppy: wiggly, curious and loving. She was also outrageously intelligent. From our first days together, I could already see the wildness in her.



It wasn't just the flickering of curiosity in her golden-brown eyes; it was the way her whole body flattened as she hunted a squirrel, how she'd hide from even the gentlest strangers. The documents from the animal rescue centre called her a Shepherd-mix.

"Nope," my vet said, after examining Dany. "You've got yourself a Carolina Dog. You know, an American Dingo?"

I'd grown up with three Golden Retrievers and one very sly Pointer; I'd written a novel from a dog's point of view; I thought I had the 'dog' thing down. Yet, before that moment in the vet's office, I'd always thought that all Dingoes were Australian.

HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT

That night, I threw myself into research – tracing the history of the American Dingo. A dog with wild, ancient bloodlines. A dog that remained undiscovered for thousands of years, hidden in the swamps of South Carolina in the United States of America. A dog that, as I researched, was snoring on top of my feet.

I whispered Dany a promise: "I will learn as much as I can about you." And so, I learned that her wild stomach wanted a diet of raw food, not cooked, tinned meat or dry biscuits. I learned that she was shy by nature, that her ancestors barely had any contact with people. And, above all, I discovered that learning is a process.

Every day, I notice something new about Dany – the exact way she angles her head, the precise bend of her fish-hook tail – and it sparks my curiosity all over again.



DISCOVERING A WORLD OF DOGS

I've followed my curiosity with this book. Why is a dog's sense of smell so brilliant? What is a dewclaw, and what is it used for? How much do dogs understand about human behaviour? I really, really needed to know! Not just because I wanted a stronger connection with my own dog, but also because it's fascinating to find out how wild animals of the ancient past became the dogs we know and love today.

GUIDE DOGS
are trained to guide and protect their owners.

SHOW DOGS
are trained and groomed before entering competitions.

SLEDGE DOGS
such as Huskies pull sledges across snow and ice.

SHEEPDOGS
are used to herd farm animals.

THERAPY DOGS
help people with everything from stress to gaining confidence when reading aloud.

ANTI-POACHING DOGS
help wildlife rangers keep animals such as rhinos and elephants safe.

In these pages, you'll find loyal dogs and famous dogs and heroic dogs. You'll discover amazing facts about the science, history and incredible abilities of different kinds of dogs. And hopefully, you'll walk away with a much better understanding of our truest friends. Who knows, this information might come in handy if you ever – accidentally, or even on purpose – adopt a Dingo.

THE ORIGIN OF DOGS

At first glance, a Pug and a grey wolf don't have much in common. One is round, plump, with a squished-up snout and a curly sprig of a tail. The other is swift and sleek – a natural hunter. There is no 'Big Bad Pug' in fairy tales. And yet, all domestic dogs (the kind that live with humans) – Pugs included – share a distant relative, or ancestor: the grey wolf.

FURRY LITTLE MEAT EATERS

Fifty-five million years ago, wolf-like creatures were already prowling the Earth. Known as **Miacis**, this group of meat-eating mammals was much smaller than the wolves we know. Every dog, jackal, fox and wolf that has ever lived is related to, or rather has evolved from, this extinct little fellow.



Fast forward 20 to 30 million years, and Miacis has evolved into the long-tailed **Cynodictis**. Coated in bristles and perky eared, you can really see the fox in this creature, just as much as the wolf.

TREE OF LIFE

When we try to map how different forms of life have evolved, we often use a tool called an **evolutionary tree**. Each new branch shows how one kind of living thing has changed, or evolved, into something different.

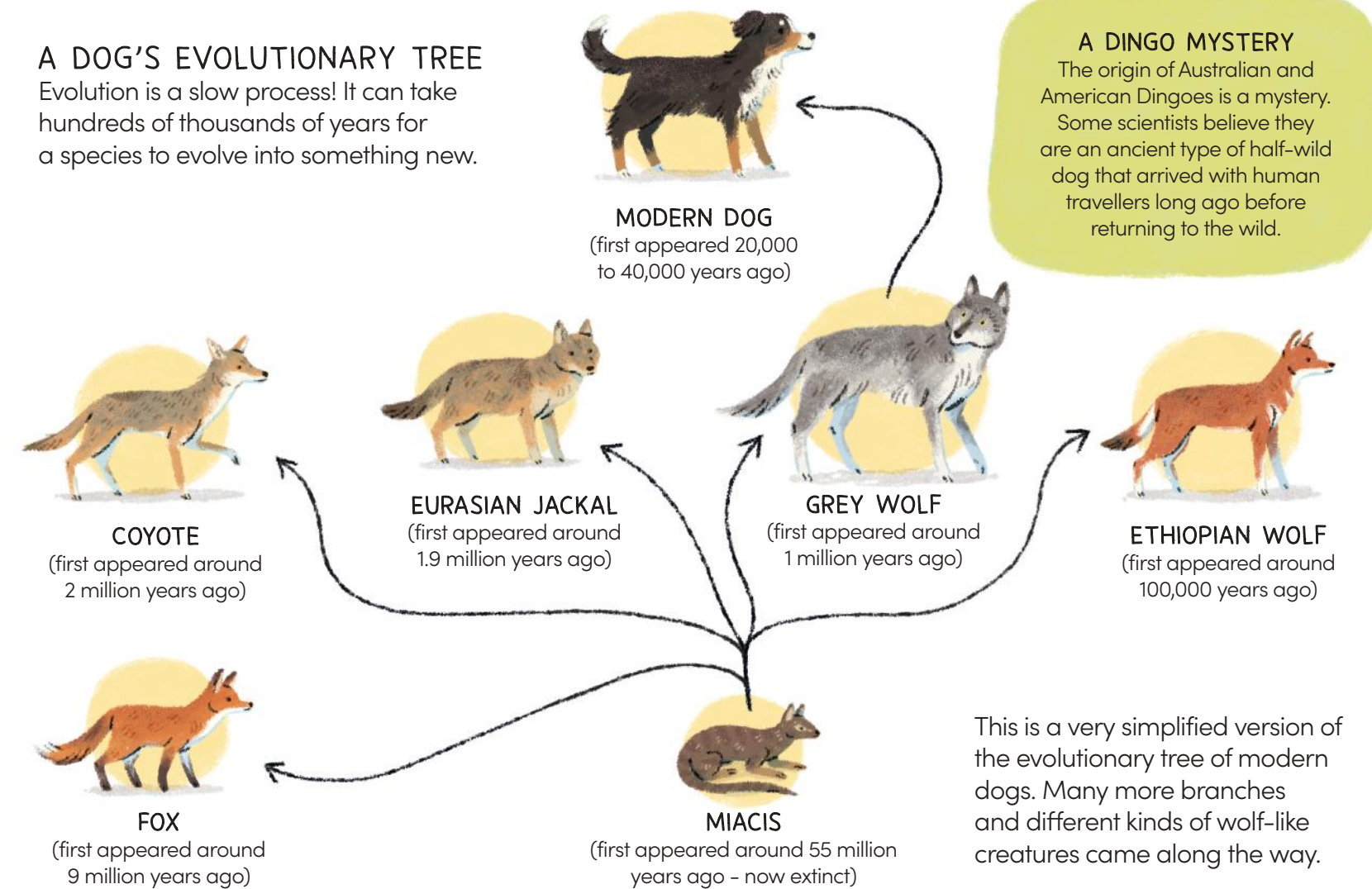
It took many thousands of years for the branch for the ancestors of foxes to split from the branch for the ancestors of wolves – and many more for wolves and coyotes to go their separate ways. But eventually, around 1.8 million years ago, the ancestor of today's wolves emerged. Ta-da!

EXPLAINING EVOLUTION!

When we talk about **evolution**, we are talking about the idea that every living thing alive today developed from earlier types of living things. The first form of life began on this planet at least 3.5 billion years ago. Since then, millions of different types of living things, also known as species, have evolved. Some of those species are extinct; there are no more of them left on Earth.

A DOG'S EVOLUTIONARY TREE

Evolution is a slow process! It can take hundreds of thousands of years for a species to evolve into something new.



This is a very simplified version of the evolutionary tree of modern dogs. Many more branches and different kinds of wolf-like creatures came along the way.



DOGGY DNA

So, how similar is the Golden Retriever on your sofa to the grey-furred wolves of Yellowstone National Park in the United States of America? Quite similar! Dogs share 99.9 per cent of their DNA (information carried inside every single cell that tells their bodies how to grow and how to work) with wild wolves. Certain types, or breeds, of dog, such as the Alaskan Malamute, the Shiba Inu and the Akita, have DNA that is almost impossible to tell apart from the DNA of wolves that you might find in a zoo.

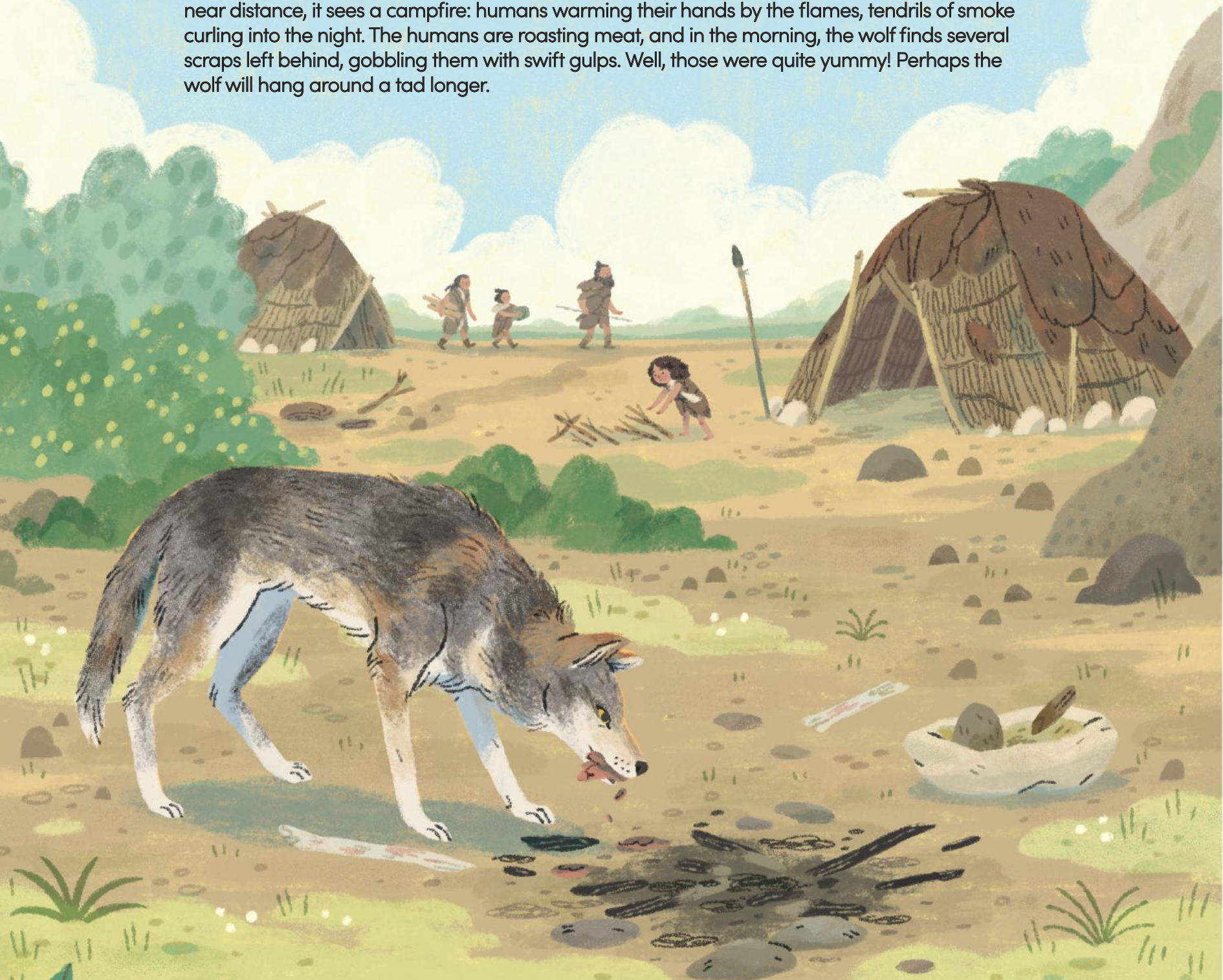
Some people think that dogs evolved from these zoo wolves, but that isn't true. Zoo wolves and domestic dogs are more like cousins. You can trace both back to the same extinct species of wolf: their wild ancestors, who no longer walk the planet.

So the next time you see a Pug – or a Chihuahua, or a Beagle – remember that they have a long, proud history. Perhaps we should all take them more seriously, even when they're barking at the postman!



HOME IS WHERE THE WOLF IS

Somewhere in central Asia, a wolf listens to the soft thump of its paws against the ground. In the near distance, it sees a campfire: humans warming their hands by the flames, tendrils of smoke curling into the night. The humans are roasting meat, and in the morning, the wolf finds several scraps left behind, gobbling them with swift gulps. Well, those were quite yummy! Perhaps the wolf will hang around a tad longer.



A JOURNEY FROM THE WILD

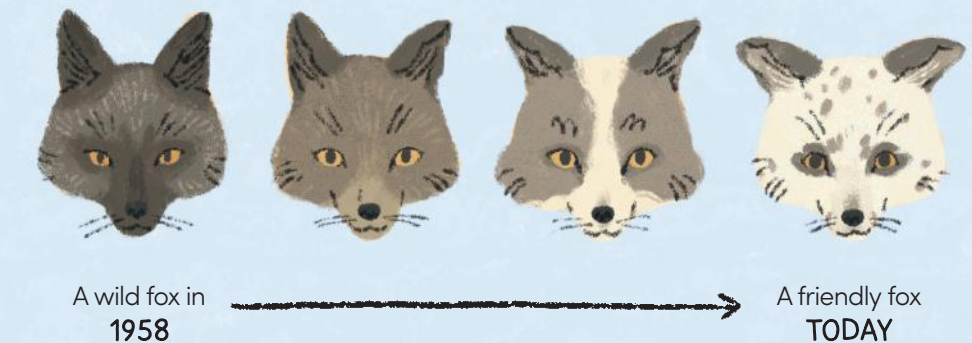
Domestication, the process of taming a wild animal and keeping it as a pet or on a farm, might have begun this way. Or maybe not. Scientists can't seem to agree on a lot when it comes to the domestication of dogs. What's certain is that sometime, probably between 20,000 and 40,000 years ago, wild wolves became much, much tamer. Their strong and lean bodies started to transform: tails curling, ears drooping. They grew gentler, and more in tune with the will of humans.

But why did this transformation occur with wolves many thousands of years ago? And where? It's sort of a mystery. Some scientists claim that domestication actually happened at least twice in different parts of the world. Some say that hunter-gatherers (people who lived off the land and travelled to find food) looked for wolves to tame, while others think that wolves became interested in people. Maybe the wolves followed humans, ate their food, and were allowed to stay? It's a pretty good deal, all around! Humans get protection, as well as extra help with hunting, while wolves can snack on tasty treats.



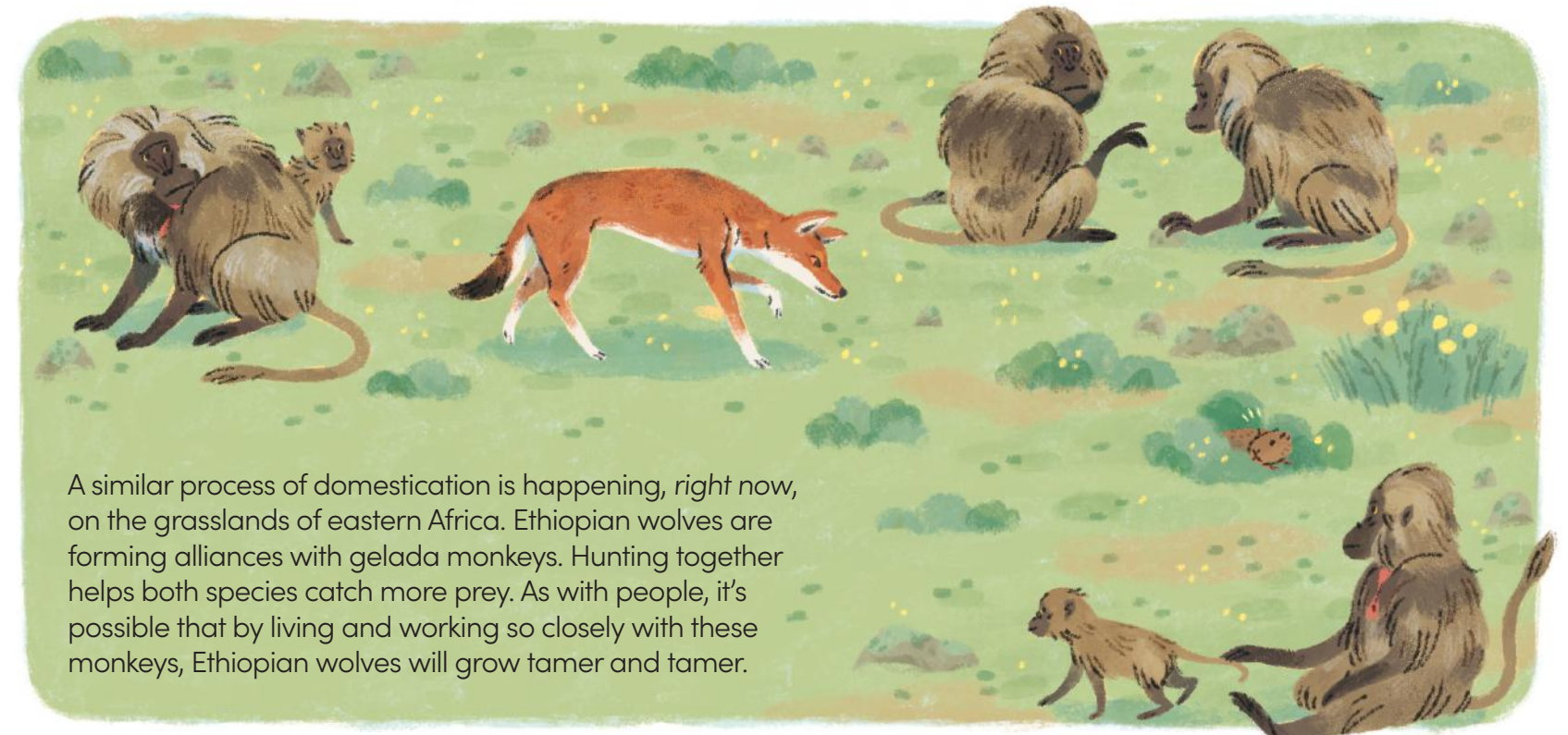
FRIENDLY FOXES

There's a famous experiment on a fox farm in Russia, which shows just how this might have happened. Beginning in 1958, the farm started choosing which foxes should have cubs together based on how friendly they were with people. And . . . surprise! After 60 years of choosing the friendliest fox parents, the newest cubs were not only super tame, they also looked incredibly cute, like puppies.



A HUMAN'S BEST FRIEND?

No matter how wolves ended up living with people, the result is the same: dogs formed a special bond with humans. They became our first domesticated animal, before sheep and pigs – and lived with us long before humans had invented farming to grow food. In ancient societies, dogs were our guardians, our shepherds, our sledge pullers; they were our most faithful companions, pack members for life.



A similar process of domestication is happening, *right now*, on the grasslands of eastern Africa. Ethiopian wolves are forming alliances with gelada monkeys. Hunting together helps both species catch more prey. As with people, it's possible that by living and working so closely with these monkeys, Ethiopian wolves will grow tamer and tamer.

CAN DOGS REALLY UNDERSTAND US?

In 1789, King Frederick of Prussia (modern-day Germany) claimed that “a dog is a man’s best friend.” He was right: there is something so incredibly special about the dog-human bond.



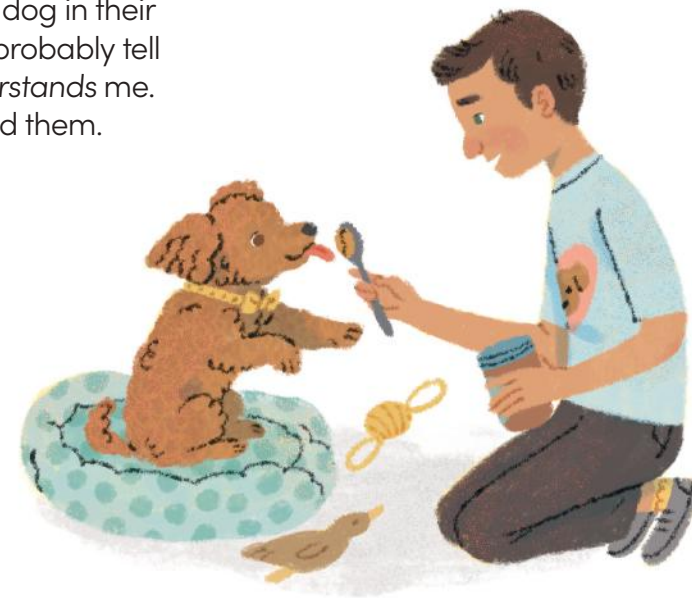
This, it seems, has always been the case. As far back as 30,000 years ago, a dog – recently discovered – was buried with a bone tucked into its mouth, and in one area of Siberia, scientists have discovered gravesites with humans and dogs laid to rest side by side. Perhaps these humans wanted their dogs with them in the afterlife, or perhaps they believed that a dog’s soul would continue to roam the Earth, long after the dog was gone.

WHO’S A GOOD BOY?

Today, there are roughly 900 million dogs (members of the **canine** family) in the world. They’re our companions, our sidekicks, our helpers. They’re sleeping at the foot of our beds and licking peanut butter off our spoons.



Ask anyone with a dog in their family, and they’ll probably tell you: my dog *understands* me. And we understand them.



THE HUMAN-DOG CONNECTION

Recent research proves that our connection with dogs is even more tightly linked than we had ever imagined. Can you read the facial expressions of a rhinoceros? What about a pigeon? Probably not . . . although, many points to you, if you can!

But with dogs it’s a different story. As humans, we and our ancestors have spent so much time with dogs, we’ve picked up on their facial expressions, their habits, their whims. What’s even cooler is that dogs can read our expressions as well. When our faces look angry, they can tell. When we’re smiling, they can sense our happiness.

Dogs also have the ability to read the tones of our voices. Say anything in an upbeat voice, and most likely, their tails will wag. “Yes, yes, who’s a good boy – it’s you!”



They also turn to us for guidance. There’s a really wonderful experiment where dogs and wolves are both given the same tricky puzzle. While the wolves try desperately to solve it, pawing at the puzzle and gnawing at the edges, the dogs glance back at their humans, their eyes asking a simple question: *You’re going to help me, right?*

FRIENDS FOREVER

A dog’s eyes are very expressive. In fact, if you’ve ever gazed lovingly at a dog, when that dog is gazing at you, then you’re releasing **oxytocin** – a hormone, or chemical message, produced in your brain which makes you feel love – and your dog feels the same way. This is also how human parents bond with their newborn babies – with a release of oxytocin. The fact that this is occurring between species is incredible.



DOGGY DIFFERENCES



One of the wonderful things about dogs is that they come in all shapes and sizes – from the massive Mastiff to the tiny Chihuahua. Some breeds came about naturally with no interference from people. Others, such as the Dachshund, were bred, or created by humans, who decided which dogs should have puppies together based on the way they behaved or looked.

Humans decided the Dachshund must be short-legged and long, otherwise how could it burrow inside a badger tunnel? After years and years of pairing together dogs with the shortest legs and the longest bodies . . . the result was a sausage-shaped dog!



EAT, SLEEP, GROW, REPEAT!

No matter their shape or size, all dogs behave in ways that are similar to their wild ancestors. When they're sleeping, for example, they often curl up their bodies to stay warm and protect their soft bellies.

While adult dogs sleep for up to 14 hours a day, puppies sleep for up to 20! That's partly because, during their waking hours, they're constantly exploring: *What's this smell? What will this cat do if I bop it with my nose? Tiring work!*



Dogs grow from roly-poly puppies to springy adolescents in just six months. Most people believe that one human year equals seven dog years (so, a 12-year-old dog is like an 84-year-old human), but every dog is different. Usually, bigger dogs age faster, while smaller dogs age more slowly. Big or small, when they do grow old, the fur around their snouts begins to go white, just like human hair as people age.

AN OUTFIT FOR EVERY SEASON

Let's talk about fur. Somewhere out there, right now, a dog is wading into a river. Water droplets are sliding off its back due to a stiff topcoat of fur, while a softer undercoat is keeping it warm.

Not all dogs have this double coat (some have just the stiff layer; some have no fur at all!), but most can thank their fur for helping them to stay warm when it's cold, and cool when it's warm. Dogs can't just buy a new coat for every season, so they have to create one: growing thicker fur for the winter and losing fur, also known as moulting or **shedding**, in hotter months.

HAIR-RAISING HACKLES!

Have you ever seen a dog who's really surprised or afraid? If so, you might have noticed little hairs standing up all along that dog's spine. Those are its **hackles**. They're like doggy goosebumps, popping up when a dog is scared or excited.

Some dogs love a gentle stroke of their fur; this is for the same reason that humans like hugs. It can feel wonderful!