

Learning from Dogs

Innate Wisdom from Man's Best Friend

Paul Handover

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to my German Shepherd dog, Pharaoh, and to all the loving dogs that my wife and I have had the pleasure of knowing, and also to all the wonderful dogs in the whole wide world.

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Foreword

Some 13.8 billion years ago out in the vast nothingness of space, there was a big bang, a humongous gargantuan explosion from which all matter in the universe originated. Every element, atom, molecule, subatomic particle in the known universe spewed forth from this fantastic explosion. Eventually some of this stardust coalesced into billions of galaxies containing tens of billions of stars around which revolved hundreds of billions of planets.

On one of these planets, a rather ordinary "pale blue dot" as Carl Sagan put it, in an average unremarkable galaxy in an obscure corner of the universe, something magnificent and extraordinary transpired. It just so happened that this very ordinary orb was in what astronomers describe as the "Goldilocks Zone": where the temperature was not too hot, not too cold. And in the primordial stew in which this planet simmered was just the right mixture of all the ingredients necessary for the creation of self-replicating molecules and, voilà, life emerged.

In the slow but inexorable and unrelenting march of evolution, fine-tuned by genetic mutation and culled by natural selection, these molecules gradually over the next few billion years formed single cells, and then colonies of cells, then multicellular organisms culminating in the higher plants and animals, most notably the self-proclaimed "pinnacle of creation": *Homo sapiens*.

Many species came and many species went, by way of mass extinctions, but life (primitive as it was) plodded along for eons and epochs. And sometime very late in this long and arduous four-billion year evolutionary journey, a wondrous and extraordinary relationship was forged between two distantly related species: humans and dogs. In his book *Learning from Dogs*, Paul Handover devotes a whole chapter to dog origins, in which he discusses in great detail the differing theories regarding how and when this unique relationship may have developed. Regardless of the details, this was a very special relationship, unlike any interaction between any two species ever in the history of the earth, and the relationship continues to this day, stronger and more poignant than ever.

Initially, the relationship seems to have been mutually beneficial, enhancing the survival and well-being of both species. But now, as Paul alludes to, I think in many ways it is we humans who have benefited most. As any dog lover can attest to, the human-dog bond is a deeply meaningful experience that defies description and can have a profound effect on our hearts and minds.

I am constantly reminded of this when, for example, I have the unenviable duty of having to tell a young family that their 13-year-old Golden Retriever has terminal cancer and they are forced to make the difficult decision to euthanize their dear old companion; to end the life (and suffering) of a loyal loving member of the family. The heart wrenching grief and sense of loss is almost unbearable and testifies to the love and compassion we feel for these animals. Or

conversely, when I see the sheer joy, love, and pride in a child's eyes as they present their new puppy to me for its first vaccinations, again I am reminded of the power of this bond.

Suzanne Clothier in her book *Bones Would Rain from the Sky: Deepening Our Relationships with Dogs* writes movingly about this heartfelt connection between dog and human:

"There is a cycle of love and death that shapes the lives of those who choose to travel in the company of animals. It is a cycle unlike any other. To those who have never lived through its turnings or walked its rocky path, our willingness to give our hearts with full knowledge that they will be broken seems incomprehensible. Only we know how small a price we pay for what we receive; our grief, no matter how powerful it may be, is an insufficient measure of the joy we have been given."

But what exactly is this human dog bond and why do we feel such an affinity for this species above all others? My feeling is that it may be associated with our deep but subconscious longing for that age of simple innocence and innate human goodness that we supposedly possessed before we became truly "human"; that child-like innocence or what Jean-Jacques Rousseau referred to as the "noble savage" before being corrupted by civilization, before we were booted out of the Garden of Eden. We humans, for better or worse, somewhere along that evolutionary road acquired consciousness or so-called human nature and with it we lost that innocence.

What we gained were those marvelous qualities that make us uniquely human: a sense of self-awareness; an innate moral and ethical code; the ability to contemplate our own existence and mortality and our place in the universe. We gained the ability to think abstract thoughts and the intellectual power to unravel many of the mysteries of the universe. Because of that acquired consciousness and humans' creative and imaginative mind we have produced the likes of Shakespeare, Mozart, and Einstein. We have peered deep into outer space, deciphered the genetic code, eradicated deadly diseases, probed the bizarre inner world of the atom, and accomplished thousands of other intellectual feats that hitherto would not have been possible without the evolution of our incredible brain and the consciousness with which it is equipped.

No other living species on this planet before or since has developed this massive intellectual power. But this consciousness was attained at what cost? Despite all the amazing accomplishments of the human race, we are the only species that repeatedly commits genocide and wages war against ourselves over political ideology, geographic boundaries, or religious superstition. We are capable of justifying the suffering and death of fellow human beings over rights to a shiny gold metal, or a black oily liquid that powers our cars. We are the only species that has the capability to destroy our own planet, our only home in this vast universe,

by either nuclear warfare, or more insidiously by environmental contamination on a global scale.

Was it worth it? No matter what your or my opinion may be, Pandora's Box has been opened and we cannot put the lid back on. But what can we do now to reverse this trend and help improve the quality of life for humanity and ensure the well-being of our planet? In his book, Paul proposes that if we recognize the problem and look very critically at ourselves as a unique species, with awesome powers to do both good and bad, and if we put our collective minds to the task it may be possible to retrieve some of the qualities of that innocence lost without losing all that we have gained.

Dogs represent to me that innocence lost. Their emotions are pure. They live in the present. They do not suffer existential angst over what they are. They do not covet material wealth. They offer us unconditional love and devotion. Although they certainly have not reached the great heights of intellectual achievement of us humans (I know for a fact that this is true after having lived with a Labrador Retriever for several years), at the same time they have not sunk to the depths of depravity to which we are susceptible. It could be argued that I am being overly anthropomorphic, or that dogs are simply mentally incapable of these thoughts. But nevertheless, metaphorically or otherwise, I believe that dogs demonstrate a simple and uncorrupted approach to life from which we all could benefit.

In his book *Learning from Dogs*, Paul repeatedly elaborates on this thought in different contexts: that dogs possess innate qualities of character that it would behoove us to emulate. I think the crux of Paul's thesis is that, within the confines and limitations of our human consciousness, we can (and should) metaphorically view the integrity of the dog as a template for human behavior. He has an epiphany of sorts when his psychotherapist and good friend shares with him the profound observation that dogs are creatures of integrity and it is this that he feels is the central message of the book.

In the following pages Paul Handover has written a sincere and personal account of what he feels we humans might gain if we took the time and effort to reflect on our current human situation and adopted what he sees as the integrity of the dog as an example for our future conduct in order to improve the quality of life on this planet.

Over the years Paul and especially his wife Jean have rescued many, many dogs from Mexican streets that otherwise would have suffered terribly and succumbed to early death. Paul has intimately lived with as many as 14 of these dogs at a time, and with his diverse background of experiences and skills he is uniquely qualified to elucidate and expound on the character of the dog and how it relates to the human condition.

His book is hard to define as a genre. At times his work reads as autobiography, diary, or blog. Other times he reinforces a point with speculative and imaginative fictional narrative. And other times he injects factual research. Occasionally launching into other intellectual tangents, Paul ultimately returns to his central thesis: "What we can (and should) learn from

dogs".

I love dogs because they are dogs, not because they are furry little humans who seem to exhibit some of our virtuous personality traits. I love the smell of puppy breath. I love an exuberant tail wag and sloppy drool-laden full-tongue kiss upon returning home. I love watching the uninhibited joy of retrieving a tennis ball or a stick thrown into the river. I love the fact that the simple pleasure of a delicious dog food dinner can be the high point of the day. Or that a drive in the countryside with the windows down and lips and ears flapping in the breeze can make a dog giddy with joy. Dogs are neither saints nor sinners. They are dogs, pure and simple, and I love them for it. Maybe we too could still learn to appreciate the simple pleasures of life. As Paul Handover proposes, *Learning from Dogs* may be the answer.

"The dogs in our lives, the dogs we come to love and who (we fervently believe) love us in return, offer more than fidelity, consolation, companionship. They offer comedy, irony, wit, a wealth of anecdotes, 'the shaggy dog stories' and 'stupid pet tricks' that are the commonplace pleasures of life. They offer, if we are wise enough or simple enough to take it, a model for what it means to give your heart with little thought of return. Both powerfully imaginary and comfortingly real, dogs act as mirrors for our own beliefs about what would constitute a truly humane society. Perhaps it is not too late for them to teach us some new tricks." (Marjorie Garber, *Dog Love*, Simon and Schuster, 1996).

James R. Goodbrod, Master's Degree, Doctor of Veterinary Medicine.

Preface

This is a journey that would not have begun had I not had my eyes opened to the fact that dogs are creatures of integrity. So thank you, J.¹ You and I had no idea what you started back in 2007.

The other undeniable fact is that my blog, from which this book takes its name, would not have commenced in July 2009 if I had not counted Pharaoh, my German Shepherd dog, as my dearest animal friend since 2003. I owe it all to you, dear Pharaoh. Indeed, it was the many people over those years who commented, remarked and regularly read my blog posts that persuaded me to participate in National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo) in 2013 and 2014. I used the Novembers of each of those years to draft in excess of 110,000 words of non-fiction writing that underpinned the creation of this book.

The inspiration behind the title goes back to 2007 when I was living in the village of Harberton, near the town of Totnes, in the southern part of the county of Devon, southwest England. I had cause to work with J and one particular afternoon we were talking about integrity. J made an observation about Pharaoh, my German Shepherd, that was in the same room, albeit fast asleep, and about dogs in general. His observation was that dogs are creatures of integrity. My curiosity was tweaked by J's revelation and I pondered that someday I might write about this. (Indeed, that same day I registered ownership of the domain name: learningfromdogs.com.) Fast-forward to July 2009 when Pharaoh and I were living with Jean, and her 14 dogs, in San Carlos, Mexico, and I started writing my blog. Five years later, when Jean and I were living in southern Oregon, still with Pharaoh and nine other dogs, saw the conception of this book.

Acknowledgments

It is said that one writes a book for oneself but then edits it for the reader. That is a powerful reminder of the critical importance of editing a draft manuscript. The rewriting involved to turn the draft manuscript into a finished book could not have been accomplished without the professionalism of Joni Wilson of Missouri who, for a very reasonable fee in my opinion, edited the manuscript and cover text beyond anything that I could have done on my own. Joni was recommended to me by Deborah Perdue, who trades as Illumination Graphics here in Oregon. The design of the cover and the interior of this book were very professionally undertaken by Deborah.

Then I must give thanks for the huge support, in both time and energy, of local vet and close friend Jim Goodbrod, who very kindly in addition wrote the foreword to this book.

Speaking of writing, I must compliment the fine people at Literature & Latte Limited, in Truro in Cornwall, England, who are the creators of the Scrivener writing software that I used for this writing project. Frankly, I was blown away by the quality of that software.

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Thanks also to the members of organisation AIM (Authors Innovative Marketing) in Grants Pass, Oregon, who not only welcomed me before I was a published author but provided valuable advice to this first-time author who felt lost on more than one occasion.

My final and most important thanks go to my beloved wife, Jean. Over weeks and weeks, as I drafted and re-drafted chapter after chapter, Jean patiently listened to me reading out each new piece, giving me honest and valuable feedback and never hesitating to interrupt what she was doing when, often without notice, I sought her views to some aspect of my writing. I would never have completed this book without Jean's honest and loving devotion to the project.

Introduction

The beloved dog, *Canis lupus familiaris*, has been humankind's most glorious companion for thousands of years. This species reveals that special companionship in numerous ways, especially those dogs that are lucky enough to be living with caring and loving humans. Some might argue, and argue correctly, that this characteristic is not exclusive to dogs. Cats, horses, birds, chickens, goats, pigs, and doubtless other animals, can live happily in a domesticated arrangement with humans.

However, this is a book titled, *Learning from Dogs*, and is largely about dogs and, more specifically, about what I have learnt from a close domestic relationship with so many dogs during a period of more than ten years.

Despite the many thousands of years that the dog has been associated with humans, the origins of the dog are still the subject of research and far from being clear, in a scientific sense. In Part One, I offer what is known and what is still conjecture, including my fictional account of that first contact between man and wolf, the genetic predecessor of the dog. Part One also includes two autobiographical accounts of a relationship with a German Shepherd, one from my childhood days and another some 47 years later.

Demonstrating that this is a book less wholly about dogs and more about the lessons these wonderful animals offer us, in an emblematic or metaphorical manner, in Part Two, I take a look at where humankind is in this 21st century. On so many fronts there are scary views of the future. It feels as if the certainty of past times has gone, as if many of the trusted models of society are failing. Whether we are talking politics, economics, employment, and the environment, radicalisation of opinions seems more prevalent than a common desire to leave things in better shape than when we found them. Added to that, it's as if my generation (I'm a 1944 baby) is grossly unaware that without radical change in how we care for and treat this planet, we might be leaving a hostile world for our grandchildren.

Naturally, such a broad, general statement cannot be true for all people in all places on planet Earth; there are countless good people engaged in countless good causes. Nevertheless, there is little doubt in my mind that many are deeply worried about the future of the world and looking for ways of ensuring a safe future for all.

In Part Three, I endeavour to put that need for a safe future into context in terms of how long humankind might have to implement the required changes to bring about a secure future. In addition, examining the key, essential changes that have to be embraced; describing the foundations, the anchors so to speak, that need to be put in place to guarantee a long future both for humans and for the entire natural world.

The essence of those changes, the central purpose of this book, follows in Part Four. I am aware that in reviewing the attributes of dogs, and how they serve as emblems for humankind, I run two risks: first, of being overly romantic and, second, of mistakenly seeing those

attributes in anthropomorphic ways by imparting humanistic qualities to our dogs. My intention is not to make these mistakes but you, dear reader, will be the final judge of that.

Part Five is perhaps, a tad self-indulgent for it offers a deeply personal look at the way that living with dogs, living "cheek by jowl" with so many dogs for so many years, has left an almost sacred tone about me as I live through the years of this final stage of my life. Then in the conclusion to the book I try to draw together the whole endeavour.

Finally, readers will quickly spot that this book is written in the Queen's English, apart from the words of Dr. Jim's Foreword and other Americans quoted herein. Prior to moving to be with Jean, now my wife, in 2008 and later settling down in southern Oregon, for more than 60 years I had lived in the United Kingdom, being born in Acton, North London. Old habits die hard and I trust that non-English, English speakers will not be too annoyed with me.

Part One: Looking Backwards

"On one of these planets, a rather ordinary 'pale blue dot' as Carl Sagan put it, in an average unremarkable galaxy in an obscure corner of the universe, something magnificent and extraordinary transpired." So wrote Jim Goodbrod in his Foreword to this book, referring to the most magnificent and extraordinary creation of life.

Let alone that event being beyond any rational understanding of those of us alive in this 21st century, it is almost inconceivable to go back just a mere smidgen of time, to go back the 200,000 years to when the relationship between that ordinary planet, planet Earth, and humans, as in *H. sapiens*, came to pass. Despite the difficulty of sensing such immense periods of time, there is something extremely beautiful in the knowledge that about 100,000 years ago, namely about half-way along that journey between us and our planet, DNA evidence suggests that the animal we today call the dog evolved as a separate species from the grey wolf.

That's about all that we do know, although that's not to say that there aren't plenty of theories. When we look at some breeds of dogs, let's say the Chihuahua, it beggars belief that the wolf was the ancestor of that dog. Not so hard to believe, mind you, when we look at a breed such as the German Shepherd. Many German Shepherd dogs look like they are first cousin to a wolf.

The Latin "binomial nomenclature" for both the wolf and dog offers clarity irrespective of specific dog breed. I am, of course, referring to *Canis lupus* for the wolf and *Canis lupus familiaris* for the dog. For those, like me, who had to refresh their memory of this naming convention, the first part of the name identifies the genus to which the species belongs and the second part identifies the species within that genus. Thus, humans belong to the genus *Homo* and within this genus to the species *Homo sapiens*.

Thus both the wolf and the dog belong to the same genus. However, when we enquire as to when *lupus familiaris* split away from *lupus* then it all becomes much less clear.

Scientific American magazine, in 2009, quoted in an article²: "The going theory is that dogs were domesticated somewhere between 15,000 and 40,000 years ago."

Applying a periodic label to those past times, such as the Mesolithic or Palaeolithic periods, is not helpful, because such names for those archaeological periods vary enormously³ from region to region. Thus it might be clearer for readers if we stay with the number of years involved.

The end of the last glaciation period, the Ice Age, was about 12,000 years ago. That heralded the start of the period when humankind evolved from a hunter-gatherer existence to that of farming and herding. People discovered how to cultivate crops and began to learn how to domesticate animals and plants⁴.

There is a view that around 10,000 years ago, when humans started settling down, there was contact with wolves that led to some wolves living on the fringes of human activities and thence the long evolutionary journey to the dog. But it is an understanding that is not fully shared by all in the field. Indeed, Professor Marc Bekoff⁵ in a telephone call with me said that

of the two theories of the origin of dogs, either from wolves scavenging from early man, or from an evolutionary split, the evidence was overwhelmingly in support of dogs being the result of an evolutionary split from the wolf.

Mark Derr⁶ is an American author and journalist, noted for his books about dogs. He is the author of a number of books including *A Dog's History of America* and *Dog's Best Friend*. In 2006 he wrote an article, "The Wolf Who Stayed", that first appeared in *The Bark* magazine⁷.

When I first read the article I realised that there was much information that I hadn't come across before. I contacted Mark and asked if he might grant me permission to include his article in this chapter. Mark generously offered me permission to quote from his article in part or in full. It is such a comprehensive review of the whole history of the dog, known and speculated, that it is included, in full, as an Appendix to this book.

Nevertheless, some of what Mark has written really should be included in this chapter. For instance, these three paragraphs:

Dates range from the dog's earliest appearance in the archaeological record around 14,000 years ago to the earliest estimated time for its genetic sidestep from wolves around 135,000 years ago. Did the dog emerge in Central Europe, as the archaeological record suggests, or in East Asia, where the genetic evidence points? Were they tame wolves whose offspring over time became homebodies, or scavenging wolves whose love of human waste made them increasingly tame and submissive enough to insinuate themselves into human hearts? Or did humans learn to follow, herd and hunt big game from wolves and in so doing, enter into a complex dance of co-evolution?

Despite the adamancy of adherents to specific positions, the data are too incomplete, too subject to wildly different interpretations; some of the theories themselves too vague; and the physical evidence too sparse to say with certainty what happened. Nonetheless, some models, and not necessarily the most popular and current ones, more clearly fit what is known about dogs and wolves and humans than others. It is a field in high flux, due in no small measure to the

full sequencing of the dog genome. But were I a bettor, I would wager that the winning view, the more-or-less historically correct one, shows that the dog is the result of the interaction of wolves and ancient humans rather than a self-invention by wolves or a "conquest" by humans.

Our views of the dog are integrally bound to the answers to these questions, and, for better or worse, those views help shape the way we approach our own and other dogs. It is difficult, for example, to treat as a valued companion a "social parasite" or, literally, a "shit-eater." To argue that different breeds or types of dogs represent arrested stages of wolf development both physically and behaviorally is not only to confuse, biologically, description with prescription but also to overlook the dog's unique behavioral adaptations to life with humans. Thus, according to some studies, the dog has developed barking, a little-used wolf talent, into a fairly sophisticated form of communication, but a person who finds barking the noise of a neotenic wolf is unlikely to hear what is being conveyed. "The dog is everywhere what society makes him," Charles Dudley Warner wrote in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* in 1896. His words still hold true.

That the dog is descended from the wolf, or, more precisely, "the result of the interaction of wolves and ancient humans", seems to be a pretty conclusive feature of our mutual evolution and history. As Mark Derr writes, that is about all that *is* agreed among those who have set out to answer these fundamental questions about the origins of the dog. So much about the domestication of the dog is uncertain; as Mark puts it, "specifically, the who, where, when, how and why of domestication."

Two years after Mark Derr's article appeared in *The Bark*, the NBC News website in 2008 carried details⁸ of what was thought to be the earliest known dog.

An international team of scientists has just identified what they believe is the world's first known dog, which was a large and toothy canine that

lived 31,700 years ago and subsisted on a diet of horse, musk ox and reindeer, according to a new study.

The discovery could push back the date for the earliest dog by 17,700 years, since the second oldest known dog, found in Russia, dates to 14,000 years ago.

Remains for the older prehistoric dog, which were excavated at Goyet Cave in Belgium, suggest to the researchers that the Aurignacian people of Europe from the Upper Paleolithic period first domesticated dogs. Fine jewelry and tools, often decorated with depictions of big game animals, characterize this culture.

The study explained that the scientists analysed 117 skulls of recent and fossilised large members of the *Canidae* family, which includes dogs, wolves and foxes.

DNA studies determined all of the canids carried "a substantial amount of genetic diversity," suggesting that past wolf populations were much larger than they are today.

Isotopic analysis of the animals' bones found that the earliest dogs consumed horse, musk ox and reindeer, but not fish or seafood. Since the Aurignacians are believed to have hunted big game and fished at different times of the year, the researchers think the dogs might have enjoyed meaty handouts during certain seasons.

Germonpré⁹ believes dog domestication might have begun when the prehistoric hunters killed a female wolf and then brought home her pups. Recent studies on silver foxes suggest that when the most docile pups are kept and cared for, it takes just 10 generations of breeding for morphological changes to take effect.

The earliest dogs likely earned their meals too.

"I think it is possible that the dogs were used for tracking, hunting, and transport of game," she said. "Transport could have been organized using the dogs as pack animals. Furthermore, the dogs could have

been kept for their fur or meat, as pets, or as an animal with ritual connotation."

The history of the dog would not be complete without referring to historical evidence of the relationship between dog and man.

In March 2013 there was a study published in the *PLOS ONE*¹⁰ scientific journal that revealed, according to lead author Dr. Robert Losey talking with Discovery News:

Dog burials appear to be more common in areas where diets were rich in aquatic foods because these same areas also appear to have had the densest human populations and the most cemeteries

If the practice of burying dogs was solely related to their importance in procuring terrestrial game, we would expect to see them in the Early Holocene (around 9,000 years ago), when human subsistence practices were focused on these animals. . . . Further, we would expect to see them in later periods in areas where fish were never really major components of the diet and deer were the primary focus, but they are rare or absent in these regions.

Losey¹¹, went on to report that researchers found that most of the dog burials occurred during the Early Neolithic period, approximately some 7,000 to 8,000 years ago, and that, "dogs were only buried when human hunter-gatherers were also being buried."

I think the hunter-gatherers here saw some of their dogs as being nearly the same as themselves, even at a spiritual level. . . . At this time, dogs were the only animals living closely with humans, and they were likely known at an individual level, far more so than any other animal people encountered. People came to know them as unique, special individuals.

While not expressly mentioned by Losey, there is the strong implication that the relationship between humans and dogs all those thousands of years ago was as close and intimate as many of us experience in modern times. An implication supported by authors

Joshua Glenn and Elizabeth Foy Larsen in their book¹² *Unbored: The Essential Field Guide to Serious Fun* who write, "c. 10,000 B.C. In what is now Israel, a puppy is buried cradled in the hand of a human. It's the earliest clear evidence we have that humans and dogs, which two thousand years earlier had been domesticated Asian wolves, share a special bond."

If dogs had already been part of our lives for some considerable period by the time we humans had turned away from hunting and gathering, and started settling down as farmers, then we are led, inexorably, to the question of how did it all begin? What were the circumstances of early man befriending a wolf or two, and how did that very early relationship evolve into the magnificent domesticated animal that is the dog of today?

Clearly, there is no way of knowing what happened. All we can do is to dream about how that first coming together between human and wolf might have happened.



Neith stirred. Something had roused her from her sleep. Even with her eyes still closed she knew there had been an unfamiliar sound. A sound from the deep night outside, yet a sound that she sensed had come from close to the entrance to their shelter.

She could hear Gal's steady breathing beside her. He was still fast asleep. She opened her eyes and lay very still, seeking comfort from the familiar feel of Gal's arm across the skins that covered both of them. What was it that she had heard?

Then Neith heard the sound again. Much more clearly this time. A sound that spoke to her; spoke to her of a creature in pain. It was the sound of an animal quietly whimpering.

She softly shook Gal's arm. He woke instantly. It was instinctive. His and Neith's survival, as with all the members of their group, depended on always being alert to danger. Always keeping ahead of the many wild beasts that wouldn't, and often didn't, hesitate to feast on the unwary, or on the sick, or on their young.

Neith placed her fingers over Gal's lips, signalling him in the dark to stay quiet and listen. There it was again, that whimpering sound. The sound of a very scared, small animal. Or possibly the sound of more than one animal.

The darkness of the night, their shelter of thick grasses and reeds surrounded by the open savannah, made it impossible for them to leave just now and seek out the injured creature. There was nothing for it but to wait for the sun to rise, for the sun to light up the sky and shine down onto the land.

They sat back-to-back, their bedding skins around them, each listening. Each trying to identify the animal, or animals, from the sounds. Then there was the stirring of a faint nighttime breeze, the gentle air wafting across their entrance. The breeze carried a familiar odour. Gal picked up the unmistakable scent of wolf. Not an uncommon odour because the wolves were constantly shadowing them, drawn by the smells of their food, hoping to find a scrap of meat, a bone, or a piece of skin. But Gal could not understand. These were not the sounds of a family of wolves; this was not the smell of a group of wolves.

Slowly the blackness of the night sky gave way to a hint of pale seen at the edge of the land from whence the light of day always came. The paleness spread and became half-light. Neith left her shelter and visited the six other shelters that made up their group. One by one, she quietly entered each shelter and, almost silently, touched each sleeping woman and man on the shoulder or arm and, as they stirred, motioned to them to remain perfectly quiet. Each of them in turn smelt wolf, heard the whimpering, and knew they must wait for more light.

Then it was time. Time to search out the cause of the whimpering, to understand what was out there. Four of them left their shelters. Gal with Neith, and Sanga with Turgunn, both experienced tribe elders, especially when it came to dealing with the animals who preyed on their peoples. All four of them fanned out and, as quiet as that morning breeze, slowly

followed the scent upwind.

It was not far to go. As they closed in on the sounds of pain, it became clear that not only were there two wolves, but most likely there was a wolf of each gender. They all knew from past experiences how the sounds of a male wolf sounded so differently from that of the female.

Then they saw them. Just a few strides away, two young wolves perhaps of age only a little more than the passing of a single moon. The two pups had been attacked by an unknown predator and the rest of their family must have abandoned them.

The tearing of their small bodies was clear; blood all over their fur. The two frightened animals became quiet as the four of them approached. There was nothing that could be done. The pups must be left because it would only be a matter of time before more predators arrived to take advantage of an easy kill.

Yet there was a spirit speaking to Neith that motioned her forward. Moments later, she was crouching next to the shivering creatures. These two young wolves were so utterly exhausted. Too tired to move, unable to flee to safety. Now Neith was speaking quietly to them, soft loving tones in her voice. She sensed that deep in the minds of these tiny animals, there was a spirit whispering back to them. That they knew that Neith was not coming to harm them. That this animal who walked on two legs, who made sounds like no other animals in the land, was going to help them.

Neith's arm slowly reached out and the fingers of her hand drifted across one of the tiny heads, the gentlest touch of a human finger on the fur of this one young wolf. The whimpering stopped. The pups became very still. Neith knew what she had to do.



Neith loved the young wolves in a way that she would not have understood before that day when the animals were first found. She was unsure as to why receiving these wild animals into their midst had flowed so calmly; like the clear stream from where their group took its water. Yet it had.

The wounds had been cleaned and treated in the same way that Gal would treat a wound he might suffer when out hunting or gathering food. There had been no resistance to Gal's caring attentions. The puppies soon had readily accepted the same meats and drunk the same waters as the rest of them.

Yet Neith had this sense that these young wolves were unsure of their new lives.

That is until a dark, stormy night about three moons later on.



Neith and Gal were asleep, as were all the others in all the shelters. Suddenly, yet not alarmingly so, Gal was awakened by the soft touch of a nose on the cheek of his face. He felt the cold wetness of a wolf's nose. It was the nose of their young, male wolf. Gal did not understand how but just knew that the wolf was warning of a danger to them all.

He threw off his skins and stood. The wolf led Gal to the entrance to the shelter. The second pup then came up beside Gal and immediately both wolves opened their jaws, nostrils flaring, and let out loud howls. There was the strongest sense that the wolves were warning off an unknown creature close by in the dark.

By now, the howling of the two wolves had all the people awake in the other shelters. All the men were at the shelter entrances. Some were holding clubs and spears but all were shouting at the creature that had approached the camp. For they all trusted the instinct of their young wolves.

Then the wolves ceased their howling and the men knew the danger had passed and the morning would tell all.

The morning did tell all.

For in the soft earth around the camp they found paw prints. Prints that told of two large mountain cats that could prey on their people, especially at night when they were all sleeping.

Later on the elders sat out in the warm sunshine speaking of what had happened that last night. It was decided. Their wolves would be welcomed as friends, as new members of their family. The wolves were free to stay. The wolves would be given names chosen by Neith.

So it came to be. Neith named the female wolf Gula and the male wolf Kalbu.

Then one night, when less than a single moon had passed since that warning of danger, Neith turned in her sleep, her warm back now against Gal's back, something so common for them at night. But this night, Neith had this knowing, even in her sleep, that the wolf spirits had spread magic over their people. For alongside her lay Gula and Kalbu. Curled together sharing their sleep with Neith and Gal.

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As is the way of things, as has always been the way of things, Kalbu and Gula soon settled into the patterns of the lives of Neith and Gal and the rest of the group.

The sun became high in the sky and the fruits of the warm days were bountiful.

Gula and Kalbu were very smart wolves. They knew so well where food could be found. They seemed so happy hunting with the men and, in turn, the men knew they were all hunting so much better than ever before.

These were good times as the long, warm days moved over and the shorter, cooler times came to pass again. Then the blossoms and the grasses were sending signs that the longer, warmer days were returning.

Neith was devoted to Gula and Kalbu and not a single day or night passed without many hugs and licks and kisses and strokes. So it was clear from the start that Neith knew that Gula was carrying babies. Gula became more round and soon the mother wolf was spending her time curled up on the sleeping skins, happily taking food from Neith's fingers.

Then early one day, when the sun was just above the edge of the land, Gula gave birth to four beautiful baby wolves. These new children were born into the world of the two-legged animals.

And forever more this would be the way of the human and the wolf.



1. J has requested that his identity not be revealed in the book.
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3. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_archaeological\\_periods](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_archaeological_periods).
4. <http://www.infoplease.com/encyclopedia/society/mesolithic-period.html>, and others.
5. Marc Bekoff, Ph.D. professor emeritus of ecology and evolutionary biology at the University of Colorado, Boulder.
6. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mark\\_Derr](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mark_Derr).
7. *The Bark*, Issue 38 (Sep/Oct 2006.)
8. [http://www.nbcnews.com/id/27240370/ns/technology\\_and\\_science-science/t/worlds-](http://www.nbcnews.com/id/27240370/ns/technology_and_science-science/t/worlds-)

first-dog-lived-years-ago-ate-big/.

9. A paleontologist at the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences.

10. See <http://news.discovery.com/animals/pets/prehistoric-dog-lovers-profiled-130521.htm>.

11. Associate Professor in the department of anthropology, University of Alberta.

12. Published by Bloomsbury.