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Wolves are Wild: A Collection of Narratives About Rescued Wolves and Wolfdogs

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Wolves are Wild: A Collection of Narratives About Rescued Wolves and Wolfdogs

Abstract

Breeders across the country are creating wolfdogs by breeding dogs (*Canis lupus familiaris*) with wolves (*Canis lupus*) for a large profit. This project is a response to the growing exotic pet trade of wolves and wolfdogs. Through this project, I hope to bring awareness to the issues associated with these animals being raised in captivity. Recent research has shown that raising a wolf or wolfdog in captivity can lead to various negative psychological and physical effects on the animal, and can cause potential problems for humans as well. This practice is embedded in the concept of humans wanting to own a piece of the wild, or being convinced that this trade is not harmful to the animals. Taking an animal ethnographies standpoint, this project uses storytelling, poetry, and original illustration to introduce narratives of multiple wolves and wolfdogs who have been exposed to the exotic pet trade or raised in captivity, and who have been rescued by sanctuaries across the country. These narratives address circumstances of animal hoarding, neglect, separation anxiety, insufficient care, and owners not knowing their dog was actually a wolfdog. In doing so, this project aims to highlight some of the major issues associated with this harmful practice through the voices of the animals and the owners who have experienced them themselves. The goal of this project is to reduce the desire to purchase wolves or wolfdogs, and to encourage others to support sanctuaries aiming to stop these harmful practices as well.

Keywords

wolves, wolf, wolfdog, exotic pet-keeping

Disciplines

Animal Sciences | Applied Ethics | Environmental Education | Poetry

Comments

Senior thesis written for Environmental Studies.

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Molly Vorhaus

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by
Molly Vorhaus

Wolves are Wild:
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Rescued Wolves and Wolfdogs

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For Ollie and Ziggy, my canine brothers.

May you always feel wild at heart.

Acknowledgments

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and the beautiful animals they work with, which has made this project all the more special.

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to learn more about their ancestors and who they truly are, for inspiring me, and for bringing me infinite joy.

Finally, I would like to thank all of the wolves and wolfdogs that I have met in the process over the past few months, both in person and through written stories. Thank you for inspiring me, for filling my heart with joy, giving me something to fight for, and most of all, for making this project so much more fun and rewarding than I could have ever imagined. Thank you for showing me how to always be wild at heart, how to be strong, and most importantly, how to be a good citizen of this planet.

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Author's Note

Dear Reader,

My journey with wolves and wolfdogs began in August 2018 when I started volunteering weekly at the Wolf Sanctuary of PA (WSPA). On my first day of volunteering, I remember stepping out of my car and immediately hearing the sound of over 50 wolves and wolfdogs howling around me. The sound hit me so hard that I could physically feel the vibrations, the sheer power of these animals resounding in my chest. I couldn't believe what I was hearing, and the timing with which it started. I also remember seeing the wolves and wolfdogs for the first time, looking many of them in the eyes, and feeling both chills throughout my body and tears well up in my eyes. Within a few months, I was fully immersed in the world of wolves and wolfdogs, with the arrival of each Saturday's return to WSPA the highlight of my week. The more I got to know the wolves and wolfdogs as individuals, the more their stories overwhelmed me and the stronger my commitment became to doing something to make a difference for these animals and for others like them.

This book represents my effort to help spread awareness about the problematic issues many wolves and wolfdogs are experiencing all over this country. I want to specifically show

my readers not only the range of circumstances that these captive animals face but also demonstrate that they can be prevented. As shown through the following stories, some of the most challenging issues that wolves and wolfdogs face today are directly rooted in their forced status as exotic pets. As discussed in the Introduction, exotic pet captivity is linked to larger problems such as animal hoarding, neglect, separation anxiety, insufficient care, and owners not knowing their dog was actually a wolfdog--which, in turn, leads to abandonment or, in some cases, euthanasia. Oftentimes, in the case of wolfdogs, people seek to rescue dogs from animal shelters, unknowingly coming home with an animal that is part-wolf. Unlike their domesticated counterparts (dogs), wolves and wolfdogs do not make “good” pets, for as animals that would in the wild run as many as 40 miles per day, hunt large ungulates to meet their needs for meat, and live in hierarchical social groups with their kin, they will always remain “wild” in a sense. Ironically, however, such “wild” attributes are often the very characteristics that attract their eventual owners. Inherently stressful to the wolves and wolfdogs themselves, poor understanding on the part of the owners about the needs and markers of stress in their wolf pets can lead to detrimental outcomes for all parties.

In this project, I ultimately aim to help educate readers as to why it is important to leave wolves and wolfdogs the freedom to “be wild”, show what can be done to protect these wild animals from lives of captivity or abuse, and help readers to better understand what organizations are protecting them so that they have the information needed to support. Wolves should not be a token from the wild to possess, and they should not be a commodity to be sold.

I aim to increase public awareness of the negative impacts of raising wild animals in captivity, through individual narratives of various wolves I have read about and met throughout my studies. Further, to counter negative portrayals of wolves in children’s literature, such as *Little Red Riding Hood* and *The Three Little Pigs*, I wanted to create a book that would offer readers a more realistic understanding of wolves and wolfdogs. Further, I wanted to reveal details about wolves’ and wolfdogs’ lives in captivity and how they are affected by it. I aim to make these issues more understandable and accessible to as many people as possible. My objective through this project was to gain a greater understanding of this issue by getting to know wolves by observing their behaviors, learning about their individual histories from the workers, discussing these issues of the trade with sanctuary workers, recording the personal stories

of the volunteers, and generally immersing myself in experiencing the issues firsthand to be able to speak personally and truthfully about what I have learned.

Wolves and wolfdogs are such spectacular, strong beings, and the more that I have learned while conducting background research, volunteering at the Sanctuary, talking to the other volunteers, and perhaps most importantly, observing the animals themselves, the more that my deep respect and admiration for the animals, the volunteers, and the Sanctuary as a whole has grown. While the wolves and wolfdogs at this sanctuary are inspirational themselves, I am also truly in awe of the volunteers who take care of them as well: humans who are so knowledgeable, so selfless, so *caring*.

Though I did not know it upon arrival, I feel as though this project is why I came to Gettysburg, and that my time here has been given meaning with the completion of this important project. I hope that after reading these short stories and the information that follows, readers will feel similarly inspired and moved to action as well.

Molly Vorhaus
May, 2019

Introduction

“The leading cause of death for wolves is contact with the human world. Our presence means tragedy to them...”

– L. Hogan, *Dwellings: A Spiritual History of the Living World*

For at least eighteen thousand years, wolves have been an important animal in both the ecosystem and human society (Fagan 2015, DeMello 2012). Viewed as predators, symbols, and totems, wolves have occupied multiple roles in human societies across different places and times (Fagan 2015). Negative portrayals of wolves as vicious predators or villains in children’s literature and a history of conflict with livestock ranchers in particular, have left wolves a prime target for hunters for many years (Brownlow 2000, Fagan 2015). However, as an ecological keystone species, wolves play the important role of maintaining biodiversity in their native environments (Peltola and Heikkilä 2018). Removal of wolves from their ecological habitats has been detrimental to both the animal at an individual, pack, and species level, and has contributed to wider biodiversity loss in the areas where they are no longer found (Bush et al 2014).

In recent decades, American society has seen a division between those who have historically disdained wolves and

those who appreciate them as symbols of the wilderness or “wildness” (Brownlow 2000, Emel 1995), relatives of domesticated dogs (Fagan 2015), and animals that are nurturing family members and skilled hunters that work together to protect one another in the pack (Allen 1979, Bekoff 2002, Lopez 1978, Fagan 2015). In addition to the numerous threats to wolves posed by humans’ historical efforts at species eradication and habitat destruction (DeMello 2012), in this project I make the case that we can now add to this list their inclusion in the exotic pet trade. This thesis project explores the desire for wolf and wolfdog pet-keeping, to argue that it encourages a problematic trade in animals that is harmful to both the wolves and their human owners.

The last two decades have shown that this desire to own a piece of the wilderness is a driver of wolf trafficking and expansion of the exotic pet trade (Hope 1994; McConnell 2013; Gorman 2017). Many breeders across the country are exploiting the human desire to own a piece of the wild, and are making profits off of selling these captive, and sometimes endangered, animals (Terrill 2011b). Wolves and wolfdogs advertised online, for example, are priced between \$600-\$4000 (Figure 1). While the laws about which animals can be legally bred and sold vary by state in the United States (WPSA

2018, Tegeder 2015), the exotic pet trade in general includes breeders who take wild wolves and breed them, sometimes with other dogs, to sell wolf and wolfdog pups. For example, many breeders, in places where there are restrictions against the buying and selling of pure wolf pups, instead offer hybrid animals for sale, in which they breed wolves (*Canis lupus*) with domesticated dogs (*Canis lupus familiaris*) and lie about the percentage of pure wolf in an animal in an attempt to make the sale legal, especially because the percentage is hard to prove (Tegeder 2015). Some states allow greater or less percentage wolf in an animal in order for the sale and purchase in that state to be legal, percentage of wolf ranging from 25% to even 75% (Tegeder 2015). As long as people will have the desire to bond with a part-wild creature, these breeders will continue to find ways to sell them (Terrill 2011b).

Many wolf and wolfdog breeders also falsely advertise wolves as being great pets. An example of this marketing is found in a newspaper advertisement that claimed excitedly, “Own a piece of the wilds! Three-week-old, 98 percent wolf pups for sale! Loyal and affectionate bonding makes them great with kids!” (cited in Hope 1994). Similarly, even a quick Google Search with the keywords “wolf-dog puppies for sale,” reveals ample opportunities for purchase from breeders

that claim to have years of experience raising them, some asking only that potential owners “must live in legal states” (Figure 2). Because it is easy to find wolves and wolfdogs for sale, it brings up the question of what this trade means for the wolves and wolfdogs.

Impacts of Captivity on Wolves and Wolfdogs

While the trade may benefit breeders, there are many negative impacts for the captive wolves and wolfdogs. One of the biggest problems with raising a wolf or wolfdog in captivity, however, is that this practice is detrimental to the animals’ physical and emotional well-being. Wolves in the wild spend an average of eight to ten hours out of every twenty-four travelling around thirty to fifty miles each day (Safina 2015, Lopez 1978). Many wolves or wolfdogs in captivity, often living in small apartments or enclosures in a person’s backyard, can experience high levels of anxiety being cooped up all day. These animals have been known to show signs of boredom and loneliness. Domestic living spaces are typically too small for a wolf’s needs for physical movement, and ethologists have observed that wolves living in captivity exhibit stress-induced behaviors such as constant pacing, attempts to escape their enclosures, seemingly-unexplained aggression towards humans or other pets, and sometimes

even acts of self-mutilation, all in an effort to cope (Safina 2015, see also Terrill 2011a). Further, as illustrated in this thesis, without the space to run and get exercise, captive wolves and wolfdogs can become lethargic and suffer from poor health.

Another serious mental health problem that wolves and wolfdogs experience while living in captivity is separation anxiety. While sometimes wolves and wolfdogs don't bond with humans, when they do accept a human as part of their "pack", the bond is very strong. As argued by those who work with rescued wolves, the attachment experienced by wolves to their "person" is a great deal stronger than it would be as compared to a dog's bond with their guardian (WSPA 2018). An owner leaving the animal's sight for even a few minutes can be an extremely traumatic experience under such conditions. Further, since wolves and wolfdogs can hear for six to ten miles around them, simply living in the domestic setting of a neighborhood with constant sounds of cars and other human activities can also severely impact their mental health (Terrill 2011a).

In addition to the mental and physical health disruptions caused by wolves and wolfdogs living in captivity, it is genuinely difficult for a human to give their captive animal the proper care. As carnivores, wolf diets should consist of

about 98% meat; this amount can be hard for owners to acquire, store, and portion to their wolves (Allen 1979). In the wild, wolves can eat about five to ten pounds a day (Allen 1979). At the Wolf Sanctuary of PA, the volunteers feed the wolves six times a week, leaving one day for digestion. The meat they feed them includes large ungulates, such as donated deer and horse meat (WSPA 2018). In addition to the inconvenience and challenge of keeping up with a wolf or wolfdog's diet, there is a risk that the animal could suffer from malnourishment or hunger from not getting the proper food or amount that he or she needs. Further, because dogs have adapted to needing a reduced amount of nutrients than wolves (Fagan 2015), commercially available dog food products typically cannot meet the nutritional needs of wolves (SFWS 2019). According to the Saint Francis Wolf Sanctuary, wolves and wolfdogs do not have the same digestive systems as dogs do, and so cannot process the grains found in many commercial dog food brands. Moreover, they need to not only eat raw meat, but also organs, bones, and similar nutrients received from eating fur, feathers, antlers and hooves in the wild (SFWS 2019). For a wolf or wolfdog in captivity, these nutrients can only be provided through very specific nutritional supplements (SFWS 2019). Therefore, not only would it be a lot of work

to make sure the wolf or wolfdog is properly nourished, but it could get expensive as well.

Another issue associated with keeping a wolf or wolfdog in captivity is that they can be very unpredictable, and there is always a risk they could become harmful to the owner and others. According to a recent study of the more general exotic pet trade in the United States, fewer than 20 people per year report injuries from an exotic pet, including other mammals such as tigers and chimpanzees (Tegeeder 2015). Attacks by an exotic pet are extremely rare, as can be compared to the 4.7 million domestic dog bite victims per year in the United States (Tegeeder 2015). However, even if an owner has known the wolf since they were a pup or is aware of the general physical and psychological needs of a wolf or wolfdog, as observed above, the inherent stress of living in captivity can cause any animal to lash out and behave in dangerous or unpredictable ways (McConnell 2013). If a captive wolf or wolfdog is by chance pushed by stress to bite a human, the relevant authorities are required to biopsy the brain to check for rabies even if the animal had been vaccinated (McConnell 2013, Terrill 2011a); in effect, the punishment is euthanasia, even if the animal was vaccinated.

Caught between worlds: Neither wild nor tame

Because wolf-dogs are genetically and emotionally stuck between two worlds, they sit uncomfortably in the human sphere. As the canid behaviorist and trainer Patricia McConnell (2013) writes in her essay, “The Tragedy of Wolf-Dogs,” wolfdogs have the conflicting instincts of wanting to be in the wild and wanting human interaction, yet they are unable to comfortably embrace either. Whereas some people purchase wolfdogs in an attempt to get the best of both worlds, these animals often get the worst. In effect, they are caught “in limbo” between worlds, belonging to neither (McConnell 2013). Further, many owners purchase a wolf or wolfdog with the false assumption that he or she can be trained like a dog, and engage in dominance-based training techniques to simulate a pack hierarchy structure when raising a pup (Terrill 2011a). Despite popular belief, humans cannot entirely learn the language of wolves or expect the same results that dog-training techniques yield when trying to assert dominance over their wolfdog pets (see Terrill 2011a).

For all of the harm it would cause the animal living in captivity, the fates for these wolves and wolfdogs if abandoned by their captors are most likely negative or poor. Some human owners, after their wolf pet has reached maturity, find that they can no longer take care of their

animal anymore. There are few good options for owners who wish to surrender their wolfdogs: many animal shelters won't take them as a policy, and there are limited spaces in wildlife sanctuaries. One sanctuary director explains the gravity of the situation when she says, "If I could build 20 new enclosures today, I could fill them all tomorrow with wolfdogs needing rescue" (Belsky 2013, cited in McConnell 2013). The wolves and wolfdogs living in the Wolf Sanctuary of PA, for example, are extremely lucky to have a place to live in which the caretakers genuinely care about the animals and make sure they get the proper space, food, and care that they need. Yet even there, space is limited (Mancini 2019).

Beyond the rescue sanctuary, few viable options exist. Releasing captive wildlife back into the wild is not a good option, giving wolves or wolfdogs a high probability of premature death either from not being able to hunt properly, or from getting killed by a human or wild wolf who felt they were a threat (Terrill 2011a, Hogan 1995, Peltola and Heikkilä 2018). Releasing hybrid animals is also ecologically risky from a genetic conservation perspective (Peltola and Heikkilä 2018). Moreover, wolves and wolfdogs are very social animals (Bekoff 2002), and this is also where the trauma from separation anxiety can be prevalent. The practical implications of abandonment if the wolf or wolfdog has already bonded

with their owner can result in the wolf's attempt to "track the owner down" even despite large distances. Ceiridwen Terrill, in her memoir of the 6 years she spent with Inyo, her hybrid wolf-dog, recounts several such occasions (Terrill 2011a). Euthanasia constitutes the main remaining option for those owners seeking release from the cycle of problems inherent to wolfdog ownership under typical circumstances (Tegeuder 2015).

Wolves are Wild: A Collection of Narratives About Rescued Wolves and Wolfdogs

As the reader will see in the coming pages, the stories, illustrations, and poetry in this project were created to highlight the problems created by the practice of keeping a wolf or wolfdog in captivity. My stories attempt to portray these issues through the lives of the people and animals who have experienced them. In trying to translate their voices, I hope to spread greater awareness about their struggles and the negative impacts of raising wild animals in captivity, and contribute to the prevention of these problems in the future. In doing so, I aim to make this issue more understandable and accessible to as many people as possible.

To accomplish these goals and create this project, a combination of archival research and fieldwork was

completed over a period of fifteen months. To gain firsthand experience of wolf sanctuaries, learn about the individual life stories of wolves and wolfdogs, and gain ‘insider’ perspectives about why wolves and wolfdogs need to be rescued by sanctuaries, I engaged in seven months of weekly site visits and participant observation as a volunteer at the Wolf Sanctuary of PA in Lititz, PA (Figure 3). As part of my fieldwork and background research, I also, spent many hours in direct wolf observation, and used photography as a means for preparation and reference for the illustrations that will be shown throughout the printed and bound version of this thesis project. To support the storytelling objectives of my thesis, I studied the repositories of archived sanctuary documents from various wolf sanctuaries across the country, collected oral histories from former wolf and wolfdog owners and sanctuary workers who were willing to share them, and traced wolf backstories from sanctuaries as well. These research activities were undertaken in attempt to compile information and details across multiple sites, so that the resulting stories could each touch upon one of the emergent key issues faced by captive wolves and wolfdogs across the country.

Wolves are Wild: A Collection of Narratives About Rescued Wolves and Wolfdogs is the resulting book project, and reflects

my synthesis of these oral histories, archived narratives, and personal accounts into original stories, poetry, and illustrations. The book documents problems ranging from abuse, to animal hoarding, to separation anxiety, and to maltreatment -- all while telling true life stories of real wolves and wolfdogs. Hopefully, readers will feel inspired to support their local wolf sanctuary and feel motivated to help stop the perpetuation of these harmful practices using the resources provided in the final pages. I also hope that in reading my book, readers will be able to see and get to know the wolves and wolfdogs in these stories as I have come to over the past year. As Terrill (2011a) thoughtfully reminds us, “To love dogs is to keep them close. To love wolves is to leave them wild.”

Wolf Voices



Scout *

Clack clack clack.

Clack clack clack.

“Honey, he’s coming back upstairs,” I sighed into my pillow.

“How could that be? I just went back down and made sure I closed it well this time,” my wife responded in the darkness. I could hear her lethargy.

“Well I guess not well enough,” I exhaled as I swung my legs over the side of the bed and turned on the light on my night table. This was his first night with us, and the third time he had already escaped from his crate. As soon as the light went on, Scout rounded the corner from the stairwell and was standing in our door frame.

Wig.

Wag.

Wig.

Wag.

He looked so happy to see us, as if he had been worried that the cage would swallow him up and he may have never gotten the chance to see us again. He sat smiling, seemingly

* Co-written with Anthony Celona

proud of his feat. My head in my hands as I mustered the energy to push myself off the bed, I got up to once again guide Scout back downstairs and into his crate.

Realizing that the definition of insanity was repeating something over and over again and expecting a different result, I tried to get creative and searched our kitchen cabinets for something that would do the trick to keep him in his crate for the night.

Using binder twine around and metal clips on the crate, I secured Scout in there as if he was millions of dollars worth of gold in a bank safe. His confusion splayed on his face, my heart sunk a bit in my chest as I wished him goodnight for the fourth time and slowly walked upstairs. The sound of his wagging tail hitting the metal sides of the crate punched holes in my heart with every heavy step I took away from him. But my focus quickly shifted back to the bedroom, and I realized that with each step I took, I was getting closer and closer to a good night's sleep.

Or so I thought.

Scout barked all night while locked in the crate.



After a few months of volunteering at a local wolf sanctuary, we were finally able to go and see him.

“Hop on, I want to show you something,” Cara, a caretaker at the sanctuary, smiled as she pulled up beside us in a four wheeler while we were checking visitors in for their tour of the sanctuary. She radioed to another volunteer for backup near the check-in area, and both my wife and I hopped into the vehicle, curious and excited. Sitting in the back of the four wheeler, my wife in the passenger seat, I felt an immense wave of excitement and, strangely, *nerves*. We had not seen Scout for months, and had not been allowed to even visit this wolf sanctuary until recently, for fear he would smell us and all the progress made during his transition to this new world would be lost. My wife put her hand on top of mine, comforting me.

I had no idea how Scout would react to seeing us, and as we made the ascent up the hill towards the enclosure he now called home, a home we were not allowed to go anywhere near until now, I began to wonder if he missed us, or if he resented us for seemingly abandoning him. Taking this drive up the hill, a wave of memories flooded my head, and my eyes began to well up in tears.

I remembered the moment we picked out Scout, a playful puppy amongst his distracted counterparts who did not seem

to pay much attention to us. We already had met a few dogs that summer day at the SPCA, and were ready to leave empty-handed before turning around and seeing this friendly boy staring at us behind the bars of his cage. Scout had a pleading but genuinely friendly look to his face, and when we asked the animal caretaker if we could take him out of his cage to meet him, this black lab-looking dog seemed to instantly fall in love with us. He jumped all over us with his paws on our shoulders and licked our faces, as if he was trying to convince us to bring him home. The time just flew by while getting to know him, and after thirty minutes of playing, I had instantly fallen in love with him too.

When we took him home that evening, he explored our entire house, sniffing every corner, every space a human had been before him. For the first few months, he was just a playful puppy who was full of energy. Every week, I visited the local pet store to buy him more toys, the remains of the former week's sprawled along the living room floor, the white stuffing plastered to his nose and embedded in his facial fur. At first, he loved to be around people and would jump on visitors, licking them, wagging his tail with excitement. His energy brought life to our home.

It wasn't until a few months after having him that we started to become concerned about his behavior, and we

wondered what breed he was. He looked like a black-lab with his floppy ears, large paws, and playful wag to his tail, yet we found the ability of an 11 month-old puppy to be able to stand on his hind legs and be eye to eye with a 5'9" man like me to be quite unusual.

On this four-wheeler with Cara, we drove past a crowd of people on our way to Scout's enclosure. I watched the visitors as they looked at the wolves and wolfdogs with giddy expressions, longingly looking at the volunteers who could occasionally reach into the enclosure and pet one of the wolves they took care of and who trusted them. Although not all the volunteers could touch every wolf or wolfdog, there were the lucky ones who gained the trust of certain furry individuals. In the back of the crowd, I overheard a tall man with a green baseball cap ask one of the volunteers if wolves made good pets and how much they would cost. We drove past before I could hear the other volunteer's answer, but the man reminded me of my neighbor, Paul, who Scout used to love and who also had a green baseball cap like that. Scout used to run up to him when we would go for a walk, jumping on him and licking him, picking up sticks to bring for Paul to throw.

I looked behind me as the four-wheeler gained more and more distance away from the crowds of people. I could see

that green baseball cap peaking above the sea of visitors, and I remembered how, slowly, Scout grew afraid of humans.

It started off that Scout just didn't want to be touched by Paul anymore. We would be out for a walk and as soon as Scout saw him, he would strongly pull in the opposite direction of Paul's friendly smile and waving hand. After a few weeks, I this behavior manifested in Scout with other people as well. As soon as he saw a person--anyone--while on a walk, he would fervently pull the leash to get away from them. He would sit down and move backwards with all of his strength in an attempt to avoid that person, leaving me with no other option than to follow his frightened lead. I had never seen a dog so afraid before in my entire life, it was as if he thought our neighbors were going to kill him.

I remembered a night last year on Christmas Eve, when we had guests over for dinner and drinks. The first couple to arrive came in the back door, and upon seeing Scout, walked over to give him a comforting pat on the back of his head. When they made their approach, Scout avoided their touch and walked straight into the other room. That night, even after the rest of the guests arrived and offered him meat from the table, he walked from room to room, always staying around 10-15 feet away out of fear. He kept his eyes on the supposed intruders and never broke sight of them. Suddenly

everyone was a threat to him, and everyone symbolized danger.

This development of fear of other people Scout exhibited was especially concerning to us because we know how dogs are supposed to be friendly with other humans for the most part, and he had been so playful for the first few weeks that we had him, always excited to meet new people.

Sitting in the four-wheeler with Cara and my wife, I looked down the long line of enclosures, hoping to see him, his wagging tail, and his floppy ears. Not there yet.

Scout was never afraid of us, and thinking about all of those months full of good times, I began to miss him. I missed playing tug o' war with him in our living room, or wrestling with him on the carpet. I missed taking him to the dog park and watching him just run and run in his happiest state: freedom. He was a wonderful animal with a big spirit and was never aggressive with me, my wife, or anyone for that matter. I wondered if it was all worth saying goodbye.

But then, as we left behind the crowds of people, approaching the private enclosures not available for viewing on the public tour, I remembered some more...

His separation anxiety had caused him to become destructive. I remembered a time when my wife was washing up for bed one night and had closed the downstairs

bathroom door behind her. Scout had followed her downstairs, and, unable to see her behind the closed door, had freaked out. He started barking and scratching at the door to be let in. My wife, who usually plays music while she showers, couldn't hear him over the noise. Eventually, he became so worked up that he began running around the house, peeing on every piece of furniture, in every room, and all over the house. It was heartbreaking to see him so panicked, so freaked out from being separated from my wife for such a short period of time, and I felt helpless. I tried knocking on the door, but the music was too loud. The only thing that could have comforted him would have been for him to see her, and there was nothing I could do to soothe his anxieties. There have been urine stains on the living room carpet ever since.

I remembered the day Scout tore down the blinds when my wife went to talk to the mailman on our front lawn. I watched him from the kitchen as he tried to dig through the wooden window sill, punching at the glass with his big, strong paws. He scratched off almost all of the white paint covering the sill, and nearly broke the whole structure completely off. Scout had been able to see her standing on the lawn through the glass of the window, yet the distance from her still drove

him crazy. We were Scout's pack, and he did not want to be abandoned by any of us.

This separation anxiety was particularly heartbreaking for me, to see him so panicked, so upset, that he would not only destroy parts of our house, but he would hurt himself. I remembered leaving him in the crate for only a few minutes to pick up something at the grocery store and later on finding dried blood from where he had dug and dug until his claws bled bright red, all in an attempt to escape the confines of his cage. As this separation anxiety developed and got more intense as time went on, we decided that we needed to get him checked out by a professional. We had been at a loss for what to do, and could no longer watch him suffer from separation anxiety for even a few more minutes.

I remembered the veterinarian handing me the Prozac medicine, a failed attempt at calming Scout's unstable nerves.

Continuing to make our way up the hill, Cara told us we were almost there. We passed wolves and wolfdogs I had never seen before who all ran to the end of their enclosure to watch us drive by. Maybe they thought we had food, especially since many of the volunteers carry meat on the back of these four-legged vehicles. Maybe they were looking for a volunteer they recognized. Or maybe they were just curious. We were not familiar faces.

As we passed the various yellow eyes, now knowing the reality of Scout's genetic makeup, I remembered the day we received the news that our very own Scout had wolf within him. Opening the letter from the University lab, I read the content percentage in the middle of the page...

75% wolf, 25% dog.

I remembered the look on the veterinarian's face as she told us she could no longer provide us service, warily petting the back of Scout's neck, the last time she would feel his thick fur underneath her fingers.

After all, he was a wolf.

A wolf.



Pulling up to Scout's enclosure, I heard him barking before I actually saw him in the flesh. I approached his new home slowly, my heart pounding hard in my chest, a drum stick beating against my ribcage. My wife, walking beside me and following my pace, squeezed my hand again and gave me a comforting smile. I wondered if my nerves were visible by the expression on my face. In reality, it was all anticipation. I had missed him so much. From where we were walking, I searched every inch of the enclosure I could see with my eyes.

Getting closer, we gained more visibility with every step, the grass crunching underneath the rubber of my sneakers. Finally, I saw something moving behind one of the bushes in Scout's enclosure, but I couldn't see him, nor did I know if the movement was him or another being.

They say that when you're out for a walk in the woods, odds are you won't even see a wolf. But, he will be watching you. I had a feeling Scout was somewhere in there, behind those bushes.

Watching us.

The barking continued, consistent in pace, until we were up against the metal fence surrounding Scout's new home.

And then, for a second, the barking stopped.

Suddenly, Scout emerged from the brush and followed his nose to the part of the enclosure we were standing in front of.

In this second of silence, he looked at us. I smiled, overjoyed, as I looked right back at him and breathed out the word, "Hi." He then looked over at me, eyes directly aligned with mine, and whimpered for a few seconds, his tail wagging a total of two beats. Then, just as quickly as he stopped, he started barking again and moved towards the other wolfdog, Missie, his new companion. He looked happy with her, his entire face seemingly lighting up in her presence. Watching

them together, nuzzling each other and biting each other's faces playfully, I knew that we had made the right decision bringing him here. After that brief connection with him, I wondered if Scout missed us as much as we missed him. But then again, here, he can be who he truly is.

A wolfdog.

Buddy

Pacing back and forth, back and forth, my muscles felt anxious and ready to move, ready to run for miles and miles and miles. The metal bars enclosing me in this tight Space felt as though they were shrinking, getting smaller with each breath I took.

Inhale. Shrink.

Inhale. Shrink.

Inha-. Crush.

Silence.

I felt the coldness where my body met the cement underneath me, lacking the weight to keep me warm enough. I felt the cold radiating off the cement floor, surrounding me like a blanket of needles, poking through to my skin at every inch of my being. Still pacing, I kept my head to the side, facing the metal bars, hoping to see one of the owners coming over to me with a big stack of meat. When I heard the latch of the gate open, I slowed down to focus on the small frame, multiple feet away. The possibility of seeing this sight so slim, I barely slowed to a stop. Instead, it was usually a person or group of people coming to look at me, smiling at my pain, or so it felt. Always watching for food, I gave myself an aching neck, and my heart was heavy. The latch of the gate

meeting its match once again, I heard the closing *click* sound that signaled loneliness once again. I grew more hungry, I stopped pacing, and curled myself into a ball up against my boundary.

It hadn't always been like this, I remember days when I was surrounded by my family, I remember life before this isolated existence. This wasn't life, I always told myself, this wouldn't, this *couldn't* last long. I thought about having the space to run again, the sun not shielded by the darkening roof of my cage, but my muscles quivered at the thought of moving too much. I thought about how the soft ground would soothe my painful blisters caused by the incessant rough of the cement. I looked at the ground outside of my enclosure, and sniffed it through the metal holes that blocked me from the outside world. I knew that even the dirt I could smell would be softer than my current reality. Too long had I not been given the opportunity of freedom, too long had I been imprisoned in this cold chamber. My dreams fueled this fire within me and drove me crazy.



One family came in last week with one of the owners, the female, and they were excited by the sight of all the animals.

The rows of enclosures made it “feel like the circus,” a little boy said.

An animal growled in the distance. I knew not what neighbors lived beside me, but I could smell them.

“Yes, and I’m the ringleader, Toby!” replied a small girl companion, probably his little sister. The little boy ignored her, his eyes full of excitement as he looked down the rows of animals and pulled at his mother’s paw.

Or was it called a hand?

In the distance, there was a sound of nails scratching continuously on cement.

The walk from the entrance gate to my Space took over five minutes, and although the parents and little girl stopped along the way to look into the other Spaces, who lived inside them I knew not, the boy set his eyes on me. Headed in my direction, he moved towards me with purpose, walking as fast as he could before his strides became illegal runs. The female owner’s eyes vacillated between the little boy, the little boy’s parents, the little girl, and then back to the little boy. Her face showed the internal dialogue she was experiencing and you could see that she agreed with herself that the parents were enough supervision over the little girl. She came over to my Space to stand next to the little boy, and politely reminded him not to run near the enclosures, all the while keeping her

eyes on me. The owner offered to give him a dog treat to feed me, “but,” she said, “for fifty cents, of course.” The owner started to walk away, her feet moving in the direction of the closet near the entrance, her face peering over her shoulder at the young child. The owner did not wait for an answer, and moved her head back to the rightful direction of which the rest of her body was facing.

The little boy’s parents eventually came over to where their son was standing, transfixed. They wanted to know, “what are you looking at, Toby?” and all three of them surrounded him from behind. Toby’s little sister came up by his side and wrapped her hand into a fist around the bottom corner of his cargo shorts. She held onto this corner in one hand, her thumb plunged into her mouth with the other, while she stared at Toby’s object of interest.

By the time the owner came back, a bag of dog treats in hand, the parents had already started sifting through their wallet, looking for loose change clinking around. I sat staring at the bag of treats throughout this entire exchange, all the while Toby stared at me.

The owner handed Toby a dog biscuit, and at that point both of our eyes were fixed onto the crumbly, darkened cookie. My mouth was filling with saliva and my tongue couldn’t keep it all in, wetness spilling onto the fur around my

lips. Toby jumped back a step when he threw the treat into my Space and I devoured it whole within seconds. His face warmed from an initial nervousness to a satisfactory smile, and the rest of his family squealed with joy and clapped at Toby's accomplishment. They were excited by this act, and Toby was now grinning with pride with his mom's arms folded around his chest.

Toby walked away from my Space while holding his mother's hand, and none of them looked back at me. Licking the fur around my lips and slapping my tongue against my back teeth to get every crumb into my stomach, I sniffed the cement floor to see if I had missed any of the remains. The owner, with sad eyes, walked up closer and dropped another treat between the bars of my cage. "You're a good boy," she said, "you're a good boy indeed."

Many families like this visited me and the other Spaces at this zoo near the road. I assume the reason I get so little food is because there are so many other animals to feed here. Maybe the owners just wanted to give the visitors a show when they get to feed me and I eat the food fast. I eat it really fast.

The owners, a male and a female, are never mean to me, but I do feel hungry. Sometimes they apologize for the lack of food, and their faces do look worried most of the time, but

still, I was so hungry. I could feel my ribs sticking out of my sides, my skin rubbing against them with every move I made. My whole body felt tight and I craved something with more meat to it. Something with blood dripping out of it that I could just sip like a pool of water. The hunger took turns with exhaustion.

One time a man and a woman came and walked straight to my Space, despite an arrow near the entrance gate that guided visitors through the maze of the enclosures, encouraging visitors to start walking to the left, and end at my Space. The man was large, with muscles straining his shirt sleeves and his height towering at least a foot over his significant other. He started to make funny sounds at me and straighten his back as if attempting to be my Alpha. I looked at him in bewilderment.

He started to bark, and then attempted a howl. I looked him in the eyes and fought every instinctual urge I had to tilt my head back and release my soul back to him in song. The man and woman were giggling to one another, with smiles that pushed their cheeks so high it almost closed their eyes. I don't know how they could have seen through such smiles, wily smiles like what I remembered of coyotes. However, the man was still not satisfied. When the male owner came over to the couple, asking if either of them wanted a dog treat to

feed me, the man accepted the offer without hesitation, before the owner could name the price. He held the treat through the bars in my Space, maintaining eye contact with me while his female partner gave the owner what he required for the sweet biscuit.

The man didn't blink once as he stuck the treat through the metal holes in my enclosure, the owner too busy counting his change to say anything about caution. While the man waited for me to come to him, the treat crumbled in his hands, dropping sandy pieces into the murky water that pooled at the base of my Space from a previous rainy day. Meeting a downwards slant at the foot of the metal bars separating me and him, the puddle of murky water ran down the slope and out of my Space, pooling around the man's feet. He didn't move, he didn't shift uncomfortably. He was unphased by the muddy puddle leaving stains on his white sneakers, and he knew I wanted to lap up all of it. He crumbled the treat some more.

He was challenging me.

Instead of coming up to him and taking what was left of the biscuit, I bared my teeth and sunk my head lower to the ground, my vocal chords emitting a deep growl that I had forgotten they could release. My hunger had made me territorial, for I had never had to fight for my food before.

Seeing that I was getting angrier, the man dropped the treat and backed away, holding the upper arms of his female partner, closer to her shoulders, and shaking her excitedly. “Oh oh oh,” he shook her some more, “did you see that? I’m all jacked up!” Watching the couple walk away while holding hands, I inhaled what was left of the crumbly treat, drinking the stale water containing most of the now soggy biscuit pieces, and walked to the darkest corner of my Space to eat. I didn’t avert my gaze on them until they were gone, they never stopped to look at any other Spaces.

Outside of my Space, the unattainable puddle containing the rest of the waterlogged treat and the smells its gave off drove me mad.

What a waste.



On the day that she came in to the warehouse, I didn’t realize that it would be a special day, especially because it was a particularly hot day, which always made the days feel longer. My Space gets extremely hot and humid during this season, and the owners often forgot to fill up my water dish for me to drink out of, let alone to help me cool down. There were two families that had visited that day, but it was rather quiet until she came in. I wanted visitors to come so that I could

eat. I wished that the owners sold the guests some sort of meat to feed me, then, I thought, I would never go hungry.

The sun shone bright through the metal holes of my enclosure, surrounding me with unbearable heat. I thought about all the different kinds of animals that existed and wondered what many of them tasted like. My instincts were to run, to escape this all-encompassing torture. I heard myself let out a whimper as I pulled myself up to pace anxiously again in the small area allotted to me. I could hear growling in the Spaces beyond mine, crying in another one. I collapsed in exhaustion.

She walked in with the owner, holding a brown bag over one of her shoulders and wearing a T-shirt with an animal on it that looked attractive to me. The animal had a similar body as mine. Her expression did not match most of those whom I had seen throughout my time here, it was different.

I could smell her sadness, it matched my own.

She started moving down the walkway to the right, to view the other enclosures in the zoo. The male owner tried to get the other animals to “do something funny for Ms. M---, why don’t ya?” But I could hear his disappointment as he scoffed, and could hear the crunching of the dirt underneath the two of them as the owner started guiding her further down the path. The sounds became softer as the two of them

moved further away. But then, after a pause, they grew closer and louder until Ms. M---'s smell was strong in my nostrils, a sweet scent of the outside.

Freedom.

Ms. M--- now standing in front of me, I stopped pacing and looked at her in the eyes like I had done with the man earlier, but attempting a softer, inquisitive gaze. Her eyes were like sunken ships, disappearing under the ocean that grew from her tears. She refused to pay the fifty cents to give me a treat, and I looked away, disappointed. I could smell her sadness but it didn't match mine anymore. I felt hopeless, as though I could not live in this horrible world.

Turning my back to Ms. M---, and with complete despair, I collapsed under her gaze, a cloud of dust shooting out from either side of my abdomen. I did not watch her leave, but the sweet smell lingered for some time.



The next day I woke up with a restless feeling in my legs, with miles of energy pent up within them. When I walked to the furthest point of my Space on the right hand side, I heard the lock of the gate snapping open, showing two figures in the frame of the door.

A man with a blue button down shirt and a belt with lots of tools on them walked in with both of the owners, the man carrying a similar expression to that of which Ms. M--- had on yesterday. However, I did not smell sadness. This was a new emotion. Anger.

Following behind these two men were a whole crowd of people that flooded into the warehouse. I saw people holding black objects up to the two owners, into which the owners responded to their questions. The gate propped open, a whole crowd of people with different roles and responsibilities came quickly into the zoo, filling the aisles and holding various tools and smaller enclosures that could be carried in. I felt afraid, as I had no idea what was happening, and although the owners had never done anything to hurt me, I felt no trust in them or in any of these people. Until...my nostrils picked up a familiar scent. My pacing slowed to a stop and I sat and watched the unfamiliar faces as a crowd surrounded my Space.

Ms. M---

She presented herself in front of my Space and started to speak to me in a calming voice. My resentment towards her had melted away, as she told me she was going to take me out of this place and bring me to a sunny home where I could play all day and eat until I need to lay down from all the food

in my full belly. My previous fear dripped out of my mind, my skin, the tips of my paws. It was carried away by her words, down the drain in the far left corner of my Space, along with all my hopelessness, despair, and anxiety.

Behind Ms. M--- approached a man and two women. One of the women carried a sharp-looking object of some sort, while the other woman and man opened the door to my Space, placing what looked like a smaller enclosure in the frame. I sat there looking at them. The woman with the sharp object now held it behind her back, stepping away from my Space and observing the situation closely, as if she were stalking her prey. I could smell the synthetic material behind her back. The other woman and the man stepped into my Space, using soothing voices to encourage me out of the place I had called home for such a long period of my life. Initially afraid to obey their wishes, I sat staring at them, unmoving, until their voices cajoled me into trusting them. The man looked over his shoulder at the woman holding the sharp object and shook his head, “no.” Feeling pain on my paws with every step I took, I slowly entered the smaller enclosure and watched as my world became even smaller than it previously had been.

But this felt *different*.

The smaller Space was dry, it smelled cleaner, and there was a soft fabric lining where my blistered pads could rest. The bars were smaller and I could see less of my surroundings, yet I had a comforting feeling within me that this was a positive change. I was too exhausted from spending the past few years in such a damp, cold, dark place, that I didn't have any more energy to be afraid at this point. My fate was already decided. The people in blue uniforms sounded concerned when they agreed with each other that the small cage I had lived in for years left me "uncharacteristically lethargic." I could see the legs of Ms. M-- following behind our procession as two of the three officers wheeled me further, further away from my previous home.

Her smell was comforting and stayed with me the entire journey.



Later that day, I woke up in the same small enclosure I had been moved into some time before, although now the door was hanging open and sunlight flooded in. My nose was picking up so many scents I had never experienced before, and they all smelled so *good*. I smelled the large amount of dirt

surrounding me, and it smelled warm. An unfamiliar but wonderful smell.

But there were other smells as well, other animals just like me.

I smelled their food, their fur, their urine, their noses. I could even smell their curiosity.

But still, I sat alone.

Unsure of what lay beyond the walls of this small enclosure, I hesitated to leave the familiar. However, the fire in my legs burned from ancestral desire to run, and I stood up. Placing each paw on the ground one at a time, I braced myself for the pain that a cold, rough surface would bring to my blisters.

However, this action brought no pain. It actually felt good, soft. I sunk into the warm, warm, earth, and was enveloped by the healing, grassy ground. I remembered how good it felt, and my heart was overwhelmed with joy as memories flooded back to me of life on this familiar ground.

The warmth moved up from the ground, into my body and filled me with energy to run a thousand miles. I was shocked with the electricity of such ecstatic emotion and I flew out of the small space, running around, exploring all of my new surroundings. For what felt like a long time, I ran to the end of my new home, stopping for a long drink of water

in a large tub against a fence furthest away from where I had initially ventured out. Whatever lethargy was, it was overcome by my immense excitement.

While running back in the opposite direction, I landed on plants and warm soil and lots and lots grass. I sat next to the small enclosure and lifted my head to the sun, soaking in all of the warmth and the light, letting it fill me up. With my neck stretched as close to the sun as it would go, and my nose held high in the air, a familiar scent came back into my nostrils. I had been so caught up in the joy of the moment, that when I woke up, I hadn't even realized that her smell was not present. Until now.

I smelled her before I saw her. *Ms. M--*.

I stopped and looked at the woman standing behind the large fence next to seven other smiling faces. She was wearing the same shirt as she was on the day when I first saw her. Another woman walked up to my enclosure, holding two chunks of deer meat, and threw them over the fence, landing right in front of my front paws. Incredible.

Looking at *Ms. M--* and all the other smiling faces, I lunged at the abundant meat supply and started having a feast, unsure of when I would eat again, but enjoying it while it lasted. I bet this was quite a show for them but I didn't care. I felt their compassionate eyes on me, and I got the

feeling that they were genuinely interested in my well-being. I knew they were exploiting my display of ravenous hunger to no one, I knew they were trying to help me. For all this time, I had known that my reality at the zoo had to be only temporary, it was not the life I was supposed to or could live. The home I had thought to be my personal Space for so long, was more of a trap, a wolf trap. The owners from which I had watched every day, had no right to keep me caged, regardless of their intention. For I am a wolf. I belong on the warm grass, I flourish from the sun. I am meant to eat until I am full, and most of all, I was born to run.

Ms. M--, who the others around her referred to as Maisie, sighed dreamily as she laid her head on the shoulder of a man standing beside her. Both of them smiled with noticeable tears in their eyes, as they watched me eat and talked about how glad they were that I made it here safely, how glad they were that I could have a better life here. They referred to this place as a wolf sanctuary, and I wondered what the word “sanctuary” meant.

Picking her head up, Maisie gave me the answer to my question. Stepping closer to the fence, she whispered in my direction, “Welcome to your new home, Buddy.”

Home, I thought. I like the sound of that.

Lucy: A Poem

New York City was my home
It was
I lived with Sophie in this City that was our home
It was

There were smells, there were sounds, there was always
something to see
My owner always told me I was a good wolfdog
Both me and Sophie

From our small yard I sat, watching as the other dogs passed
The squirrels passed
The humans passed
The clouds passed
The time passed

But miles and miles to run is better
It's better for me

A big city, I supposed
But I had no place to move
I could not pass
Just like the dogs, the squirrels, the humans, the clouds

I could only stay, stay here in this yard
And in this yard I sat, I barked
I dreamed of running fast

I barked and borked and howled and growled
To occupy the time
I could smell every smell for miles
I could hear every sound in this neighborhood
And this city was not mine

Where did those smells come from?
The smells on every inch of every home and street?
I could smell those smells from miles away
And could I get some?
And did I smell meat?

Could I have some of that roasted chicken, please and thank
you?
Was there any left for me to eat?

So I barked and borked and howled and growled
To occupy the time
I was bored, I was stir-crazy
In this smelly city
And I knew the food would not be mine

One day another human came by
A human that was neither Sophie's nor my owner
He came by and said that he heard I had been barking
He heard me barking and borking and howling and growling
He called for my owner
Who promptly came out

He did not look happy
He started to shout

"I called and called to a wolf sanctuary,
Located not too far away.
If it will be the right thing,
The volunteers will come for your wolfdogs,
Lucy and Sophie,
And they will come today."

Darwin

It was a beautiful morning in my little yard in San Francisco. The light just made everything golden and it was my favorite time of day. I liked to wake up early, to pee of course, but also because I liked to see how the sun made everything seem to sparkle. It was a golden city, and in the morning, so was my backyard. I could see everything at this time; the bugs crawling up the tree trunks, escaping my tongue; the birds chasing each other, their movements creating a colorful wind in the sky; and the papergirl, with her pack on the back of her bicycle, overflowing with newly printed newspapers to hand out to all of my neighbors. The papergirl especially was a brief source of entertainment as I practiced defending my family by barking at her speeding tires as she rolled on by. We didn't get a paper, however, as my human watched the television at night instead.

This morning I pranced around my backyard, excited to find a new spot to leave my mark, to conquer, to make my territory. Most of the backyard was mine, but every once in a while I got a whiff of someone else who had left their scent,

and I had to make sure I still ruled over this little, golden, kingdom.

And what were they thinking trying to claim my land?

Holding my head up high, I lifted up my leg to mark the yard that was rightfully mine. With my nose in the air, I sensed a different smell. Distracted by the scent, my leg slowly lowered, and sadly, I marked my own leg in the process by accident.

But I didn't care.

Following my nose, it led me all over the backyard. Around three trees, through a sprinkler stream, behind the hose attached to my house. It led me under the porch, into a bush, and in front of a mound of dirt. It led my nose *into* the mound of dirt.

Then, all of a sudden, out popped a small, brown-blur of an animal who was moving too fast for me to identify by sight alone. But I knew who he was, I could smell him. That furry little target was a playful squirrel, just asking for me to chase him. Squirrels were a funny bunch; always laughing at me, taunting me, willing me to play.

Immediately zooming into action mode, I shot forward, leaping for that fluffy tail swinging in the air in front of me.

I chased him back around those three trees, through the sprinkler stream, and behind the hose attached to my house. I

chased him back under the porch, into the bush, and in front of the large mound of dirt where it all began.

Jumping up and standing on top of this tall pile of earth, panting excitedly, my eyes did not break contact with the squirrel's ahead of me. He was now sitting on the other side of our white picket fence, enjoying the forest of grass encompassing his body. He was daring me to chase after him.

The day was beautiful, and the sun felt so nice on my face. It was not too hot, but there was a slight, cool breeze. Just right.

I chased that squirrel for what felt like miles and miles. We zoomed around the neighborhood, my eyes never breaking sight of the furry bullet in front of my nose. I was focused, I was determined, and the whole world just melted away from my peripheral vision. The only scent I could smell was his.

After what felt like an hour, the squirrel finally ran up a tree. A tree that did not look familiar to me, and it did not have my smell. After whining at the squirrel for a few minutes, willing him to keep on playing, I eventually lost interest when it appeared the squirrel had too. I then lifted my leg to mark this tree that I had apparently forgotten to claim, which was odd.

Had I not marked all the trees and my little yard?

Looking up and around, I soon realized that not only did I not recognize this tree, but I didn't recognize any of them. There were smells I had never experienced before, not even on walks. There were people I did not know, other dogs I had not met before. There was even a fire hydrant I had not yet peed on, despite my desire to partake in the cliché dog habit whenever I came across one on my daily walk with my human around the neighborhood. Realizing what had happened, and knowing my ability to find my way home through scent, I decided to, instead of being afraid, take this opportunity to enjoy myself, to take in the day, to leisurely find my way home after exploring the unknown.

A park. I was in a park.

Feeling excited by this brand new world of opportunity, my energy overflowed out of my paws and fueled me forward. Zooming around the widest edges of the park, I ran and ran and ran, indulging in my new found freedom. I could feel my tongue hanging out of the corners of my smile, slobber flying out and hitting my face as I ran faster and faster, not tired in the slightest after the previous chase with that devious squirrel.

Running and running and running, I began to notice the people around me who seemed to hold an expression of fear on their faces. They were grabbing their children and moving

quickly away from my path, pointing at me to other humans and shouting in my direction. I did not know why they were so afraid, so seemingly angry at such a happy dog, so I slowed down and decided to take my joy and freedom elsewhere.

Prancing around the park, my paws enjoying the feeling of the warm grass and soil beneath me, I came across a play area where a bunch of children were swinging and jumping and running and hiding. It looked like the most fun I had ever seen. Changing my trajectory to move in this direction, I stopped at a few trees to leave my scent for other dogs, and made my way over to the play area, ready for some fun.

Upon arrival, the ground changed from soft grass to coarse wood chips, but I did not mind. Children with all different colored coats flooded towards me, overwhelming me with pets and pats and scritch-scratches, like a wave of rainbow had washed over me. I was so happy.

Some children wanted me to run for them, some wanted to scratch my belly. Some gave me hugs, some gave me kisses. Some children whispered their secrets into my ears, and I promised not to tell. Some children asked if they could take me home, but I tried to communicate that I have my own home to go to. I made so many friends at that small little park, and I wondered again why the other families had run away, seemingly so afraid.

But all of this positive attention did not last long, as soon enough, it took a turn for the worse.

“Wolf!” A parent cried, looking in my direction. Shocked by the abrupt fear that came from the previous joviality, I turned around to see what the woman had been so afraid of. Had she seen something running near me in the park field? Had something followed me to this park?

Was *I* this wolf she spoke of?

Soon, parents swarmed their children, pulling on their little fingers that had entwined themselves into my fur coat and picking them up onto their hips. Some parents took out their cell phones and made urgent-sounding calls while others ran towards me making threatening sounds, seemingly trying to get me to leave. Looking around, I couldn't believe how quickly such fun had turned into such hatred, and it made me so so sad to see. But, I also wondered, what if this was all a game, like the squirrels and I play. The children, now four feet higher in their parents arms, were still smiling in my direction, reaching out for me to come back to them. I began running around, running towards the families, prompting them to keep playing with me, showing them that I was not scary, that I could indeed play their games with them.

It wasn't until more adults showed up, adults in dark-colored uniforms with long poles and a loop at the end, as if

they were extensions of their hands, that I realized this was no game. They had a different look on their face, a look similar to what I imagine mine was while chasing the squirrel that got me into this mess.

Determination.

A hunting face.

The adults started chasing me, but this time, even more so than the parents of the children I had been playing with. They wanted to get me, they wanted to dominate me, they wanted to take me out of this park and make sure I never came back. For the first time, I realized how truly unwelcome I was. The sadness came back and then quickly transformed into survival mode.

But I did not know why until I heard an adult praising one of the officers for their work, for their swiftness in answering his call, for their willingness to mitigate this “dire and frightening situation.”

All of these officers were from Animal Control.

During my pause of internal dialogue, one of the officers lunged towards me and placed the hoop around my neck, pulling me towards their van, the door already open. I could see a large crate sitting their patiently on the inside, seemingly waiting for me.

Oh no, I thought, someone get my human.



“Where is he?” I heard the voice of my human yell from the other room, I could smell her too. “Where is Darwin?!” Her voice sounded frantic.

The two doors separating me, sitting patiently in my crate like the good boy that I am, and my human, had swung open and I got a burst of her smell. It was comforting.

“Oh baby! Baby baby baby! Darwin are you okay?” She asked me while poking her fingers through the holes in my crate. “What were you doing running away?”

“He is fine, he was not at all aggressive when we picked him up. We actually found him in a park playing with children, one of the parents called us because they thought he was a wolf,” one of the Animal Control officers responded, amused.

Slightly offended that the man responded to a question that my human had directed at me, I wagged my tail playfully to show her myself that I was indeed fine.

“You know, ma’am, we are going to have to do DNA testing on him. He really does look like he is a wolf, or at least part wolf. But, in the meantime, we are going to have to ask that you get him vaccinated if you haven’t done so already.

Here is a list of the vaccines he will need, and here is some information about the laws of wolfdog hybrids in the state of California,” he handed her a printout, “I highly suggest you read this over.”

“Thank you, sir, I will look into this right away,” my human replied, looking hesitant and confused.

“You and your boy got very lucky today. Many times if people see a dog they think looks even remotely like a wolf, they get very scared. We’ve had some dogs come in with bullet wounds from people thinking they saw a wolf and then shooting at them. If your boy had bitten someone, even playfully, we would have had to euthanize him to test for rabies. It’s a scary world out there for a wolf or wolfdog, ma’am,” the officer sighed and reached down to pet me. “You have a really, really great boy here. So friendly. Some people just don’t understand, and it’s a sad thing.” I gave him a smile and wagged my tail even harder to show him that I am a really, really great boy. “I would look into a dig fence for your backyard, and make sure it’s escape-proof,” he motioned for the handout he had given my human earlier and flipped it to a page showing what looked like sideways fences on the ground before handing it back to my human.

“Again, officer, thank you for letting *us*,” my human looked down at me to include me in the conversation, “know

all of this. I will make sure he stays safe, he is a good boy. I bet he just saw a squirrel or something and decided to go out for a little joy ride.” She smiled at me and tucked the printout into her coat pocket with her free hand.

“I wish you all the best, have a great rest of your afternoon, m’aam,” he smiled at my human, and then looked down to smile at me, “and you too Darwin.” He scratched the top of my head. I liked that.



A few weeks later a letter came in the mail and after reading it for two seconds, my human’s hand shot right up to cover her mouth.

“Darwin!” she looked over at me, “you’re part wolf!”

Stunned, I tilted my head at her, not believing it to be true.

“What are we gonna do about this, hmm?” She looked at me inquisitively, starting to pace around the kitchen, the DNA results still in her hand. I gave no response, for I had no answer to her question.

Continuing to pace, my human’s look was stern. She was lost in thought.

And then, she looked sad. And she stopped pacing.

What is it? I tried to ask her, *what is wrong?*

She came over to me and knelt in front of me, her hands stroking either side of my neck.

“Baby, I love you more than anything in this world,” she looked at me with the saddest eyes I had ever seen.

Please don't be sad, I willed.

“But I think I know what I have to do, and I just don't know how I am going to be able to do it. You heard what the animal control officer said, if you ever escaped again, someone could mistake you for a wolf and...and...” She collapsed into my fur, her arms wrapped around my neck and her cheek pressed up against mine. My face felt wet from her tears. “Darwin, I am going to take you to a truly wonderful place. A place where I know you will have lots of space to run, lots of meat to eat, and close enough for me to visit you every day.”

Visit me? What was this woman talking about? Weren't we supposed to live together forever? I was her good boy...



After two weeks of seemingly endless phone calls and my human especially more stressed than usual, one day she grabbed my leash and told me that today was the day we were

going to be starting my new big adventure. I knew what this meant, and I wasn't excited for it. This was the day that she had been planning for, the reason why she cried more than usual when I woke her up with kisses or played with her in the backyard.

But I promised her I would always be her good boy, and I was going to stick to that no matter what it meant. I trust her, I love her, and I will always be loyal to her.

Getting in the car, I stepped over onto the passenger seat so that I could stick my head out the window as she drove fast. She always drove so fast. One of her hands was on the steering wheel, the other was on my back. She needed that connection, I supposed, as did I.

As we pulled up into a driveway, there was a sign for a wolf sanctuary hanging over a small building. I could smell that there were other beings like me in the vicinity. I was so curious as to whom I would meet.

Outside of the sanctuary, there was a reflective glass bordering the bottom of the building. As my human and I stood outside, waiting for the head caretaker to come out to meet us, I looked at my reflection. I looked at my legs, my paws, my face, my jaw, my ears, my tail sticking out from behind me.

Wow, I thought to myself, I *am* part wolf.

The head caretaker came outside to greet us, and she was very friendly. She told my human and me that she thinks I will be very happy here, and after some time of getting myself acclimated, that my human could come and visit frequently to say “hi.” She motioned for us to follow her to where a large, grassy enclosure was located. I looked where she was heading, and there were other wolfdogs and wolves, I presumed, watching me to see my next move. Some wagged their tails, some barked in my direction, and some were uninterested.

“Come on my handsome wolfdog,” my human smiled at me with a tug on my leash. Getting up from seated position, I watched myself for as long as I could until we passed the end of the reflective glass.

Following my human into this new world, this new home of freedom, I could have sworn I looked stronger.

I looked like a wolf.

Lola and Shawna

Riding in the back of this big van, the slits of sunlight infused my fur with warmth. Still cool outside during the onset of spring, the warmth was a comfort which supplanted the previous depression. When the rescuers looked at me, there was horror in their eyes. Later on when I would see videos of myself on the news, my ribs protruded noticeably.

A part of my body that was supposed to be private, all my own, not for the world to see.

I wondered where Shawna was, my packmate and best friend. She was the only other one that I shared a true connection with. Like me, she too had wolf within her.

Trees blurred by through the bars of my cage that hindered my vision. I imagined this is what it must feel like to run fast, but I don't remember the feeling. So much time in that small, crowded basement. I only remember one thing from the rest of that awful house. I remember the urns.

It was the only neat thing about that place. There were urns lined up neatly on the fireplace of his living room, urns supporting taped-up pictures of deceased dogs and wolfdogs, urns that held their ashes. I remember the smell of the ashes as he led me down to the basement that first day, the sound

of barking and whining overwhelming my attentive ears. We passed open bags of food on the stairwell, but none of the others could get to them from behind the confines of their crates. It was a form of torture, starving and dehydrated animals, as the smell of food was ever present yet we lacked the ability to access it.

Moving down into the basement was like descending into a fog, a haze. With each step I took down the stairs, the pit in my stomach grew larger and larger as I realized the gravity of the situation. There were so many smells filling my nostrils, as I looked around and saw the faeces on the ground, the puddles of urine surrounding the cages of animals with shame in their eyes. Fear was a common expression as well. There was a window cracked in the farthest corner of the room, but it did little to stir the stagnant air permeating this dank dungeon.

After that first day, I rarely saw that man ever again, as we almost never got fed and were never given enough water. I only occasionally got a whiff of the sweet smell of the outdoors.

I remembered when the man first led me into my cage, where I would spend what felt like eternity. He closed the crate door behind me and I felt stuck in a trap.

Shawna was the first wolfdog I met at that horrible place, and luckily our cages were close enough that we could feel each other's warmth and develop a friendship. I had an immediate and strong sense of protection over Shawna. Since she was my kind, I felt an instant kinship to her. She was my pack and I wanted us to get out of there.

I didn't trust him, though. I didn't trust the look he gave us when he came downstairs, smiling but empty handed. He heard the whimpering of the others, begging for food. He *wanted* us to feel this way, that sick man.

I just kept promising Shawna that this was temporary, that all humans couldn't be as wretched as this man.

Although I wasn't sure if I believed it myself.

I ate what little food he gave me right in front of him, that sick man. He liked to watch his fingers get licked clean by my tongue in desperation. He thought I was getting the last drops for myself, but no, it was for her. I was so hungry, but I gave Shawna what little food I had.

My packmate.

As soon as he was gone, I would throw it back up for her, pushing my mouth in between the holes of my cage so much so that the food landed on the ground in front of her with just enough room for her to lap it up with her long tongue.

I would do anything for her, and although she was hesitant at first, she finally accepted my offering. I saw the look in her eyes as her aching belly drove her towards the food, and I knew she was grateful, but I also knew she was ashamed. Yet, she knew I was her packmate now, she knew I would look after her, and she knew that I wouldn't let her starve before I starved myself.

I remember the day we were discovered, when we were taken away at last. Unlike the man, our rescuers were loving and showed us kindness. They seemed shocked by our appearance and by the living conditions we were subjected to. One of the rescuers came and opened the door to Shawna's cage, and with a soothing voice and a piece of meat was able to coax her out of the cage. I had been conflicted: I wanted to get out too, but I felt uneasy seeing her go without me. What was taking them so long? When would it be my turn? Were they taking Shawna away from me?

I wanted to catch up to Shawna, my pack. My chest had grown tight thinking about the distance between us, the pain from not knowing if I would see her again had overwhelmed my body. My breathing had sped up quickly, and my heart rate followed as well. I had begun to pant, and then, to whine. It was a horrible feeling. I will never forget the look on the

rescuers' faces as they watched me pacing back and forth in my small cage, their eyes wide in shock.

I remembered overhearing one of them talk about hoarding. A new term for me.

“I have seen many cases of animal hoarding,” she said to her fellow rescuer, “but this is the worst thing I have ever seen.”

One of the other women looked up in response. “Well, we both know that usually the hoarders don't intend harm. Either they try to rescue too many animals and can't support them, or they just don't realize how harmful their idea of “rescue” truly is.” The woman guided another dog out of his cage and continued, “But this man...This is different. This is just evil.”

“I agree,” the first woman responded, moving over to my cage. Looking at my ribs, she sighed: “So, so sad.” She looked into my eyes and with a teary-eyed smile said, “We *will* get you out of this place, my friend.” I took the meat from her gentle hand and followed her out of my crate, back up those stairs, and out the door I first entered, after what felt like ages.

I remember sitting on that front lawn in the sunshine, the ten others surrounding me, all being guided into larger crates after being offered a drink. I looked around to take it all in:

some looked scared, and some looked downright exhausted. All of them looked hungry, their noses stuffed so far into the water bowls provided that the water was splashing up onto their grateful faces.

But where was Shanna? Spotting her at the other end of the yard, I watched her lap up water in the same desperate manner as the rest.

I stood in front of my bowl and sighed with relief before shoving my face in the water, too. It was cold, it was refreshing, it was so delicious. I could feel the water moving down my throat and into my belly, the most satisfying feeling I had experienced in a long time.



After a long drive, I eventually arrived at the place I would call home for the rest of my life. The rescuers unloaded my crate from the van, and guided me towards a nearby enclosure. The air here smelled of freshly cut grass and I could also detect the scent of meat in the distance. There were sounds of wolves and wolfdogs. I could hear them playing, running, eating, barking, and then, all at once...*howling*. I saw huge tubs full of water, and some of the younger ones were playing in one.

Entering the enclosure, my nostrils inhaled a familiar smell. Could it be?

Shawna.

Shawna!

We ran towards each other from opposite ends of the enclosure. Barking and jumping, we wrestled out of pure joy. I was reunited with my packmate, my friend, my sister.

Although it would take a great deal of rest and nourishment to regain our strength, that didn't stop us from playing together. It would take some time to get used to this new home and our new caretakers as well, and I wasn't completely sure if I trusted them yet. However, as I watched a smiling volunteer stride towards us with a big bucket of meat, I began to have a good feeling about this place.

And I just couldn't help wagging my tail while thinking about it.

How You Can Help

1. **Support** your local wolf and wolfdog sanctuaries. Many of these sanctuaries are volunteer-run and need funding in order to properly take care of the animals, including feeding, maintenance, and cleaning. For many of the sanctuaries, which are mostly non-profits, your donations go directly to the wolves and wolfdogs. Wolf Sanctuary of PA is a good example of a sanctuary who has the animals' best interests in mind. There are many different ways of supporting wolf and wolfdog sanctuaries, even from your own home. Many of the organizations offer opportunities to virtually sponsor a wolf or wolfdog, order merchandise online, and reserve tours in advance.
2. **Research** the wolf and wolfdog sanctuary before you support them. It is important to do research to see how the facilities are run and whether or not they are participating in ethical treatment of these animals. There are so many sanctuaries truly making a difference, however, some organizations may use the image of the wolf or wolfdog to make money. Some sanctuaries breed their wolves and wolfdogs to make a profit off of their

business from tourism, yet this contributes to the harmful practice of keeping these animals in captivity and using up space that could be used to rescue wolves and wolfdogs already in the world. Do your own research and make decisions based on where you feel you personally stand on issues like these.

3. **Don't purchase** a wolf or wolfdog in an attempt to stop the perpetuation of these harmful practices and the negative effects it can have on the animals.

4. **Spread awareness** of the importance wolves in our ecosystems, and help to contribute to the reversal of the negative views humans have historically had on wolves and the hunting practices that ensues as a result. Some of the animals rescued by sanctuaries are injured wolves and wolfdogs that have been shot or hurt by other humans. Not only will the awareness of the importance of wolves and wolfdogs stop violence that can cause sanctuaries to need to rescue them, but it will also promote healthier relationships and appreciation in terms of human-wildlife conflict. Further, sometimes people think a dog looks like a wolf, or that a wolfdog in someone's yard is particularly dangerous, which can be dangerous to the animal if

violence is committed against them from fear or hatred from the human. Spreading awareness can also save a lot of heartbreak from owners of wolf-looking dogs or wolfdogs that are not harmful.

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Appendix



	<p>hybrid timberwolves Price: \$599.00 Name: Dakota Wilder Posted: 12/22/2018 Phone: (740) 605-0392 Email: Email Seller Location: Ohio</p> <p>hybrid Timberwolves. 599.99 plus tax</p> <p>View Details</p>
	<p>"Wolf Pups" high content wo Price: \$3,500.00 Name: Bobby Posted: 12/12/2018 Phone: (806) 938-2612 Email: Email Seller Location: Texas Website: http://www.wolves-usa.com/</p> <p>"Wolf Pups" high content, Now taking deposits c appearance & Temperment , will make great amt info check out our website http://www.wolves-u be available to...</p> <p>View Details</p>

Figure 1. Example of online search results showing wolves and wolfdog pups for sale (google search, April 17th, 2019)

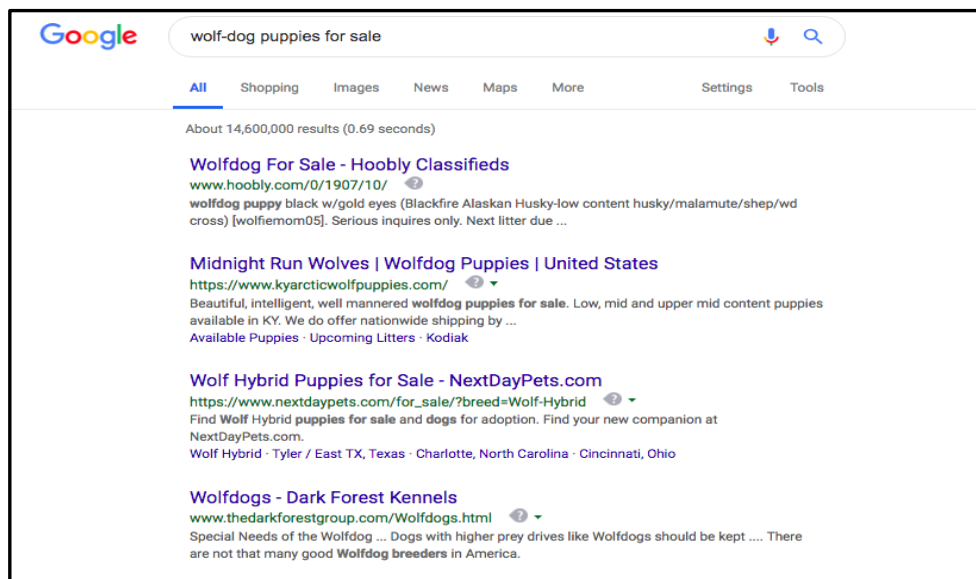


Figure 2. Google Search conducted on April 17th, 2019 (“Wolf-dog puppies for sale”) showing around 14,600,000 results.



Figure 3. Collection of oral histories from a sanctuary guide (author pictured on right side). Note wolfdog sleeping on platform in background.