
JACK-JACK
A DOG IN AFRICA
BEN GARROD
illustrated by
CHARLI VINCE

This is a Zephyr book, first published in the UK in 2024 by
Head of Zeus, part of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

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9 7 5 3 1 2 4 6 8

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN (PB): 9781035906741
ISBN (E): 9781035906734

Printed and bound in Great Britain by
CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon CR0 4YY



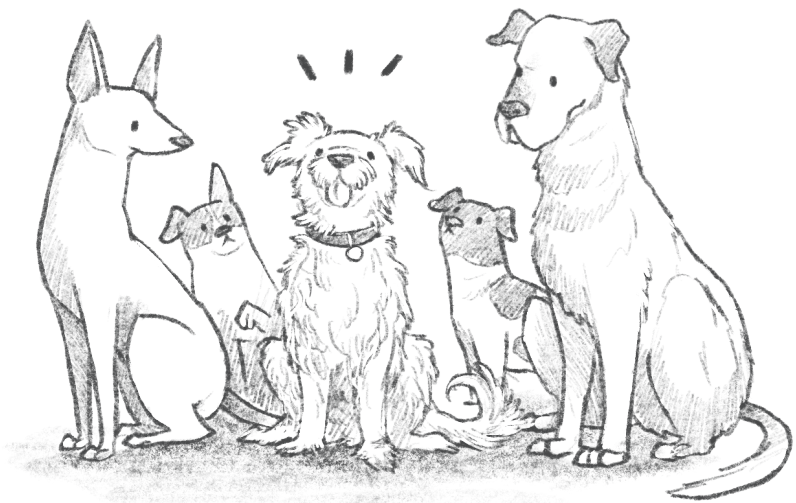
Typesetting & design by Jessie Price

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London EC1R 4RG

www.headofzeus.com

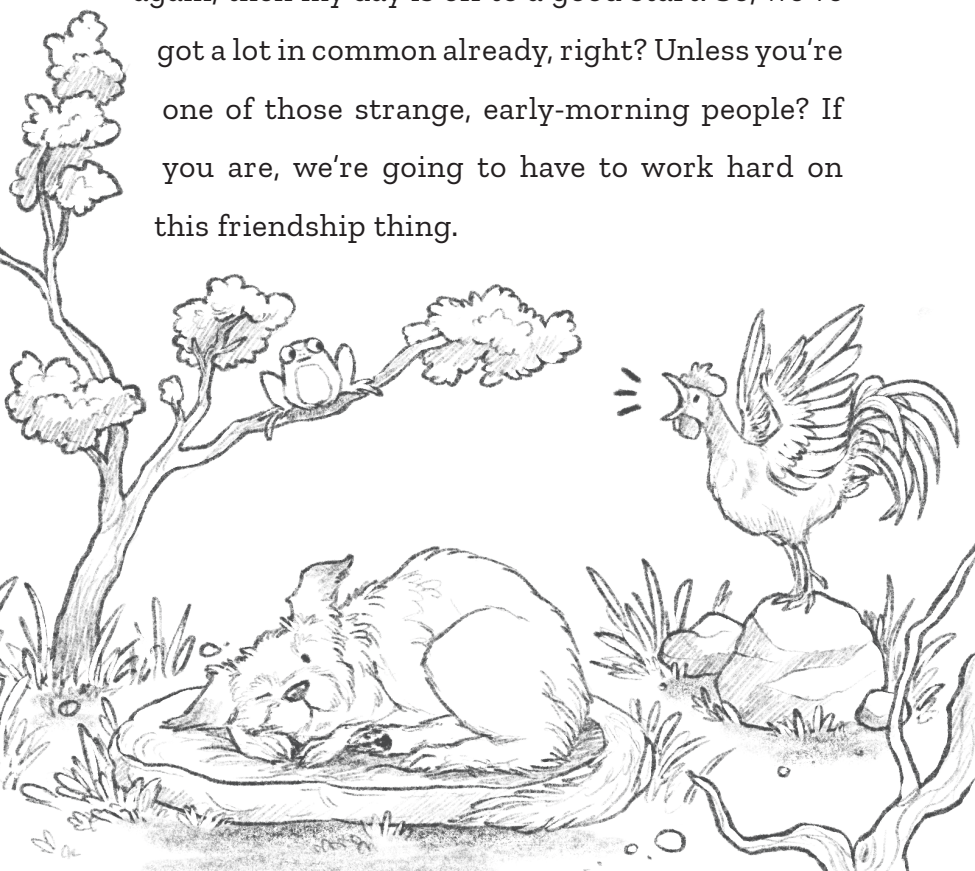
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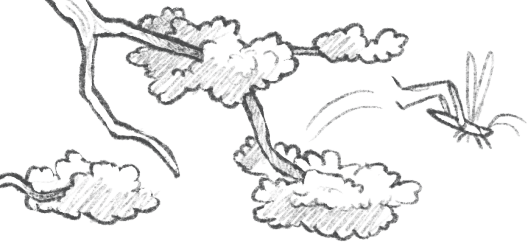
MEET JACK-JACK

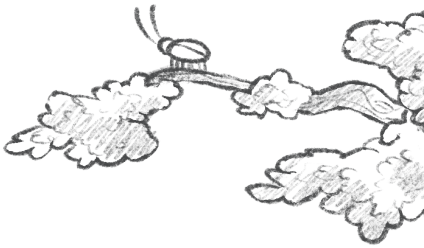


What's your morning routine?

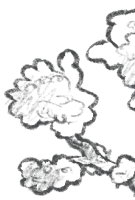
I don't know about you, but I'm definitely not a morning person. I hate waking up as soon as that awful chicken starts **cock-a-doodle-do**-ing. *Oh, cock-a-doodle*-don't, *Sidney*, I think to myself, as I snuggle further into my bed. If I can squeeze in an extra two minutes of sleep before opening my eyes again, then my day is off to a good start. So, we've got a lot in common already, right? Unless you're one of those strange, early-morning people? If you are, we're going to have to work hard on this friendship thing.





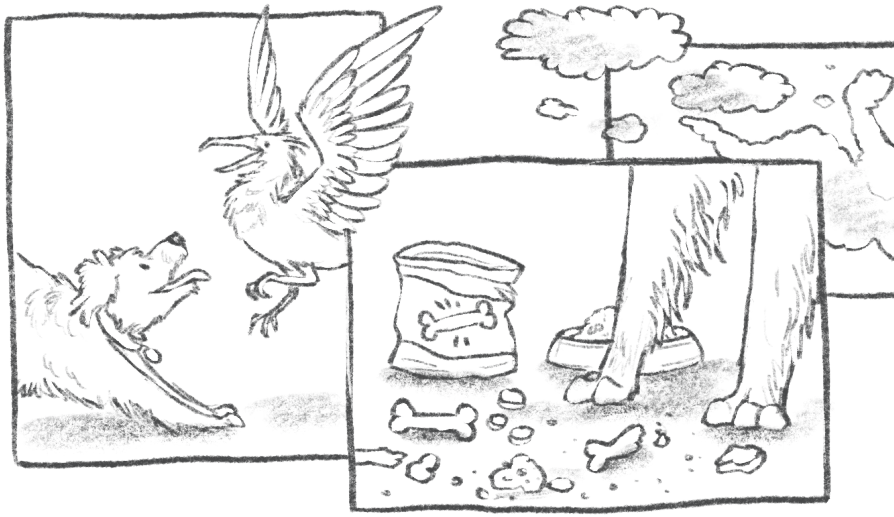


I guess I do wake up early sometimes, and when I do, I always go to the same place. Into the forest that starts close to my home, when the light hasn't quite found its way past the thick layer of leaves, and it's still dark, cool and quiet. Noisy frogs who make up the night chorus have gone to sleep, the screeching hyraxes and wailing bushbabies are tucked up in their nests in old tree trunks, and the day shift, with chirping crickets, grasshoppers and other little things that creep, crawl, hop, and fly – the things I call binkybonks – hasn't yet started. The waking forest is a magical place. Leaves sparkle with dewdrops, and wispy swirls of mist sneak by as I trot on my way.



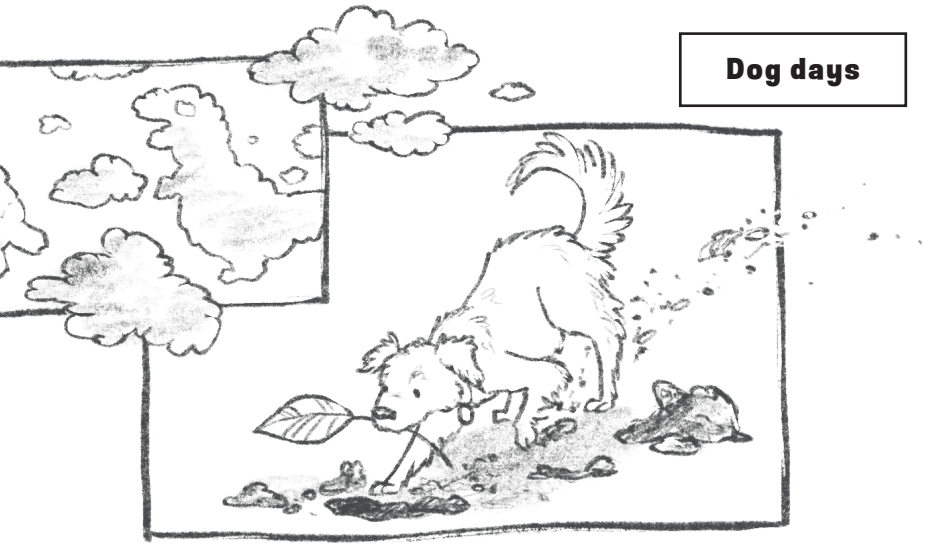






I love to play with my friends, and I could happily survive on snacks every day. Sometimes I lie on my back and stare at the clouds as they float by to see what pictures they make – nearly always monsters or what I've heard the people I live with call dinosaurs, isn't it? It may sound strange, but they look like bigger versions of chickens with teeth to me. Maybe I have Sidney on the brain. I often hang out with my fleas. Or perhaps I should say they hang out with me. There are two of them.

While we're at it, I'm absolutely brilliant at digging holes to bury super-important stuff like

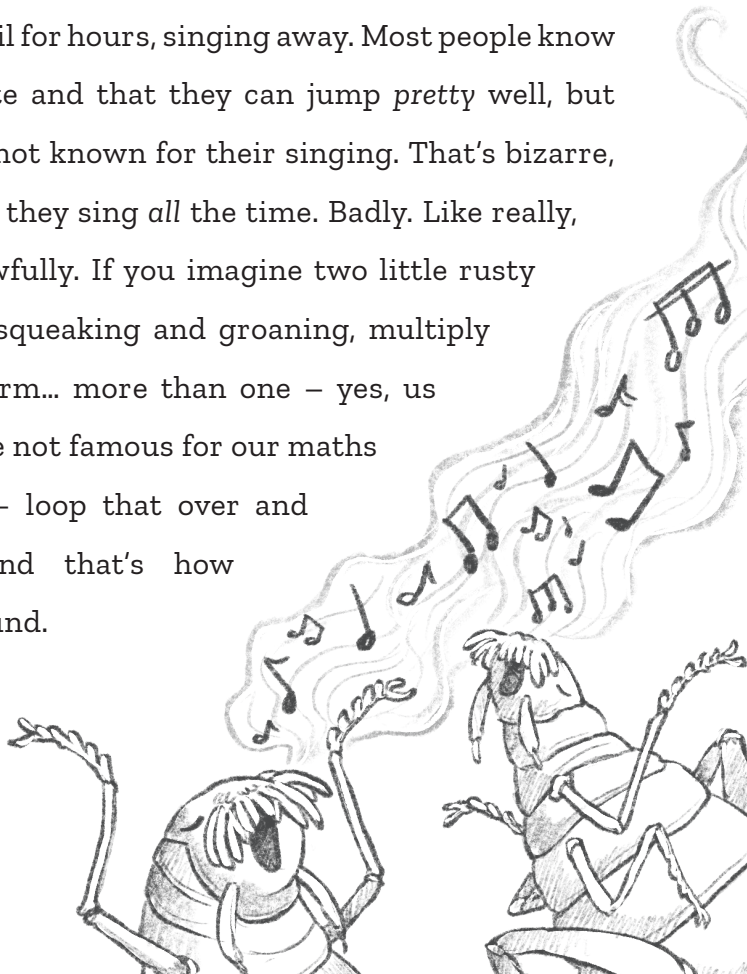


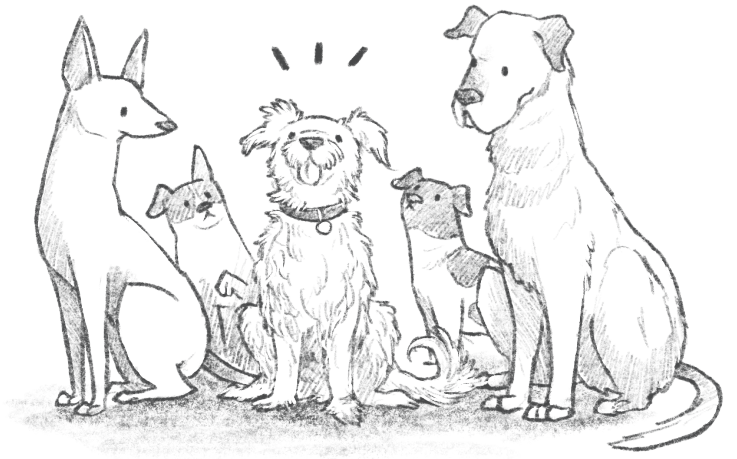
bones, old socks and sometimes a fancy-looking leaf. And when I need to, which is more often than you might expect, I can lick my own bum.

Okay, when I think about it, we may not have *that* much in common, after all. You *do* know I'm a dog. Oh, you thought... Oh, no, I'm not a human... I'm a dog. You can call me Jack. Jack-Jack is my full name and, if you're wondering, of course my two bouncy friends have names. Let me introduce you to Hop and Jump:



I've had them since they were larvae. They were 'gifts' from one of the cats. She's thoughtful like that. Hop and Jump live under my collar and usually keep out of the way, although not always out of trouble. Last week, they kept me awake for ages, doing what fleas do best. They sang. They jumped from my nose to my tail for hours, singing away. Most people know fleas bite and that they can jump *pretty* well, but they're not known for their singing. That's bizarre, because they sing *all* the time. Badly. Like really, *really* awfully. If you imagine two little rusty wheels squeaking and groaning, multiply it by... erm... more than one – yes, us dogs are not famous for our maths ability – loop that over and over, and that's how they sound.

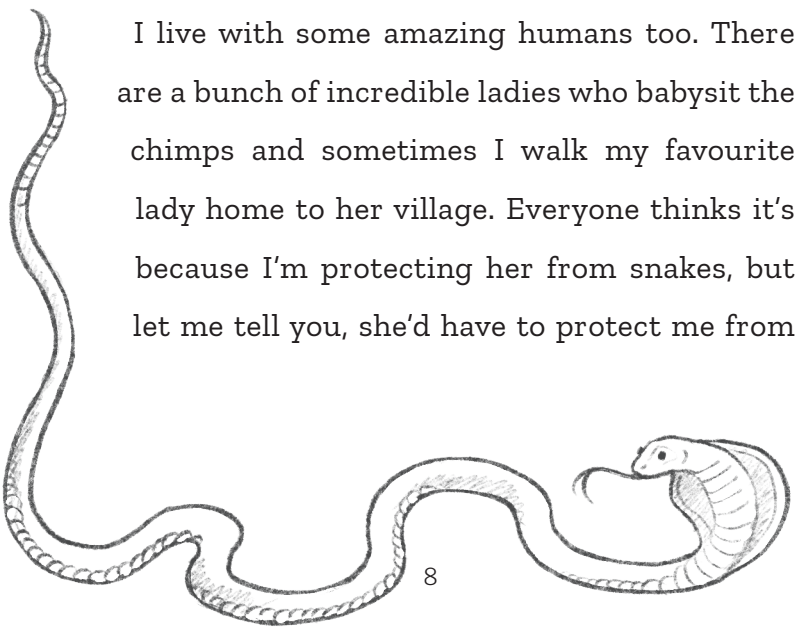


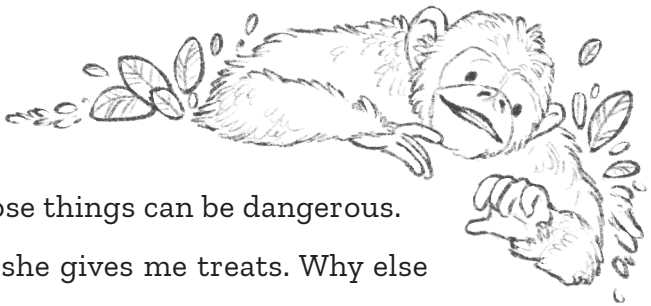


On the other hand, it's nice to have friends. There are a few of us dogs here. Most of my canine companions are white and brown, with short coats. Me... well, it's safe to say I look a little odd, if you think about where I live. I'm skinny and not too tall, and my coat is the colour grass turns at the end of a long, hot summer. My tail is usually wagging, but when it *is* still, the other dogs tell me it always curls the same way, in a big loop. And I'm hairy. Not normal dog sort of hairy, but, you know, super hairy. My hair is long and sticks out in scruffy bunches, making me look like some sort of wild animal who has just woken up from a year-long sleep.

So apart from the regular bum licking, the fleas and the whole 'being a dog' thing, what else do you need to know? I live in West Africa, have a vulture for a best friend, and spend my days in a rescue centre full of baby chimpanzees. *But*, apart from the bum licking, the singing fleas, being a dog, living in Africa and looking after chimps, I bet we're almost the same. Hmmm, maybe there *are* some differences. Also, to be fair, I don't actually lick my bum 'regularly'. That was a little lie. I do it all the time.

I live with some amazing humans too. There are a bunch of incredible ladies who babysit the chimps and sometimes I walk my favourite lady home to her village. Everyone thinks it's because I'm protecting her from snakes, but let me tell you, she'd have to protect me from





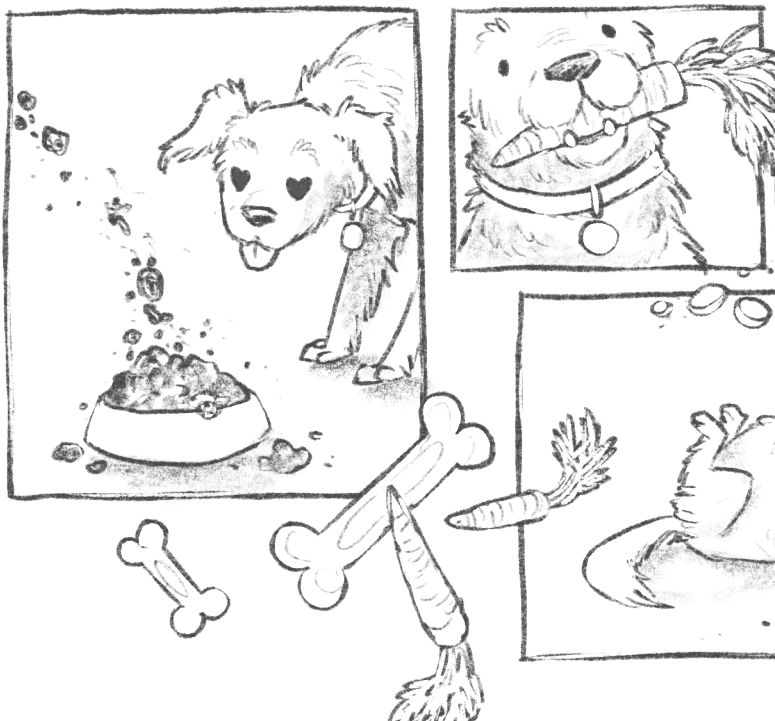
snakes – those things can be dangerous. It's because she gives me treats. Why else would I walk all that way?

Apart from these huge (to me) walks, my life at the sanctuary is pretty chilled. The animals there need help. The humans do a good job. They give them food, and somewhere to live and feel safe. And stuff to play with. It's us dogs who do the *hard* work though. We have to play with the chimps. Well, they mostly play with us. And if you don't know what it's like to have four or five hairy little apes climbing over you with hands and feet you can't always tell



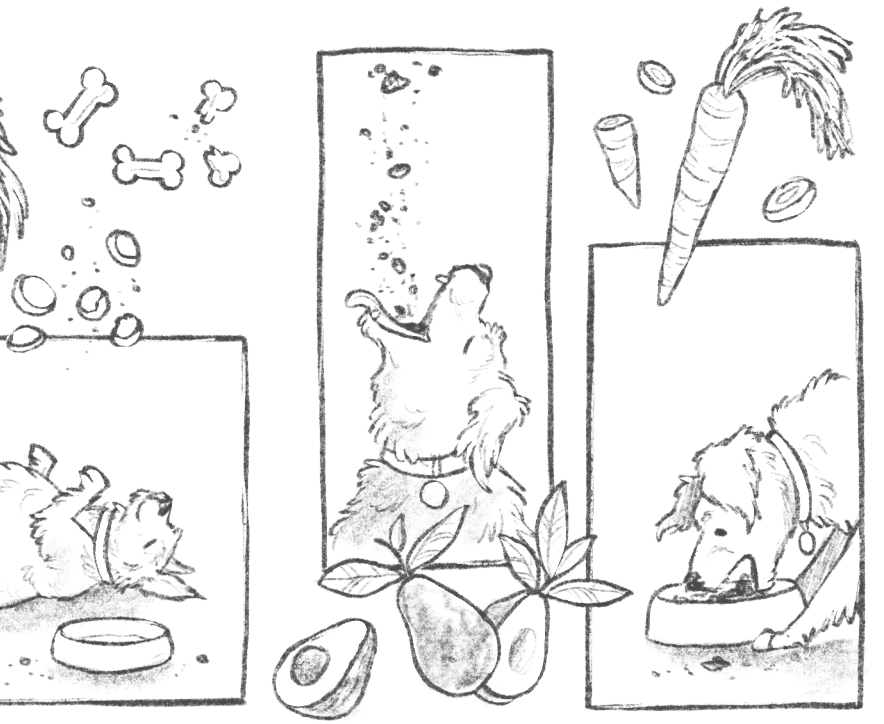
apart, grabbing your tail, pulling your ears and trying to swing on your back, then you and I have a different idea of what playing is. It's still my favourite thing to do.

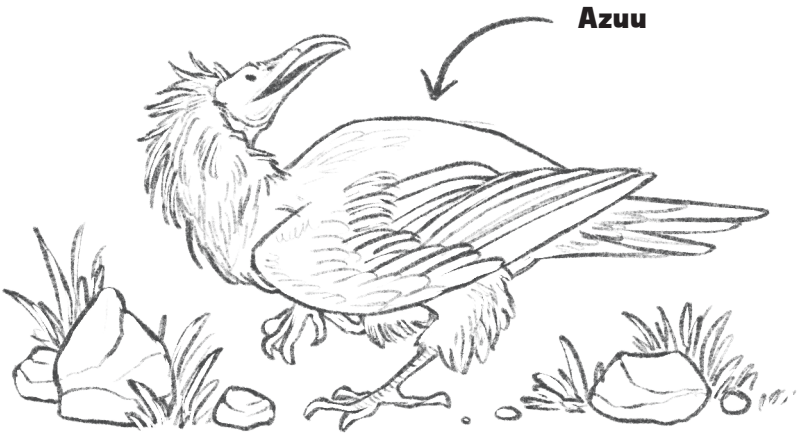
Apart from breakfast, that is. And lunch, obviously. And dinner too. But apart from breakfast, lunch and dinner… and snacks. How could I forget snacks? I love snacks. Especially butter pears, cucumber and, of course, carrots. Because, come on, why wouldn't



you like carrots...? Mmmm, that first crunch. I can almost taste it now. Oh wait, I forgot sleeping... I do love to sleep. My friend Azuu, the wise vulture, says the only animal that likes to sleep more than me is a pygmy hippo. And he's seen one.

So, playing with the chimps is the best. Unless they're being annoying, which is most of the time, most days. They're funny though, they make me smile lots. You know dogs can smile, right?





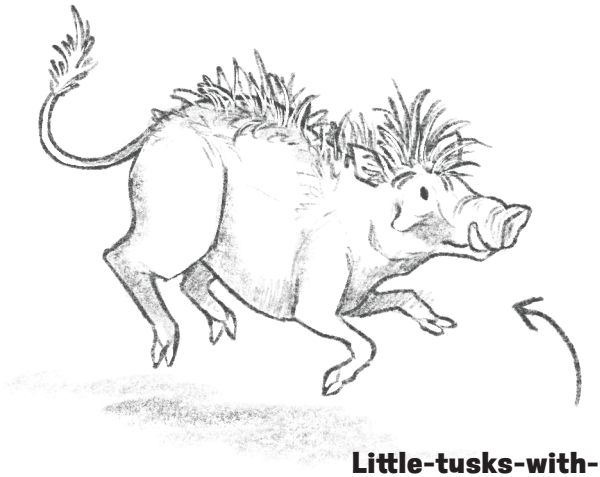
I like almost all humans, but there are a few who make the hair on my neck stand up, and make me want to growl. It's because of them my baby chimp friends are here. They've lost their families, and humans have tried to sell them as pets. Azuu says this is against the laws the humans have,

I told you Azuu is my best friend. He's a bird. An Egyptian vulture. Weirdly, he's never been to Egypt and doesn't even know where it is. Actually, neither do I. It sounds cold. The humans at my sanctuary found Azuu by the side of the road. He was going to

be turned into a stew, which seems horrible to me. Mainly because I once licked him by mistake and he tasted awful. I definitely wouldn't want Azuu stew. His wing was hurt when he was caught and he finds it hard to fly now. He doesn't like it when I say with one good wing, he'd be great at flying in circles but not in a straight line. Yes, I think I'm hilarious.

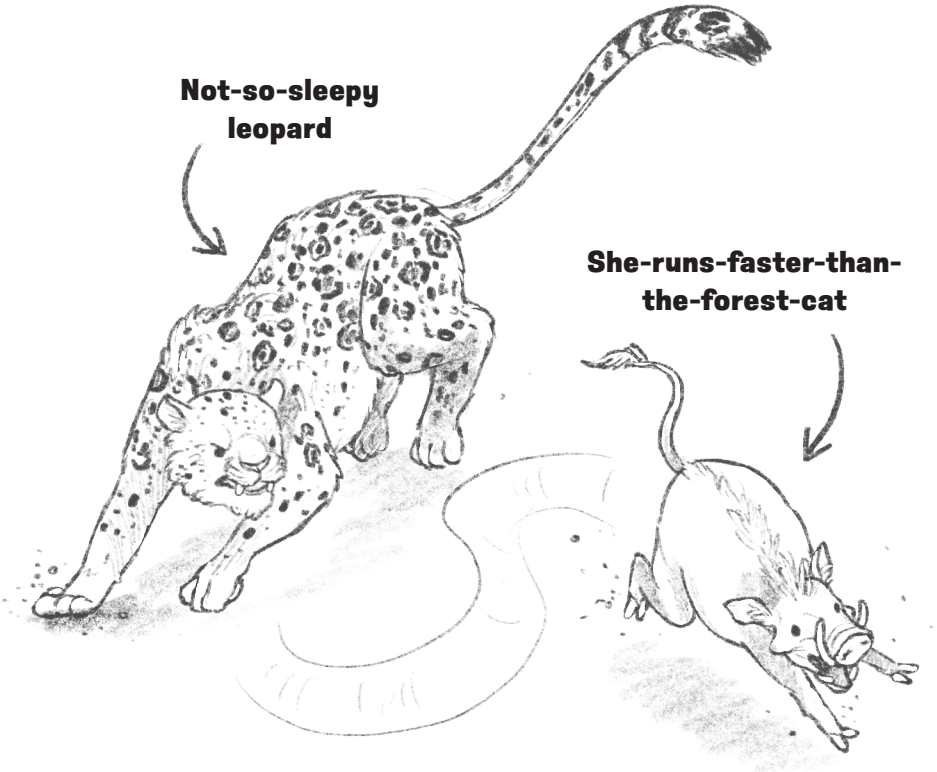
Most of us animals have names for ourselves, and each other. We call different things different names for different reasons. Take snakes, for example. They all have the same name – Naja. This is because you nearly always see snakes on their own, so they don't need separate names because you only ever see a single snake. When was the last time *you* called out to a snake and the wrong one answered? I'm guessing never.





Little-tusks-with-scruffy-hair

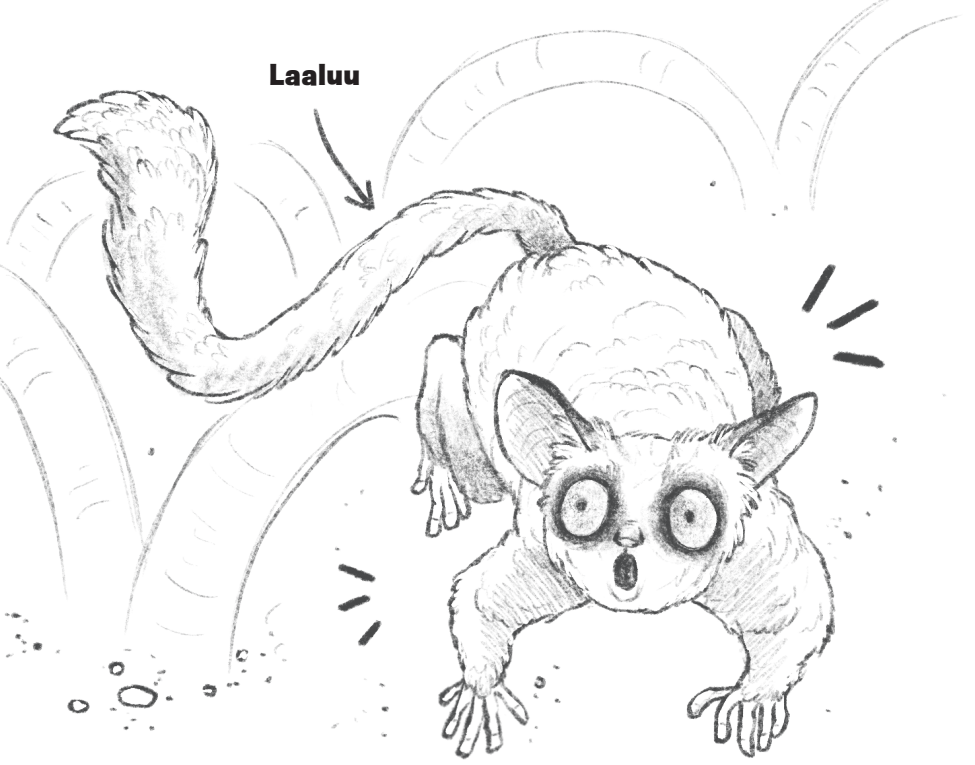
We have lots of wild pigs and forest hogs around where we live, and they have a completely different naming system. They never stop talking, and they have lots of babies. That makes it hard to remember names, but also provides a solution. Here, pigs and hogs are given a name based on themselves. I've met 'Little-tusks-with-scruffy-hair', and 'She-runs-faster-than-the-forest-cat' was given her name after a close encounter with the 'Not-so-sleepy leopard'. These names make sense and I think they're cool. 'Why-are-you-always-rolling-in-elephant-poo?' and 'His-face-looks-like-his-bum' weren't so lucky.



I'm glad I'm a dog, and I'm really, *really* glad I'm not a hog. Imagine what name I'd be given. I am unusual because I've only ever known Jack as my name. If I ever had an 'animal' name before humans started calling me Jack, I can't remember.



Why-are-you-always-rolling-in-elephant-poo?

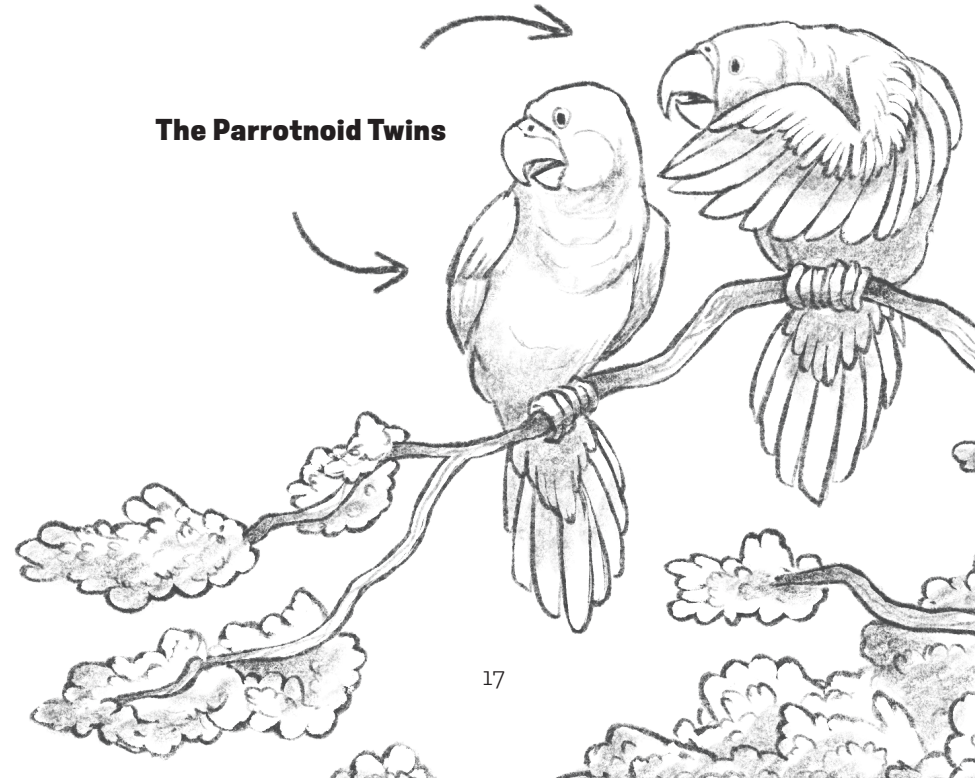


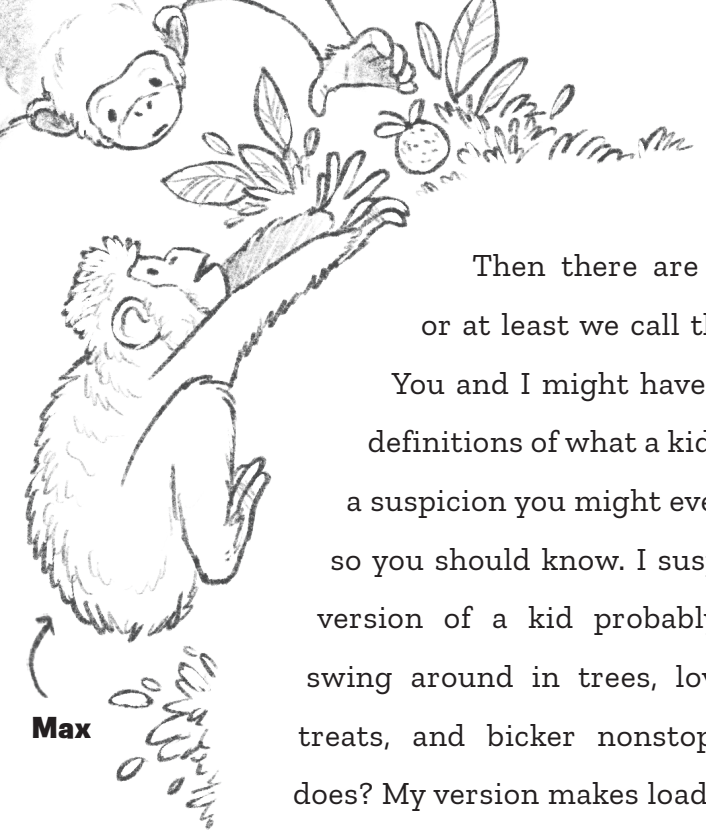
In the sanctuary we use the names humans have given us. There's Laaluu, who I love but find confusing. She's a bushbaby, which is like a cross between a monkey and a squirrel and a box of springs. She bounces everywhere with her big, bushy tail, a blur of movement, and she speaks even faster than she moves. I'm sure she pauses for breath, I'm just not sure when.

And the two shifty parrots who are always whispering, but stop whenever I get close. Laaluu reckons they have a big secret. I call them the 'Parrotnoid Twins'. Get it? Like *paranoid*... Oh, never mind.

Then there are some monkeys who speak a different language to the rest of us. They're always busy chittering, chatting about something or other, though none of us knows what.

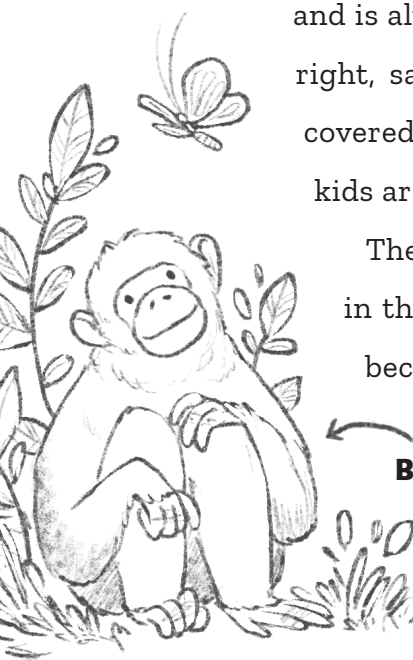
The Parrotnoid Twins

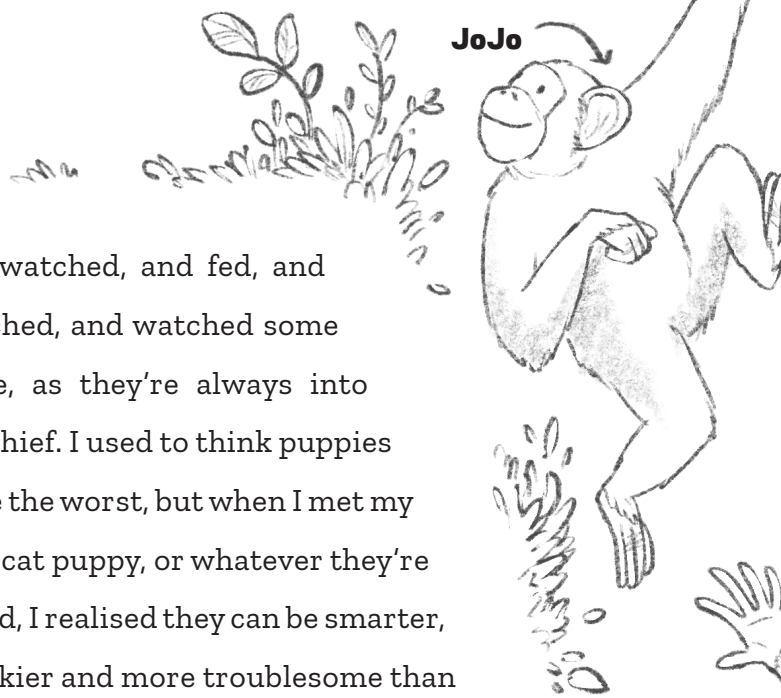




Then there are the kids, or at least we call them kids. You and I might have different definitions of what a kid is. I have a suspicion you might even be one, so you should know. I suspect your version of a kid probably doesn't swing around in trees, love to eat treats, and bicker nonstop? Oh, it does? My version makes loads of noise and is always getting into trouble. Oh, right, same again? Well, my kids are covered in hair. Aha, got you there. My kids are also chimpanzees.

They're sometimes a bigger pain in the bum than a tail full of fleas, because they have to be loved

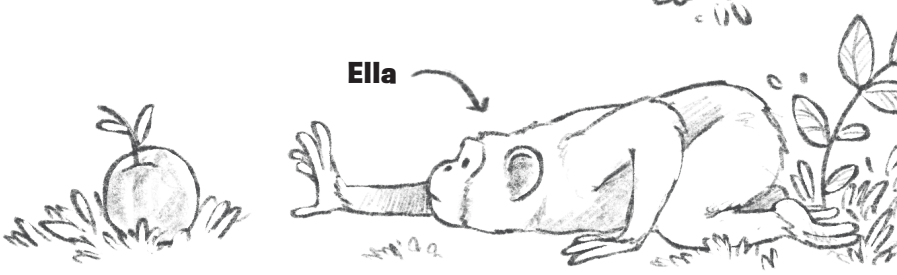




and watched, and fed, and watched, and watched some more, as they're always into mischief. I used to think puppies were the worst, but when I met my first cat puppy, or whatever they're called, I realised they can be smarter, sneakier and more troublesome than any dog puppy. *Then* I met my first chimp baby and, wow, they make cats and dogs look easy.

Suddenly, I was face to face with hairy geniuses, who move like forest ninjas, using their feet like hands and their hands like feet. I have between twenty and sixty of them to look after. I can't give you





a better number, because they never stay still for long. I might be counting the same chimps two or three times over.

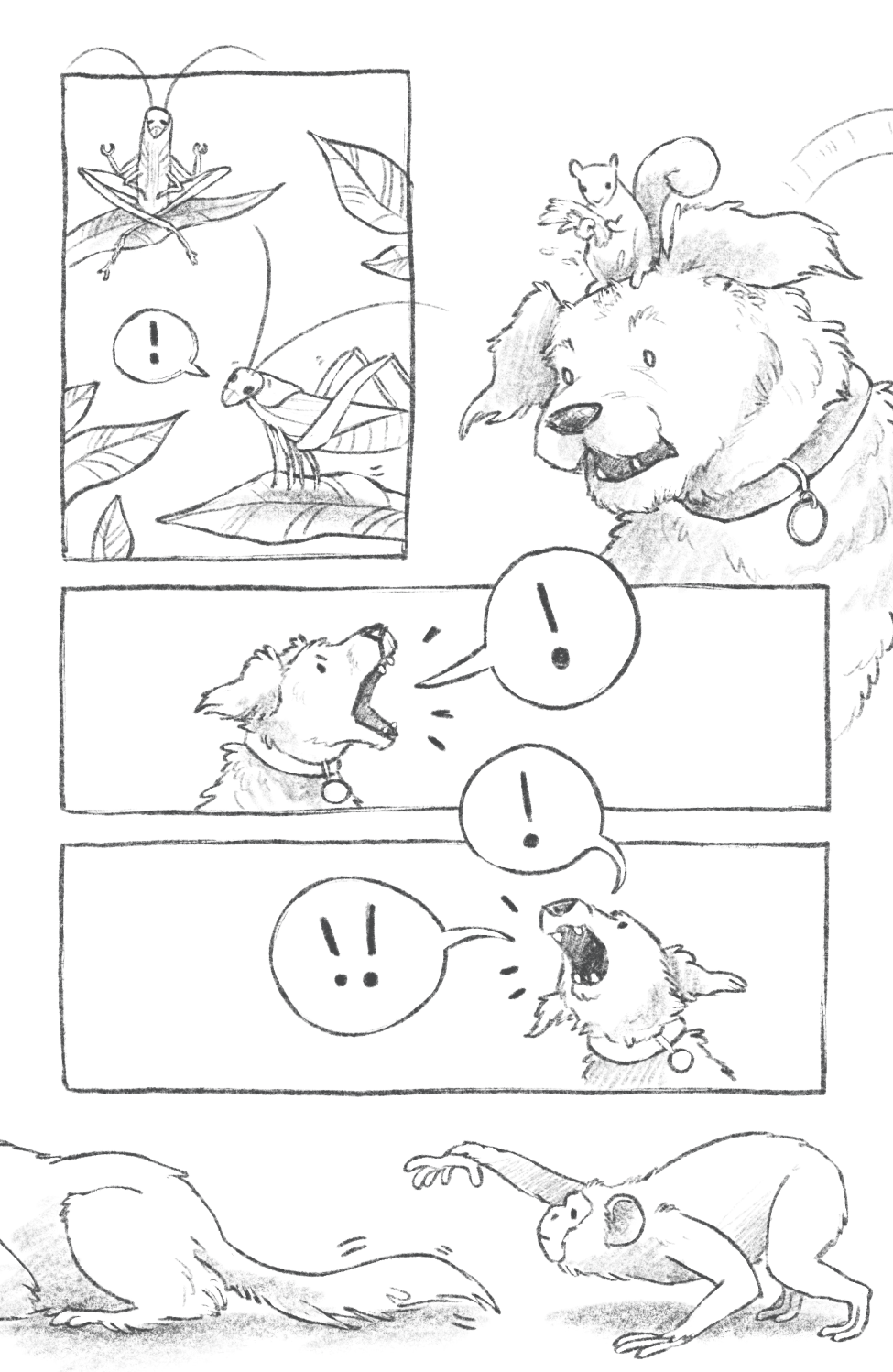
I'm not sure how well dogs are meant to be able to count anyway. I know the difference between one biscuit and two biscuits. Three is my magic number, after that it gets a bit fuzzy. There are definitely *lots* of very naughty, hairy baby chimpanzees living with me and I love them all. I've always lived at the sanctuary. I can't remember a time when I didn't.

It's dusty and dry half the year and wet and muggy for the other half, but it's my home and I know every sound and smell. I know where big land snails curl up in the leaves when it's too warm, and



the different chirps between a happy grasshopper and a stressed one, although it's hard to stress out a grasshopper. They mostly just hop about and sing. Maybe that's the secret to being happy. If my fleas are happy and the grasshoppers are happy and they both spend their days hopping and singing, perhaps I should give it a try.

Apart from playing games, I bark at strangers, of course, including those tricksy squirrels who once tried to steal some of my fur to make a nest. Otherwise, I work all day playing. You have no idea how tough it is. Sometimes, I'm so tired that I fall asleep and let the chimps swish my tail around and use me to land on when they jump off stuff. I'm not so keen on that last one. Whenever I'm trying to nap on the old, square sponge mattress, they jump all over me. If I don't fancy having my ears almost pulled off, you'll find me sleeping on the table. It makes sense. Trust me.





Tricksy squirrels and moody mantids

When the chimps go charging about, they're on the ground and too busy to look up. As long as my tail isn't hanging over the edge of the table (something I learned the hard way), they can't find me. And that's it, day in, day out. It always seems funny when I tell anyone new, like the swifts and wagtails who fly to faraway places called France, Spain, Germany and the Yookay, wherever that is, each year. The truth is that life here is the same most days. Nothing exciting ever happens.

