

Why I stopped asking my dog to sit



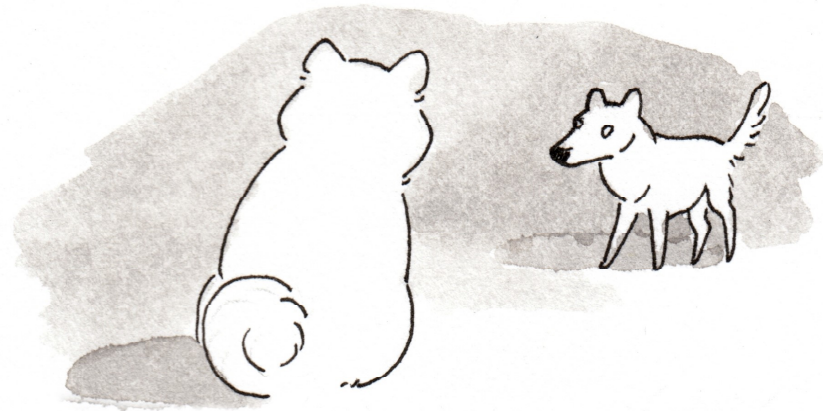
(And how it saved our relationship)

By Lucille Mendes

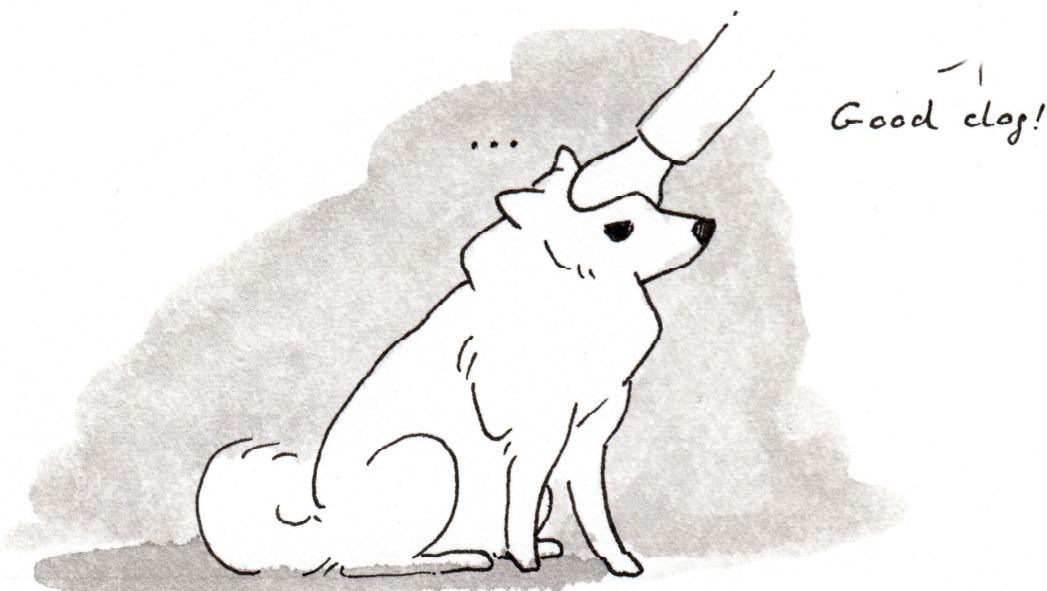
When I got Neos, I thought that the most important thing a dog can learn is to sit on command.



To sit before eating,

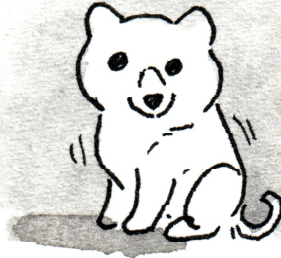


To sit before greeting another dog,



To sit so someone could pet him.

I would ask him to sit everywhere, all the time.



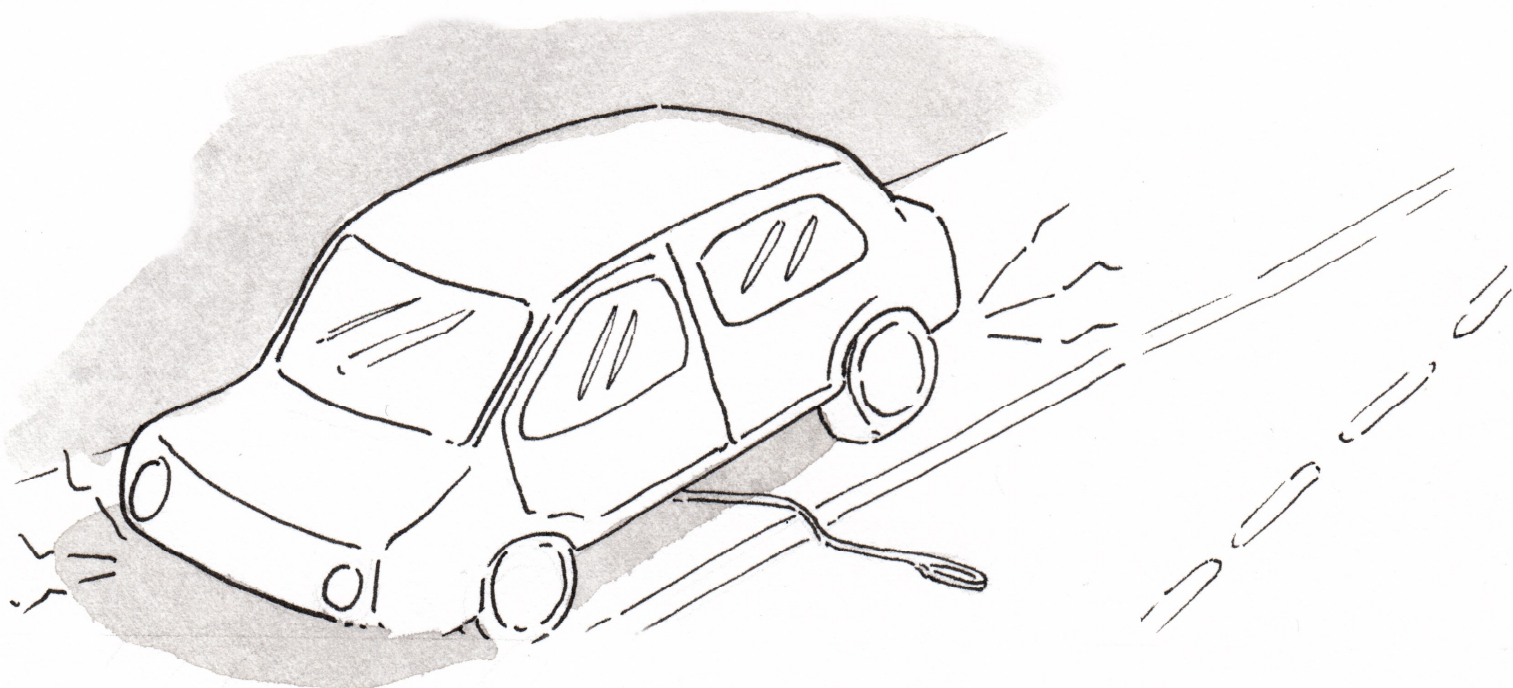
... We knew something was wrong the day he entered our lives.



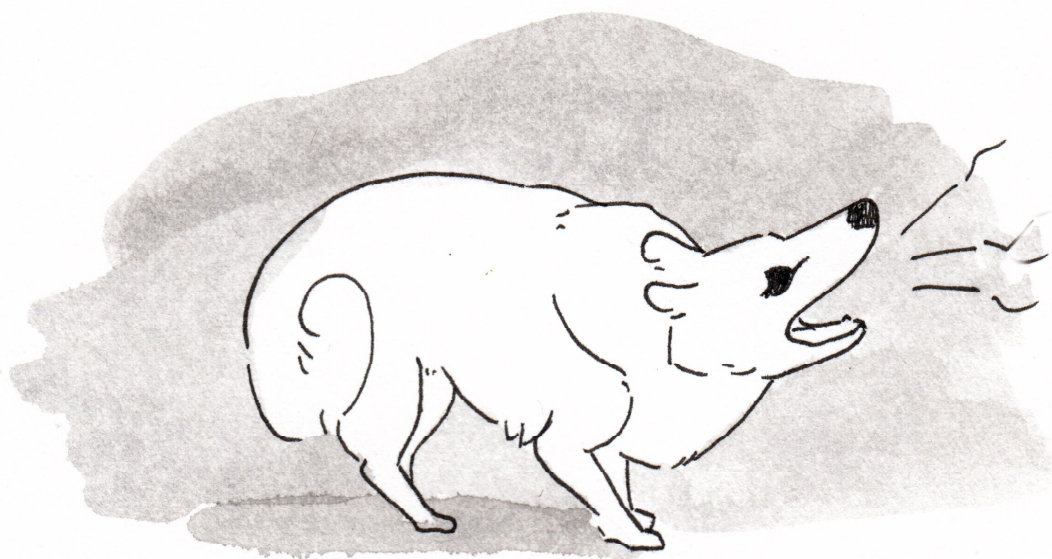
Neos was scared of EVERYTHING. And every time he was scared, he screamed.

And I mean, he screamed.

The first time he did it, we thought he was seriously injured.

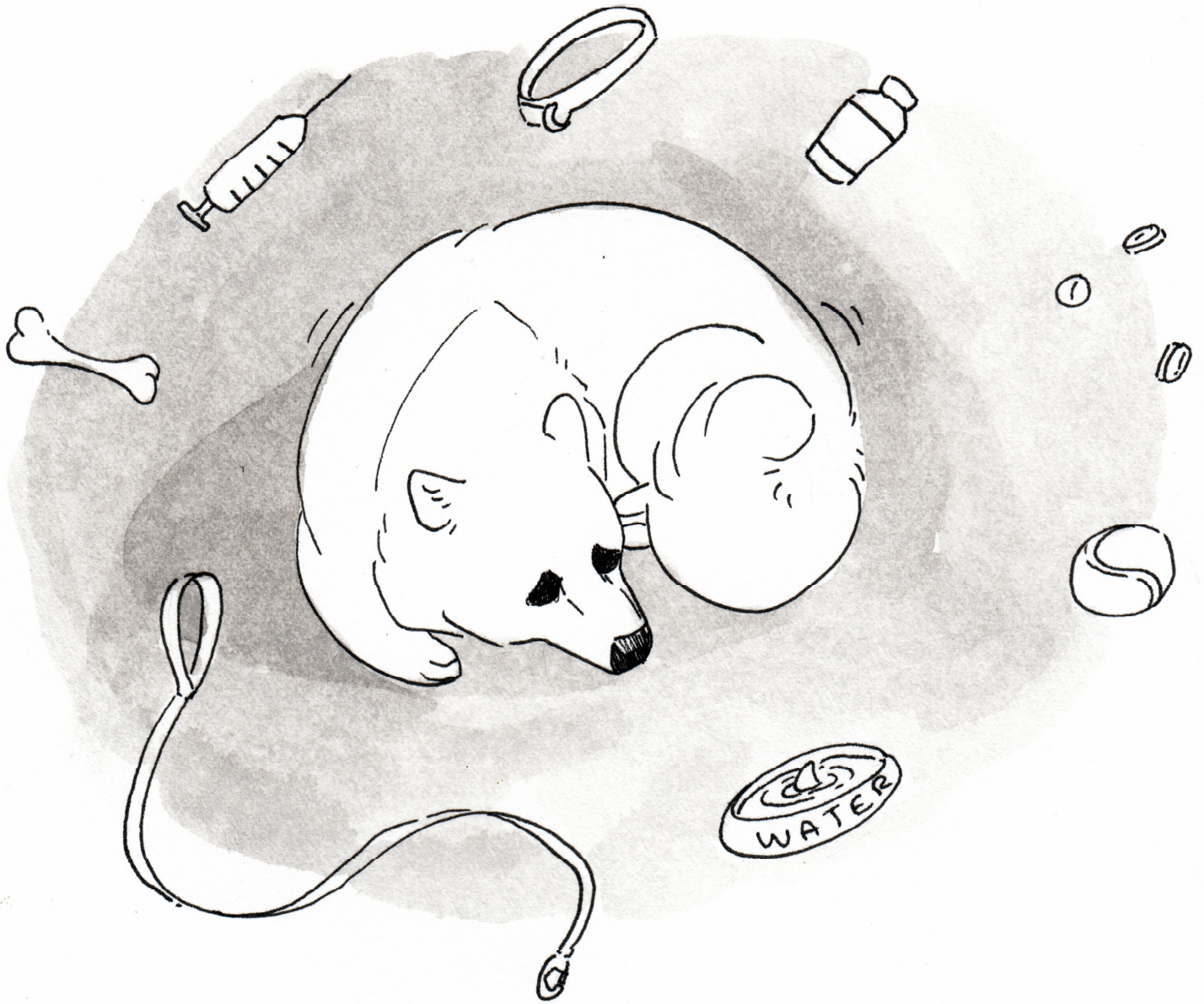


But he wasn't, not physically. our dog was TERRIFIED.



Living with him was like living with a dog made of thin glass,
Who would break if you even sneezed too close to him.

It was a combination of medical problems, genetic, and environment.



But my need to control every aspect of his life only made things worse. He didn't really enjoy anything. Even going for a walk was a nightmare.

One day I realized that Neos was the most well-behaved dog
Anyone could dream of.



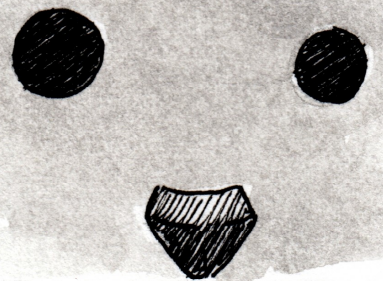
At home, he would calmly sit in a corner
And wait.



ALL.



DAY.



LONG.

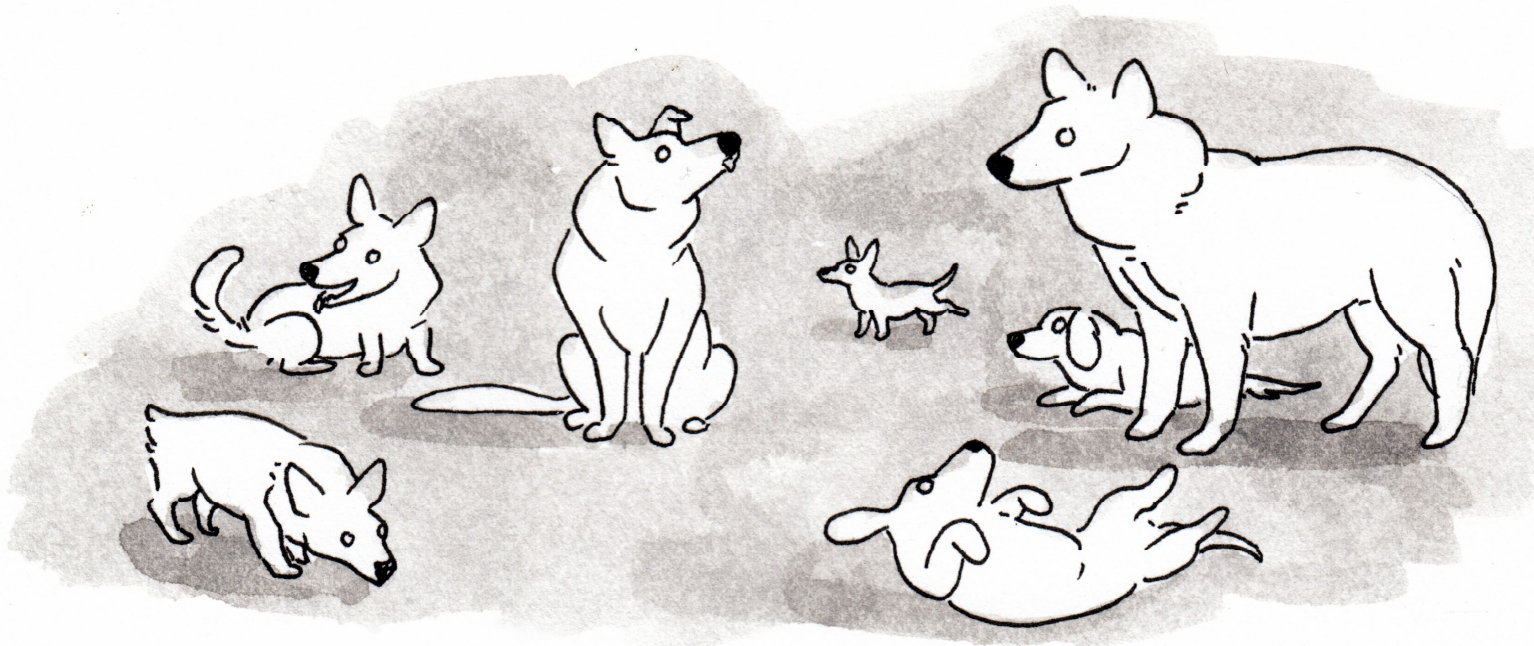
We worked with two behaviorists,



Several vets,



Got help from many friends and their dogs.



(To every person we met on this difficult journey, thank you)

But something was missing. He was still well behaved and depressed.



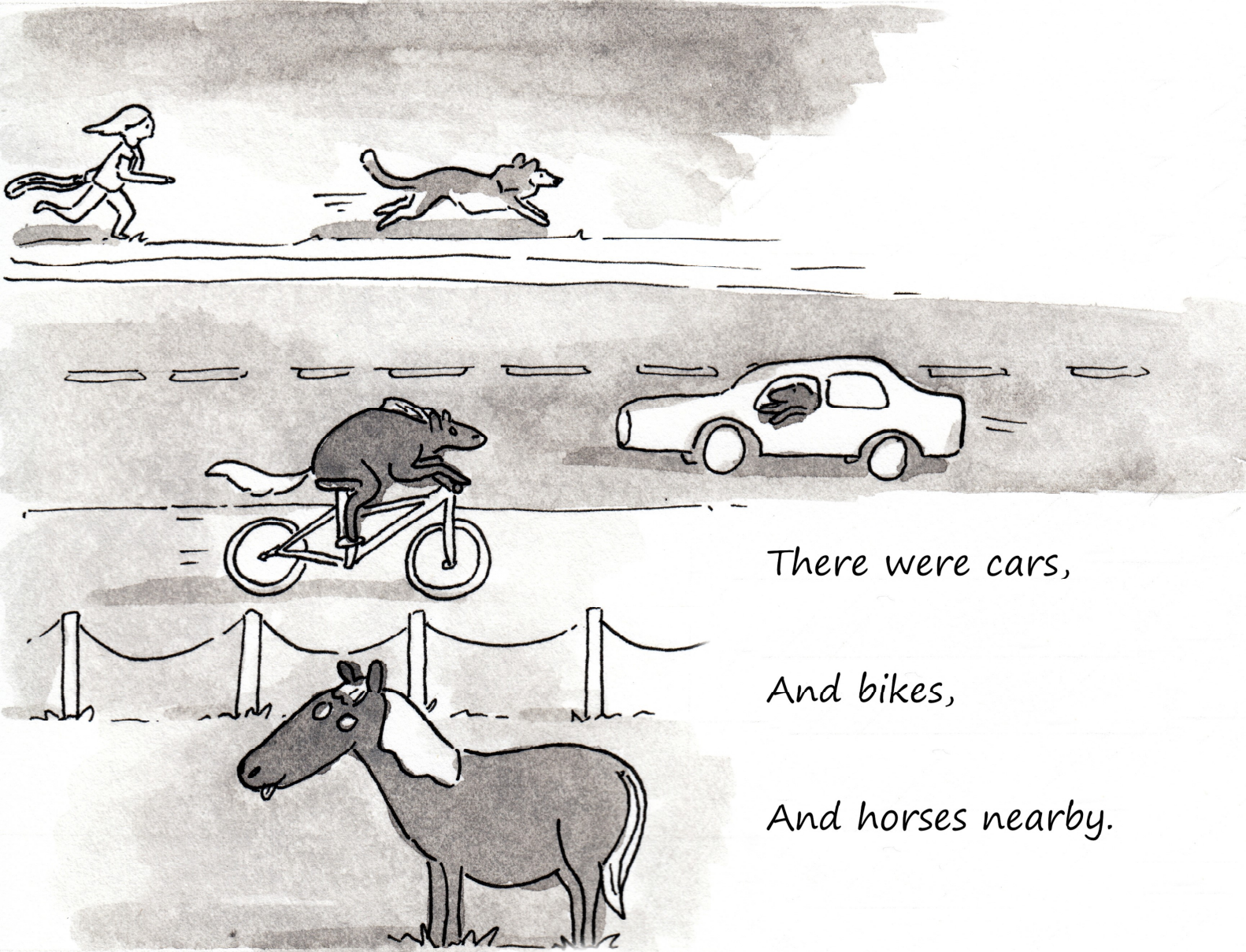
Another dog, Chaussette, came along and stayed with us for a few months. This is a story for another day. The important part is what this dog taught me.



One day, he got out of his harness and ran away. We didn't know each other yet, and he didn't have any recall.



I panicked. I ran. He ran faster.



There were cars,

And bikes,

And horses nearby.

I was scared out of my mind. But I couldn't do anything about it. So I sat down. He looked back, and stopped running.



He calmly came back and lowered his head as I put his harness back on with shaking hands and a racing heart.

This night, Chaussette taught me that it's ok.

It's ok to let go.

It's ok to lose control.

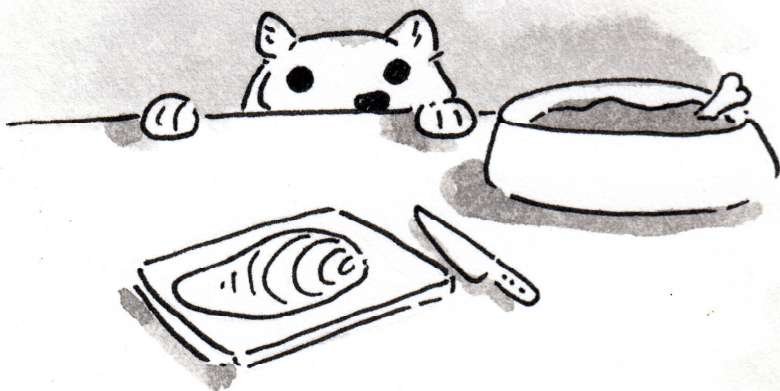
It's ok to trust your dog.



One day, I stopped asking Neos to sit.



He would not have to sit before eating.



Or before greeting another dog.

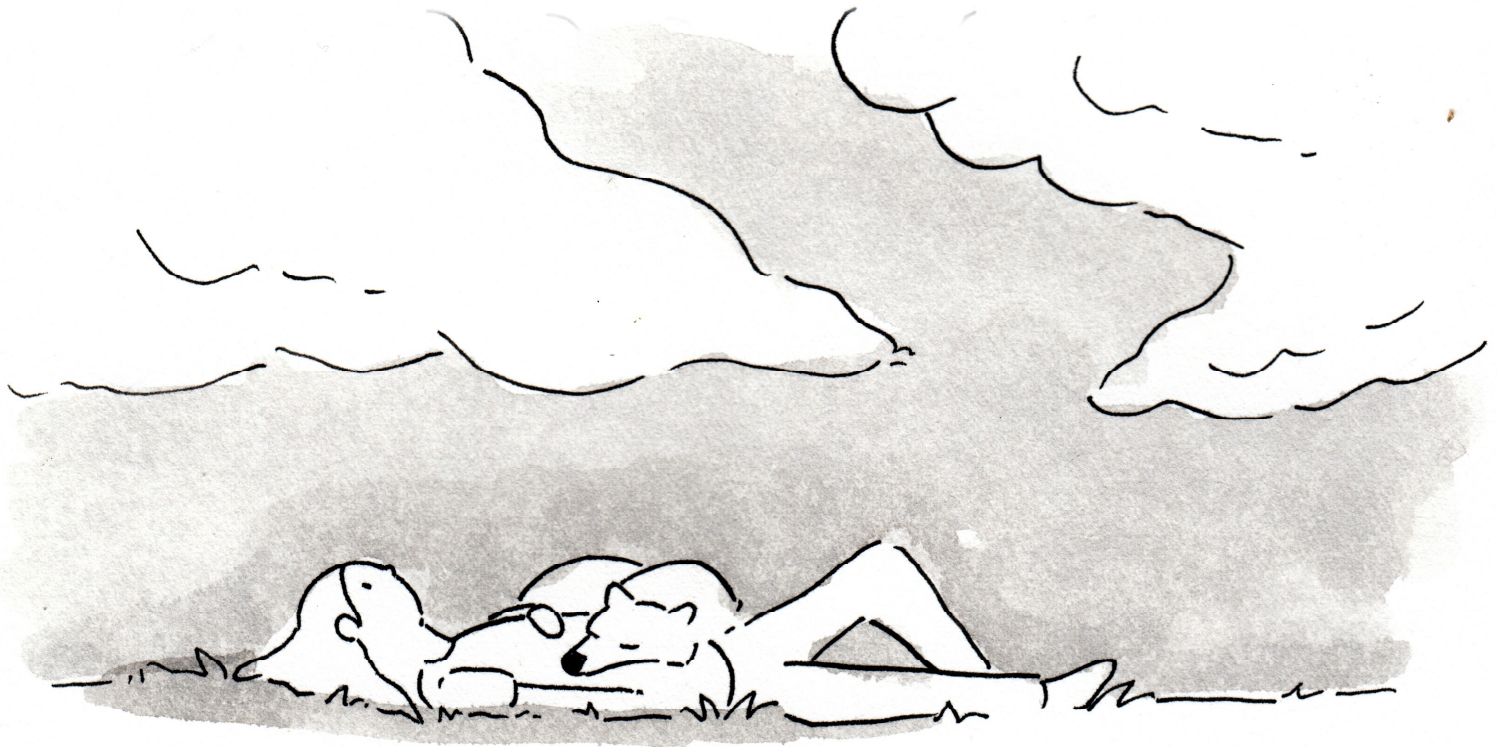


He could walk away from someone if he wanted to.

The day he understood that he didn't have to sit anymore,



He started trusting me more. And I started feeling less frustrated



It was like meeting my dog for the very first time.

New dog owners often ask what is the most important thing to teach a dog first.

SIT!

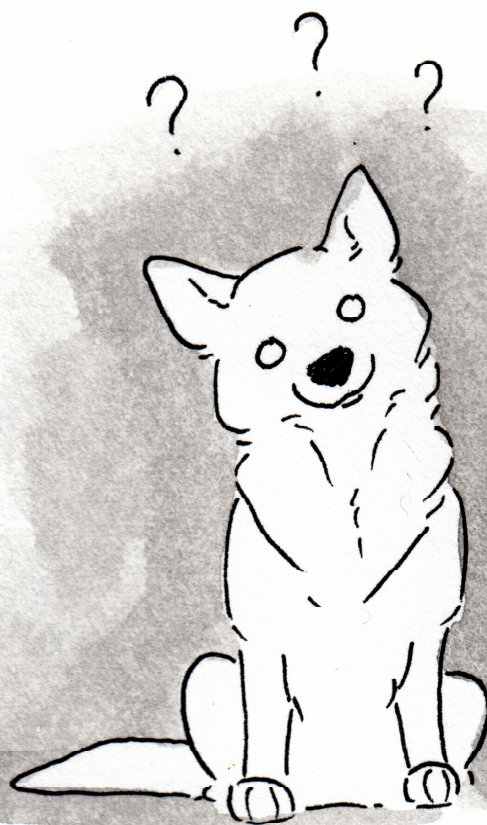
DOWN!

STOP!

NO!

STAY!

COME!



I don't think there is only one answer to this question.

But the most important thing Neos and Chaussette taught me,



*Is to let go of my desire to control,
and take no for an answer with a smile on my face.*

*From now on, I know I will always try to love the dogs in my life
for what they are,*



And not for what I want them to be.

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