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***Murphy's Miracle – One Dog's Wild Journey.***

by

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The sun was setting and Murphy had stopped to rest near a tree, when she felt eyes upon her. Another dog looked intently her way, its steely eyes locking with hers. Murphy got up to walk closer, but the [coyote](#) stood transfixed to its spot. With tannish, gray fur and perked up ears, the coyote was smaller than Murphy, but a lifetime of living in the wild had made her a skilled hunter. During the winter it was a matter of survival that the coyote be more active in the daylight to find food. Compared to Murphy, who had grown weary and slow, the coyote was practically frisky.

She continued to look at Murphy from a short distance away, licking her lips. The coyote broke the stare first, turning her head down to continue working at something more intriguing to her, a single tree blocking whatever it was from Murphy's view.

The coyote's serious eyes shot back to Murphy's as if to dare, *Join me*. She looked away slowly, turning back to her important work, beginning to pull it, then struggling to drag the weight of whatever it was.

Interested, Murphy cautiously walked closer to the action and watched as the coyote lowered her head and pecked slowly. Murphy walked closer still for a better look, sensing danger, but the hunger pangs in her stomach overrode whatever fear she had. The smell, even from a distance, was intoxicating. She feasted on a small deer.

Four coyote pups appeared from the brush to join their mother. They were like children running in from playing outside, gathering around the family dinner table to share a meal. Murphy stopped to survey the scene.

Despite their smaller size, the pups looked just like their mother. All of them had the same golden, mysterious eyes and deep hunger for meat.

Murphy edged closer to the pack as the coyotes continued to devour the deer, their coveted treat, not seeming to notice, or care, that she was there. Murphy inched even closer, sniffing the air. She smelled the fresh meat that the wild dogs enjoyed, getting some satisfaction from its scent alone. Yet the satisfaction was fickle. Within seconds the smell tormented her, tugging at her insides, making her mouth turn dry and pasty, tricked by its inability to form saliva as dehydration set in.

Murphy was close enough to the pack to touch any one of the wild dogs, but they still didn't seem to mind she was there, though her instinct told her otherwise. She got close enough to the pack to reach down and lick the deer; a test. Would they show her she wasn't welcome? Would they attack? She scampered back as though dodging an invisible blow, but the group just kept on eating as if she were not there.

Murphy walked carefully back to the pack. She looked down at the deer, the chunks of bloody pink flesh disappearing with each bite. How she longed for one taste.

As her sights were set on the delicious extravagance, she glanced back at the coyotes again to make sure she was welcome, to make sure she was safe, but the coyotes paid her no mind and continued to feast.

Murphy took one quick, energizing bite and then, when nothing happened, she ate more. As each bite gave her a shot of confidence and the needed nourishment to last another day, it was too late to stop.

Just as she relaxed, focused on the all-important task at hand, a searing jolt grabbed Murphy's hind leg. The mother had nipped her, sending the unwelcoming message, "Get away!"

Murphy yelped in pain and ran from the scene.

Mother coyote turned back to her meal, the nuisance of Murphy forgotten. She joined the others as Murphy watched from a distance, sticky spittle pasty in her dry mouth, as the coyotes cleaned out the deer.

Once Mother coolly turned to go, the rest followed.

