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So, dogs and their people have been devoted to each other for a while now.

When archaeologists looked into a series of ancient Natufian graves in what is now Jordan recently, they found a moving scene. About 12,000 years ago, the hunter-gatherer group was on the verge of making the precarious switch to an agricultural lifestyle when they paused and held a funeral. They buried an old woman.

Obviously, they believed in some form of afterlife because they sent her into the great unknown with a companion to protect her and show her the way. Of all the animals they could have picked from their prehistoric world, which one filled the bill?

They buried her with a puppy cradled in her arms.

They expected the woman and the puppy to go on. The woman would protect the puppy and teach it. In turn, the puppy would grow, learn her ways, use its unique skills and watch over her. And they would take that bond into eternity.

Today we call them a primitive people. Except... we want that same bond still. It moves us, it motivates us and sometimes it shakes us.

The dog and the wolf parted ways on the evolutionary road more than 40,000 years ago. The dog used that vast span of time to become very good at one thing — living in the world of man better than any other animal in the wild kingdom.

Dog lovers know this, but over the last decade, researchers have pinned down and proven some of the remarkable skills dogs have developed because they want to be by our sides. Dogs developed empathy to read us better. They respond to emotion in our voices. Even though human language is just a series of sounds to a dog, they recognize hundreds of our words. A border collie named Chaser once showed he understood more than 1,000 words in rigorous lab tests.

When you look into the eyes of your dog, your level of oxytocin — the feel-good hormone that encourages the same intimacy shared between old friends or a parent and child— rises. And as your dog looks back into yours eyes, his oxytocin level rises, too. Our natures encourage an iron-clad bond between us.

This is true of all dogs, but in my experience it's especially strong with the Irish wolfhound, the dog that regards people as his equal. The wolfhound's size and independent streak means he doesn't hide his feelings and thoughts behind a neutral mask as some dogs do. A wolfhound holds nothing back. A wolfhound reaches inside you with his eyes, peer to peer. We have conversations without words. It's sometimes too easy to forget they're not human.

Except....there are daily reminders that they're not. You may catch them with their nose in the wind, rapt, and remember their sense of smell is 40 times ours. A major portion of their brain is devoted to analyzing and cataloging the scents of their world. A simple walk to a dog is to swim through an environment of secret vapor trails and clouds of information.

They straddle this world and a world we'll never know.

Our best friend slouching over the couch can hear much more than we can. A sighthound can practically see into next week. They can spring up and race from zero to 40mph in a heartbeat. That snout covering your face in wet kisses can also bite with a force measured in hundreds of pounds of pressure.

And sometimes I see a look in their eyes that gives me the thrill of an electric jolt. I know that I am living with The Other. I have dear friends whose DNA is not my DNA. We easily communicate, we seek each other's company and touch. But even my wolfhounds can only take me so far. They go to an unfathomable place. And look back over thousands of years, miles of tundra and frozen mountain ranges. And when the wind is right, they still hear the call of the wild.