

# CONTENTS

A Link to the Previous Story / 1

Chapter 1 / 6

The Secret in the Rain Fissure

Chapter 2 / 49

Half Dog, Half Dhole

Chapter 3 / 72

The Revenge of Blacktiger

Chapter 4 / 95

Returning to the Dhole Tribe

Chapter 5 / 121

The War Against Wolves

Chapter 6 / 174

Ascent to the Throne

Chapter 7 / 201

Harelip's Sacrificial Death

Chapter 8 / 234

The Belated Love Life

Chapter 9 / 271

The Hard Choice

Chapter 10 / 327

The Massacre

Chapter 11 / 371

Whitebrow's Self-destruction

## A Link to the Previous Story

Dear readers, if you have already read my last animal fiction *The Dhole Hound*, you could skip this part and read the following chapters. But if not, my suggestion is that you should proceed with reading this introduction.

This is the story told in *The Dhole Hound*. On the Richuca Snow Mountain of the North Yunnan Plateau, a male hound named Loga was chasing after a female dhole named Darvia. It was during the flood season; floating in the Nujiang River were many huge trees washed down by flood from the upstream reach. Darvia was forced to jump onto a pearl chestnut tree stuck temporarily at the bank. The hound Loga followed Darvia so closely and also made a leap onto the tree, which was immediately pushed by

the riptides toward the center of the river. Lacking swimming skills, they dare not jump into water and cross the roaring river back home, and were thus taken downstream. Their desire for survival made the two opponents form a relationship of interdependence on the tree to avoid being tossed into water by angry waves. Two days and nights passed and the tree was finally stuck again at the beach of Wild Monkey's Ridge, far away from the Richuca Mountain. The male hound and the female dhole remained interdependent in their fight for life at such a new territory. Eventually they conquered the cunning monkey pack and had a sweet home there. When Darvia was pregnant and approaching its delivery, Amanstar, the master of Loga, suddenly appeared at the Wild Monkey's Ridge. His calling for Loga across the Nujiang River appealed to Loga, which immediately abandoned Darvia and took off to meet Amanstar at a suspension bridge. Darvia, frustrated and angry, suddenly launched an attack from behind and knocked Loga down the shaking bridge where he met Amanstar. Loga lost his life, falling from over one hundred meters height into the

turbid and roaring river; Darvia, escaped the bullets by luck and returned to the Etis red dhole tribe, from which she was missing for over two months.

Half a month later, Darvia gave birth to a male cub; this hybrid was then named Whitebrow.

Soon Darvia got seriously sick; to ensure the survival of the cub after its death, Darvia set up a vicious trap and murdered the son and the daughter of Blackbutterfly, another female dhole of this tribe. Darvia dug a pit underneath its residence and used her body to cover tightly that spot where the corpse of the cub named Bagpipe was buried. The secret of her murdering little Bagpipe was buried underneath Darvia's body and then Blackbutterfly was finally willing to be the foster mother of Whitebrow.

Darvia departed the world, feeling certain that Whitebrow would have no problem surviving in the tribe.

Unfortunately, a vulture, the forest mortician, arrived half a month later and began pecking on the corpse of Darvia; and like removing the lid, it revealed the corpse of little Bagpipe

and the secret murder committed by Darvia. Blackbutterfly stopped nursing Whitebrow right away; the entire tribe treated the little cub like an alien and the origin of sin. But Whitebrow managed to grow up, despite all the suffering of contempt, bullying and humiliation, into a lowest slave dhole in the tribal hierarchy.

With such a low status in the tribe, Whitebrow still carried physical advantages over common dholes, thanks to its excellent hound father and dhole mother. The Dhole King, Shasal, harboring suspicion and jealousy against Whitebrow, set up traps all the time to eliminate this possible threat; Whitebrow survived all the dangerous situations with its outstanding physical strength and hunting skills, except for the last time when it eventually fell into the King's trap. It was then expelled from the tribe and became a tramp dhole.

Whitebrow lived a homeless life, always struggling for food. It finally took food from a mountain villager named Bitterantze and became a hound of the Hunters' Village. It managed to hide all the dhole behavioral patterns and qualities, and exhibit those of a dog, hoping

to become a good hound. But its fate failed its plan again; this master, the drunkard Bitterantze, forced it to steal chickens, and one day it was caught on the spot by angry villagers, who then took it to the market for sale as a dish dog, with two straws stuck to its neck.

When a dog dealer was ready to smash its snout with a jujube stick, the village chief Amanstar saved its life and took it home as a hound. Whitebrow caught the real chicken thief—a cunning fox and regained its reputation. During a hunt, it captured a valuable lynx with its keen smell, rich jungle life experience and outstanding hunting skills, and was thus regarded as the most excellent hound of the village.

Amanstar took from his old black dog a set of collar, the symbol of pride and status, and put it around the neck of Whitebrow, which then took the leading position among all hounds of the Hunters' Village.

It seemed as if Whitebrow finally lived a sweet life as a cherished hound. Yet its hybrid identity had predestined a bumpy road for its life. More severe life-and-death ordeals and emotional sufferings were still waiting for it...

## Chapter 1 The Secret in the Rain Fissure

It was a bright spring day. The mountain forest had put on an emerald cape.

Whitebrew, a pretty collar around its neck, was trotting briskly along the mountain path. From behind came its master, Amanstar who was also walking an old black dog with a thin hemp leash.

The two dogs were following their common master to hunt at the foot of the Richuca Mountain.

It was a great day, with sunlight dripping through fresh treetop leaves while milky morning fogs still lingering around. But nothing could compare how Whitebrow felt about its current life. The dog was beaming with joy and energy. Since it went to humans for shelter last early winter, it had tasted all the bitterness be

fore finally enjoying the current sweetness. With its success in killing that lynx, Whitebrow had earned more and more affection from its master Amanstar, who now offered Whitebrow meat diet, and cuddled and fondled it after work. Whitebrow was a grateful dog and cherished such relationship. Thus it had spared no efforts in hunting and never came back empty-mouthed, inviting even more adoration from proud Amanstar. Sometimes in its best mood, Whitebrow would hunt alone and get back with a hare or a badger. Such a dog made Amanstar grin a lot and fond of praising his new help as the only one of its kind. Love from Amanstar aside, other villagers in the Hunters' Village had also reversed their attitude towards Whitebrow—no more spits or violent stares, no more kicks or curses, no more finger pointing and suspicion of its dhole breed. Wherever it went, there was warm reception—a bone tossed out of generosity or a smile of benevolence. This case was especially true with the Lady Witch, who harbored mysterious thoughts and any sight of Whitebrow gave her chance to stuff its mouth full with great food, such as frog meat or half a



pie. She then circled Whitebrow's head with those beads made of wild animals' kneecaps while mumbling or praying. She was enlightening Whitebrow, as the witch lady had explained, and praying to gods of the mountain, of hunting and of the village for everlasting safety of the dog. Hammer Nose, who used to pick upon Whitebrow all the time, now extended compliments and respect for the dog with his thumb up. Among the dog community of the Hunters' Village, Whitebrow had totally transformed from a loser, a pitiful creature to a shining star, leading and dominating all the dogs except for that old black dog named Blacktiger. Those dog bullies wagged their tails to flatter Whitebrow, which now took on a reigning bearing with its sparkling collar, besides its extraordinary height and look. Whitebrow's greatest achievement was the affection from Icy, the white bitch owned by the Lady Witch. Icy had a sexy upward snout, narrow eyes, a smooth pretty neck on a plump body, and especially a beautifully round buttock exhibiting the charm of a young mature female. By the standards of dogs, Icy was definitely a top beauty at its blooming age;

no wonder many male dogs in the village salivated and tried to approach it secretly to have an affair. But Icy, just as her name was, put on a cold face and a condescending posture before those eager males, covering its privates with that pretty white tail. Whitebrow used to be not well received by Icy, who had seen Whitebrow like it was a prisoner but the bitch now offered to be a faithful company, with the soft and submissive manners one normally saw on a cat. As an old saying goes, the female was a mirror for the male; Whitebrow knew its own charm and eminence from Icy.

Whitebrow, while trotting forward on the path, cast grateful glances at Amanstar. It was nothing without the master. Whitebrow knew that so well. Along with the identity of the beloved dog of the village chief came naturally status and power; its loyalty and bravery also led to increasing popularity it enjoyed among the villagers, and respect and support from the dog community. If not for the trust and understanding of the master, Whitebrow would have vanished from the world. Harboring such a profound gratitude, Whitebrow was searching in the

quiet forest, ears alert and nostrils quivering, eager to locate preys of some value, so its master can return home at the end of the day, fully loaded with catch and happiness.

Climbing on a ridge, Whitebrow caught sight of the flash of a reddish shadow in the woods ahead. A dhole, possibly. Amanstar also had great eyesight; he immediately snapped, “Whitebrow, a dhole! Go for it!”

His voice was filled with aversion and hatred for dholes.

Whitebrow didn't hesitate and rushed in that direction.

The floating thin fogs in the forest failed Whitebrow's effort to identify the prey, only showing a vague image. But Whitebrow knew that was a member of the Etis red dhole tribe. It had perceived the familiar smell of the tribe; since this was the Etis tribe's territory, other possibilities were excluded.

Whitebrow was not retarded by the fact that the dhole was from the Etis tribe; to the contrary, it was even more devoted to the job, chasing relentlessly so that it could pounce on that game right away and seize it with its teeth.

Since Whitebrow had already decided to remain a good hunting dog, it had to throw irrevocably all its history with dholes behind. For Whitebrow, life in the Etis tribe had left no heart-warming memory, and it was not a place it wanted to revisit. Life there might as well be defined as a nightmare of bitterness. It had once been chased out of the territory in winter by those dholes; it had almost been bitten to death by Shasal, the Dhole King. What was between Whitebrow and the tribe was only hatred and revenge; killing a tribal member would never involve disturbance of emotion. Its soul as a dhole had been transformed by the warm fireplace of humans and the amiable fondling of its master, and now it had gained a brand new dog soul. It was living as one of the happiest dogs in the world, suffering neither hunger nor coldness but embracing status, honor, company and a desirable master. With such satisfaction, Whitebrow would never get back to the Etis tribe to be a dhole. No, Whitebrow is not a dhole anymore, but a hunting dog standing opposite to dholes. Then, to catch a dhole was the divine job of a hunting dog, and should not arouse any hesita

tion. Additionally, catching a dhole was a matter of extra significance for Whitebrow; it could purify its soul when it preyed on its old gangsters, demonstrating its dog identity, inside and outside. A side benefit would come along—complete removal of the suspicion of that old black dog, which somehow still treated Whitebrow as an alien in disguise despite the attitude change among all villagers and other dogs. The old dog never ignored the red color of Whitebrow's hair tips—a strong resemblance of a dhole—or disregards doubtable scent of Whitebrow, another suspicious feature. That old dog was always suspicious of Whitebrow as a hybrid monster, an undercover sent by dholes. But breaking the neck of a dhole in the presence of Blacktiger could definitely draw a clear line between Whitebrow and dholes and the blood would testify the irreversible transformation of Whitebrow's soul into a dog.

At present, Whitebrow was drawing near to the dhole and there remained only several leaps between them.

Ahead was a long-drained mudslide, jaggy with grotesque boulders and rocks. Between

rocks was silt, bundles of green bristle grasses and a long strip of rain fissure in the core area.

That dhole was desperate in shock and headed right into the fissure.

A narrow yet rather deep crack that was.

But that only proved that dhole was slow-witted and not resourceful in a crisis. Entering the rain fissure meant death. There was only one opening in and no other way out. If it was chased by a tiger or leopard, taking refuge inside the crack could be counted as a smart strategy because the narrow opening could prevent large-sized animals. But such strategy would not frustrate dogs of similar size to dholes. Whitebrow was on the large side but still followed the dhole downwards.

This unfortunate dhole had reached the bottom. Facing the blind alley and at bay, it turned back, showing its teeth and growling, ready to put on a stubborn fight.

Whitebrow approached the dhole, unhurried. Even in the faint fissure, it could tell the game it was cornering was a female, and not a physically strong one. A fierce dog as Whitebrow alone was quite enough to handle it, not to

mention Amanstar and Blacktiger, who were rushing here, with a powerful shotgun. Whitebrow had already gained absolute advantage in this battle and expected to seize the game with little effort.

In fright, the dhole stared at Whitebrow, ready for the last kill.

The sun rose and shot an enlightening beam into the dark crack, and also on the face of the dhole.

The hair on its head was grey, like a red cherry rolled in mud. Its jaw had a crack and that gave it a hare lip where saliva dripped from time to time, resembling a white thread hanging from its mouth. Such an ugly dhole face had never been forgotten by Whitebrow.

Whitebrow could kill any dhole in the Etis tribe without a trace of hesitation, but this one was an exception.

Harelip, this female dhole, was named after its physical defect. Besides the V-shaped crack on the jaw, it had ugly patched hair like infected with scabies. Its rasping throat produced friendly yelps like quarreling and cursing. In the society of dholes, beauty was worshipped like pow-

er. Not welcome among males, ugly Hare Lip had low status in its tribe. It was still single at the age of five while other female dholes at least had given one or two births at this age. Harelip had no eccentric desire for singleness, but pitifully no males wanted to mount its back and mate.

Cupid forgot this poor creature.

Possibly for such a reason, Harelip and Whitebrow once had an unusual interdependent relationship. If not for Harelip, Whitebrow couldn't have made it.

Back then Whitebrow was only half a year old when a rarest snowstorm struck the Richuca Mountain. The north wind howled angrily and large snowflakes whirled down the sky and covered everything in extreme coldness. Other dhole cubs had huddled up in the arms of their mothers in the long winter night. But Whitebrow had neither a mother to turn to nor a lair to return. It had to crawl underneath fallen leaves to pass the night. Coldness late at night woke Whitebrow up, its limbs frozen and its body shivering. After all, it was a cub carrying little heat inside. The chance was great that it would



become a frozen stick before the snow stopped and the sun came out. To survive, it cast away shame and timidity, and crawled into lairs of other dholes where it could possibly find shelter in the hug of adult dholes. The first lair it chose belonged to the female dhole Blackbutterfly, which kicked Whitebrow out like chasing off a detestable snake. Whitebrow then tried the tree cavity occupied by another female dhole Rareplum, and this time it was even worse—Whitebrow's nose was almost bitten.

At such a cruelly freezing night, adult dholes were struggling to warm their own cubs, and they had no heart for this little orphan.

Whitebrow was given cold shoulder several times in a row and lost energy and courage to approach other dhole lairs. It lied on open snowfield, howling in desolation and expecting death. Soon its body was covered by snowflakes and made a little snow dune, or more accurately, a little snow tomb.

Just before losing all its consciousness, Whitebrow felt that its body was dragged out of the snow by a mouth and soon was surrounded by warmth, as if in the arms of the sun. White

brow opened its eyes and found itself actually in the embrace of Harelip. This kind dhole, upon the orphan's howls, got out of its shelter in the stone crack against wind and snow, and saved Whitebrow.

Whitebrow huddled against the belly of Harelip, and the piercing coldness was replaced by a sweet maternal love. From then on, Whitebrow always found its way to the nest of Harelip at night.

The two lonely and pitiable dholes accompanied each other for survival.

This intimacy had remained between Whitebrow and Harelip, until Whitebrow was expelled violently out of the tribe by Shasal, the Dhole King.

But it had remained the only unforgettable affection Whitebrow harbored for the days in the Etis tribe.

Under current circumstances, if it were any other dholes of the Etis tribe, Whitebrow would have pounce forward, cut off its throat and held the half-dead game out of the rain fissure to Amanstar for the credit.

Yet it happened to be Harelip!

The spirit of hunting dog somehow vanished. Whitebrow felt weak and useless, and just gazed at the female dhole.

Oh! Why is fate always against me?

Harelip recognized Whitebrow and the shock on its face turned into surprise. It stopped withdrawing but took a step forward and quivered its nose to smell Whitebrow's face. That was a recognition ritual between dholes after long separation.

Whitebrow also quivered its nose and perceived the familiar warm breath of Harelip, the breath once comforting its lonely heart and bringing life warmth into its frozen body.

In confusion, Whitebrow felt like those old days in the tribe coming back.

“Woof!”

There came a bark down the slope—Black-tiger, and the master! The master arrived!

Whitebrow was suddenly awakened, from dream to reality. It jumped backwards, off the body of Harelip. Whitebrow was a dog—how could it lost the principles of dogs and mess around with a dhole? And this happy life had been earned hard and should be cherished. Let

bygones be bygones and focus on the present. One should never harm his own interests and destroy a promising future, just out of the impulse and intangible feelings. Be real! Be practical! Whitebrow warned itself and decided that it must kill Harelip for the master, which should not be regarded as ingratitude but the firm stand it took as a dog, its lifted awareness as a dog and its huge leap in the spirit as a dog! Despite the care and warmth once offered by Harelip like a foster mother, this female dhole had to be killed for the right cause. The contradiction between dogs and dholes could never be reconciled; there was no middle ground. So Whitebrow decided it would execute justice on that dhole, on behalf of man! Immediately, Whitebrow showed its teeth again, ready to attack and bite the female dhole. Sorry, Harelip! Pray before your death!

It shot up and aimed at Harelip, like an inescapable net of justice. Whitebrow's overwhelming power nailed the dhole down to the ground, its snout sticking into the neck pit of the game with the sharp teeth locating the weakest throat. This bite would be deadly. Yet Harelip

never struggled or resisted, but gazed, with a trace of grief in its eyes, at Whitebrow.

Struggling is useless! Resisting is useless!  
You are dead meat!

To Whitebrow's surprise, there was no sensation it expected. According to its experience, holding the throat of games would soon make its blood boil and cause a drowning excitement. Yet this time it felt no excitement but bored and numb, as if the thing held between its teeth was lifeless reeds.

Don't let the feeling control you!

Whitebrow was thinking that the choice of reason should be superior to that of feelings. Its deed was just and worthy. The belief could not be swayed. Whitebrow tried to press its sharp teeth into the tender throat of Harelip and finish the biting. But...But...It can't! It failed to shut the mouth together and lost the power of biting.

How could it commit such a cruelty and kill Harelip? If not for this kind dhole, could Whitebrow have survived those long winter nights? Was it going to reward the warmth of life given by Harelip with cold death? Returning kindness with hatred! Such despicable deed will

make me more like a dhole, a demon, a pest, a disgusting worm. Whitebrow was not conscienceless, nor could it totally neglect the existence of moral principles. It had a heart to search before making such an important decision.

A dhole or a dog, I have to follow my conscience.

Helplessly, it freed Harelip from its mouth.

Harelip crawled out of the paws of Whitebrow and shook its messed hair. It remained calm, and very close to Whitebrow. Its dhole neck was still approaching ahead for fondling rubbing.

Possibly it was comforting the faith abandoner.

Human steps could be heard outside the fissure, as well as the gruff barks of the Black-tiger.

Responding to the coming danger, Harelip made a half step forth and almost leaned against Whitebrow. Whitebrow knew Harelip was asking for protection.

Well, it seems I have no other choice but to carry my kindness down to the end. What the

heck is ahead, I will have to take my chance!

Pushing with its head against the loin of Harelip, Whitebrow drove the female dhole behind a ridge near the bottom of the fissure and hinted it to squat.

Harelip understood soon and quietly hid itself.

Whitebrow quickly turned back and rushed out of the fissure. At this moment, the master had already climbed up from the mud slope with Blacktiger. Whitebrow kept barking towards a deep dark creek on the left of the slope, sending a message to Amanstar—See! That dhole has escaped along the creek. Let's chase it up, Master! This was the first time Whitebrow cheated the master since he has become a hound and it was ill at ease.

Yet Amanstar caught nothing fishy. He turned around and pulled the old black dog close up, ready to chase the dhole as directed by Whitebrow.

Whitebrow was relieved. It had never expected to deceive a man so easily.

All of a sudden, an obstacle emerged.

It was Blacktiger that began growling.

From the angle of animals, human sense of smell was so terrible that man could not tell the truth by the odor even in short distance; their nose bridge and nostrils were mere decorations. The nose of Amanstar failed to reveal the truth yet that of Blacktiger caught the trace. Old though it was, Blacktiger was still a dog, with much more sensitive smell than Amanstar. It had perceived the dhole smell in the rain fissure as it passed by. In surprise, it stopped and quivered its nose heavily. Aha, the fresh dhole odor comes exactly from somewhere down there. Apparently that escaping dhole is huddling inside the fissure. Bow-wow! Blacktiger barked to hint Whitebrow: Hey boy, you are mistaken—that dhole is actually inside the fissure.

Whitebrow purposefully ignored the hints from Blacktiger. It jumped up before Amanstar and growled in the direction of the stream, trying its best to lure the master to leave for the creek.

The dhole was truly inside the fissure while Whitebrow was trying to lead the master to the creek. What the heck is going on? Blacktiger blinked in confusion. It began to think. Is there



any chance that the dhole had run into the fissure without being perceived by Whitebrow? No! Impossible! The dumbest dog would not be so insensitive and miss the general direction where the game escaped. Is it possible that something wrong happened to Whitebrow's smell? No! Not a chance! That boy does not have a cold or blocked nose; it should have an extraordinary smell just as usual. With such strong and fresh dhole odor spreading up from the fissure, an old dog like me can tell it easily. There is no way Whitebrow missed it. Then why such eagerness it has to lead the master to an odor-free creek? There is only one explanation! That boy is covering the dhole down inside! It is misleading the master on purpose!

Such an epiphany thrilled Blacktiger, giving it an impulse of blood surging as well as excited quivers. From the ancient times, the opposite camps had been established between dogs and dholes, and a hound of integrity would never have mercy on a dhole, unless it was not a dog but a dhole in disguise. So, Whitebrow is indeed a dhole and that explains everything, and validate my suspicion. The first sight of White

brow half a year ago made Blacktiger doubtful about its blood for the suspicious smell and the deep evil in the eyes resembling dholes. Blacktiger had tried all the tricks to isolate and frustrate Whitebrow, with the only purpose of maintaining purity of this dog community by kicking out the alien. But who would expect the shrewdness of Whitebrow luckily brought that bastard to the yard of Amanstar, even without being punished for the chicken loss. And now, that bastard had become the star dog in this village, and even taken away the good old days belonging to Blacktiger and Amanstar. The master used to cuddle Blacktiger while smoking his water pipe by the fire pit, and fondle its back with his callous, coarse palms. They used to play the game of Amanstar tossing a key or a glass marble to a corner or under the bed and Blacktiger tracking them down, bringing them back to the master, tail wagging, and then Blacktiger would be rewarded with laughters, praises or a bone. But such pleasure any dog would enjoy the most ended forever since the bastard's arrival. Now it was Whitebrow that was fondled by the palms of Amanstar, and it

was only Whitebrow that had the right to enjoy the place closest to the firm breast and between the strong arms of the master. There was once an occasion when Whitebrow was out of the house and Amanstar was alone, smoking the water pipe on the campstool by the fire pit. Blacktiger missed the warmth in the master's arms, and felt a strong impulse for being fondled again. But its initial approaching of Amanstar only invited an impatient stare, and the cold words—"No! Go away!"—accompanied by his hand waving off. He couldn't be for real! Blacktiger guessed. Maybe he is playing another game. But when it ignored the cold shoulders and tried hard to get into the gap between the knees of Amanstar, the master lifted one foot and kicked its ribs, shouting with a long face. "Go! Don't piss me off!" Blacktiger failed to label its response at that time, only feeling giddy and light-headed. To be honest, that was not a hard kick, but more of soft rubbing, and actually left no hurt on the chest. Yet Blacktiger felt tortured because of the immeasurable hurt for its feeling. For a domestic dog, loss of love from its master diminished life meaning greatly. What

made its inner heart hurt worse was when Whitebrow returned from outside after a while and approached Amanstar. The master welcomed that bastard by allowing it to squat between his knees. They shared the warmth of the fire pit, without any distance between them. The jealousy was so strong that the witnessing old dog wanted to step on the head of Whitebrow, which should belong to the hell, to regain its place. Whenever Blacktiger recalled that memory, it turned furious. In its eyes, Whitebrow's path to luck had literally been its own path to unluckiness; every moment of pride for Whitebrow had been the exact moment of its loss—Whitebrow actually stepped upwards over the old body of Blacktiger. The most unbearable thing was, the yak leather collar with cooper stud embellishments, which Blacktiger had worn over ten years, was taken down and rewarded to Whitebrow by the master—the old dog was virtually dethroned from the position of village dog leader. Since then, its life had demonstrated a decline of sweetness, like someone eating a sugar cane from the root. Those male dogs previously full of obedience never

wagged their tails or be haved at the signals Blacktiger subtly expressed. There was even one occasion where a giant male dog named Donkeypoo rushed from its behind, shoved it far off and robbed it of a bone still with some meat bits, which Blacktiger had made great efforts to locate in the garbage and had not touched yet. And now those female dogs previously full of flattering manners totally neglected Blacktiger, let alone wagging their tails. Walking on the road, it seldom had the old luck of getting food from the passing villagers. What pitiful days when power is taken away! But it was Amanstar who took away the collar, and a dog should never have the right to blame its master, so its target of anger was for good reasons Whitebrow, which remained its archenemy, its destined opponent in the world. As a dog, Blacktiger had not such a level as to transform its jealousy to transcendence over one's opponent as in the modern conception; on the contrary, its level still remained at the primitive understanding that one should never allow his opponents to live a good life if he himself has not. Its hatred towards Whitebrow had been so deeply rooted

and it craved for revenge. Clearly, the most decent way to have its revenge was to have a death-risking battle against Whitebrow, and thus regain its honor. Yet despite its teeth gritting, light-headed disgust against Whitebrow, its rationality still remains: that young dog had a strong body, equipped with sharp and shiny teeth and slim long paws; it was capable of cutting off the tail of a lynx. Blacktiger could never win in a honest battle—after all, it was old, impossible to maintain a silky hair, or jade-like teeth, or a pair of eyes clear and shining as water in a well, or fast rolling legs to hunt valuable animals and regain its glorious image and love of the master. So Blacktiger had to harbor its grievances, hide its teeth and paws, and watch for its chance, in the hope that one day Whitebrow would lose its mind and destroy itself. Hopefully, Whitebrow could possibly turn out proud and arrogant, or repeat its old mistake and become a chicken thief again, or bully dogs around and rob kids of food from their hands, or use its strength to bully other hounds; then Whitebrow would be hated by everyone in this village. Yet to Blacktiger's disappointment,

Whitebrow seemed so smart; even when it was the apple in everybody's eyes, it was never arrogant, neither stealing a chicken nor seizing food from kids, nor bullying other dogs; it was even more well-mannered, always wagging tails at passengers, friendly to other dogs, creating an ever brighter images among villagers and a leading role among dogs. Blacktiger had almost given up its hope for revenge in this life, but now it perceived the dawn all of a sudden—Whitebrow, you young bastard, is about to be exposed.

Sometimes a long pursuit of one thing may result in vain but when you give up, you could possibly realize your dream.

In the plan of Blacktiger, if the wise master could discover the evil dhole down in the fissure, he would immediately figure out the truth that Whitebrow was also a dhole. In the knowledge of Blacktiger, Amanstar had once owned a hound named Loga, which was murdered by a dhole. The master thus harbored profound hatred against all dholes and would never have mercy on a dhole alien; there was great chance that Amanstar exploded Whitebrow's head with his gun, in an uncontrolled rage.

He who harbors a criminal is a criminal himself; he who shelters a game should also be treated as a game.

Ha! All evils will be uprooted then. That's what Blacktiger had waited too long to see.

While the old dog was making its secret plan, Whitebrow was still luring Amanstar towards the creek.

Son of a dhole bitch! I will never let you have your way! Blacktiger gave Whitebrow an angry stare. As long as I am still alive, nobody can fool my master!

Amanstar was dragging the leash towards the creek, a signal for Blacktiger to hurry up.

Yet the old dog wouldn't go, its neck hardened with the straining efforts.

"What's wrong, buddy? Are you tired? Oh, you are old for this. I shouldn't have brought you here. All right, you take your time, and I will follow you."

"Bowwow! Bowwow!" Blacktiger kept barking at Amanstar. My master, you are taking me wrong! I wouldn't go not because I am old and tired for the hunt, but because the evil dhole is hiding down inside this rain fissure. Please



trust me, or you can fire a bullet into the fissure and you will find a blood covered dhole choked and running out of the gun smoke.

Pitifully, Amanstar still failed to understand the language of a dog, even with all his lifelong experience of raising dogs.

“What are you barking for? You are scaring the dhole off!” Amanstar began to complain. “Look at Whitebrow! Never bark loudly but attack like a cheetah!”

Perceiving the suspicion of Blacktiger, Whitebrow was burning inside with great anxiety. It had to get Amanstar and the old dog away, as soon as possible; or they would eventually find out the truth. Whitebrow dragged the end of a trouser of its master and moved towards the creek. My master, lingering here is of no use. Don't waste your time. The dhole is running farther if we don't hurry up.

In this situation, Amanstar strained the leash and forced Blacktiger to go with him.

Yet with all the choking feeling from the leash straining, the old dog still maintained its position, and made long, grieving barks at the fissure,.

“You old bastard! Have you lost your mind?” Amanstar cursed.

In a crazy manner, the old dog was jumping and dashing, trying to get out of the control of the leash and raid the fissure. It must get through to the master, whatever it would take.

“Old dog! What the hell!” Amanstar loosened the leash a little bit and Blacktiger rushed forward right away. The hunter couldn't set his footstep and was brought to the crack of the fissure. This time Blacktiger was even more excited and began to demonstrate its attack-and-bite manner and the spirit of craving for a battle down in the fissure.

Whitebrow felt its tongue burning like a live coal. Dogs have no sweat glands, so Whitebrow could never be covered in a cold sweat even with the greatest anxiety. It had to rely on the tongues to give off heat and tension, especially in such a situation full of worry and uneasiness. Its heart was nearly jumping out of the mouth. It knew that once the truth was found out, bad consequences would occur. The master was likely to recognize it as a dhole alien and explode its head with bullets; or he would still

take it as a dog, but only a despicable dog cheating him and ganging up with a dhole, so the end would still be death, but executed by a long blade. In a reality moment, Whitebrow regretted. For real, it did not need the stupid mercy and emotions. Self destruction for saving a female dhole was the worst bargain, wasn't it? On the other hand, once the master found out, a disaster was expected to happen to Whitebrow, let alone Harelip. In that case all animals in the forests would laugh their heads off—a hound sacrificed for a female dhole and they died hand in hand? But it was too late to feel regretful. It had to remain tough and calm to the end while praying for good luck. Thus, Whitebrow controlled the heavy heart beats and acted as normal, strolling in front of Amanstar, only occasionally giving short barks at the creek.

“What is happening?” Amanstar looked at the thrilled old dog, and then at calm-as-usual Whitebrow, and his thick eyebrows were drawn together in confusion. “If there was any game in the fissure, Whitebrow must have followed it down. You think you have any chance to get it right?”

Amanstar bent over while talking. He had a try at the width of the fissure and decided that he could not make it into the depth. He saw nothing underneath but darkness.

Blacktiger was now even more enthusiastically rushing towards the fissure, like in a mania.

“Damn! Seems you would die if I don’t let you in. Go then! I’ll see what you can get there,” said Amanstar, unleashing Blacktiger.

Freedom of movement regained, the old dog hurried into its destination right away, aggressively.

Whitebrow followed its lead immediately. It could not just wait outside passively until the evidence was discovered. In that case, a huge battle of dog and dhole would be heard by the master, who would naturally catch the sounds of dog howls, as well as the sharp snarls of Harelip. If that happened, there would be no way to get things back.

“Right! Right! Whitebrow, follow Blacktiger, just in case it bites a snake or a scorpion.”

In retrospect, Whitebrow still felt frightened to some degree. If not for that flashing de

cision of following Blacktiger into the fissure, its career as a hound must have ended. It was its smartness down there that saved the situation.

There were only few leaps distance before Blacktiger reached the mud ridge where Harelip hid itself, and began to growl at the female dhole.

“Bowwow!” Now you have nowhere to hide, you evil dhole!

Harelip was panicked. It jumped from the ground, back arched, ready for a battle.

The malicious growls of Blacktiger even gave slight quivers to the small space of fissure.

In response, the ugly mouth of Harelip opened a wide crack, its throat rolling, ready to spit a surge of fierce snarls. Seeing this, Whitebrow made a huge leap over Blacktiger, right to the front of Harelip, and stuck its muzzle between the lips and teeth of the female dhole.

Never make any noise! Or both of us will be destroyed!

Hare Lip soon got its intention and stepped back, mouth shut, hiding behind the mud ridge again.

Now Whitebrow remained between Black-

tiger and Harelip. There was no room for maneuver. And it was too late; even if it decided now to sell Harelip out and or kill the dhole. Amanstar would see through its tricks, or degrade it to a dumb dog as it failed to detect the game while old Blacktiger could. Whitebrow mustn't swing between the identities of a dog and a dhole. It had no more choice but to follow the path it had chosen.

Whitebrow turned to Blacktiger, silently staring at the old dog with cold and serious eyes, tip of its tongue licking those of its sharp teeth. The body language was so clear: Whitebrow was warning the old dog to keep off Harelip and never hurt it, or else!

Blacktiger turned furious and growled even more loudly. The noises made dirt fall from the top of the fissure. Ganging up with dholes and betraying our master, you bastard is disgusting for dogs! More disgusting than shit of dogs! The current scene had already confirmed Blacktiger's early suspicion—that bastard indeed had a heart of dhole inside the doglike body. It is such a pity that the master couldn't come here to acknowledge this solid fact by himself. Blacktiger

kept growling at the female dhole, with the intention to piss it off and open its mouth to snarl. Once the master heard the dhole snarls, he would figure out the secret in the rain fissure and tell the loyal dog from the traitor.

Yet Whitebrow, that bastard, seized the timing and stopped the dhole from snarling to expose itself.

That was the most infuriating thing for a dog in the world. Blacktiger was outrageous and ready to pounce. It was totally committed to the cause of exposing the ugly deeds of Whitebrow right to the face of the master, even at the price of its own life. It was not scared, knowing those were two fierce opponents, because it had the truth and justice in hand and represented the righteousness, which it firmly believed would conquer evils and villains. It then made its moves, harboring justice in heart. Blacktiger aimed its mouth at a leg of the dhole, trying to take Harelip out of the fissure and give it due trial.

Whitebrow immediately erected its body on the two rear legs and sabotaged the attack of the old dog.

Oh, you shameless traitor! I will fight you to death!

Blacktiger tried to bite Whitebrow, but pitifully, its age had ripped many skills off its body. The attack was not only in vain but left a chance for Whitebrow to hold one of its rear legs and shovel it up to expose its brisket. Before it could get onto its feet, Harelip made a brisk leap and seized its forelegs while Whitebrow pressed its young body against the loin and hind legs of Blacktiger. After struggling for a while, the old dog felt like being trapped underneath two millstones, with no way out. Whitebrow was taking its time, licking the fine hair of Blacktiger's neck pit with its moist long tongue, those ill-intentioned white teeth rubbing against the old dog's throat; from the icy cold eyes of Whitebrow, the killing desire was surging out.

What do you want? Murdering a loyal dog with your dhole friend?

Take it easy, buddy! Terrorist actions are under criticism in the whole world!

Yet Whitebrow did not let go but softly picked up the throat of the old dog and then rolled and rubbed that part between its sharp



teeth. Now the bastard was playing its life with the teeth and claws. All of a sudden, its courage was replaced by fear and body shaking. Just like all life forms in the world, the old dog began to cherish its own life. If I was bitten to death, the master would still have no clue and might attribute my death to slipping and falling into this bottomless cave. After all, he could not make it down here to investigate; that young bastard Whitebrow would definitely act out sadness to get out of its responsibility. Such meaningless, obscure death in this place is truly a bad bargain, isn't it?

The old dog then took a soft attitude and quivered its limbs, giving off begging message with its eyes.

No matter how strong an animal is, it is endowed with toughness and softness in their character—this is a life skill. Encountering a strong opponent and knowing there is no hope of victory, an animal would adopt various begging manners so as to gain mercy from the rival. This strategy is especially common in intraspecies competition and has been categorized by biologists as one of the evolutionary stable strategies,

or ESS.

The old dog knew so well when to retreat.

Right at this moment, they heard the call of Amanstar from outside. “Whitebrow, Blacktiger, what takes you so long, huh?”

“Oh-oh-yo-yo!” A series of whining sounds went out of the pressed throat of the old dog.

“Get out! Now!”

Whitebrow sent a signal to Harelip and they lifted their claws together. Blacktiger turned over in a hurry and got back to its feet. Ignoring the mud stains still on its hair, giving off a sad cry, the old dog tucked its tail and rushed out of the fissure.

In silence, Whitebrow pushed Harelip back behind the mud ridge. Then it scanned the fissure and found a dead bat, which it took in mouth and rushed out following Blacktiger.

Outside the fissure, in the shining sun, Blacktiger made circles between the legs of Amanstar. It calmed down Soon and its spirit bounced back. It was so true that a dog always acted aggressively with an master behind it. For Blacktiger, Amanstar was its supporter, its back-

up force. Nothing could scar it with Amanstar standing behind. It was its firm conviction that the master would never let a dhole go. Now it could soothe its grievance down from the fissure because Amanstar would be the judge with the ultimate justice in hand and convicting the double agent. Look at the bastard, following me outside the fissure! And now shaking its yellow tails like a chrysanthemum! Totally no shame! I know you! You are on a team with that female dhole with hare lip! Blacktiger was furious, and walked out of the shelter of the human crotch, towards Whitebrow. Come on! Come on! Show our master your cruelty as a dhole! He eyes will be enlightened and see through your disguise!

Out of the old dog's expectation, its opponent showed no intention of attacking, but acted like the mildest dog, with both its head and tail lowered in ultimate obedience. An old hen turned a duck within a blink; if a dhole could pretend to be a dog, it would act even more like a real dog. In a rage, Blacktiger dashed out with a widely opened mouth. It craved tearing off that dog skin and exposing that dhole heart.

Yet Whitebrow made a brisk leap—a man-

ner of forbearance and shunning in pursuit of harmony. Such a mercy and elegance even made it more like a role model for dogs.

Blacktiger was so close to fainting in anger. Its bites finally got on a rear leg of Whitebrow and brought down a mouthful of yellow hair.

Producing a gentle bark in grievance, Whitebrow approached Amanstar, like a real gentle dog knowing when to recede.

After short puzzlement concerning why Whitebrow would take this suffering without any defense, Blacktiger soon found out the answer from Amanstar.

Looking at the hairy mouth of the old dog, the eyes of the master were spitting fire. He suddenly kicked the ass of Blacktiger, making it roll on the ground.

“You damn old dog! How dare you! If Whitebrow limps, you will lose your skin!”

The eyes of Whitebrow were blinking in secret joy.

Although Blacktiger knew nothing of human language, it told the hatred and disgust of its master, from his severe tone, short snaps and

the force in that kick. Now it understood why Whitebrow would intentionally let it bite that leg.

It had received a huge unjust treatment. But as a dog, it could not speak human language to reveal the secret down in the rain fissure. Instead, with its mouth, it pulled one of the trousers of its master towards the fissure—My master, you should know the secret! There is a dhole hiding there!

The overuse of strength in the old dog's pull, combined with the fact that the trousers had been long used, led to a sound of cloth splitting, a huge tear on the trousers and another angry kick from Amanstar.

“Damn Old dog! Go to hell!”

Yet Blacktiger did not stop but kept jumping and barking crazily in front of the rain fissure, mocking a series of battling actions, so that Amanstar would figure out its unspeakable intention.

Finally, the connection Amanstar had long established with his dog overcame the language barrier to some extent. Amanstar bit his lips while pondering. Then he squatted in front of

the old dog and asked, “Blacktiger, you are telling me that something in the fissure will interest me, right?”

Hooray! The old dog was literally thrilled to a whimper!

Amanstar lied on his belly and approached the fissure with his face, eyes staring and scanning yet locating nothing interesting.

Blacktiger was desperate for the poor eyesight of human beings.

Amanstar, in his puzzlement, turned to Whitebrow. “Well, can you tell me what’s down inside?”

Whitebrow trotted to him and dropped the dead bat on the ground.

Amanstar kicked the corpse away and spat. “Pooh! Who takes interest in this?”

Blacktiger sprang to air at such a huge lie! The truth that down there was a female dhole with an ugly face and a hare lip could never be revealed. In such a pity, Blacktiger impulsively rushed towards the fissure but retreated at the edge, knowing that it could never fight the two rivals at the same time. The anxious eagerness made the old dog spinning around and attacking

at an imaginary enemy in the air, like having lost its mind.

“Aye,” Amanstar cast a merciful glance at the old dog. “Blacktiger, you are old indeed and not helping any more. Unable to chase valuable games but aroused by a dead useless bat! I was thinking you can at least lead the way, but I was wrong! You are not even a good guide! I should have left you in the yard.”

Whitebrow barked at the direction of the creek, urging Amanstar to take that way.

Amanstar put the hemp leash back to the neck of Blacktiger and dragged it to creek.

Yet the old dog clasped a stone and refused to go, unwilling to let that young bastard have its way; it rejected the tag of old and useless; it could never witness the master being cheated to a wrong direction; it was determined to lay bare the evil deed down the fissure.

However, Amanstar was angered and gave two heavy kicks at the old dog. “Ya old stupid dog! Still dreaming about those dead bats? Hurry up or I’ll strangle ya right away!”

The thin leash strangling around the neck made eyes of the old dog bulging, its breath dif

ficult. Any struggle would literally choked it to death. There was no choice for it but to follow Amanstar trace along the creek. But its steps were accompanied by long, sad howls, suggesting its imperishable grief and indignation.

In totally opposite direction, the journey of the three along the creek certainly led to no result. No matter how fast they proceeded, they wouldn't detect the trace of any dhole. Amanstar did not doubt the direction decided by Whitebrow but put all the blame on Blacktiger for the delay which created escaping opportunities to that dhole.

Blacktiger swallowed that bitterness.

However, Whitebrow did not harbor pride and satisfaction for this successful cheating. The more trust it received from the master, the more guilt it felt. Knowing that Amanstar suffered loss for its choice with Harelip, Whitebrow went to the mountain again that night. It climbed over the Richuca Mountain in darkness and captured a tufted deer from the Gamar Grassland. Dragging the game back to the village to cover the loss of Amanstar, Whitebrow finally felt better.

In its heart, this incident was totally an ex



- The International Collection of Ecological Literature by Shen Shixi •

ception which would never happen again in its career life as a hound.

*Jiang Boyan LLC*

## Chapter 2 Half Dog, Half Dhole

To the old locust tree in the yard, the new yak was tied with a strong hemp rope.

It's a two-year-old bull, with large and strong build, shiny, smooth and dark hair. Standing under the tree, it was like a black hill. Its sharp, long, amber-like horns made great hayforks with cold gleams in sunlight.

A great bull it was!

Yet nobody would expect such a beautiful bull would be equipped with such a wild temper, such wildness that you would only expect from a wild ox fond of horning men.

The yard was filled with morning sunlight, fresh and bright. Amanstar set up charcoal fire in the stove, busy with all work before branding the bull and roping its nose.

Those were the adult ceremony for bulls.