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IF DOGS WERE ARCHITECTS

A field study in ground-level thinking.

They say dogs start to resemble people: habits, temperament, even the way they walk into a room. After a few decades in this profession, we got curious about what happens if the resemblance runs the other way. So we asked ourselves a question: what would the built environment look like if dogs were the ones holding the pencil?

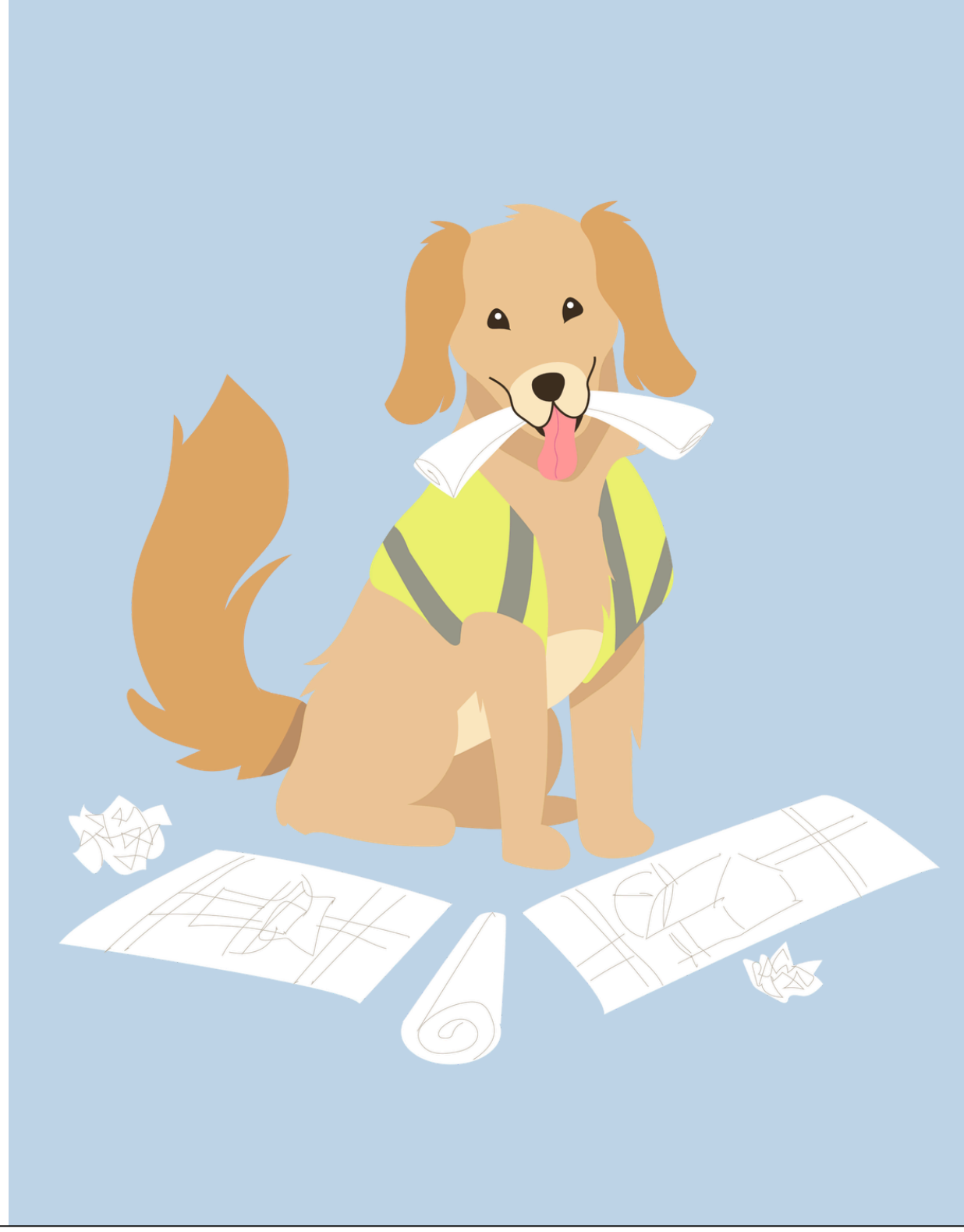
TABLE OF CONTENTS

- **The Golden retriever** *Says yes . To all of it.* —— Page 03
- **The Poodle** *Do not let the drawings fool you.* —— Page 04
- **The Bulldog** *Is not moving.* —— Page 05
- **The Corgi** *Herding you. You have not noticed.* —— Page 06
- **The Husky** *Will argue. Out loud. In the meeting.* — Page 07
- **The Chihuahua** *Runs the office. Weighs nothing.* —— Page 08
- **The Border Collie** *Has already redesigned it.* —— Page 09
- **The Dachshund** *Takes the space nobody else will.* —— Page 10
- **The Great Dane** *Thinks in acres.* —— Page 11
- **The Bloodhound** *Found the thing in the existing conditions.* — Page 12
- **The Greyhound** *Concept in a day. Then nothing.* —— Page 13
- **The Saint Bernard** *Arrives once it has already gone wrong.* — Page 14

We hope you enjoy meeting the twelve very good dogitects who made our day.

THE GOLDEN RETRIEVER

Says yes. To all of it.



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The client adores them, and it's not hard to see why. They've never once heard the word no. They walk out of every meeting beloved, holding four new pieces of scope they genuinely didn't notice agreeing to. It went well. That's the problem. Full enthusiasm, all the time, whether or not the moment calls for it. Scope has tripled. Everyone's delighted. The fee hasn't moved an inch.

> ***SAYS, CONSTANTLY "We can definitely look at that."***

- ***Best at:*** *The pitch, the relationship, the room.*
- ***Worst at:*** *Saying no.*
- ***Pairs with:*** *A Husky, who will say "hold on now".*

THE POODLE

Do not let the drawings fool you.

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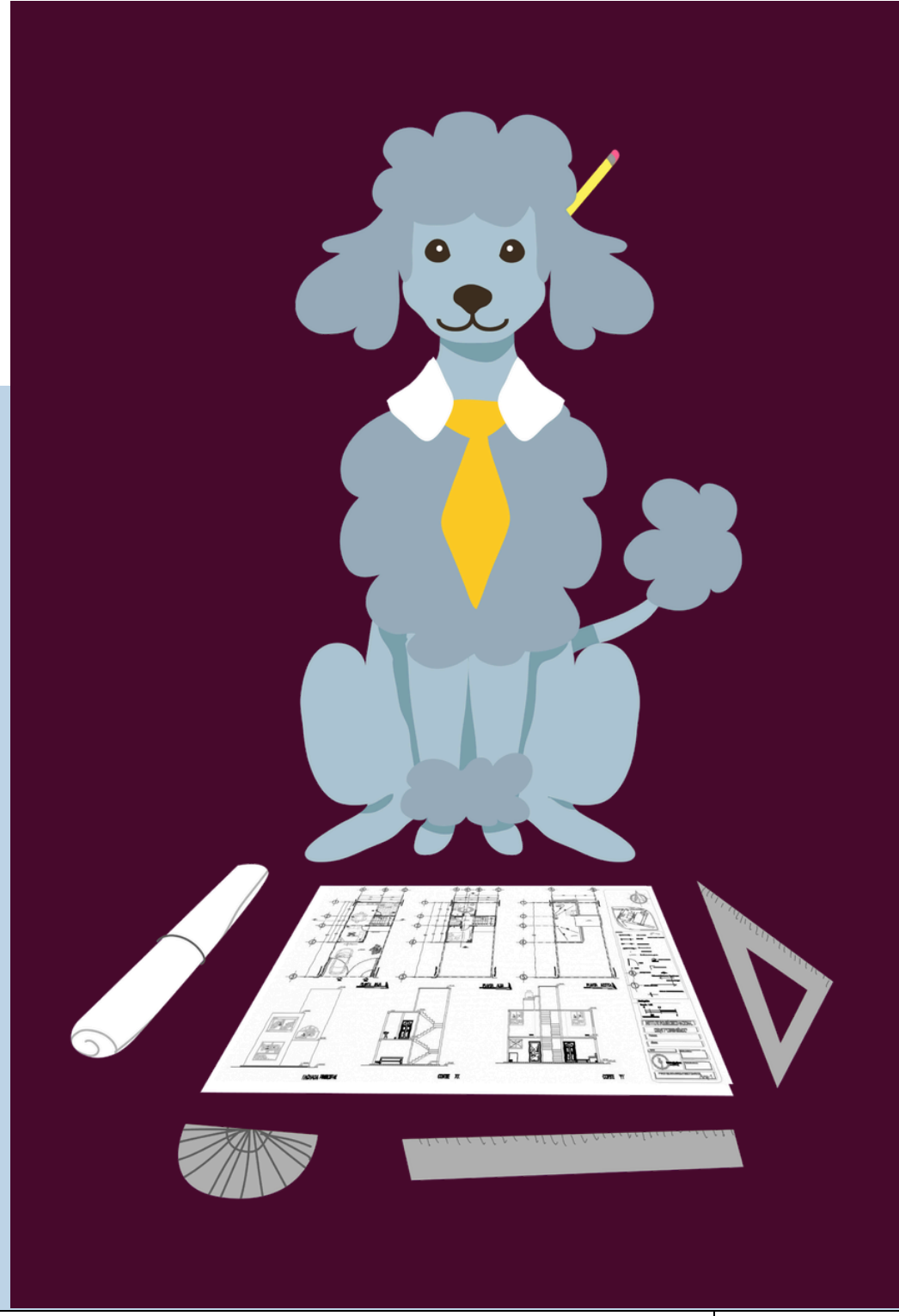

Immaculate sheets. Perfect line weights. Consistent notation. The set reads like a monograph, and bids are three percent tighter because the subs can actually read it. People assume this means fussy. People are wrong. Historically a water retriever. Quiet energy, endless stamina. Will wade into a five-hour MEP coordination call, stay to the end, and come out with everything they went in for.

> ***SAYS, CONSTANTLY "It's on sheet A4.02."***

- ***Best at:*** *Documentation, precision, being underestimated.*
- ***Worst at:*** *Pretending the sheet doesn't matter.*
- ***Pairs with:*** *A Greyhound, whose concept needs to be properly drawn.*

THE BULLDOG

Is not moving.

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You send the Bulldog to the agency meeting because they've read the ordinance, the general plan, and the minutes of the meeting where they wrote the ordinance. Low energy, zero flexibility. Will not be charmed. Will not be hurried. Will still be sitting in that chair when the planner finally gives up. Not a flaw. That's the whole point.

> ***SAYS, CONSTANTLY "Show me where it says that."***

- ***Best at:*** *Entitlements, conditions of approval, attrition.*
- ***Worst at:*** *The phrase "let's just compromise".*
- ***Pairs with:*** *A Golden Retriever, to smooth it over afterward.*

THE CORGI

Herding you. You have not noticed.

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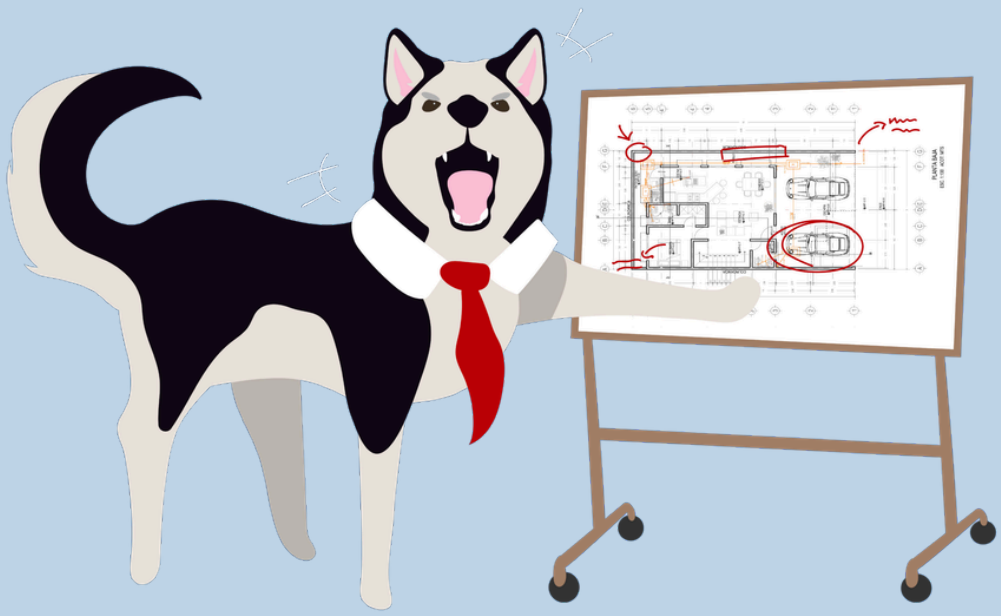
Short. Cheerful. Absolutely relentless. Low-key energy, constant motion. That's the whole strategy. Somehow you've submitted everything on time for eleven straight months. You don't recall agreeing to a single one of those dates. You've met every one of them. Never had to bark. Never needed to. There's a spreadsheet, and you're in it.

> ***SAYS, CONSTANTLY "Just checking in on this one."***

- ***Best at:*** *Program, schedule, gentle menace.*
- ***Worst at:*** *Being ignored.*
- ***Pairs with:*** *A Bloodhound, who needs a deadline.*

THE HUSKY

Will argue. Out loud. In the meeting.



Told the client no. Told the client why. Then barked it again when the client came at it from a different angle. Everyone else in the room went quiet and looked at the table. Loud, direct, allergic to hedging. That's the whole tale. The client is now recommending them to other clients. Nobody understands this. It works every single time.

> ***SAYS, CONSTANTLY "I don't think that's a good idea, and here's why."***

- ***Best at:*** *Hard truths, difficult clients, honesty.*
- ***Worst at:*** *The phrase "let's take that offline".*
- ***Pairs with:*** *Almost anyone, afterward.*

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THE CHIHUAHUA

Runs the office. Weighs nothing.

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Not an architect. Does not need to be. Would not want to be. High energy, zero size. Knows where every drawing is, which invoice is ninety days out, whose license renews next month, and exactly what you said in March when you thought nobody was writing it down. Has never once been overruled. Not by a principal, not by a client, not by the city.

> ***SAYS, CONSTANTLY "I already sent it."***

- ***Best at:*** *Everything, technically.*
- ***Worst at:*** *Pretending otherwise.*
- ***Pairs with:*** *The entire firm, which would collapse immediately.*

THE BORDER COLLIE

Has already redesigned it.

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Solved it Tuesday. Came to Thursday's meeting anyway, so you could have the meeting. Sat very still the whole time, watching you, which is considerably worse than being barked at. High energy, never off duty. Cannot leave a bad detail alone. Physically cannot. Has redrawn the stair three times, and only one of those was asked for. The third one is better, and everybody knows it. Sends revisions at 11:40pm. Always the same subject line.

> ***SAYS, CONSTANTLY "One small thing."***

- ***Best at:*** *The detail nobody else would have caught.*
- ***Worst at:*** *Letting it go.*
- ***Pairs with:*** *A Golden Retriever, who can talk to the client.*

THE DACHSHUND

Takes the space nobody else will.

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Eleven hundred square feet. A column dead center. A landlord who will not move the meter, and a health inspector with opinions. Four firms passed on it. Low to the ground, all stubbornness. The Dachshund took one look and asked for the program. Came back out with a permit, a mezzanine nobody thought was possible, and a faintly smug expression that has not left since.

> ***SAYS, CONSTANTLY "It fits. Watch."***

- ***Best at:*** *Tight sites, awkward constraints, spite.*
- ***Worst at:*** *Being told it cannot be done.*
- ***Pairs with:*** *A Bloodhound, who checks the codes first.*

THE GREAT DANE

Thinks in acres.

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Genuinely gifted at master planning. Sees the whole parcel, the circulation, the phasing, and the thing the city will object to in 2031. Massive, calm, built for scale. Honestly cannot design an ADU. Has now asked twice about the regional traffic study. Next on to full CEQA review meeting

SAYS, CONSTANTLY "Let's zoom out for a second."

- ***Best at:*** *Hundred-acre redevelopments, phasing, the long view.*
- ***Worst at:*** *Anything under 5,000 square feet.*
- ***Pairs with:*** *A Dachshund, for scale calibration.*

THE BLOODHOUND

Found the thing in the existing conditions.

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Slow, methodical, impossible to rush. Went to site four times. Nobody asked for the fourth time. Opened a ceiling nobody asked them to open. Found the 1974 electrical problem the survey missed, an abandoned floor drain, and the actual reason the floor slopes. Ran three weeks past the schedule. Saved eight months that nobody will ever thank them for, because the eight months never happened.

> ***SAYS, CONSTANTLY "Before we draw anything."***

- ***Best at:*** *Due diligence, existing conditions, being right.*
- ***Worst at:*** *Hurrying.*
- ***Pairs with:*** *A Corgi, who will eventually make them stop.*

THE GREYHOUND

Concept in a day. Then nothing.

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Forty-five minutes of genuinely astonishing output. A scheme that solves the site, the program, and the thing the client could not articulate, all at once, on trace, in one pass. Then requires a horizontal surface and total silence until Thursday. Do not put them on construction administration. It is not that they would do it badly. It is that they would simply stop existing.

| *SAYS, CONSTANTLY "I've got it. Give me an hour."*

- ***Best at:*** *The sprint, the competition, the charrette.*
- ***Worst at:*** *Construction administration.*
- ***Pairs with:*** *A Poodle, who will document it.*

THE SAINT BERNARD

Arrives once it has already gone wrong.

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The project is in the water. The contractor is not speaking to the owner. There is a stop-work notice, and two people have started using the word lawyer. Somebody calls the Saint Bernard, who arrives unhurried, enormous, and carrying precisely what was needed. Does not mention that it was avoidable. Everybody already knows.

| *SAYS, CONSTANTLY "Alright. Walk me through it."*

- ***Best at:*** *Rescue, recovery, the 6pm Friday phone call.*
- ***Worst at:*** *Starting things.*
- ***Pairs with:*** *A Bloodhound, so it does not happen twice.*