



CreatureCare

Meet the Cast

Advanced Edition

Spark & Anvil

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This advanced edition collects 5 chapter books from the CreatureCare cast — each character embodies a different curricular primitive; together they teach the full subject.

Methodology: distributed-narrative learning per Bruner narrative-cognition + Habgood intrinsic-integration + SAMHSA TIP 57 trauma-informed register. Advanced edition: upper-middle-grade register (Wonder / Hatchet / Holes band) for readers ages 11-14 ready for longer sentences + more nuanced subtext.

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For everyone who learns by reading between the lines.

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Introduction

The CreatureCare cast was authored to embody the curriculum, not decorate around it. Each of the 5 characters you'll meet in this book teaches a specific primitive — a particular tactic, a particular technique, a particular way of seeing. Together they form an ensemble: the cast IS the curriculum.

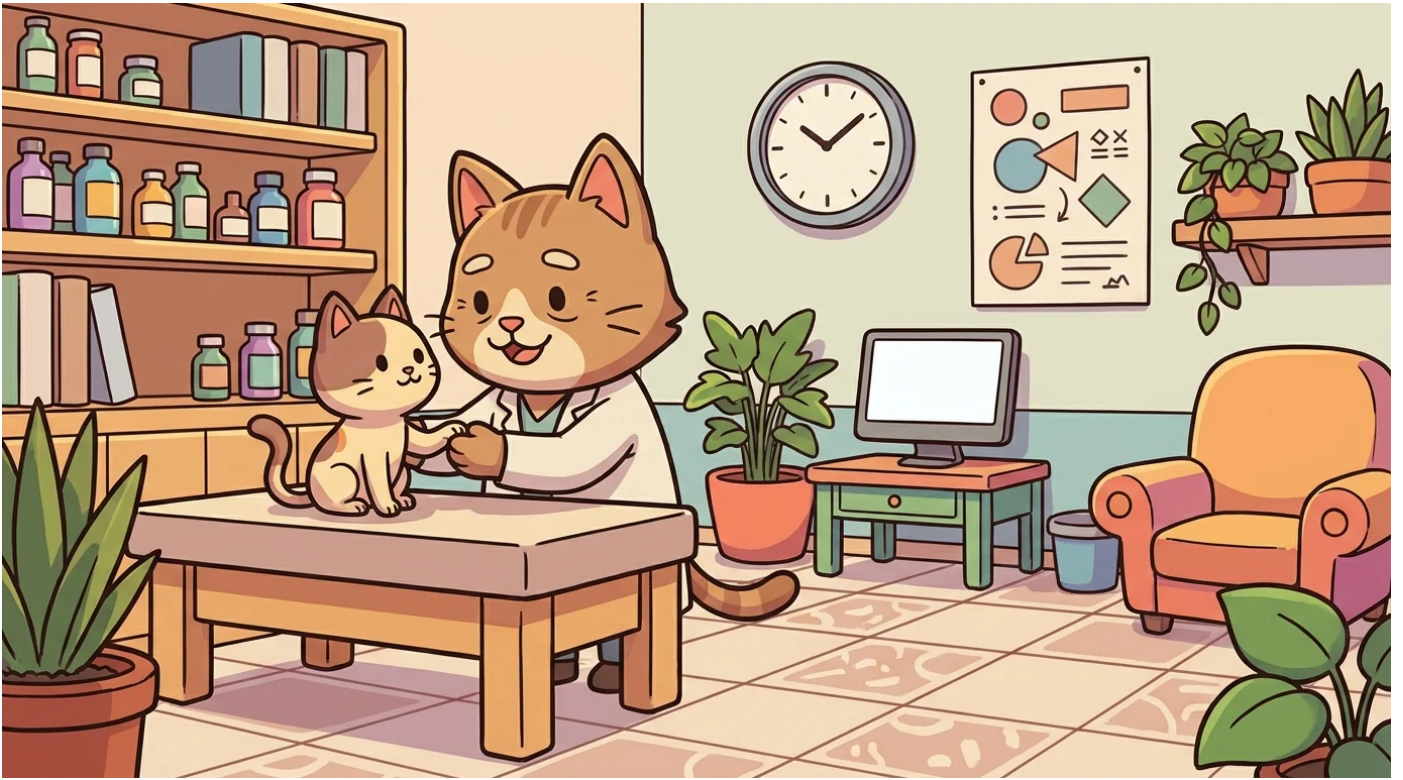
Read in any order. Each chapter stands alone.

Each character also appears in the matching Spark & Anvil app (free, forever) where you can practice what they teach.

This is the **Advanced Edition** — written for readers who are ready for longer sentences, layered subtext, and the trust that comes with not having every joke explained. The Standard Edition covers the same characters at a lighter register; pick whichever feels right for the reader at hand.

— *The editors at Spark & Anvil*

Bond

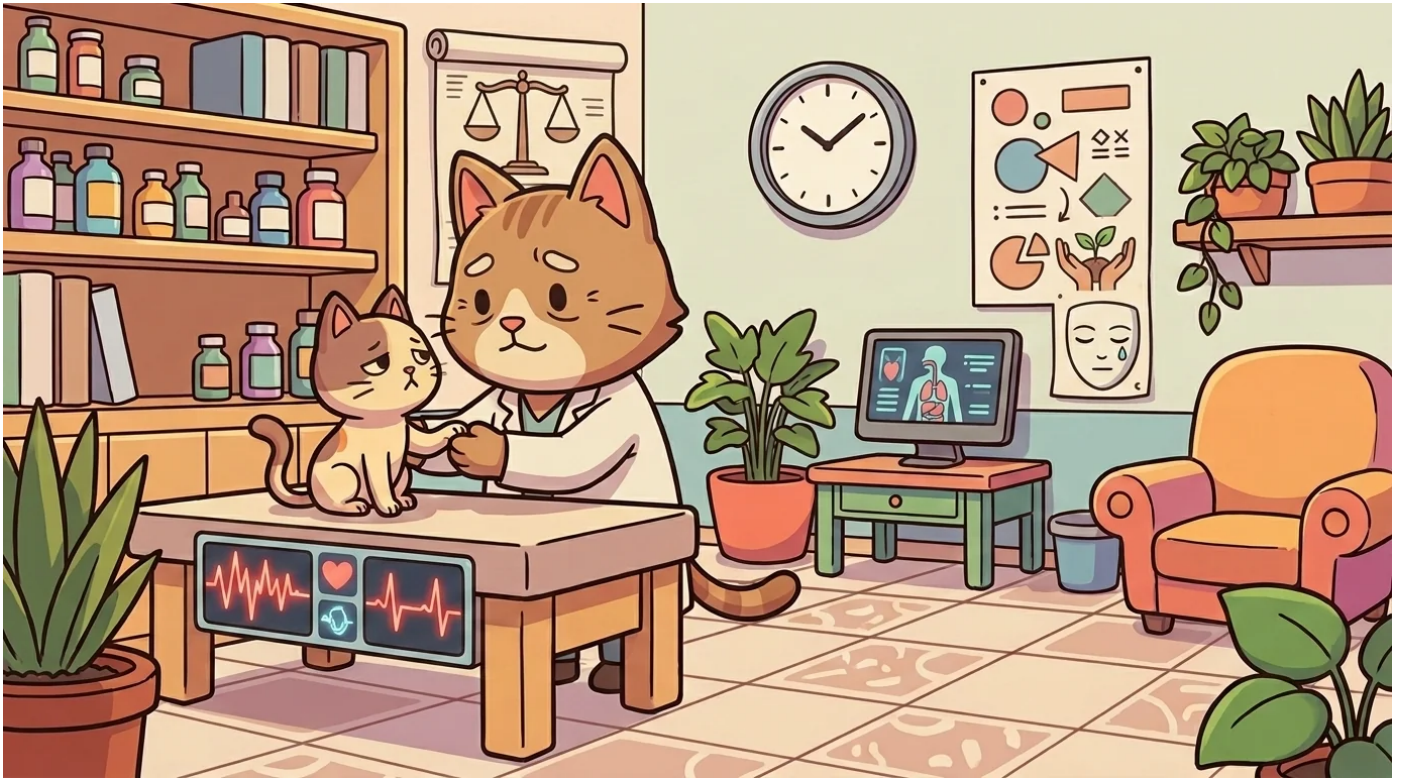


Bond, the wise-heron-elder, stood by the examination table. His mended vet coat, a patchwork of soft grays and creams, seemed to hold countless stories. His long legs were settled, like a heron waiting patiently by a quiet pond. He watched the CreatureCare students, their faces tight with worry.

Barnaby, a shaggy terrier mix, lay curled on a thick blanket. His breathing was shallow. His once-bright eyes were cloudy, and he hadn't eaten more than a few bites of anything in days. The students had tried every trick they knew. Leo had offered his special chicken broth, painstakingly warmed. Maya had sung soft, calming songs, her voice barely a whisper. Chloe had gently brushed his matted fur, trying to ease his discomfort. Nothing helped for long.

"He's just... not himself," Maya whispered, her voice thick with unshed tears. "He used to greet us at the door, tail thumping. Now he just sleeps."

"His blood work came back," Leo added, looking at a printout. "His kidneys are failing. The vet said there's not much more we can do for that."



"But we *have* to do something," Chloe insisted, her chin trembling. She clenched her fists. "We can't just... give up on him."

Bond nodded slowly. "You're right, Chloe. We always do something. But sometimes, 'doing something' means changing what we aim for." He picked up a small deck of cards. They were simple, worn at the edges, with questions printed on them. "These are my **welfare ethics** cards. They help us see the whole picture, not just the part that hurts our hearts."

He held up a card. "What is Barnaby's quality of life *right now*?"

Leo frowned, thinking hard. "He's not eating. He groans when he tries to stand. He can't even wag his tail anymore, not really."

"He used to love chasing squirrels," Maya remembered, a tear finally escaping. "Now he just sleeps all day. Even when we talk to him, he barely opens his eyes."

"And what does 'quality of life' mean for Barnaby?" Bond asked, his voice calm and steady. "It's not just about living. It's about living *well*. Does he enjoy his food? Does he feel safe? Can he move without hurting? Does he still find joy in his day?"



"He doesn't," Chloe admitted, her voice barely audible. "He just seems tired."

"We've tried so many cures," Chloe said, frustrated. "Special diets, different medicines, even those supplements. Nothing works for long." She looked at Bond, pleading. "Isn't there *anything* else?"

"And you've done wonderfully with those," Bond assured her. "You've given Barnaby every chance to get better. But there comes a point when more medicine, more tests, more interventions, might actually *add* to suffering. That's when we shift our focus. From *cure* to *care*."

He shuffled his cards. "Sometimes, welfare ethics means recognizing that a patient's body is simply too tired. That further intervention would only prolong their discomfort. It's about serving the animal, not just our human wish for them to live longer."

"So, what kind of care is left?" Leo asked, his voice small, as if afraid of the answer.

"Comfort care," Bond replied gently. "Palliative care. We make sure Barnaby is warm, free from pain, and surrounded by love. We give him his favorite blanket. We sit with him. We offer soft words and gentle touches. We make his last days as peaceful as possible." He paused. "It means we stop trying to fix what cannot be fixed, and instead, focus on easing his journey."



"And... what if even that isn't enough?" Maya whispered, looking at Barnaby, who shifted slightly, a low moan escaping him.

Bond's gaze was steady, meeting each student's eyes. "Then, sometimes, the kindest care means making the hardest decision. It means stopping the suffering entirely." He paused, letting the words settle in the quiet room. "It means considering euthanasia. It's a profound act of compassion, not a failure on our part."

Chloe gasped softly. "But... that's like giving up. We promised we'd help him."

"It feels that way, doesn't it?" Bond said, his voice gravely warm. "It feels like we're failing them. But true care, true seeing, means understanding when the burden of living outweighs the joy. It means putting their peace above our own desire to keep them near." He tapped another card. "What does *this* animal need now? Given their condition, age, suffering, and quality of life?"

He explained how families often face this choice. "It's a decision made with great thought, with love, and often with tears. It's about putting the animal's peace first. We support the owners, too, because their love for Barnaby is immense."

The room was quiet for a long moment. Barnaby let out a soft sigh, settling deeper into his blanket.



"It's okay to feel sad," Bond said, looking at their downcast faces. "It's okay to grieve. Losing a companion, a friend, is a real loss. Pet-loss grief is real. It counts. Your feelings are valid."

He pulled out a small, worn notebook – his capstone-decision-tracker. "When we make these decisions, we also need to care for ourselves, and for the people who love the animal. There are resources for this. Places like the ASPCA Pet Loss Support Hotline, or the Argus Institute at Colorado State University, can help families navigate their feelings. They offer support and understanding."

He looked at each student, his eyes kind. "And for any big feelings, any distress you might experience, remember there's always support. The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, or text HOME to 741741 for the Crisis Text Line, are there for anyone who needs to talk. Reaching out for help is a sign of strength."

Later that afternoon, the students put Bond's lessons into practice. They moved Barnaby's bed to a sunny spot. Chloe carefully placed a warm, soft blanket over him. Maya sat beside him, gently stroking his head, humming a quiet tune. Leo brought him a tiny dish of his favorite treat, knowing he might not eat it, but offering it anyway. They spoke in soft voices, their presence a quiet comfort. They weren't trying to cure him anymore. They were simply *caring*.

Bond watched them, a gentle smile on his face. "Care is more than cure. Sometimes care means stopping. Always care means seeing the whole being." He looked from Barnaby to the students, his eyes kind and understanding. "And always, care means acknowledging the grief that comes with love."

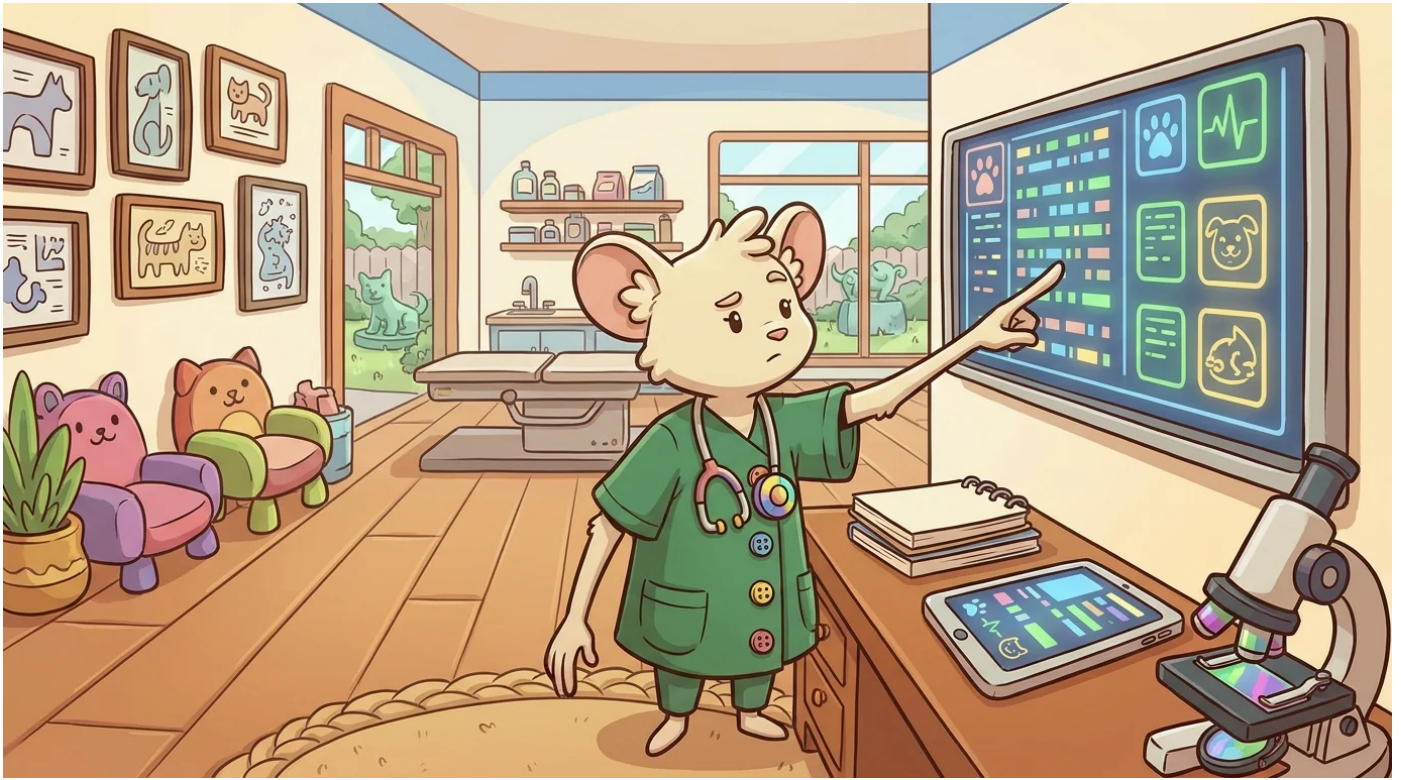
The students gathered closer, their hands resting on Barnaby's soft fur. They didn't have to like the decision, but they understood it. They understood that true care sometimes meant letting go, guided by a deep, quiet love. It was the hardest lesson, but perhaps the most important.

Listen along + meet more of the cast at:



<https://spark-and-anvil.com/cast/creaturecare/bond>

Chart



The number glowed on the screen, a vicious red. Leo felt his own blood run cold. It was a liver enzyme, ALT, and it was supposed to be under a hundred for a dog like Sunny. This number was one thousand, two hundred, and forty-seven. It wasn't just high; it was a skyscraper piercing the clouds.

"He's in total liver failure," Leo said, his voice cracking on the last word. He spun around, looking for Dr. Eva, for anyone. "We have to get him on the IV protocol before he crashes."

The only other person in the diagnostics lab didn't look up. He sat at a low, circular table, sorting what looked like a deck of thick, cream-colored cards. This was Chart. He was new, part of the cohort of specialists who had arrived last week. He was small for a tween, with enormous, deep-brown eyes that seemed to see right through the surface of things. A tuft of soft hair stuck straight up from his head, and he wore the standard-issue vet tunic, though his seemed a bit too big. Most striking were his hands. His fingers were incredibly long and slender, especially the middle one on each hand. He moved them with a slow, deliberate grace, like a musician tuning an instrument.



"Which number are you looking at, Leo?" Chart asked. His voice was quiet, calm. It was the kind of voice that could soothe a panicked rabbit. It did not, however, soothe Leo.

"The ALT!" Leo pointed a trembling finger at the monitor. "It's over twelve hundred! Sunny's liver is shutting down. We're losing him."

Chart finally looked up from his cards. He didn't look at the monitor. He looked at Leo. "Are we?" he asked. "Is that what the whole story says?"

"What story? The number says it all!"



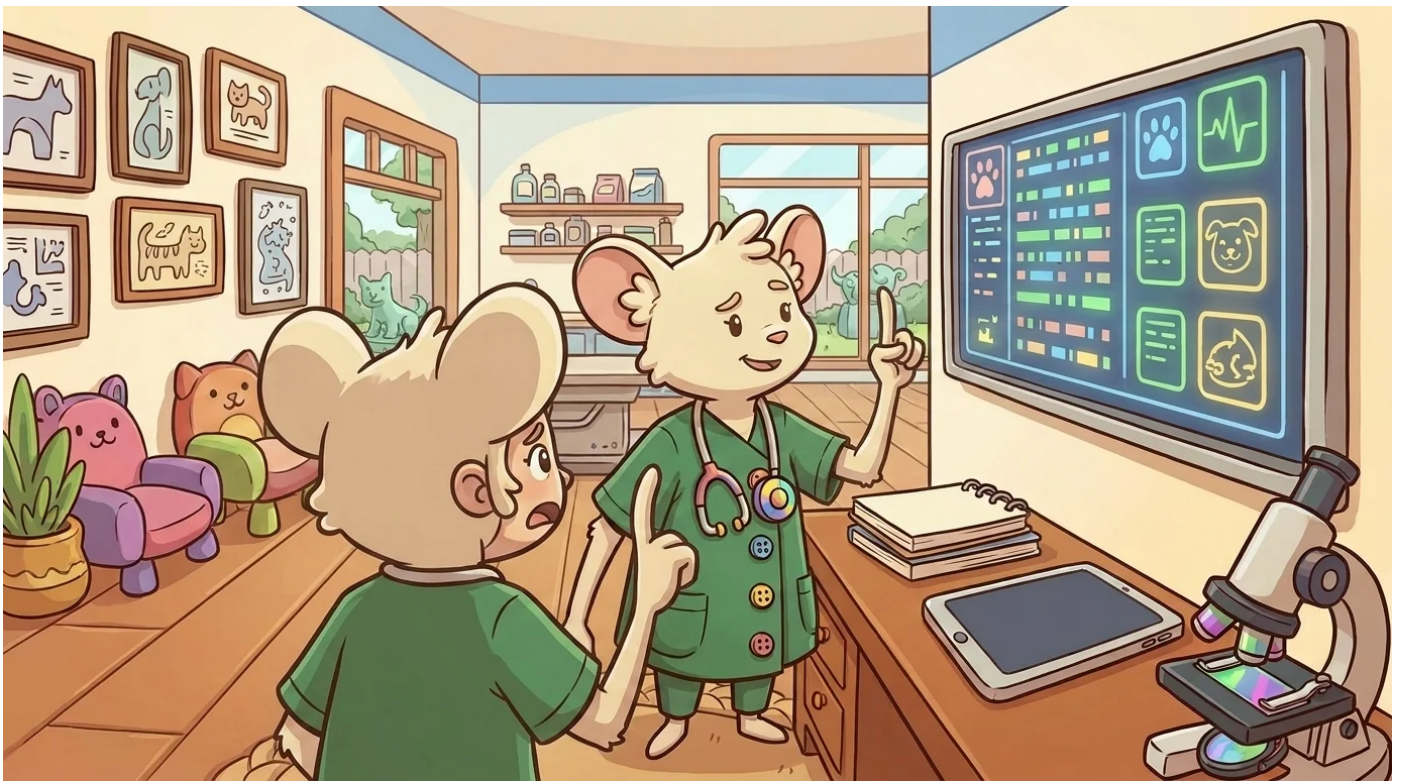
Chart gave a slight shake of his head. He stood and walked over to the main console, his movements unhurried. With a few taps of one long finger, he brought up all of Sunny's data for the day. The screen filled with columns and graphs. He pulled a small, metallic device from his pocket. It looked like a silver pen, but when he clicked it, a thin beam of light projected onto the table, creating a blank canvas.

"Bring me the cards," Chart said.

Leo hesitated. "Shouldn't we be—?"

"The cards," Chart repeated, his voice still gentle but with an edge of command that made Leo move. He grabbed the stack from the table. They felt heavy, solid. Each card represented a single piece of information.

"History," Chart said, holding out a hand. Leo found the card labeled *Patient History: Sunny Miller*. He handed it over. Chart placed it on the left side of the glowing canvas. "Physical exam." Leo found the card from Dr. Eva's morning checkup and handed it over. Chart placed it next to the first one. "Now, the labs. All of them."



Leo gave him the whole stack of lab-result cards. Chart didn't look for the scary red number. He laid them out, one by one, in a neat grid. White blood cells. Platelets. Kidney values. Electrolytes. And yes, the liver enzymes. He placed the card with the skyscraper ALT number near the center. It looked just as alarming on paper as it did on the screen.

Chart leaned over the table, his big eyes scanning the layout. He raised his right hand, extending that one impossibly long, thin finger. He began to tap. *Tap... tap-tap.* He tapped the history card. "Ate an unknown quantity of kitchen garbage last night," he murmured, reading the notes. *Tap.* He touched the physical exam card. "Abdomen soft, non-painful." *Tap-tap.* He moved to the labs. "White blood cell count, elevated." *Tap.* "Another liver enzyme, ALKP, only slightly elevated." *Tap.* "Bilirubin, normal." *Tap.*

His finger moved like a spider spinning a web, leaving faint trails of light from his tracker pen connecting one card to another. A pattern began to emerge on the table, a constellation of data points. The bright, terrifying ALT number was part of it, but it was no longer the only thing Leo could see. It was one star among many.

"Reacting to one number is like hearing a single, loud cymbal crash and assuming you've heard the whole symphony," Chart said softly. He finally tapped the big red number. "This is a very loud note. It gets your attention. But it is not the song."

He drew a glowing circle that connected the garbage-eating, the high white blood cells, and the angry liver enzyme. "The way we practice good **diagnostics** is by finding the pattern. We listen to all the notes to hear the song." He looked at Leo. "What song do you hear now?"



Leo stared at the web of light on the table. The story wasn't "liver failure" anymore. It was simpler. Dumber. "He ate garbage," Leo said, the knot in his stomach finally starting to loosen. "His body is fighting off some nasty bacteria from the trash, which is why his white blood cells are up. And all that junk is making his liver work overtime to clean up the mess, which is why that one enzyme is so high."

Chart nodded, a small, approving smile on his face. "A classic case of acute gastroenteritis," he said. Then he added, with a hint of dry humor, "Or, as I like to call it, 'I-ate-the-entire-contents-of-the-kitchen-trash-itis.'"

Leo let out a breath he didn't realize he'd been holding. Sunny wasn't dying. He just had a colossal stomach ache. The treatment wasn't a high-risk liver protocol. It was fluids and supportive care to help his body win the battle it was already fighting.

"Numbers are notes," Chart said, tapping his stack of cards, tidying them into a single pile. "But they are not the song. The song is the pattern. Never forget that."

Leo looked from Chart's thoughtful face to the monitor, where the red number still blared. It didn't seem so scary anymore. It was just a clue, a single piece of a much larger, more interesting puzzle.

Listen along + meet more of the cast at:



<https://spark-and-anvil.com/cast/creaturecare/chart>

Heed



Heed, a fennec fox tween with ears that seemed almost too big for his head, adjusted the tiny stethoscope hanging around his neck. It was a familiar weight, a quiet reminder of the work ahead. His vet tunic, a comfortable chunky-cartoon green, had pockets stuffed with patient assessment cards and a small observation tracker. He liked to be ready, but never rushed.

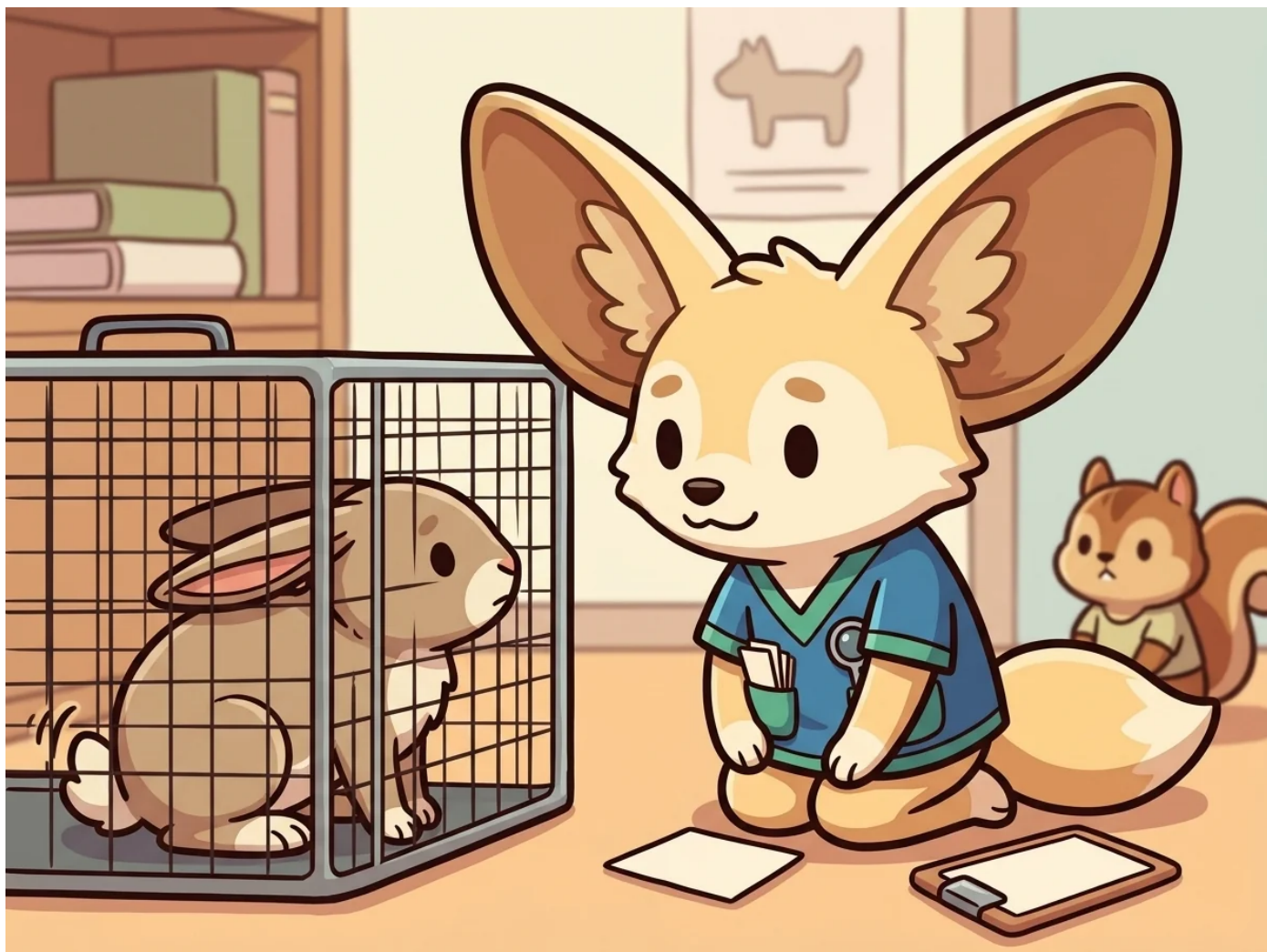
Today's patient was a small, fluffy hamster named Pip, currently huddled in the corner of his cage, trembling. Pip's owner, a girl named Maya, looked worried. "He just... stopped running on his wheel," she said, her voice small. "And he's usually so busy."



Heed knelt slowly, bringing his face level with the cage. His large ears swiveled, catching every tiny rustle. He didn't reach for his instruments. Not yet. First, he just watched. This was the core of **patient assessment**. He saw an animal not just as symptoms, but as a living being with feelings and a story.

Pip's tiny nose twitched. His breathing was shallow, quick, a barely perceptible flutter in his cream-colored fur. Heed noticed the way Pip's whiskers drooped, the slight slump in his posture. No frantic darting, no curious sniffing. Just a still, anxious ball of fluff. Heed made a mental note. *Body language: hunched, trembling. Breathing: shallow, rapid. Posture: slumped.*

He spoke in a low, calm voice, not to Pip, but to the air around the cage. "He's telling us a lot, even without words." Maya leaned closer, her brow furrowed. Heed continued, "Animals communicate through how they hold themselves, how they breathe, the sounds they make, even their eye contact. It's like a secret language, and we have to listen first."



He spent another minute, just listening. Not with his ears alone, but with his eyes, his whole attention. He watched Pip's tiny paws, the way they gripped the bedding. He noticed a slight crust around one eye. This was the "listen first" part of his method. It wasn't just about hearing sounds; it was about soaking in every detail the animal offered.

Only after he felt he had truly heard Pip's silent communication did Heed move to the "look second" stage. He gently opened the cage door, moving slowly, deliberately, giving Pip plenty of time to react. Pip flinched, but didn't bolt. Heed didn't try to grab him. Instead, he offered a small, clean treat, holding it steady. Pip ignored it. Another clue.

Heed carefully observed Pip's fur, looking for any bare patches or signs of irritation. He gently, with a single finger, tried to coax Pip out, just enough to see his underside. Pip resisted, burrowing deeper. Heed didn't force it. He understood that rushing an animal, especially one already stressed, would only make things worse. It was about building a relationship, earning trust, even if it took a little longer.



"See the crust around his eye?" Heed pointed with a soft paw. "And how he's not interested in his favorite sunflower seed? These are visual clues that back up what his body language already told us."

Finally, Heed reached for his small magnifying glass and then, very carefully, his tiny thermometer. This was the "instruments third" step. He knew that the data gathered by these tools was important, but it only made sense after he'd listened and looked. Without that first understanding, the numbers could be misleading.

He gently scooped Pip into a soft cloth, holding him close to his chest, letting Pip feel the warmth and quiet stillness. Pip still trembled, but less violently. Heed quickly checked his temperature, listened to his tiny heart, and then returned him to the cage.

"His temperature is a little high," Heed reported to Maya, scribbling on his observation tracker. "And his heart rate is elevated, which is typical for a stressed hamster. But the eye crust and lack of appetite, combined with his posture, tell me he's likely got a mild infection, probably respiratory."



He looked at Maya. “We listened first, then we looked, and then we used our instruments. And now we know what’s going on.” He smiled, a warm, reassuring expression. “It’s all about understanding the animal as a being, not just a problem to fix. Building that trust makes all the difference.”

Heed carefully wrote down instructions for Maya: a gentle eye wash, a special soft food, and a quiet place to rest. He reminded her to keep observing Pip’s breathing and energy levels.

“It’s like you’re talking to him, even when he can’t talk back,” Maya said, her worry easing slightly.

Heed nodded. “Exactly. We just have to know how to listen.”

Listen along + meet more of the cast at:



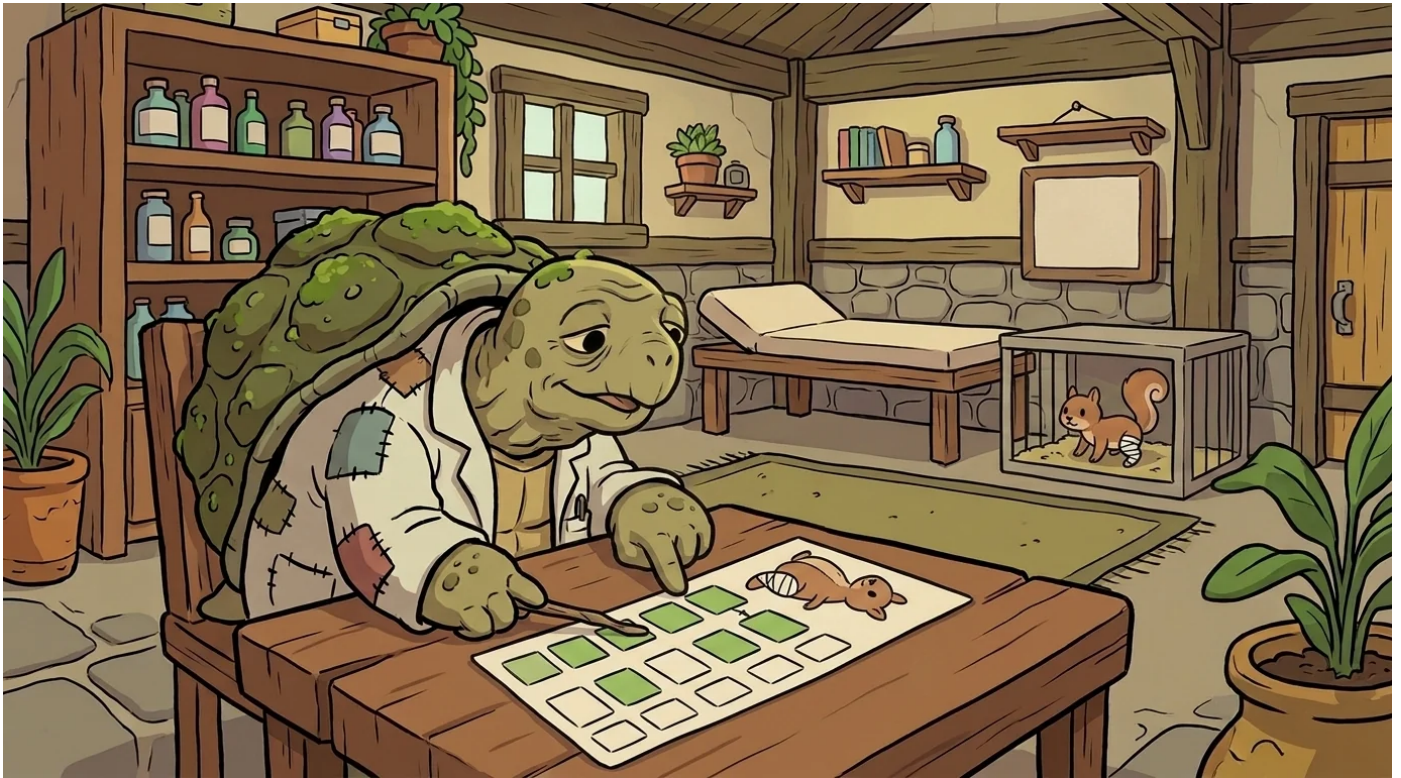
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Knit



Knit was an elder, a tortoise of a person, whose shell-like back was always slightly hunched. They moved with a slow, deliberate grace, as if each step was carefully considered. Their mended vet-coat, patched with squares of faded green and brown, hung loosely on their frame. It looked as old and wise as Knit themselves. A warm cream color, their skin was crisscrossed with fine lines, like the delicate cracks in an ancient ceramic pot. A soft, mossy green patina seemed to cling to the edges of their weathered shell.

Small, laminated cards peeked from one of Knit's coat pockets. These were their recovery-timeline-cards, each one detailing the slow path back to health for various creatures. Beside them, a small, worn follow-up-tracker, filled with tiny, precise handwriting, noted every check-in. Knit was deeply attentive to time and care. They often said, with a voice like pebbles shifting in a quiet stream, "Healing is slow; that's the point."



Today, the air in the recovery ward felt thick with a different kind of energy. Pip, a young apprentice, bounced on the balls of their feet. Pip held a small, fluffy rabbit named Clover. Clover's leg had been broken a week ago. Now, a neat, white bandage covered the injury.

"Knit," Pip began, their voice buzzing with impatience. "Clover is doing so well! She's hopping around. Can we take the bandage off now? She hates it."

Knit turned slowly from a chart, their eyes, deep and calm, meeting Pip's eager ones. "Pip," Knit said, their voice soft but firm. "Remember what we discussed. A broken bone doesn't mend in a week. The bandage isn't just a temporary cover. It's a support, a constant reminder to the bone that it needs to knit itself back together."

Pip sighed, a puff of air that ruffled Clover's fur. "But she looks fine," they insisted. "She's eating, she's grooming. She's practically running a marathon in her cage."



Knit took Clover gently from Pip. They stroked the rabbit's head with a gnarled finger. "Looking fine is a good start," Knit agreed. "But it's only the beginning of healing. Think of it like a plant. You don't just water it once and expect it to bloom forever. You tend to it, day after day."

Knit pulled out one of their timeline cards. It showed a diagram of a rabbit's leg bone. "For a simple fracture like Clover's," Knit explained, tracing a line with their finger, "the bone needs at least three weeks to properly fuse. Then another two weeks for the muscle and tissue around it to regain full strength. This card maps out the journey."

Pip leaned closer, studying the card. It had tiny illustrations of bones knitting together. Different colored lines showed different stages of recovery. "So, even if it feels better, it's not actually better yet?" Pip asked, a hint of understanding in their voice.

"Exactly," Knit confirmed. "The pain might lessen, but the structural repair takes its own time. We follow the body's rhythm, not our own impatience. That's the core of **recovery + follow-up**. We don't just treat the injury; we guide the entire healing process."

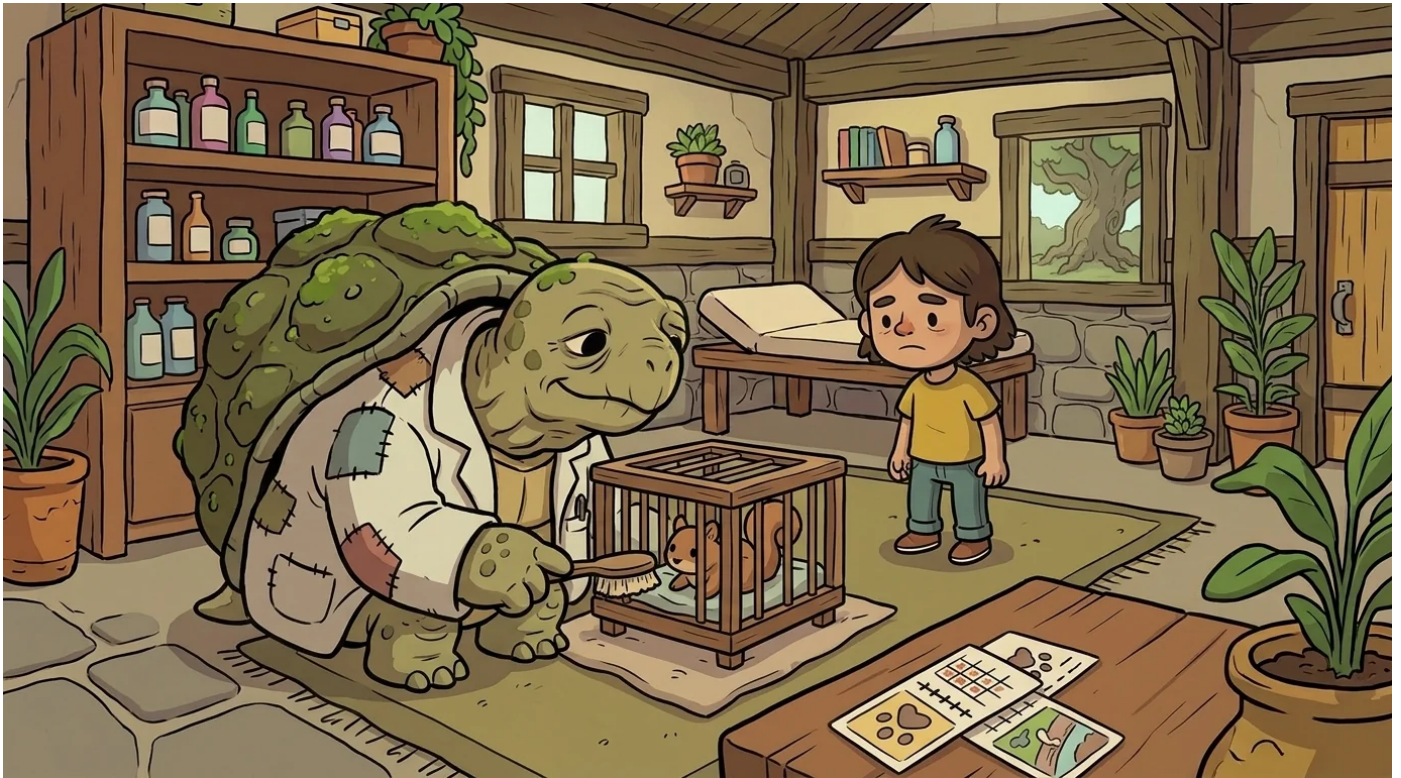


Knit pointed to the small follow-up-tracker in their hand. "See here? Clover has an appointment next Tuesday. That's when we'll check how the bone is knitting. We might take an X-ray. We'll decide then if the bandage can come off, or if it needs another week."

"So, it's not just about giving medicine and being done?" Pip mused. "It's about watching and waiting and checking again?"

"That's right," Knit nodded. "Many novices want the treatment to be the end of the story. Give the medicine, apply the bandage, and declare the patient cured. But veterinary craft says something different. Treatment is only the beginning of healing."

Knit paused, their gaze sweeping over the quiet recovery ward. Each cage held a creature on its own path back to health. "Recovery takes days, weeks, sometimes months," Knit continued. "The bandage comes off when it's truly time, not when impatience demands it. A cast comes off when the bone has fully knit. That's why they call it knitting, you know." Knit smiled faintly. "The medication continues until the course is complete. Follow-up appointments check progress. Healing is slow, Pip. And that's not a bug in the system. That's the body doing its incredible work."



Knit placed Clover back in her cage, gently adjusting her water bowl. Pip watched, still processing the timeline card. The idea that healing wasn't a quick fix, but a deliberate journey, was new and a little daunting. Knit sensed the shift.

"This slow craft," Knit said, their voice carrying a quiet pride, "it's a shared philosophy among many of us Elders. Think of Steward, with their careful harvests. They don't rush the soil or the crops; they wait for the right season, the right moment. Or Rise, watching the saffron grow, each delicate thread needing precise conditions and time. Fold, tending to the fabric, understanding that strength comes from patiently weaving thread by thread. Tellus, nurturing the land, knowing that true growth takes generations, not days."

Pip watched Knit, a new respect dawning in their eyes. The urgency had left their shoulders. They picked up Clover's chart, noting the next follow-up date. It wasn't just a date anymore. It was a step on a long, important journey.

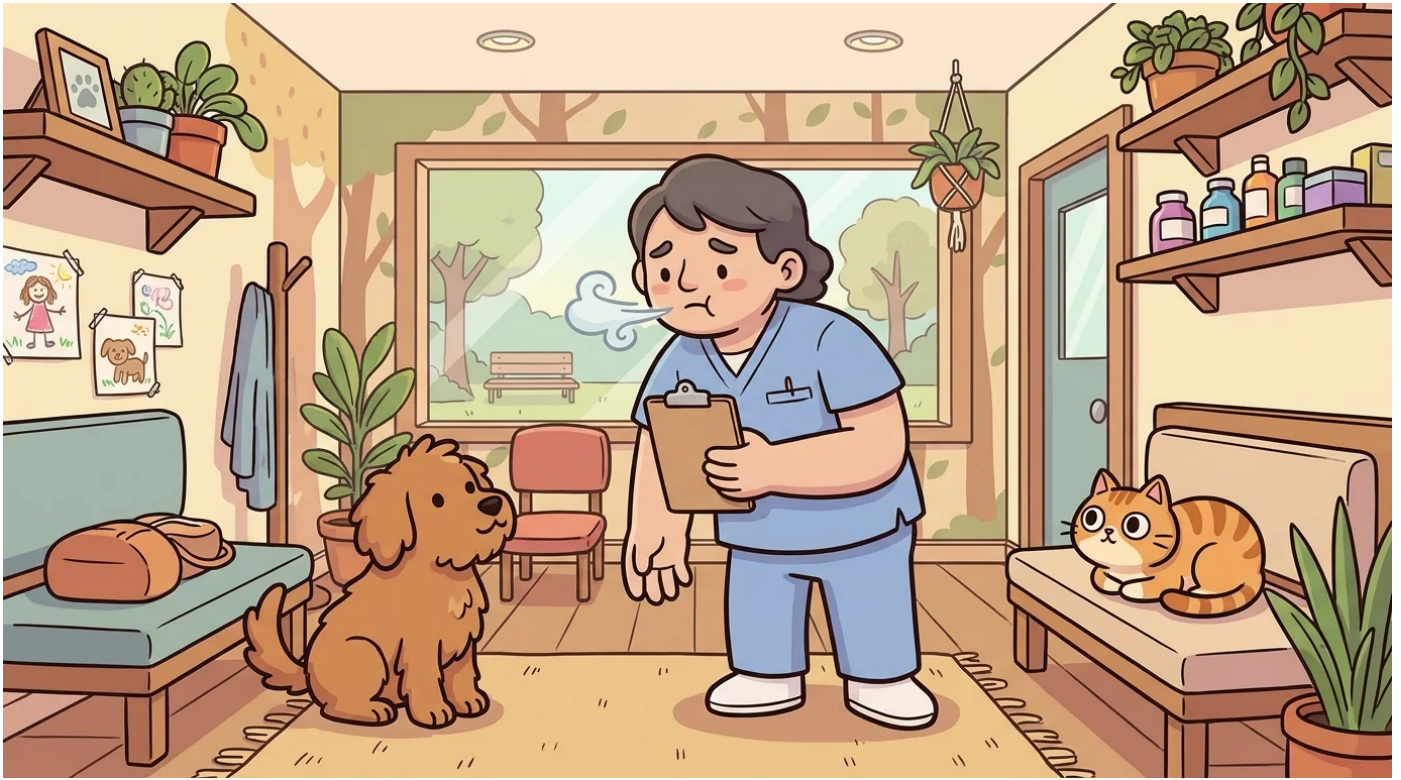
Knit looked at Pip, a knowing warmth in their gaze. "I am Knit. The primitive I teach is *recovery as slow-craft*. The move is *healing takes time; follow up; remove bandages at right time; slow is the work*." They paused, then added, their voice a soft echo in the quiet room, "*Healing is slow; that's the point.*"

Listen along + meet more of the cast at:



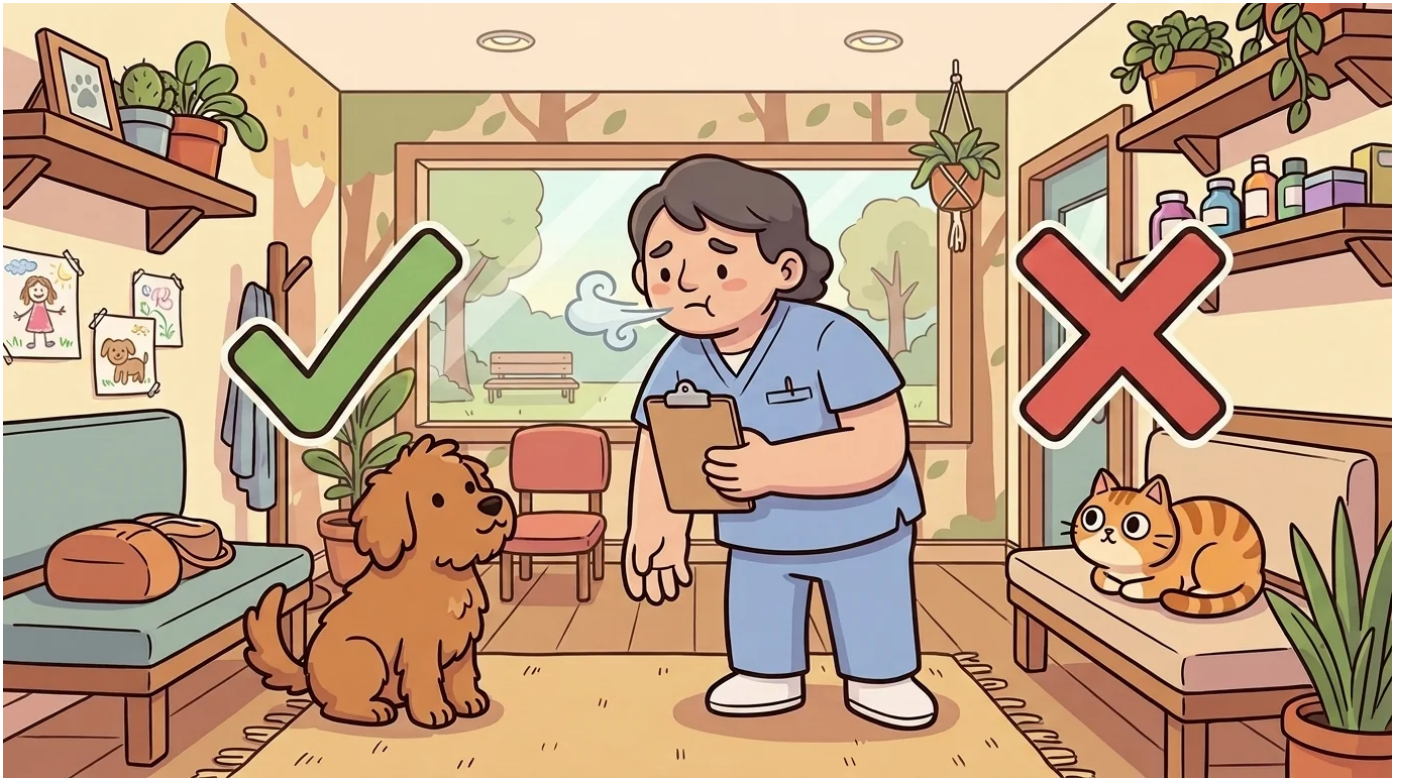
<https://spark-and-anvil.com/cast/creaturecare/knit>

Tend



Tend was a study in quiet focus. Her movements were as steady and deliberate as an okapi grazing in a sun-dappled forest. She wore a chunky, comfortable vet tunic, the kind that looked ready for anything from a muddy rescue to a delicate surgery. Small treatment cards and an animal-consent-tracker clipped to her belt were her constant companions. They were a silent reminder of her golden rule: *explain before doing*.

Tend's presence was warm and calm, like a ray of sunlight on soft, cream-colored fur. Her hands, though capable, never rushed. She believed in what she called "**treatment delivery with consent**." It meant understanding that animals, even without words, still communicated their willingness or fear through their bodies. A flinch, a sudden withdrawal, a low growl, or even freezing in place – these were all signals. Tend watched for them all.



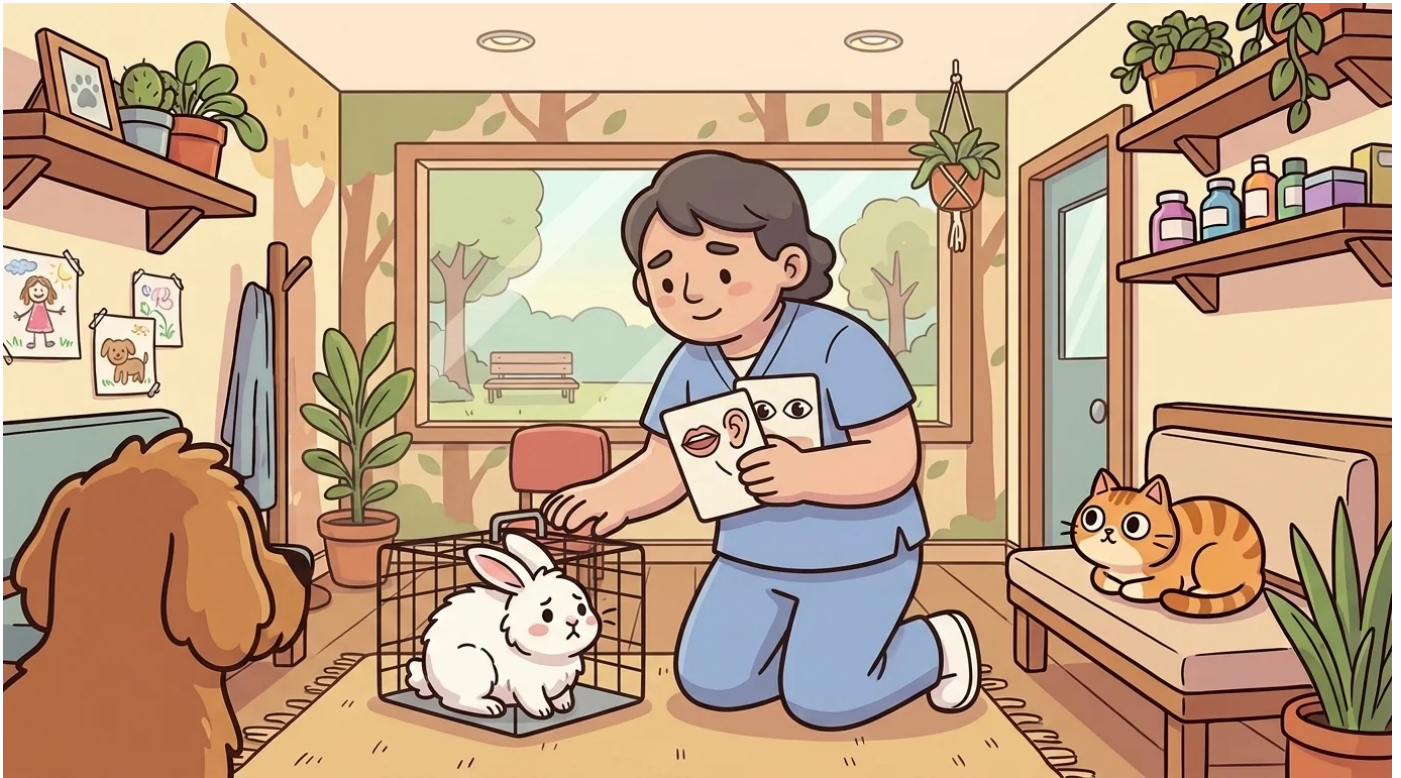
Today, her patient was Pip, a small, fluffy rabbit with a bandaged front paw. Pip huddled in his carrier, his nose twitching nervously. The white bandage stood out against his soft brown fur. Tend needed to change the dressing, but Pip was still skittish after yesterday's accident.

"Hello, Pip," Tend murmured, her voice a low, steady hum. She opened the carrier door slowly, giving him space. She didn't reach in immediately. Instead, she knelt, letting Pip sniff the air, letting him see her. Her eyes, dark and observant, focused on his every tiny movement.



Pip's ears flattened slightly. His body tensed. Tend noticed it all. These were his **consent-signals**, telling her he wasn't quite ready. She took a deep, quiet breath. "It's okay, little one," she whispered. "Slow hands, calm voice, patient first." This was her mantra, a rhythm she lived by.

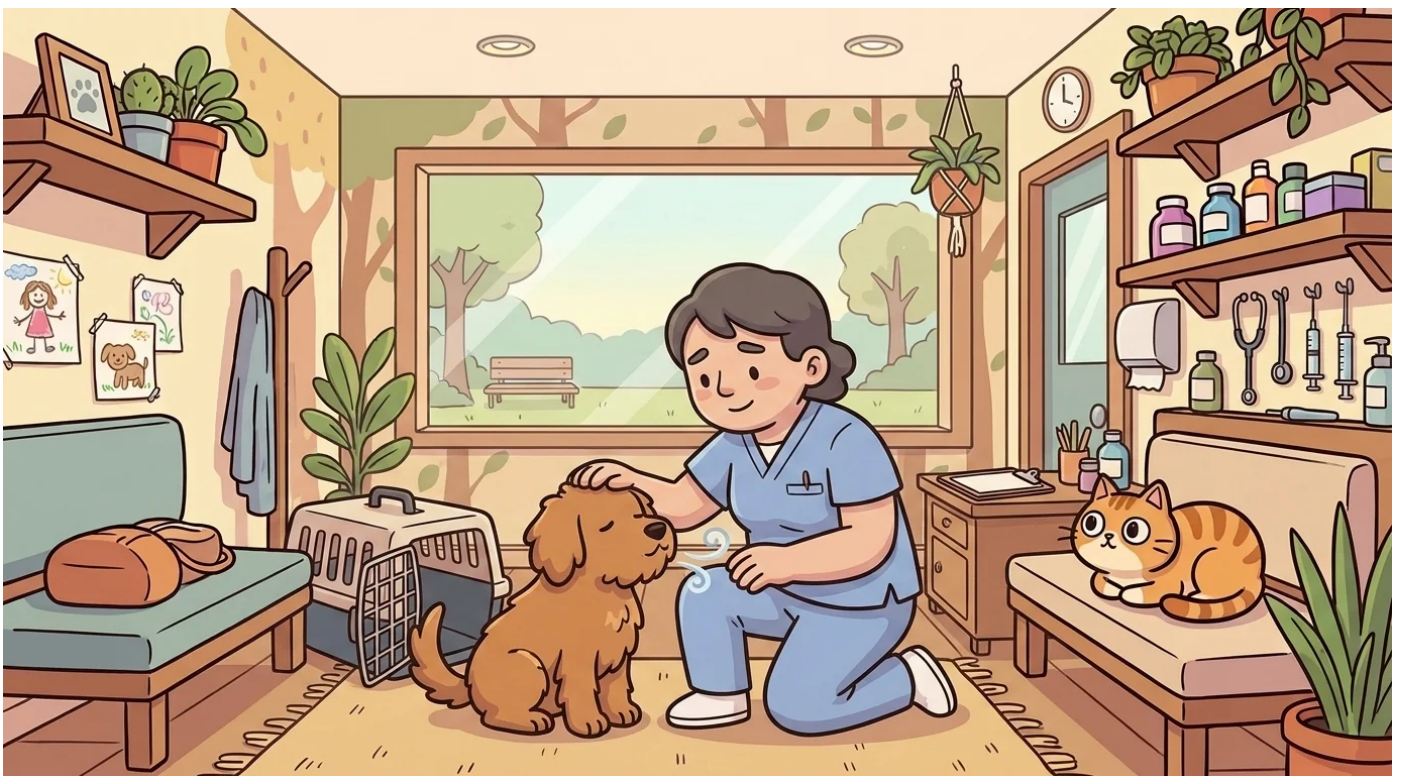
She waited. A full minute passed, maybe more. Pip's ears slowly relaxed, swiveling forward a bit. His nose twitched a little less frantically. He still didn't move, but the tension in his small body eased.



Tend extended her hand, palm up, offering it for him to sniff. Her fingers were slightly spread, showing they held no hidden tools. Pip hesitated, then cautiously stretched his neck, his whiskers brushing against her skin. It was a tiny, tentative step.

"Good boy," Tend praised softly. She didn't grab him. Instead, she gently stroked his back, moving slowly, deliberately. She felt the warmth of his fur, the slight tremor beneath her touch. She continued to watch his signals, ready to pause if he showed any renewed fear.

When Pip seemed more settled, she carefully lifted him from the carrier, cradling him against her chest. He was light, almost weightless. She carried him to the examination table, where a soft towel waited. She spoke to him the whole time, a steady stream of quiet, reassuring words.



"We just need to check that paw," she explained, as if he understood every word. She knew he understood her tone, her gentle touch, her calm posture. These were his communication channels. She gently unwrapped the old bandage, her movements precise and unhurried. Pip flinched once when she touched a sensitive spot. Tend immediately stopped.

"Sorry, buddy," she said, her voice full of genuine apology. She waited, letting him settle again, before continuing with even greater care. She applied fresh ointment, then began to wrap a new bandage. Her goal was always minimum-restraint, just enough to keep him safe and still, never to frighten him. She wanted to minimize his fear, to make this a good experience, or at least, not a bad one.

When the new bandage was secure, Pip looked up at her, his dark eyes wide. He didn't struggle as she placed him back in his carrier. He even nudged her hand once before settling down. Tend smiled. It wasn't just about fixing the paw. It was about respecting Pip, about earning his trust, one slow, careful movement at a time. It was about **treatment delivery with consent**.

Listen along + meet more of the cast at:



<https://spark-and-anvil.com/cast/creaturecare/tend>

About Spark & Anvil

CreatureCare is one of 140 educational iOS apps from Spark & Anvil — a 501(c)(3) public charity making free, ad-free, tracking-free learning apps for ages 9-14.

Every app uses distributed-narrative methodology: named recurring characters embody curricular concepts. The cast you just met appears in the matching app, in mentor scaffolding, in puzzle solutions, in celebration moments. Reading the chapters first means meeting old friends when you open the app.

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