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this guy!

## Marley and Him

When Zach Skow was near death, dogs came to his rescue. Now rescuing dogs is his life.

**ZACH SKOW SPENDS** most mornings on a skateboard, zigzagging through hilly Tehachapi, California, with a German shepherd or Great Dane running happily beside him. Seeing him now, it's hard to believe that two and a half years ago, at age 28, Skow was facing end-stage liver disease after battling alcoholism since his teens. When his doctors recommended exercise, he started taking short, slow walks with his father's skittish rescue dogs, including a Rottweiler-pit bull mix named Marley. Each day the group covered a little more ground, as the animals grew more trusting and Skow grew stronger. "I'd thought I was destined to die," Skow says. "The dogs gave me motivation to stick around. I found purpose because of them; I got better because of them."



Today, healthy and sober, Skow is the founder of Marley's Mutts, a nonprofit shelter that specializes in large rescue dogs, located on 16 acres of craggy, mountainous land surrounding his and his father's houses. With frequent road trips, park and playground runs, and those high-speed skateboard adventures, Skow helps abused or neglected dogs feel comfortable with humans again. "With cars and people zipping around, the dog stays by your side—he learns

to feel an allegiance to you," says pack leader Skow. His second-in-command is Marley himself, who has a knack for stopping fights and keeping newbies in line.

Large dogs are notoriously hard to place, but since March 2009, Marley's has found homes for some 250 mutts. "They were throwaway dogs, and there was a time when I felt like a throwaway human being," Skow says. "They've experienced a metamorphosis, and so have I." —KATIE ROBBINS

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## The Lions' Share

A husband-and-wife team tracks a family—and a species—in peril.

Naturalists Dereck and Beverly Joubert have spent more than a quarter-century documenting Africa's large predators—and observing their rapid decline: The continent is home to just 20,000 lions (down from

450,000 in the 1960s), victims of habitat loss and illegal hunting. For their film *The Last Lions* (in select theaters now), the National Geographic explorers-in-residence lived in a tent in Botswana for years to keep close watch on a

magnificent lioness they dubbed Ma di Tau ("mother of lions" in the local language) and her cubs as they fended off

fearsome buffalo and a rival pride. The movie (narrated by Jeremy Irons, a.k.a. Scar from *The Lion King*) is a lush, sepia-toned

testament to Ma di Tau's resilience and intelligence, but her struggle also symbolizes an entire species' battle for survival. The title of the Jouberts' film is a dare: If Earth's caretakers act now, future generations can see *The Last Lions* as a warning heeded, not a prophecy fulfilled.

—JESSICA WINTER



The stars of the film: Ma di Tau and her cubs.

