



By  
Carolyn  
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## Tara Prosser is the lunch lady. She works at the Middle School.

Leaving after lunch, she heads back to her modest ranch home and her Weimaraners.

Some days she stops at the local EMT offices to say a quick hello to her husband, Jeff, the Chief Paramedic Officer, a giant, friendly man.

They live here, in Joplin, Missouri, a town of 50,000 squatting in the southwest corner of the state, in Jasper County. Joplin has a Walmart, a Home Depot and a Target. But there's also the quaint downtown strip of antique stores and soda fountains, vestiges of a time when the little city sat as a jewel on the long, winding belt of historic Route 66.

The people of Joplin are country music people, ball cap people. The hardworking folks that keep cities like Joplin on the map for nearly 150 years.

To Tara and Jeff Prosser, Joplin is home.

Tara lets the screen door slam shut as she is greeted by the dogs, Daisey and Lily, two great, grey leaping balls of energy, all glossy coats and blue eyes. Tara has two children, but these dogs are her babies. She lets them bounce around her and smack slobbering kisses across her cheeks.

"Four on the floor," she tells them, though she's smiling. "Four on the floor."

Daisey is a new dog, fairly young and still very green, but Lily, Lily is her champ.

Five years earlier, the Prosser family visited a pet shop on a quest to buy a lizard for daughter Ivy. There, Tara locked eyes with a Weimaraner puppy. The pup had soft, grey fur and melt-your-heart blue eyes. Floppy ears gave her a comical appearance, and she looked like she would never grow into those paws.

### CHAPTER 1: Meet Lily and Tara

Tara fell in love.

She knew, though, that a family dog was not a decision to take lightly. As much as she had fallen for the little, grey pup's baby blues, she knew it was best to take an evening with the family to consider if this was the right thing to do. After all, lizards are much less work and trouble than a wound up ball of fur.



The morning light brought assurance to Tara's gut feeling. She wanted that dog. She called the pet store and was shocked to learn that the Weimaraner pup was gone! The store chain was opening a new shop in Springfield and had sent the little dog there for the grand opening. Tara's heart plummeted. She had seen something in those eyes. Some kind of intelligence. A connection. She just had to find that dog.

She begged the pet store to ship the puppy back to Joplin. Thankfully, it obliged.

"Lily," Tara called her.

There was never any other name.

First, Lily's paws grew. Then her legs became long, her nose grew large, her snout expanded. And always those big, floppy ears.

"She's going to get big," Tara told Jeff. "We're going to have to do something with her!"

And so, the pair signed up for obedience classes. Tara immediately saw Lily's incredible intelligence. Lily mastered "sit," "stay," all of the basics, but Tara thought that maybe, just maybe, this dog could be something more.

Author Carolyn Mueller has written two children's books, "Lily: A True Story of Courage and the Joplin Tornado," available April 2014, and "Bubbles the Dwarf Zebu: A Story about Finding a Home at the Saint Louis Zoo." She lives in St. Louis. Learn more at [carolyneizabethmueller.com](http://carolyneizabethmueller.com).

Illustrator Nick Hayes draws political cartoons for the Guardian and New Statesman newspapers and writes graphic novels. His latest book is a study of the Dust Bowl in 1930s America. He lives above a flower market in East London. Learn more at [foghornhayes.co.uk](http://foghornhayes.co.uk).

### Dig A Little Deeper!



Lily is a Weimaraner. The American Kennel Club has information on this breed of dog. Visit [akc.org/breeds/weimaraner](http://akc.org/breeds/weimaraner) and summarize the information you learn. Where did the breed originate? What physical markings and personality traits are specific to this breed? What type of family would best suit this dog?

**In the News:** Classified ads are used to buy and sell items, including pets. Locate the classified ads for pets in your newspaper. Create a bar graph that shows the different types of pets represented in the ads. Next, write a classified ad designed to sell Weimaraner puppies.

CCSS: R.CCR.1, R.CCR.2, R.CCR.3, R.CCR.4, R.CCR.5, R.CCR.7, W.CCR.4, SL.CCR.3, L.CCR.4

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