

TALES ABOUT TAILS

TRUE STORIES OF STREET DOG RESCUE

#1



LUNAR, MARLENE AND WINNIE

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A short Introduction to “Tales About Tales”

Hello and Welcome

This is not just another book about dogs— It is the first issue in a new series about street dogs in Palawan, in this issue, a collection of three true stories - Not fiction. Not fluff – three true cases of dog rescue. This a book about survival, rescue, support, love, second chances, and what it truly means to care for these loveable, so often neglected creatures.

My name is Steve, and I live in Palawan, a small island in the Philippines with Ruth, my partner. I am English, she is Filipino, and we have been together now for around eleven years; starting our dog support in a small way about eight years ago in in 2017. Over the years, we’ve taken in dozens of street dogs—abandoned, injured, starved, forgotten. Right now, we share our home with fifteen of them; every one of them lifted up and brought home from the streets. Some were dumped and discarded like garbage; our latest tiny pup who we call Emily, was actually tied up in a bag and thrown into a water filled ditch; but apart from her, who was obviously discarded by her owners, the others were all born on the street, never knowing a kind word or a soft touch.

Most of them were hurt by people who should have known better. But they’re all here now, at home with us—safe, fed, warm, and loved. They are not just animals to us; they are our family. Every bark, every scar, every wagging tail has a story, and some of their stories deserve to be told. I just hope I can do justice in retelling their individual stories to show you the grief and despair that these neglected animals have had to stand, but happily have survived.

We didn’t set out to become rescuers. We don’t have a brand-new rescue van or an official shelter or a team of staff. We’re just an ordinary couple who saw suffering and couldn’t walk away. It started with one dog, who we named Stinker, and you can guess why, then another... and before long, it became a way of life. We’ve taken in sick pups, starving pregnant mothers, dogs with broken legs, blind eyes, burnt or infected skin—some too far gone to save, others just waiting, hoping, even begging for someone to just *try* to help and care.

We feed them, clean them, treat their wounds as best we can, and when necessary, we take them to the vet. Sometimes we become sad and despair. Sometimes we run short of money and have to cut back on basic household commodities for ourselves, and sometimes we feel completely overwhelmed and exhausted. But every time one of them shows signs of recovery, no matter how small, and wags their tail, curls up beside us, or gives us that look—the one that says, “*Thank you for not giving up on me*”— the feelings we get are so joyful and reminds us why we keep going... And why we will never give up!

This eBook is the starter of an intended series and covers just three true stories, although we plan to cover many more true stories in future books and videos. Each of these dogs featured in this short eBook is very special. You’ll meet Lunar, a dog who came back from the very brink. Marlene, who’s gentle, yet happy spirit still cheers us every day. And Winnie, who taught us that even the smallest lives matter deeply.

We are not doing this for fame or money. We're doing it because these stories might change someone's heart. Maybe someone who reads this will rescue a dog instead of buying from a dealer or a breeder. Maybe someone will see a stray dog walking in the street and give it a second look, and a second chance. If so, I guarantee you will never, ever regret choosing a street dog, with their truly amazing sense of loyalty, love and gratitude. Because when you rescue a dog, they rescue you right back. They teach you patience, kindness, loyalty, and strength.

We don't expect this book to go straight to the top of the best-sellers list and we don't need thousands of likes or shares either, although we wouldn't refuse them, of course. But if just one person reads this and decides to help a stray even in a small way like offering a bowl of water on a hot day, or opening their heart and giving a home to a dog in need—then every word was worth writing.

I would like to point out one thing; the first five issues of Tales About Tails will focus entirely on the fifteen dogs who currently live with us in our home, as part of one big loving family. We will cover their story in detail, such as their rescue, where we found them, their condition, and their life now. After that, starting in Issue No.6 we will delve into the missions and attempts of rescue, some successful and some not, of all the other dogs that we helped.

Thank you for being here. Thank you for listening. And most of all, thank you for caring. Now let me introduce you to just three of the saved-souls who changed Ruth and my lives forever.

Steve and Ruth

TalesAboutTails

Lunar: The Dog Who Refused to Give Up.



It was an ordinary afternoon in Palawan—hot and dry, the kind of day where the sun seems to burn through your clothes and scold your skin. We were on a drive down south of the capital, Puerto Princesa, to collect some plants for the garden, and had no plans to do anything else that day. But sometimes, that's how it goes, unexpected and unplanned; times like that is when some of the most important rescues have occurred: right out of the blue and without warning.

We saw him outside a small local shop, lying in the dust as if he had given up on ever being noticed. A crumpled, motionless shape tucked into the side of the building, half in shadow, half exposed to the sun. If you didn't look closely, you'd mistake him for a pile of old rags. That's how thin he was—his skin stretched over his bones, his ribs sharp and clearly seen, scabby fur only growing in patches, with raw, open sores clearly visible where his hair should have been.

The shopkeeper noticed us slowing down and came outside to try and serve us, thinking we wanted food, but when we said we were only interested in the dog, he stood and told us the full story. A few months earlier, the dog had been crossing the road—maybe looking for food, maybe just trying to survive another day—when a truck came speeding along, going far too fast for the small road. And then it happened; no brakes, and no attempt to swerve to avoid him. It smashed into him and flung him off the road like a bag of trash. The driver didn't even stop to come and see what he'd done.

The few local people who witnessed the accident thought that the dog would die right there. But somehow, he crawled back to the side of the shop and collapsed in the shade. He didn't leave. He didn't even whimper or cry. He didn't make a sound. He just... stayed, and the onlookers just walked away; just another case of hit and run to them and nothing to be alarmed about. And that, according to the shopkeeper was how it stayed ever since, with no one caring, no one helping, not

even giving the wretched dog a bowl of water or a few scraps of food. Somehow or other he managed though, and like most street dogs, must have scavenged for scraps of food out of bins and dumps, and drank water from puddles of rain.

We listened to the story and decided to take a closer look, just to see if we could at least give him some food from some of the biscuits and bottles of water that we always carry on the back of our pick-up at all times. We walked up to him slowly. We've learned, over time, how street dogs often react—some are aggressive out of fear and bare their teeth, others run, some just freeze. But this one lifted his head and looked at us. Eyes full of pain, yes—but also calm. Trusting. As if he'd already made peace and had accepted whatever had happened to him in the past, and would accept any help he could get without a struggle or a fight.

I knelt down beside him. His front leg was twisted in a way no leg should ever be. It looked like it had been shattered and then healed wrong, bent and useless. He couldn't stand on it. Every movement was clearly difficult as he was only capable of using three legs, and when I reached out and slowly touched his side, he didn't flinch. He didn't growl. He didn't try to crawl away.

He just let out a deep, exhausted sigh. Like he was saying, *"Okay. If this is help... I'll take it."*

We wrapped a towel around him and gently lifted him into our car. He didn't resist. He didn't struggle. Maybe he couldn't or didn't have the energy to make a fuss. Or maybe he knew, somehow, that he was finally being rescued. We immediately forgot about our gardening shopping spree, turned around and drove straight back home, and on the way there we named him Lunar. Don't ask why—it just felt right. Normally we name all our dogs from characters in British soap operas, like *Coronation Street* or *Fools and Horses*, but something about this one suggested something more 'spiritual'.

We brought him home and laid him in a big and spacious spare room at the back of the house, the one we use as a laundry room, and shut the door to keep him away from our other dogs who were crowding at the doorway to see who their latest visitor was. We've learned from experience how overwhelming it can be for a new rescue to suddenly be surrounded by other dogs—especially a dog this fragile. He needed quiet. He needed space. He needed to feel safe.

We gave him food, expecting him to sniff at it and nibble. Instead, he greedily devoured everything in sight, bowl after bowl of chicken meat, no bones, and rice, like a creature who hadn't eaten properly in weeks. And maybe he hadn't. Then he drank and drank until his whole body seemed to relax. Within minutes, he was asleep—deep, unmoving sleep, the kind only the completely exhausted ever reach. I checked on him regularly throughout the night. He had barely moved.

A Visit to the Vet



The morning after we had taken Lunar home, we took him to the vet.

We carried him to the car on a big towel, careful not to jolt his twisted leg. He didn't struggle—he seemed to trust us completely by then, even though it had only been one night. That's what gets you with dogs like him. That quiet acceptance. That silent dignity, even in suffering.

When we arrived at the clinic, the staff took one look at him and sighed, like they'd seen this kind of thing too many times before. A street dog. Broken. Abandoned. Just another forgotten life.

The vet, Dr. Dan, who we now know as a trusted friend, examined him thoroughly, moving slowly so as not to cause him more pain. The twisted leg was easy to diagnose—an old compound fracture that had healed in the wrong position. Surgery, we were told, would be dangerous. Risky. He might not survive anesthesia, and even if he did, it wouldn't guarantee full use of the leg. Amputation was an option—but again, it would be a serious strain on his already fragile body.

We had been prepared for bad news—but even so, it was hard to hear it all laid out:

- His front leg was permanently damaged and possibly should be amputated.
- His heart was weak, and the vet suspected long-term heart issues.
- His liver was struggling, possibly from parasites or old diseases left untreated.
- His skin condition was severe—mange, most likely—and the open sores made him vulnerable to infection.

We asked the vet what he'd do if it were his dog. He paused, then said gently, "If he's not in constant pain so leave the leg as it is. It's useless, but it's not hurting him anymore. And he's learned to live with it."

That was the first wave of relief. But it didn't last.

A blood test revealed serious internal issues—his liver was struggling, likely due to long-term malnutrition and untreated infections. His heart was weak, showing early signs of failure. His skin was inflamed and full of mites, and he had open wounds that had been festering in the heat.

We stood there listening to the list of health problems, feeling heavier by the second. The vet didn't sugarcoat it, he just told us how it was.

"You'll need to decide," he said. "Are you ready to commit? This will be long-term care. He'll need daily medication for his heart, liver support, regular checkups, proper food, skin treatment—and time. A lot of time." He made it very clear that it would be a long road. That he might not survive it. That if we were going to try, we had to commit ourselves to the long haul – This wasn't any quick-fix! No way!

We didn't even look at each other.

"Yes," we said. "We'll do it."

That was it. No dramatic moment. Just a decision made out of love.

The clinic supplied us with a box of various supplies and medication, we paid the bill, which wasn't small, and loaded Lunar back into the car, laying him down carefully on the back seat on his towel. Ruth was driving as we went back home whilst I sat in the back with him; he lay there quietly, his head resting on my hand, his eyes half-closed. I like to believe he knew he was in good hands at last and finally on his way to healing.

Slow Healing, Small Miracles



Recovery isn't just about medicine. It's about time, trust, and letting a broken soul rediscover what safety feels like. With Lunar, we knew we couldn't rush anything. His body was battered, but his spirit was something else entirely—gentle, quiet, watchful. As if he was waiting to see whether we meant what we said when we told him he was 'home' now.

He stayed in that spare room for a few days, resting, eating, sleeping. Every time we checked on him, he wagged his tail slightly, just the tip, like a small flag raised in thanks. We gave him his medication—pills for his heart, supplements for his liver, creams and baths for his skin. He didn't fight us. He let us treat him without any struggle or objection at all, even when it must have been painful. That kind of trust can't be taught. It has to come from somewhere deep inside, which always baffles me, why these poor dogs can be so trusting after they have endured so much pain and neglect.

After a week, he showed signs of wanting to explore. He was still unsteady, his bad leg flopping helplessly, moving slowly, but there was a spark returning to his eyes. So, we opened the door to the room and let him decide to go out and explore when he was ready; we have a big plot of land, four thousand square meters, roughly the size of a football pitch, so plenty of space for him to have a slow walk of exploration. And, out of precaution, we'd already put all the other dogs inside the house and closed the doors so that they couldn't run up to Lunar and innocently knock him over.

He didn't bolt out. He didn't come rushing up onto our balcony at the front of the house where most of our dogs tend to spend their time. He just looked around the grassy area quietly and made a choice of his own where to wander, sniffing our other dog's scents, looking all around and getting his bearings. After thirty minutes or so, with Ruth standing over him in case of accident, I slowly opened the front door and let the other dogs out to come and meet their latest house-mate. And they did; coming slowly up to him, wagging their tails, making him welcome.

That night, he didn't want to return to the laundry room and slept under the banana trees by the side of our house. Thankfully it was the dry season and he would be fine sleeping out, something he was more than used to, before, sleeping by the side of that shop.

We brought him a blanket and a large dog cage in case he felt safer to sleep inside. We placed his water bowl by his side and sat and watched as he curled up in the grass, sheltered by the trees, and looked at us with eyes that said, *"This is far enough for now."*

Wonderful! All was going to be okay. Both of us could sense it!

Over the next few weeks, Lunar became part of the background of our home—never pushing, never demanding, always present. He would come a little closer at mealtimes, slowly limping toward the bowls when the others were feeding, but still watchful and careful, and still preferring to eat alone by the trees. The pack didn't challenge him. It was as if they knew, as if they were comparing his condition to how they used to be when they first arrived. They sniffed him, gave him space, and accepted him without question. But still, even after three or four weeks, he still preferred to eat alone and sleep under the banana trees.

The first time he stepped onto the balcony with the others, it almost made me jump with joy. He stood there, unsure, waiting at the top of the steps to see if he was allowed or not. We nodded and waved him to come forward, gave him his own bowl close to the others as they were eating, and slowly, he started to eat, then lay down on the steps at first, and then later he stretched out beside the others on the wooden floor of the balcony like he'd been there all along.

Little things began to slowly change. He stopped flinching when we reached to pet him. He let out small, contented sighs when we brushed him or rubbed behind his ears, and after a few baths and skin treatment, his fur started to grow back—at first in scruffy patches, then later becoming thick and glossy. The sores healed. The tired look in his eyes had begun to disappear, replaced by a breathless smiley, panting.

And then came the moment we'll never forget – About five months after he'd joined us- A moment of magic!

One night, after a particular trying and long day, we needed an early night; switched the bedroom fan on and climbed onto bed, with three or four of the regular dogs who sleep with us most nights already laying there. A few minutes later, there was a soft sound at the door, we never fully close it in case one of them needs to go outside to do their toilet duties, or one of the others wants to come into a cooler room. Then a thump—it was Lunar pushing the door open, limping inside, carrying his bad leg in front of him, looking all around the room. He'd often been in our bedroom before, like all the rest, but never at night time.

We raised ourselves up, stayed still, just watching what he would do next.

He limped over, paused at the foot of the bed, looking at the other dogs on the bed, and then climbed up—awkwardly, gently, like someone doing something strange for the first time in their life; it took him three or four attempts, but then, with an almighty leap, he was up on the bed. He stood and looked at us for a few moments, almost as if he was asking permission, then flopped down beside us, placed his head on the blanket, and let out a long, peaceful sigh.

And just like that, he was home. Cuddling between us, sidling up to Raquel, another regular little doggie bed-sleeper, and within a few minutes was breathing heavily, eyes closed, nicely relaxed until a deep sleep called him. The next morning when I woke, there he was, half asleep, a cheesy grin on his face, still laying in a line with Raquel, Winnie, Betty and Boycie – Five on the bed alongside Ruth and me – Lucky Seven!

Lunar as He is Now



Today, Lunar is barely recognizable from the pitiful bag of bones we found by the shop.

His front leg will never heal—it's bent, useless, and moves around slightly when he runs, but much stiffer and harder than it was when we found him. But he doesn't let that stop him. He plays with the other dogs, chases birds that come onto the balcony to eat, and sometimes—just to show off—he'll run in circles, barking happily, hopping along on his three good legs with a speed and joy that defies everything he's been through. In fact, when he's racing with Ken, a beautiful dog we rescued from a local shopping market, he is just as fast, if not faster!

His fur is beautiful now. Thick and shiny, and when the sun hits it just right, you can see a healthy shimmer— no sign of any scabs or mites or bald patches; completely healthy now with a shiny light brown colour.

He still takes his medication daily. Heart and liver problems don't go away, and he'll be on treatment for the rest of his life. But we've got it down to a routine. He knows the drill. He takes his pills without fuss, then waits for his treat like the good boy he is. Some dogs back off and even run away when they see us coming with the medicines, like Elsie who always runs away instead of taking her skin supplements, but Lunar was always so easy to treat, and that's probably why he has recovered so quickly and so well.

What's most special about Lunar isn't his recovery—it's his heart. Despite all the pain, the fear, the cruelty he faced, he remains the gentlest dog we've ever known. He doesn't bark much. He doesn't demand attention. But he'll sit beside you for hours if you're feeling down or troubled; all dogs can sense this with their owners and instinctively want to help. He'll rest his chin on your knee, as if to say, *"It's okay. I'm still here. And so are you."*

There's something sacred about that kind of loyalty.

What Lunar Taught Us

We've rescued many dogs over the eight years that we've been doing the rounds. Each one has a story. Each one leaves a mark. And Lunar's story reminds us of something essential—that no life is beyond saving, and sometimes the quietest and worst hit dogs have the most to teach us.

He taught us that healing isn't always a quick and easy fix; most times it's a long and difficult road to take. He proved to us that a dog's trust is built in moments by sensing the good from the bad. That sometimes just showing up, just staying to keep them company, is the most powerful thing you can do for someone who's hurting.

People sometimes ask why we do this. Why we take in dogs that others ignore. Why we keep going, even when the costs are high—emotionally, financially, and physically.

And the answer is simple:

Because of dogs like Lunar.

Because he didn't give up.

Because no one else would help him.

Because now, when he sleeps stretched out on our bed, snoring gently, his belly full, his heart strong—we remember what he once was. And we know that love and care can make the impossible become possible.



The rescue for Lunar took place in March 2023.

Marlene's Story – The Puppy Who Wouldn't Be Left Behind



The Beginning – Meeting Marlene

When we first met Marlene, we didn't know she would become one of the greatest joys of our lives. It happened when we moved from our small rented place to a plot of land where we'd just started building our own house. At that time, the house was little more than a skeleton of wood, bamboo and beams, being built in the local native style, still a long way from being finished, but the land itself, quite big and unspoilt, already felt like home to us; back to nature, fresh air and open space. It was open, peaceful, and full of potential—not just for us, but for our dogs too, and as it turned out, for a little puppy who was about to join us and change everything.

Marlene is the puppy who came to join us and change things; she was there from the start of the house build, a tiny ball of energy, no more than two or three months old. She belonged, legally, to a man who worked as a caretaker on the land opposite ours. He wasn't particularly kind to his animals, but at that point, we didn't know the depth of it. What we saw was a sweet, playful puppy who would come bounding across the dusty road to our place every day when we arrived, her tail wagging, her face lighting up when she saw us and our other dogs.

It was as if she had chosen us, even before we realized we had to choose her. And that has happened many times before to us. It's like the dog makes its mind up even before we have had time to!

Every day while we worked on the house, Marlene would join our little pack. She would tumble around in the dirt with our dogs, chasing and playing, completely at home as if she had always belonged. She'd share their food when we laid out bowls of rice and meat, and sometimes she'd curl up in the shade just a few feet away from us, watching with those bright, trusting eyes.

She wasn't shy. In fact, Marlene was one of the friendliest puppies we'd ever met. There was something about her spirit—innocent, but tough. She was growing up in hard circumstances over

the road with that guy, but she had somehow managed to hold on to her baby-like joyfulness, even playfully bossing around another little pup who often strayed into our place called Boycie when they played together.

At that time, we weren't yet living on the land. The house wasn't ready, so each evening we'd pack up and return to our rented place, taking our dogs with us but leaving Marlene behind. And each morning when we returned, and when she heard our car, there she would be, waiting for us, her tail thumping, as if the whole night had just been a brief pause in her day.

But then, one conversation changed everything.



The Threat – The Caretaker's Cruelty

It was an ordinary afternoon when the caretaker approached us. We were sitting around watching the house slowly take shape, and he had obviously seen us laughing and playing with Marlene, and had noticed how quickly and easily she had become part of our lives as if we were her owners and not him. I thought perhaps he was coming to make small talk, or maybe even to complain that Marlene was spending more time with us than with him. Was he jealous of us?

But his words hit like a hammer. He didn't hold back.

"I'm going to kill her, later today" he said, as casually as if he were discussing the weather. "I'll cook her and eat her tonight."

We both stared at him, waiting for him to laugh, to tell us it was a silly joke in poor taste. But he didn't smile. He wasn't joking. The caretaker had already killed the other puppies from Marlene's litter, something we hadn't known until later when Ricky, one of the building workers

who lived nearby, told us after the caretaker had gone back to his place. To him, they were nothing more than a meal.

In fact, here in the Philippines, killing dogs to eat them has been illegal since the turn of the century, but, sadly, it still goes on in some remote areas by some evil people.

I felt sick. My chest tightened. I turned to Ruth and by the look on her face, she felt the same too. Marlene, our playful, happy little visitor—the puppy who had chosen us—was in real, immediate danger. That man just didn't see her the way we did. He didn't see her bright, trusting eyes. He didn't see her joyful spirit, her boundless energy, her love for life. To him, she was just free food. Disposable, like picking up a take-out meal from a local café.

I couldn't let that happen. Ruth couldn't let that happen. We just wouldn't. We would never forgive ourselves.

But this wasn't as simple as just picking her up and taking her back to our rented place to keep her safe. Marlene, as much as we loved her, wasn't ours—not yet. The man saw her as his property. If we simply took her, we risked starting a dangerous conflict. The man lived right across from us. He wasn't someone we could afford to have as an enemy.

So, we had to be smart and we had to be careful. But we had to move fast - We had to save Marlene today without starting a war.

I spoke to one of our workers, Ricky, the one who had warned us about the caretaker earlier, a kind and sensible young guy who lived locally and knew all about the caretaker, and, importantly knew how to talk to people like that. I asked him to go and speak with the man on our behalf. Maybe, just maybe, he could convince him to let Marlene go—if not out of kindness, then perhaps for a price.

We sent Ricky with some money and a promise of meat from the local supermarket. I told him to offer it all in exchange for Marlene's life. Not to take 'No' for an answer, no matter what the caretaker asked for.

It was an agonizing wait. We watched from a distance as they spoke, my stomach in knots, Ruth standing beside me, silently praying. We couldn't hear their conversation, but could see the caretaker's expression, see him weighing up the offer in his mind as he considered what was more important to him – cash or food.

Finally, Ricky returned. The man had agreed. Marlene would be ours.

Relief washed over me like a wave. We had saved her. She was coming home with us—not for a day, not for an afternoon of play, but forever. Ruth didn't waste a second, running across the road to snatch Marlene up and carry her back to our place; to safety.

From that moment on, Marlene was ours—not just in the practical sense, but in the way that truly matters. She belonged with us, and we belonged to her. There was no hesitation in her. The day we took her home she walked beside us quite naturally as if she'd been with us her whole life, as if she sensed and knew that this was where she was always going to be from this day onwards.

For the first time since we'd known her, Marlene didn't have to return to a place where danger lurked. She didn't have to wonder whether the man who fed her might one day decide to harm her. Those days were over. She was safe. She was home. And it didn't take her long to settle in.

Marlene blended into our family so naturally it was as though she'd always been there. The other dogs welcomed her like they always do with all new comers— at that time we had Stinker, Claire, Betty, Tim and Dickie- and somehow, they seemed to understand that she was one of us now, not just a visitor. She ran with them, played with them, slept curled up on the sofa or on one of the comfortable chairs, sharing space with them. She was joyful, affectionate, and wonderfully cheeky, always finding ways to make us laugh.

There's something beautiful about a dog who knows they're safe. You can see it in the way they stretch out when they sleep, the way they race across an open yard with complete abandon, the way their tail never seems to stop wagging. Marlene had that sparkle. She was alive in every way. She chased across the open land, she rolled in the grass, she found sticks twice her size and dragged them around like trophies, bringing them up onto the balcony to make another mess for us to clear up; hahahaha, who cares?

And she loved us with a kind of purity that I can always sense from a rescued dog yet can't put into words—but I'll try.

Marlene loved us in that way dogs do when they've been rescued from the edge, when they've known the weight of uncertainty and have finally found something solid, something kind. She trusted us completely, and that trust was a treasure.

Every morning when we opened the bedroom door after a night's sleep, Marlene was there, with all the others, ready to greet us as if we hadn't seen each other in years. The same if we went out for an hour to do some shopping and left the dogs at home; we'd be jumped on, pushed at, barked at and welcomed with such an amazing feeling of love. I have to say - no longer do we, or can we, close our bedroom door as there would be almost a riot outside in the hallway, with all our fifteen dogs bursting to come inside and join us!

It didn't matter what was happening in her life—Marlene's excitement was constant and infectious. She'd bounce on her paws, tail spinning round and round, sometimes giving a little yap of happiness. And, like so many more dogs that have been in our lives, she reminded us why we were doing all this, why we'd chosen to build a life that revolved around saving and caring for dogs like her. Love!

Growing Together – Five Years of Love and Friendship



Five years have passed since the day we brought Marlene home, and in all that time, she has never drifted far from us—not in distance, nor in spirit.

Some dogs change as they grow older. Some become calmer, more reserved. But not Marlene. That same playful, joyful puppy still lives inside her. She's just a little bigger now, a little wiser, but she has kept that lightness, that spark that makes her who she is.

She has grown into a beautiful dog—strong, healthy, with a soft, expressive face that seems to understand everything you're feeling. Her white fur with brown patches shines, her eyes dance, and her tail is as lively as ever. She moves with the freedom of a dog who knows she is greatly loved.

Over the years, Marlene has given us countless memories for us to cherish and remember. I can still picture her chasing two of our other dogs, Boycie and Raquel, around the place, weaving in between trees and jumping over rocks with a speed and energy that always makes me shake my head in disbelief, makes me smile. I can still hear the rhythm of her breathing as she chased after me, speedily catching me up when I walked across the land on an errand, never wanting to miss an adventure.

Marlene is one of those dogs who always wants to be near you. She's not needy—she simply enjoys your presence. She will be the first one to greet you when you come back home, jumping

up to kiss you and welcome you with that beautiful, smiling face. In quiet moments she will sit beside you, watching and waiting, content just to share time with you. And when you turn to her, when you stroke her soft ears or scratch her belly, she gives you that big toothy grin and that look of hers—the look that says, *Thank you for choosing me.*

But really, it was Marlene who chose us.

Right from the start she had a way of pulling people in and making them feel for her. Friends, visitors, even workers who came and went during the house construction—everyone seemed to fall for Marlene; everyone always seemed to remember her name, whereas, with some of our other dogs, they were just called ‘Boy’ or ‘Girl’, as in “Come here Boy”. She had a special knack of going up to people, even strangers coming to the house for the first time, like delivery drivers and so on, and making a fuss over them. It’s as though she wanted everyone to know they were welcome and safe here, just as she was.

And it’s not just people—Marlene has always been incredibly gentle with the other dogs, especially the new rescues. When frightened or sick dogs joined our family, often unsure of where they were or whether they could trust anyone, Marlene would approach them calmly, tail wagging, as if to say, *It’s okay. You’re safe now.*

She became a quiet leader, not because she demanded attention, but because she earned respect. The other dogs followed her. They felt at ease around her. And I can honestly say that some of the nervous rescues have settled in much faster because Marlene made them feel at home.

Watching her grow has been one of the greatest joys of my life, and Ruth’s as well. Sometimes I wonder what would have happened if we hadn’t been there to save her. If the caretaker had carried out his terrible plan. If we had gone home that night, not knowing it would have been the last time we would have seen her. Such a terrible thought.

But then I look at her now as I sit on our balcony writing this, and see her lying in the shade, her belly full, her tail flicking lazily from side to side as if she is remembering something nice that happened to her, and I’m reminded of why we do what we do. Why we keep saving them. Why we keep fighting for them.

Why? Simple! It’s because all dogs deserve a life like this—a life of love, of freedom, and with a loving family to keep them safe.

What Marlene Taught Us



Looking back now, five years later, I realize that Marlene didn't just find a home with us—she helped shape the home we were building. She didn't just become part of the family; she became part of the story of who we are.

Saving dogs, living this life—it's not always easy. It's messy, it's tiring, and it can be heartbreakingly unfair. You see things you wish you hadn't. You lose dogs you've loved deeply. You feel the weight of responsibility every day. Sometimes it feels like the attitude to dogs here is too harsh and uncaring and that you're constantly working against a tide of neglect and cruelty that you can never fully stop.

But then there are dogs like Marlene. Dogs who remind you that even a little bit of kindness makes a difference. That small choices—like choosing to step in, choosing to care, choosing not to turn a blind eye and simply walk away—can change everything.

When I think about what Marlene has taught us, it's this: You don't have to save the whole world to make a world of difference to a dog. For Marlene, we became her whole world. We changed her life completely. And in her own way, she changed ours just as much.

She taught us about trust, about loyalty, about the quiet power of simply being there for someone. She taught us that love is not complicated—it's in the repeated daily acts, the shared moments, the steady, simple care that builds a bond stronger than words.

Marlene taught us that joy, faith and love can conquer everything.

And isn't that something we all need to remember? That no matter where you come from, no matter what's been done to you, there's always a chance for a new story. There's always hope for a better life.

Even now, Marlene is still showing us so much love and gratitude. Every time we come back, even after a short time away, she greets us like we're the best thing since sliced bread; every time she curls up next to us at the end of a long day, she reminds us that this life—the hard, messy, beautiful life of rescuing dogs—is worth every second. She is living proof of that.

When people visit us, they often ask about the dogs, about their stories, about where they came from. And when they meet Marlene, they see a happy, healthy, beautiful dog with no sign of the danger she once faced. When we reveal the truth, they can't believe that she was once so close to being lost. They can't believe that someone, Ricky, our worker back then, had to actually bargain for her life with a few pesos and some supermarket meat.

But that's how it is, isn't it? Sometimes the biggest, most important rescue stories start in the smallest, most unexpected ways and moments. You just never know.

That's why we keep going. That's why we keep doing our best in saving them. Because behind every stray dog, behind every story of survival, is a heart beating just like Marlene's— a dog waiting to be loved, waiting to come home, waiting to live in a way that all dogs deserve to live.

That is the true story of how Marlene came to live with us, as one of the ever-growing family, and both Ruth and I are just grateful that we were there when she needed us, and not too late.



The rescue for Marlene took place in December 2020.

Winnie's Story – Love, Laziness and Laughter



It was meant to be an ordinary shopping trip, something that is a rare occasion for us most of the time, these days. Ruth had packed the car, the twenty-year-old Mitsubishi pick up that serves us well, with a supply of bottled water and biscuits in the back, just in case we came across any strays that needed food, and off we headed to a local shopping mall. It was one of the few places around here in Puerto where dogs were allowed to run around on a big area at the back of the mall, providing someone supervised them whilst the owners did their shopping; it was a great place, but sadly the play area finished when the mall extended their car park. Naturally, we brought three of our own dogs that day: Betty, Stinker, and Claire. They were always happiest when they could come with us, their tails wagging, noses twitching at every new scent from all other different dogs they bumped into in new places.

We parked the car and set off towards the mall entrance, the three dogs walking happily at our sides. As we passed through the car park, weaving between parked tricycles and motorbikes, Betty suddenly stopped. She froze in place, her nose glued to the ground, sniffing beneath a tricycle parked near our car. No matter how much we called her, she wouldn't budge which was unusual for her as she was usually obedient and eager to keep moving along with us. But this time she refused to leave. Curious, Ruth and I knelt down to see what had caught her attention.

There, huddled beneath the wheels of the tricycle, was a tiny puppy. She was so small, fragile, and desperately afraid. Her body trembled as she tried to make herself invisible. What struck us most though was the terrible state she was in; she had almost no fur. Apart from a few strands of brownish colored hair at the back of her head her skin was bare, patchy, and covered in scabs. She looked so scared, petrified and trembling, as if she had already given up.

Our hearts sank. How had she got there? Did she belong to the tricycle driver or had she just somehow made her own way there. She was clearly sick, starving, and terrified. It was obvious that if we just left her like that she wouldn't survive long on her own. Ruth quickly went and reached into the back of our pick up and grabbed some of the dog biscuits we always carry with us. We gently placed a small pile near the edge of the tricycle and stepped right back. The little

pup cautiously inched forward, the smell of the food overriding her fear, just enough to pull her from her hiding spot.



When she finally emerged, we could see her properly. She was painfully thin, the outline of her ribs poking sharply against her skin, her eyes wide and full of fear. We didn't hesitate. I slowly reached down and gently picked her up and held her close. The pup didn't struggle. It was as if she was too tired to struggle or maybe she knew that this was her chance. We wrapped a spare towel round her and placed her in the back of the car, opened the window to let air inside, locked up and left her there. I watched our dogs on the playground whilst Ruth quickly went inside to do the shopping, and, after finishing buying the necessary stuff, rounded up our dogs and went straight home; me driving, Ruth holding the pup, and our other three sitting on the back seat, trying to get a better look at the new pup.

As always, as soon as we got home, we isolated her in the back laundry room, away from our other dogs. We'd learned over the years that it was the safest way to protect both the newcomer and our resident pack. Who knows what diseases some of these poor wretched street dogs carry and the last thing we wanted was to spread it to all our dogs – Can you imagine? That first night, we made her as comfortable as possible. We gave her food, water, and a soft blanket to sleep on. She ate hungrily but stayed wary, always watching us with those big, nervous eyes, quickly backing away if either of us got too near her.

The next morning, we took her to the vet as was our usual routine, just to find out what disease, if anything, she was carrying. After a thorough examination and all the usual blood tests, Dr. Dan, the vet showed us his findings and told us that the poor thing was riddled with scabies and mites. Her skin condition explained the hair loss and the constant scratching. The vet prescribed medication, both oral and topical, and gave us special medicated shampoo. Twice a week, we would need to bathe her carefully to help her skin heal. But, gladly, apart from the skin problems there was no internal problems to worry about – Maybe she was too young to suffer like that?

That became our routine; medicine twice a day, morning and night, and a bath twice a week. Bath times were not easy and very slow, as she was still so frightened, but I could manage to bathe her on my own as she was still weak and so tiny. She would stand in the warm water whilst I gave her two washings and rinsings with the medicated shampoo and she never bit or snapped at me. It was as if she understood, like most of these poor creatures, that we were trying to help her. I always carefully dried her each time, wrapped in a warm towel, whispering softly to her. Slowly, bath and feeding times became easier as she began to have more faith and trust us.

But the process wasn't without its setbacks. After a few days, I began to notice itchy, red spots appearing on my own skin. They spread quickly and soon covered large parts of my body. I had contracted mange from her. It was one of the hazards of rescuing street dogs, I'd had them before but this was one of the worst cases I'd personally experienced. The itch was unbearable at times, especially at nights, and I had to keep fully covered to avoid passing it on to our other dogs or to Ruth and our daughter, Rhea.

Still, I pressed on. Giving up on her was never an option. Why should I? It was too late to moan and complain about myself now, so the only option was to treat both of us. So, that's what happened; I treated myself while continuing to care for her, determined to see her fully recover. After about four weeks, we could see real progress. Her hair began to grow back, her skin looked healthier, and her energy improved. We checked with the vet again and he gave her the 'thumbs up' so now she was ready to meet the rest of the pack. Meet her new house mates.

When we finally let her out of the back laundry room and introduced her to the other dogs, it was a great moment. Of course, they had all seen her through the grilled door to the laundry room, but she had kept her distance, staying at the far end of the room and not coming to the door to mix with them. She was cautious at first, sticking close to me and Ruth, but the other dogs welcomed her without issue; no barking or biting. Betty, the one who had discovered her, seemed particularly fond of her, taking her time to walk with her, side by side, around the grounds, particularly in the place where the longer grass grew. On really hot days they would often nap together in the sunshine, then come up to the balcony to drink water together, a quiet bond of trust growing nicely between them.



We named her Winnie. It seemed such an obvious name to call her – If she had been a male she would have been named Winston, after Winston Churchill, because she *'Never Gave Up'*, but as a female she was named as close as possible, hence 'Winnie'.

Once let out of the confines of the laundry room Winnie quickly found her place in the family, but she remained shy and easily startled. She had one particularly stubborn habit: despite the wide, open land surrounding our home, Winnie always chose to use the inside of the house as her personal toilet. No amount of coaxing, training, or gentle scolding could convince her otherwise; even if she was sitting outside, she would come scuttling inside to *'use the toilet'*. It became something of a running joke in our house. Ruth, Rhea and me, spinning a coin to see who would be the one to mop up and clear the latest droppings she had so kindly supplied us with. Winnie had all the freedom in the world but insisted on doing her toilet duty indoor; ah well, such is life. But one thing I will say about her, is that unlike some pups we've housed, she never tried to bite big chunks out of the furniture or belongings, which was a blessing.

Life with Winnie was full of small, beautiful moments. I remember countless afternoons spent sitting outside with the pack, Winnie always keeping a careful distance at first, but slowly inching closer to sit by my side if I called her. It took months, but eventually, she would climb onto my lap, settle herself, and drift off to sleep, fully trusting me. Those quiet moments became some of my favorite times. You would have to experience it yourself to fully understand it.



She had a quirky way of communicating, too. Unlike the others, Winnie didn't bark much for attention. Instead, she would softly paw at my leg or gently nudge her wet nose against my hand when she wanted something. It was her silent language, and over time, I came to know exactly what each little nudge meant. Hunger, playtime, or simply wanting to be close.

Her bond with Betty remained strong. They became inseparable, sharing meals, and even sharing their two-food bowls, swapping and changing, taking naps in the sunshine, and exploring and having little adventures around the property. Betty seemed to have taken on a motherly role, maybe because her own mum, Claire, was living with us as one of the pack and she got the maternal instinct from her. She spent time guiding Winnie in her early days with us, showing her the routines, and teaching her which visitors were friends and which ones needed to be barked at. Hahaha, and could she bark!

Winnie eventually grew into an excellent watchdog. One evening stands out in my memory—we were relaxing at home when Winnie suddenly bolted to the gate, barking furiously. Her warning was sharper and more persistent than usual. When I went to check, I saw a stranger lingering just outside, behaving suspiciously. Winnie's alertness may well have scared him off. It was the first time I realized just how seriously she had taken her role in the family as self-appointed watchdog! She always seemed, and still does, appear to be the first to sense someone outside, or at the gate, barking her warnings and getting the others to join the dog's barking chorus!

Of course, she never lost her little habits that made us laugh. Even with plenty of encouragement and the freedom of our land, Winnie would still sneak inside to relieve herself. It didn't matter how much progress she made in other areas—this was her one quirk she simply refused to change. Over time, we accepted it as part of who she was. A mop and bucket were always nearby just in case.

As the months and years passed, around three years now since we were first blessed with her company, Winnie's fur has grown thick and soft and long and she really does look a little beauty,

almost like a special show dog. She loves to lie outside in the sunshine that we are so lucky to have here in Palawan and is officially now a part of our ‘Balcony Brigade’ too; part of our evening routine where we all sit outside on the balcony in the evenings, enjoying the cooler evening temperatures. First of all, we feed the dogs, all fifteen eat together, and when they are finished, we clear away what we can and then have our own evening meals.

When I look back now, I can’t help but feel a deep sense of gratitude for that day at the mall. What if Betty hadn’t stopped? What if we hadn’t looked under that tricycle? The thought of Winnie being left behind, sick and alone, is unbearable. She has become such an essential part of our lives, one of the many wonderful souls we were lucky enough to rescue.

I often think about the price we sometimes pay for rescuing these animals. Contracting mange was a tough experience—the itching, the treatments, the frustration—I’ve had it three times now, but it is a small price to pay for the life we were able to give Winnie. It took me nearly two months to fully recover, but I never resented her for it. If anything, it deepened our bond. We both had the same problem and we both healed more or less together.

Winnie’s story, like Lunar’s and Marlene’s, is a reminder of the resilience of these incredible animals. Given a chance, a little love, and a lot of patience, they can overcome even the darkest starts in life. And in return, they give us their trust, their loyalty, and a bond that words can scarcely describe.

Today, Winnie is not just a dog we rescued—she is family. She is home.... And, she now goes outside to use the toilet - YIPPEEEEE!



The rescue for Winnie took place in February 2021.

A Few Thoughts

Every day, no matter the weather, no matter how tired or busy we are, we go out to feed the street dogs, driving around in our battered old truck, the truck that all the regular dogs know the sound of and sit up when we turn up, knowing that their evening dinner, their ‘Meals on Wheels’ is sitting in the back. As said, some of them know us well now, waiting patiently at the usual spots, their tails wagging as we arrive. Others are more cautious, keeping careful watch, some even running away to a safe distance until we leave before returning to eat, but all of them still relying on the food and kindness that we bring. It’s not just food we offer—it’s a little bit of hope, company, a kind word, and a reminder that someone cares for them.

We don’t choose which dogs we help. Sometimes it’s a strong, healthy-looking dog that simply needs a meal. Sometimes, it’s a dog on the edge of survival, sick, broken, and afraid. We do what we can—whether that’s feeding, treating wounds, buying medicine, or bringing the most desperate ones home. We are far from perfect, not medically qualified or anything like that, but at least we try. Some recover quickly, some need a lifetime of care, but each one matters.

There’s no organization funding this, no big team behind us. It’s just us, doing what we can, when we can, because we believe that these dogs deserve better.

This book is the beginning. The first in what we hope will become a whole series of stories about the incredible dogs we’ve met, rescued, and loved. And, let me say in all honesty, there have been hundreds of dogs over the years, dogs we have loved and lost; some dogs that have just disappeared for reasons that I suspect but wouldn’t like to say. Every story is different, every life matters.

All dogs deserve to live in a loving home.

We would also like to invite you to join us on our video series, *Tales of Tails*, now available on YouTube. There, you can meet more of our dogs, see our daily work, and share in the real, unfiltered life of street dog rescue and survival. Through these stories—both written and filmed—we hope to raise awareness, encourage kindness, and inspire others to help in their own way.

Thank you for taking the time to read about Lunar, Marlene, and Winnie. Their stories continue, and so does our journey.

God Bless

Steve and Ruth

P.S. Please forgive any grammar, spelling or any other writing issues as I’m no professional writer – as anyone can tell – being an ordinary working man in my former life.

-FREE-

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Please be sure to check back regularly as more true stories of Street Dog Rescue are always on the way – Thank You

Support Our Mission

If you’ve enjoyed this book and want to help us feed, care for, and rescue more street dogs here in Palawan, you can support us via Ko-fi.

Every bit of time spent with them, every meal given, every bit of treatment, that we are able to give these dogs only happens because of kind people like you.

If you'd like to help us with the street dogs here in the Philippines, could you please make a small donation? Every cent collected all goes straight to the dogs, no middlemen, no nonsense and definitely no wastage....

Thank you for being part of their sto

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It may be hard to believe but even just \$1 buys two days of cooked meals for a street dog

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Kindly note that the following recommended product is an affiliate link. This means that if you click through and decide to make a purchase, we at *Tales About Tails* will receive a small commission from the seller — at no extra cost to you.

Every bit of financial support that we receive goes directly towards helping us feed, care for, and help more street dogs here in Palawan.

We only promote products that have been personally recommended to us from trusted friends who do the same as us, but in other countries; street dog support. Living where we do, it would be impossible for us to buy.

But NHV Natural Pet Products are high on the list of natural and safe, dog-related products and have made a real difference to so many dogs in those other countries. Take a look and see what you think.....

Thank you from all of us — and from the dogs!

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Thank you for supporting the work we do — and for helping more dogs to finally live happy, healthy lives!

Please Read My Disclaimer

I am not a veterinarian, or qualified in any medical way, and the information I give in this book is based purely on my own experiences gained from caring for rescue dogs here in the Philippines. Everything shared in my books — from natural remedies to feeding methods — has worked for my own dogs, but every dog is different, and I always urge you to test carefully before jumping right in to any new healing method. What worked for me and my dogs may not necessarily work for you or your dogs.

Always use your own judgement and, if you're unsure, consult a qualified vet before trying anything new. These natural methods are meant to support your dog's health, not always to replace professional care.

The aim of this book is simple: To help people care for their dogs safely, naturally, and affordably — especially when a trip to the vet isn't always possible or affordable.