

TALES ABOUT TAILS

True Stories of Street Dog Rescue

'SAVED FROM THE STREETS OF PALAWAN'



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A short Introduction to “Tales About Tales”

Welcome.

This book is more than just a collection of stories about dogs. It is a reflection of a journey—one of love, hope, and the quiet miracles that are quite possible and really do happen when we open our hearts to those in need.

We are Ruth and Steve, and are based in the beautiful island of **Palawan, Philippines**, a place of breathtaking, unspoilt nature and have lived here since 2012; Ruth is a Filipina from Bicol, and I am English. We started caring for these dogs a short time after we took our first dog, who we named Stinker, into our hearts and our home; she was the trigger to what we now do. During those years we are proud to have helped, even in a small way, hundreds of desperate dogs in one way or another – and gave names to most of them!

Over the years, many suffering street dogs have not only been fed, treated and rescued, but some have been brought, no, welcomed, into our home, each of them carrying their own story of struggle, survival, and incredible resilience. Alongside them are the memories of those who came before the seventeen rescued ones, who, at the time of writing, share our home—dogs like Stinker—who paved the way and left a lasting mark on our lives and souls.

Every dog that has crossed our path has taught us something different, in their own way — about patience, forgiveness, and the profound connection that exists between humans and animals. We believe that this ‘human-and-dog’ connection goes beyond this life. In moments of stillness and quiet, I, personally, have felt the presence long after a close one has passed away, reminding me that love never truly leaves us.

All of these stories covered here are all 100% true, not faked, not exaggerated, and not fiction, and share the reality and struggle of rescue work—the joys, the heartaches, and the small victories that make it all worthwhile and mean everything. They are honest tales, told with love and respect for each dog’s journey, and for the invisible thread that ties us all together.

This journey has changed us, Ruth and me, in ways we never could have imagined when we first started out. It’s been a path filled with challenges, but also with blessings that can only come from giving and receiving love unconditionally.

Our hope is that as you read these stories, you will find a little light, a little hope, and perhaps a deeper understanding of the amazing rewards and healing power that comes from opening your heart to those who need it most.

Welcome to our pack — may these tales touch your heart as deeply as they have touched ours.

Steve and Ruth

Let us start this book with a very special case, a dog named Lunar, that shows when a dog is determined to survive, nothing can stand in his way.

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, whilst 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 wrongly, 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 a nice large cage with blankets inside to sleep on, wanting him to be as comfortable as possible, and not just lay on the hard concrete floor. We brought him some food, expecting him to sniff at it and maybe nibble a little. 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, laying his head on a large towel—a 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 wrapped in 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, the trust, even after so much suffering.

When we arrived at the clinic, the staff took one look at him and nodded, 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.
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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 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, a very long road back to health and fitness. 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 need to 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, and 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 on his own 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 and cruelty.

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; mainly set to grass, but with a

small gathering of Mahogany trees to one side, 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, in their usual way of greeting new arrivals.

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; surprisingly 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 up till then, sleeping by the side of that shop.

We brought him a blanket and his large dog cage in case he felt safer to sleep inside it. 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 over 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 as if 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, kind of panting.

And then came the moment we'll never forget – About five months after he'd joined us- A moment of pure unforgettable 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, and 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, his eyes closed, nicely relaxed until a deep sleep called him. The next morning when I woke up, there he was, half asleep, a cheesy grin on his face, still laying in a line with his doggy-sleeping partners, 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 across our land with Ken, a beautiful dog we rescued from a local shopping market, he is just as fast, if not faster!

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

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 just his physical 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. We will be fine."* 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



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. All 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 wanted to choose her; she made the first move. And that has happened many times before to us. It's almost 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, who we later named '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 the noise of our car coming up the dirt road, 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 pointing a finger in her direction, 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 just 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 some meat from the local supermarket. I told him to offer it all in exchange for Marlene's life and 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 and food or Marlene.

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 at nights 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. She even caught a slight strain of distemper, which can be a killer, but somehow, with correct medication, she recovered, not fully as she still sometimes has movement in her face, but enough for her to ignore it and get on with her life.

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 the 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 that we would have seen her. Such a terrible, 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 seen. 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. Those small choices—like choosing to step in, choosing to care, choosing not to turn a blind eye or 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? 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, Ruth to go inside and me to stay outside in the play area with our dogs; 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 it be? 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', meaning her condition wasn't contagious any longer, 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. With every dog, once you have gained that degree of trust from them, it rewards you like winning a gold medal!



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 at the time 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! Wow!

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.

Sometimes I 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 from mange, it’s not nice, 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 – Mange Mates!

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.

Emily–The Bag in the Ditch



It was just another January morning in 2025, the kind of day that you just know that you *really* must all do the things you’ve been promising yourself to do for ages, but never got round to it. The sun was high in the sky, warm but not too fierce, and I was outside in the garden, busy with the endless little jobs that come with house and land maintenance and also for caring for so many rescue dogs. I’d been picking out weeds, clearing some dry grass, tidying along the fence line—nothing special, just part of the rhythm of everyday life here in Palawan.

I’ve always enjoyed those peaceful moments when doing odd jobs and finally getting things done; days like that are very rare these days, when the only sounds are the distant barking of the dogs, the occasional motorbike passing by, and the soft sounds of one of your favorite songs playing on your earphones. My mind tends to wander in those quiet spells, but that day the calm was broken when I heard the sound of Joanne’s motorbike, a neighbor of ours, pulling up beside me.

Joanne is a local lady; someone I’ve come to know quite well over time. Her family has a soft spot for animals too, I think they have three or four dogs of their own, not tied up or locked in a cage which is the usual custom here, but allowed to run and roam. She pulled off her helmet, looked at me with concern, and said, “Can you do me a favor? I just passed by the ditch, just past your land. I thought I heard something—whimpering, maybe a dog in trouble. Can you go and have a look?”

There wasn’t a moment’s hesitation. When you hear something like that, you just move. Maybe a dog had been hit by a passing bike or car and needed help. I put my tools down and walked straight down the road. The ditch she mentioned is one of those deep roadside channels, usually dry but sometimes holding a bit of rainwater after a hard rainfall. As I approached, I also heard it—a faint, desperate sound, the soft cries of something; something struggling. A familiar sound I’ve heard so many times now, over the years.

When I reached the edge and looked down, I saw it—a cotton shopping bag, tied tightly, just lodged in the mud above the waterline; and it was moving. The bag really was moving but ever so slightly. My heart sank. I scrambled down the embankment, half-slipping, half-sliding, and grabbed the bag. I climbed back up to the road as quickly as I could, my hands wet with mud as I fumbled to untie the knot.

Oh No! Inside were two tiny puppies.

On closer look, one was already gone; dead. His little body was still warm, but he wasn't breathing. The other, though—she was alive. Barely. She was gasping, trembling all over, but thank God she was alive.

I'll never understand how people can do this—throwing away a life like it's nothing, like it has no value. It's the kind of thing that cuts a big black hole into your heart. But there was no time to dwell on that right now. Yes, I felt it, I felt the hurt and the rush of anger, but I needed to act quickly. I held the lifeless pup carefully under one arm, held the survivor close to my chest, and walked quickly back home.

I didn't even have to think. I knew the routine well. I took the surviving pup straight to the laundry room, the safest place we have for emergencies. It's cool and fresh, quiet, and totally separate from the other dogs who were already gathered around the door, their tails wagging and noses twitching, as curious as ever about the new arrival.

I put her down gently and gave her a shallow bowl of clean water and a little bit of soft meat. She wobbled over and began to eat—a shaky, clumsy attempt as I had no puppy food but thought that to a starving dog, any food would be welcome; it was a beautiful sight. Eating is always the first good sign. It means they want to live. I left her there to rest, closing the door behind me, and went to take care of the one who didn't make it.

At the far end of our land, we've made a small cemetery for the dogs we've lost. It's a peaceful place, shaded by trees, where I can bury them with dignity and love. I always wrap their bodies in one of my old T-shirts before laying them to rest. It's something I've always done—a way of saying, *"You were loved, you mattered, you're not just a number."*

I dug a small grave, gently lowered him in, gently covered it over and placed an aloe vera pot plant beside him, and marked it out with a cross made from stones. I always do that; it's a ritual for all of my beloved dogs who have passed over. Then I paused, said a quiet prayer, and took a deep breath. So upsetting.

There's no easy way to describe these moments. You carry them with you. You never get used to them. It can be heartbreaking, even with a dog you have never shared time with. But life was calling me back. A little pup was waiting.

When I returned to the laundry room, the tiny girly-dog was curled up, fast asleep. Even then, I think that I knew she would make it. There was something about her. A quiet strength.

We named her Emily. I don't know why exactly— as I explained before, we usually call all our dogs after TV characters, and this time it just seemed to fit. She was so small, yet her spirit was already showing. Emily. Sweet, simple, perfect.

The next morning, we took her to the vet, as we always do. The car rides with rescued dogs are always a strange mix of hope and fear. You never quite know what the vet will find. But this time, we were lucky. Emily was underweight, as expected, but otherwise healthy. No major injuries, no internal issues, no signs of infection. The vet smiled and said, “She’s strong. She’ll be fine. Just give her vitamins, good food, and lots of love.”

That, we could certainly do.

Every time, when I walk to the dog cemetery at the far end of our land, I take a moment to pause by the aloe vera plants that mark the resting places of those we couldn't save, or those who we did save and lived with us but passed away naturally of old age like Stinker and Claire. Each one has its own story. Each one carries its own weight. Some of those graves are so small you wouldn't believe a life could fit inside. But they did. They mattered.

On quiet days, I find myself sitting near the graves, remembering the dogs who passed through my life, even if only for a short time. The little one I buried that January morning rests there too. I still think about him. Sometimes I imagine what it would have been like if both pups had survived—if Emily had a brother to run with, to play with, to grow up with. That thought stays with me. But Emily made it. And she's made the most of her second chance.



The day when we brought her home from the vet, Emily's new life really began. She was still too small to be left unsupervised, but we slowly let her explore the garden and start meeting our other dogs; fourteen of them before Emily, and now fifteen with her. The moment the laundry door

opened, the first time I let her mix in, they all rushed to greet her—sniffing her, and circling her like she was the most exciting little thing in the world.

Out of all the dogs, one in particular formed an instant bond with her—Dixie. Dixie was a rescue too, just a couple of months older than Emily and rescued only a couple of months before her; so maybe there was a link. Maybe they recognized something in each other, that same shared story of survival. Over the next few weeks Dixie became like an older sister to her, in fact they look almost identical in size and hair coloring, always ready to play, and always ready to lead her into mischief; the kind of thing that pups always do!

Emily settled in quickly. She was fearless from the start, often running straight up to the biggest dogs and giving them a cheeky lick and nudge before sprinting off, tail wagging in triumph. She loved teasing them, dashing between their legs, making them chase her around the land. But she could be a complete rascal too. Yes – sweet and sour - Hahaha.

She developed a wild obsession with chewing—especially anything made of wood. Chair legs, broom handles, table corners—nothing was safe. She even started chewing on the wooden steps of the staircase! If you left a sandal lying around, Emily would seize it like it was treasure and dash off, carrying it proudly all the way to the far end of the land, her little tail wagging furiously, and of course, leaving it there after her fun and games had finished.

She also had this strange habit of venturing outside the property, onto the roadside, where she'd rummage through rubbish. She would return triumphantly with odd bits—plastic bottles, scraps of cloth, pieces of cardboard—and carefully deposit them on the balcony as if she'd brought home the greatest gifts for us – She always looked so proud as she sat there with her latest find in front of her. It was impossible to be angry. Her enthusiasm was infectious; naughty but nice.

Her friendship with Dixie blossomed into something really special though. They were almost inseparable in those early months. I remember one afternoon when they found a worn-out tennis ball and spent nearly an hour chasing each other around the land, playfully growling, tugging, and pouncing like it was the greatest prize in the world.

But Emily's love for shoes became legendary – Seriously



We got used to the morning routine of searching for missing sandals. It was almost a daily ritual—walking around the property, calling out, “Emily, where’s my shoe this time?” And sure enough, somewhere near the back fence or under a shady tree, we’d find her lying next to it, a cheeky smile on her face, her eyes sparkling with pride as if to say, *‘Go away, this is mine, now’*

At one point, I started leaving old, worn-out shoes out on purpose, just to see where she’d take them. It almost became like our little game, a private joke between us. Funny enough, she always took them to the same corner of the land, like she was building her own secret shoe collection. And as I mentioned before, the treasures she brought from the roadside was constant—broken flip-flops, plastic wrappers, even an old pair of shorts, in fact anything that caught her attention was a daily affair. She would drag them all back to the balcony and sit among them like a queen in her castle, surrounded by her odd little kingdom.

Some days I’d sigh and moan and curse and sweep them all into a bin, but only for her to start again the next day. She was determined, was our little scavenger. But despite all the mischief, Emily was incredibly affectionate. She loved her cuddles, always pressing herself against our legs, always seeking out a friendly hand. Sometimes she’d just sit there, as if to say, this is home now, is that right? Yes, Emily. You are right.

Over the few months since we had her, she grew; grew and grew and grew, until she was almost as big as the bigger ones, even at her young age. The frantic chewing has now mostly faded and the wild energy somewhat settled, though her playful spirit still remains as strong as ever. She still loves to run with Dixie, rolling over onto her back when Dixie comes in for the play-bite; and she still loves to tease the older dogs, waking them from their afternoon nap and then dashing off across the land to escape their barked moans and yelps of surprise. But, in general, she’s a little calmer now, more content, more grounded.

Sometimes, when the day winds down and the place falls quiet, I find myself watching her as she sprawls out in the grass in front of the balcony, worn out from play, the evening breeze gently cooling her. I often think about that morning in January, about how lucky we were in finding her; how close we came to losing her. About how easily she could have been the one I buried that day. But she wasn't. She fought. She survived. And now she's here.

People sometimes ask me if rescuing gets easier over time. If you harden, if you stop feeling the weight of it all. The truth is, no, you never do.

Each dog, each story, cuts just as deeply. Every loss hurts really bad; every rescue matters. But each success you score, each life saved is a win, win situation— that's what makes you keep going. Emily's story will always stay with me. Not because it was the most dramatic rescue, not because she was the sickest or the hardest case—but because she survived something she never should have had to survive. She was thrown away like a bag of rubbish; tied in a bag and left to die in a water filled ditch. But somehow, she held on. She found her way to us.

And in doing so, she's reminded us—once again—that what we do here matters. Love matters. Kindness matters. Every life matters.



Emily isn't just another rescue. She's a little spark that keeps the fire burning, a little reminder that even when things seem hopeless, and I am talking about for all of us, humans, dogs and all animals, there's always a chance to make things right providing you never give up

She's proof that hope still lives, that love still works, that kindness still counts. Even now, as I write this, I can hear her in the distance—her playfully barking, no doubt chasing Dixie, living life as it should be lived.

And I know, without a doubt, that she's home and that's where she's going to stay.

The rescue for Emily took place in January 2025

Ken – From Shopping Mall to Home Sweet Home.



It was back in 2018, a typical hot and sticky afternoon in the Philippines. The sort of day where the heat bounces off you and makes you think twice before going out of the coolness of your house or doing anything physical. I'd taken a break from the usual chaos of the day and headed to our local shopping mall, a place I knew well by then. It is quite a big mall, with a nice and welcome air con system going on inside, or where you can sit outside if preferred, enjoy a coffee, watch the world go by, and, if you were like me, keep an eye on the many street dogs who had made the place their little home from home; begging scraps of food from the tables or searching through the outdoor rubbish bins that were situated further along .

That's when and where I first met Ken.

I wasn't looking to anything special that day, just spend a little time for myself. Honestly, I was just there to enjoy a quiet moment with my first ever rescue, Stinker – a loyal, beautiful looking little dog with a gentle and loving approach to everyone, humans and dogs, that she met. I'd

claimed a table outside the café; Stinker happily sprawled under my chair as I sipped my coffee and nibbled on a sandwich. My partner, Ruth was just in town doing some errands but would be joining me as soon as she'd finished.

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw this young dog, maybe about twelve months old, full of beans, bounding around, playing with a little boy who was laughing his head off. The dog, slim with golden brown hair, and with the sort of long waggy tail that could knock a cup off a table, was leaping, spinning, chasing his own shadow, chasing the boy, jumping up and making a fuss of him. Obviously, I thought the dog belonged to the boy by the way they were playing together, but as it turned out the dog didn't belong to anyone. No collar, no lead, no one calling him back. Just a street dog, but a street dog who had somehow appointed himself as the mall's self-declared entertainment officer.

The boy eventually wandered off with his mum, and that's when this dog trotted over to my table like we were old mates. He gave me that look, the classic one when food is around – the “Go on, you're not going to finish all that, are you?” look. Stinker moaned softly as if to say, “Oi, this is my human,” but I could see she wasn't really serious, or why would she be wagging her tail? I broke off a chunk of my sandwich and placed it gently on the ground. The dog sniffed it, wolfed it down, then sat down, and looked up at me with the sort of gratitude that street dogs seem to carry in their bones. And just like that, we became part of each other's story. I went to my car and got a bowl of dog biscuits and a bowl of clean water and placed them by the table, for both dogs, my Stinker, and the new boy, to share. And they did share; side by side, almost taking it in turns.

His name, as I would later decide, was Ken. Why Ken? Because as I have mentioned before, I like to call all the dogs by well-known characters names off the TV; of actors from the British soap operas, and this one was from Coronation street's 'Ken Barlow'. And, to be honest, I've almost run out of names now, there's been so many of these lovable street dogs.



Over the next four years, Ken became part of what I affectionately called the “Mall Mutts.” There were about five of them in total, regular faces who lounged around the café tables, darted between parked motorbikes, and did their rounds like little furry security guards. They weren’t anyone’s pets, but they were loved in their own way. Some shoppers, some, not many unfortunately, would throw scraps of food down when walking by, and of course, Ruth and I were there, rain or shine, bringing them food every single day.

It became our thing. Ruth and me and Stinker would show up, normally about the same time every day and the dogs would all come running as soon as they heard the noise of our car, tails wagging, some barking in excitement, others just doing that quiet happy shuffle when they see someone they trust and knowing that the ‘Meals on Wheels’ service has just arrived.

Ken was always there, always first in line, always a bit cheeky, nudging the others out the way if he thought he could nick a bit extra. He was full of life, and we loved seeing him every day. I’m sure the feeling was mutual too. Some of the other dogs seemed to come and go before we could really get to know them, moving on all the time until they found a place that suited them best. But as time went by, and as we got to see and know more of these dogs, hundreds in our time, many of them seemed to have very similar appearances and coloring and funny enough many of them had an uncanny resemblance to Ken; often we would laugh about Ken being a Daddy, and even a Granddaddy.

Around the time of the pandemic when Covid struck, so many dogs just disappeared from the mall and the streets. We knew what was happening but were helpless to interfere or make any complaints; but dogs were being taken away to be used for food. When money is short people get desperate, and food becomes top of the list, so if there is a chance of grabbing some free food in the shape of a live, healthy dog, then that’s what happens – But Thank God that Ken was safe and unharmed. And in time, after a few months when life slowly got back to normal, new dogs seemed

to arrive and none of them were taken. Soon there was once more, quite a big crowd of well-fed, happy looking dogs roaming around again.

Then came year 2022 – The Change of Policy at the shopping mall. One early evening, as I was setting down the food bowls, one of the mall security guards approached me; I didn't know him and didn't like the look of the way he came marching up to me; something didn't seem right. Now, most of the guards that I knew were kind enough and usually just smiled as the dogs gathered around. But this one, wearing a serious face was different., "Sir, the mall management is not happy about the dogs. They think there are too many now, and they're saying they're going to call the dog pound."

I froze. Bad news indeed!

You see, the dog pound here doesn't have the best reputation – and that's putting it politely. Word on the street is that dogs picked up by the pound end up in overcrowded cages, often without proper care or food and water. There were even rumors that in the past the dogs were once sold to a local crocodile farm for feeding the crocs. Whether or not that was true or was still happening, I didn't know, but certainly didn't want to take any chances. When you've been feeding these dogs for years, looked into their eyes, stroked and patted them, sat with them and laughed at their tricks and games – they're not just street dogs anymore. They're your mates.

My heart was pounding; my head spinning. I knew I had to act fast. If this was company policy who was I to change it, or ignore it? No; this was serious and I had to think of a rescue plan and carry it out as fast as possible. Ruth was inside the car and hadn't heard what the guard had told me so I went and told her everything and asked her to call the head of security to see if this was true. She made the call, as her and the head guy were on good terms, coming from the same part of the country. He confirmed it. It was true – New policy! We asked if he could come down from his office and meet for a coffee and a chat. He was there in minutes and seemed as worried as we were.

He reckoned that him and a couple of the more likeable guards could round up the dogs and drive them out into the country and leave them there; better than staying put and ending up in that dreaded dog pound. We agreed; what else could we do? But we insisted that we would be the ones to take Ken and a young pup who we'd called Rita back to our house.

So that very day, without a second thought, we jumped into rescue mode. It was now dark and getting a little late, a perfect time to take action. I called Ken over – easy, he always came straight to us. But I also had my eye on another dog, a sweet little thing called Rita, who, only a few months old, had practically grown up outside that mall.

Ken came running, looking excited, thinking it was business as usual – dinner time! But instead of just a meal, I opened the car door and patted the seat. "Come on, mate. Hop in." And just like that, he leapt in as if we'd done this a hundred times before. Rita was a little more cautious, but soon enough, with Ruth helping her up into the back seat, she joined him.

The other dogs? Well, the security chief was as good as his word. Him and two other guards took who they could catch to a nice, wooded area, a picnic kind of place, where with good luck, they could keep being fed by kind-hearted souls who would visit that area. He was honest and told us that they couldn't catch all the dogs because they had sensed trouble and had bolted. But the next time I went to the mall, not one dog remained so I like to think they found their way elsewhere, somewhere safe.

And that's how Ken, along with Rita, officially became part of our family. You'd think that that would be the happy ending right there. Rescue complete, life at home, feet up. But no, Rita was happy enough settling in and getting to know her new pals, but Ken had other plans.

The first night went well. Ken settled in like he'd always been part of the gang. He mixed beautifully with the other dogs, didn't need to be isolated, and seemed perfectly content; eating and resting and acting as if he really knew the layout of the place. Job done, we thought.

But the next day, we had to go out. Just a few errands, nothing major. When we came back later that afternoon, we couldn't find Ken anywhere. Gone. Rita was there but not Ken. Panic mode again.

We looked everywhere, checked the house, checked the fence and gates; nothing. No sign of him anywhere. The gates were closed properly when we'd arrived and there were no holes been made in the bamboo fencing. What happened? Ken had most probably climbed right over the fence and vanished. Where would he go? He didn't know this area.

Then it hit me – the mall.

It's five miles away, but if you've got the determination (and Ken certainly had), that's not so far. We rushed over there as the sun was setting, about seven at night, and guess what? There he was. Sitting in his usual spot. Waiting. Like nothing had happened. Just another day in his life. I half expected him to pull out a little pocket watch and say, "You're late, mate. Where's me dinner?"

We bundled him back into the car and brought him home again, this time calling the local handyman who arrived the following morning. Looking around more carefully we guessed how Ken must have got out, now, and it seemed like the fence was too low beside the gates, so that had to be fixed and fixed quickly. "Mate, we need that fence higher. Much higher." We told him; the look on his face was a picture; the guy must've thought we were building a prison, like Alcatraz, for dogs.

The fence was reinforced, extended and raised, and since then, Ken's stayed put. Though I sometimes catch him in a half dream, laying on the balcony with a smile on his face, gazing wistfully in the direction of the mall – probably still day-dreaming of those café tables and his early days as the mall's unofficial mascot.



Life settled into a lovely rhythm after that. Ken thrived, made friends with all the others, learned that food arrived on time every day (if you didn't steal it from the others first), and generally lived like a king. Because of the episode with him climbing the fence, which was impossible to do now, we had purposely made a small hole in the bamboo fence at the far end of the land, as these dogs, being street dogs and used to a certain amount of freedom must want to go out sometimes and have a change of scenery – And where we live is very safe as it's mostly countryside, with few houses and hardly any traffic passing by on the dirt road outside our house; well away from the main roads.

So, Ken and some of the others, often squeezed through the hole and went walking around, quite safe and quite happy, chasing other dogs, exploring and having adventures. Sometimes, Ken, none of the others, stayed out quite late, just coming back for his evening meal and then going out again. We thought nothing of it as long as he was safe and as long as he came back. Obviously, he was looking for local female dogs on heat.

But one day, we noticed something wasn't quite right. Without getting too graphic, Ken was having a bit of a *personal* problem. Let's just say things weren't looking too good in the "private parts" department. There was swelling, there was discomfort, and there were a few worrying drops of blood. It was obvious that something wasn't right as he was just not acting himself.

Straight to the vet, of course. The diagnosis? A sexually transmitted infection, fairly common in unneutered street dogs. Dr. Dan, the vet laid out the plan – six weeks of treatment, regular medication, and careful monitoring. But we didn't stop there. I've got a wonderful friend back in England, a lady called Ros, who's a natural healer and practices Reiki. Both Ruth and I have used her for distant healing and it's been really helpful in speeding up recovery. I called her up and asked if she could send Ken some distant healing. Ros, being the amazing soul she is, immediately said yes and worked with him for several weeks.

I don't know whether it was the Vet's medicine, the Reiki, or maybe just Ken's sheer willingness to be cured, but within six weeks, he was right as rain. No more swelling, no more dripping blood trails where ever he went, and most importantly, no more discomfort. He was back to his old, lovable cheeky ways in no time.

Ken's been with us ever since. He's happy, healthy, and still a little rascal to the other dogs, food-wise. If they're not watching their bowl, Ken will be watching it for them. He's got a knack of sneaking in and pinching food right under the noses of the others. And if you catch him, he'll give you this look like, "What? I was just checking if they wanted it."

But he's part of our family now, and I can't imagine our home without him.

He might have started as the mall's cheeky street dog, but he's now a beloved, slightly mischievous, fully treasured member of our pack.

And I still can't have a coffee without thinking of that day when he walked up, claimed a bit of my sandwich, and quietly claimed a piece of my heart. He's a darling and I can't ever imagine life without him!

The rescue for Ken took place in April 2022.

Tim – The Dog with the Will to Survive



We first met Tim in the early part of 2019, back when life was a bit easier than it is now; not so busy for us and not so many dogs to feed, but even so, the days were filled with meaning. At the time we were living in a rented house while we slowly pieced together plans to build our own home on a large plot of land that we had bought a couple of years earlier. I say big, it was the size of a football pitch, as I mentioned earlier, about four thousand square meters and perfect for the plans we were making about taking in more dogs off the streets. But the rented house was ok for the time being; it wasn't fancy, not by any stretch, but it was ours for the moment, and it had enough space for us and our growing family of rescue dogs, and importantly, the landlord didn't mind, or if he did, never said anything about the dogs. Back then, we had five: Stinker, Claire, and her three cheeky pups who always kept us on our toes, plus three or four street dogs that came and went, but were always fed whenever they came back for a visit.

The house was tucked away at the very end of a quiet cul-de-sac. It was safe there, peaceful in its own way, but just around the corner from us, life looked quite a bit different. A group of four or five building workers lived at the back of our house. They weren't bad guys, but they were rough, hardened by life and scraping by on whatever daily wage they could manage. Their home was a makeshift shelter—a ramshackle tent made from bits of tarpaulin strung between trees, and flapping noisily in the wind whenever we had a storm or hard rain. Inside were dirty looking camp beds and a fire pit where they cooked simple meals. They didn't have much, and they didn't seem to expect much as long as they could pass the bottle round at nights or afford a can or three of beer to share. We were on nodding terms with them but nothing more than that.

It was among this rough scene that we first noticed him—a tiny, scruffy pup who lingered on the edges like he didn't quite belong anywhere, but in fact, he was owned by one of the workers. He would stand at the corner of our road for ages, watching our dogs play in the street, his little head tilted in curiosity, but he never dared come too close. He seemed fascinated by them, maybe even a little envious, but he always kept his distance even if we called him or tried to get him to come closer.

He was so small that we naturally started calling him Tiny Tim, after the singer. The name just stuck; it seemed just right for him.

But really, we felt so sorry for him; he looked so lonely and so miserable, and that's awful when you see a dog like that. There was something about him that got to you—this quiet, lonely little lad, a spectator to the world, never included, never invited. Our dogs would romp around the street, bowls clanging noisily at mealtimes, tails wagging like little windmills, but Tim would just watch. He never made a sound. Never barked. Just watched.

At feeding time, mornings or nights, we started to notice that no one seemed to care whether Tim ate or not. I doubt the builders ever fed him properly. So, we began taking an extra bowl of food out to him. I'd set it down a few meters away, careful not to scare him, and then step back to watch what he would do. He wouldn't come near while I was there, but as soon as I walked away, he'd creep forward and wolf it down, as if he'd never had a full meal in all his life; he must have been around six months old by then.

Every evening, we made sure he had a bowl of food. It became our little routine, a quiet sort of way to gain his trust and friendship. He still wouldn't let me near him, but I think he started to trust me in his own way.

Then one day, something happened that I will never forget. One afternoon I was standing by our gate when I saw a pack of wild street dogs coming up from over the empty land behind our house and run towards him. Tim had nowhere to go. It happened so quickly. He was trapped, outnumbered, and completely helpless. I watched in horror as they knocked him down onto his back, teeth bared, ready to tear him apart. And there, just a few steps away, one of the builders, I think it was actually his owner, stood watching, doing absolutely nothing. Not a word of protection for his dog, not a shout to ward off the strays; no movement at all from him. Just blank indifference. I sprinted over, my heart pounding, shouting and waving my arms to break it up. The wild dogs scattered, and there was Tim, laying helplessly on his back, trembling and shaking, his eyes wide with terror. I scooped him up, glared at the builder, and told him exactly what I thought of him. I'll admit, I didn't hold back that day, and in my honest opinion, I think the guy deserved a good shouting at!

Tim had a few scratches but nothing serious. It was the fear that lingered. I took him back to where he lived, in that scruffy, excuse of a tent that the builders lived in, left some biscuits for him, and went back to my house, once again, giving that builder a good earful as I passed him by.

About a week later, as if the poor dog hadn't had enough bad luck, I heard that a car had accidentally backed over his foot. Why Tim didn't run away as soon as he saw the car reversing, I will never know, because in my experience that trick of avoiding cars and bikes seems like a second nature to these dogs. But anyway, I wasn't there to see it, but when I found him, his foot was badly injured, his toes looked bloody and, in a mess, and he could barely walk. We rushed him straight to our vet, Dr. Dan, hoping for the best. They examined him and took X-rays, gave us painkillers and said that, unfortunately, nothing more could be done for his foot but that it would heal by itself in time. It wasn't something they could quick-fix.

After that, Tim was now hardly ever seen, and if he was, he was limping badly; he couldn't get to his usual feeding spot at the end of the road, so every night when we were feeding our own dogs, we carried his food and water directly into the builder's tent, ignoring their blank stares and smartypants comments. Tim was always hiding under one of the beds, so we had to get down on our knees and push the food over to him as he just lay there. They didn't care at all, just looking as though we were out of our minds to go to such trouble. Every morning, we would go and collect the bowls, but someone—one of those so-called 'kind-hearted men'—had taken to putting their cigarettes out in his food bowl. The water bowl and half empty food bowl would be full of half-smoked butt ends.

It's hard to describe the mixture of sadness and anger that we felt. Ruth wanted to go and tell them how she felt, but I stopped her as I didn't want to make the situation worse for Tim.

But slowly, day by day, Tim began to recover. His foot remained slightly twisted, but he adapted and coped and after a week or two, he was back out sitting at his little spot on the corner again. He was a little survivor. And over time, he started to spend more and more time at our place, moving

himself further away from the builders and closer to us. It wasn't a grand decision on his part—no moment of a big trumpet fanfare to welcome him in. Just little steps, day after day, until eventually, he was simply part of our family; just one more of the dog team.

To make it official, we offered the builders a few cans of beer in exchange for Tim. They shrugged as if they didn't give a stuff about what happened to him and were more than happy with the deal. I don't think they ever really cared about him, if they did, they didn't have a clue how to show it. When we eventually moved to our new home, of course, Tim came with us. By then, he was one of us. He had been with us for about a year, when we eventually moved from the rented house, and had experienced the rough and the smooth; the hunger, the lack of care, the rough times in that tent, then the street meals, and finally the quiet victory of finding a loving, caring family.

His first few days in our new home were special. It was like watching him experience life all over again. For the first time, he had proper grass to walk on, safe fences to keep strangers and traffic out, and no danger lurking around the corner. At first, he was cautious, sniffing every inch of the place, unsure if this was really his. But soon enough, he claimed it—curling up in sunny corners, learning the rhythm of the day, following the pack wherever they went.

He bonded quickly with the other dogs. He adored Stinker, often following her around like a little shadow, as if Stinker was his older sister. He played gently with all the dogs, running and chasing each other, though he always kept his movements careful because of his foot. He was never the fastest in a chase, but the others would often slow down, as if they knew about his injury, as if they wanted him to win just once.

In his new surroundings in the new house Tim developed a few quirky habits. For one, he had a Favorite sleeping spot—a worn patch of grass under an old mango tree where the shade protected him from too much sun, and the breeze was just right to keep him cool. He loved sunbathing there, his eyes half-closed, his ears flicking lazily at the buzzing insects. If you called his name while he was lying there, he'd glance over, lift his head for a moment, and then promptly flop back down as if to say, "Not now, mate. I'm busy relaxing, thank you very much."



He also had this funny thing about food. Even after all those months of being fed regularly, he never quite lost the habit of guarding his bowl, just in case. He would sometimes pick up a piece of meat, carry it to a secret corner, eat it, and then go back for another, as if stockpiling in his own quiet way.

And oh, he loved a good head and belly scratch. Once he trusted you, he'd lean into your hand, eyes closing, tail giving a soft, steady wag. It wasn't the frantic wag of excitement—it was the wag of contentment, of belonging.

Now, as I write this, Tim has been with us for nearly six years. Six years of good meals, soft beds, safety, and love. He's not the frightened little pup anymore. He's a confident, quirky dog who knows his place in the pack. He still has that limp—he always will—but it doesn't slow him down. In fact, I think it's become part of his character. A badge of survival. A testament to the strength of his determination and will power.

Tim isn't the kind of dog who demands attention. He's not the loudest, not the boldest, but he's loyal, dependable, and quietly affectionate. There's something beautiful about the way he just *is*—no fuss, no drama, just steady, faithful Tim. And these days, he's not so tiny, so it's not 'Tiny Tim' any more, it's Tim or, when the mood suits, 'Timbo'!

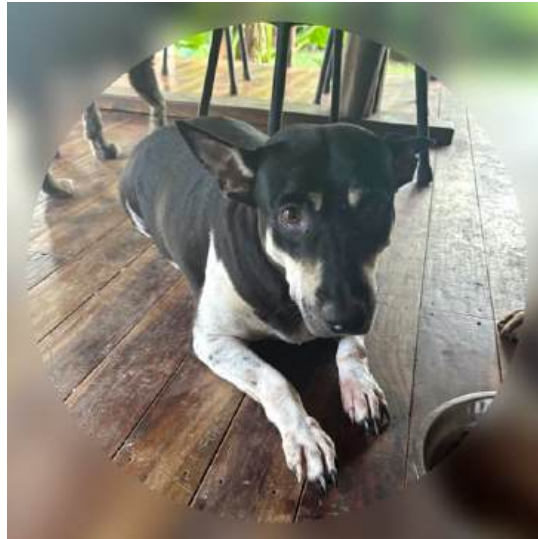
Sometimes I catch him lying in the sun, his eyes half-closed, completely at peace, and I think back to that tiny, hungry little pup standing on the corner, too afraid to come close. I think about all the little choices that brought him here—one bowl of food at a time, one small act of kindness leading to another.

Tim's story isn't flashy. It doesn't have a dramatic rescue or a heroic turning point. It's a story of patience, of slow trust, of quiet resilience. He didn't come bounding into our lives. He drifted in gently, almost unnoticed, until one day, he simply belonged.

And I think that's what makes his story so special, bless him. We love him so much.

The rescue for Tim took place in February 2019.

Elsie – The Mall Miracle



We first met Elsie back in 2018 at our usual spot—the local shopping mall that had, over time, become a kind of second home to us. Not for shopping, mind you. No, we went there every day for the dogs. There was a little gang of them who lived around the mall, including Ken, a few others, and Elsie herself. They were street dogs, but this was their territory, their patch, and they were always there waiting for us.

Elsie was something special from the very beginning. She was friendly, cheeky, and as soon as she laid eyes on us, she practically adopted us on the spot; there was no shyness or hesitation with her at all. But according to one of the guards, she'd actually had an owner once, but she'd run away and chosen life at the mall instead. Can't blame her really—Some of these dogs are either kept tied up or locked in a cage by their owners for some crazy reason. It is so common here in Palawan and I can never understand why – It's terrible. But anyway, even if she wasn't locked up at her previous home, she probably got better snacks and a lot more freedom at the mall, so it wasn't a bad move by her.

Apparently, her owner had spotted her there now and again but gave up chasing her when she heard that a foreign bloke—me—and his girlfriend – Ruth- were feeding her every day. That's how Elsie became ours, in a way. She decided we were her people.

She didn't just like us; it was almost as if she'd adopted us. She followed us everywhere. If we sat outside for a coffee, she'd park herself right next to us like our little bodyguard. If we went to the shops, she'd trail behind, walking proudly, a big smile on her face, as if she was doing her rounds.

But her absolute favorite trick—her party piece—was storming straight past the mall security guards who were positioned at every entrance door and running inside the mall itself. It didn't matter how fast the guards moved to try and block her or how carefully they watched the doors. She was like lightning. The moment she saw us heading inside, Elsie would drop her shoulder like she was getting ready and then charge through the entrance, slipping past legs and bags, ears flapping, laughing and grinning, going faster than speeding bullet, as Superman used to say. It was like she had her own VIP pass.

I can't tell you how many times I had to scoop her up and carry her out, usually while laughing and apologizing to the guards, who by then had given up even pretending to be surprised. One of them even said to me, "See you tomorrow, Elsie," as she was wriggling in my arms on the way out.

But I think we all knew why she loved going inside so much—it wasn't just to stay close to us. It was the air-con. The sweet, glorious blast of cold air that felt like heaven after spending hours outside in the blistering heat. Smart girl. Can't blame her. I reckon if I'd been living on hot pavements all day, I'd be diving in there too.

It became part of the daily routine. The guards would shake their heads and laugh, Elsie would get her moment of cool air, and I'd be chasing her out like a parent collecting a runaway toddler. I think the whole mall secretly enjoyed the little show. She wasn't just another street dog. She was *Elsie*—the mall's resident speed-machine.

But as with many of the street dogs we cared for, things didn't stay light and funny forever. One day, two of the regular dogs we fed disappeared. Just gone. No warning. It happens sometimes. They get taken, or they just decide to move on, or worse. It shook us. We realized we couldn't bear the thought of losing Elsie like that. Not her. So, Ruth and I decided it was time to bring her home.

At that point, we were still in our old rented house. Stinker was already living with us, and we were feeding four other street dogs in the area, including Claire, who would later become one of the family. It seemed the right thing to do—to bring Elsie home, where she'd be safe.

But the adjustment wasn't easy. After just a few days, Elsie got into a tussle with Claire over food. It's always about food with street dogs. Even when they're safe, that instinct never really leaves them; I see it all the time when there's a group of three or four dogs on a corner waiting to be fed. I put four helpings down, one each, but there's always one dog who goes from food to food, scaring the others away. But, anyway, I saw it happen, Claire and Elsie struggling and fighting, but was just a second too late to stop it. Elsie bolted out the gate and vanished down the road. I chased after her, calling her name, desperate to bring her back, but she just wouldn't stop. Maybe she panicked. Maybe she thought she didn't belong with us after all. Maybe she was scared of Claire and didn't want another fight. Who knows? But one thing was for sure, that she wouldn't wait for me to carry her back home; she'd already made her mind up about that.



The next day, we found her. Back at the mall. Somehow, she'd found her way back across town to the place she knew best. She looked at me as if to say, *This is my home. This is where I belong.* Ok, so we let her stay there if that's what she wanted. We kept feeding her every day, as usual, alongside Ken and the others. And just like that, life carried on.

For two more years, she was the mall's little star. She still tried to sneak inside for the air-con, still followed us around, and the guards still gave her that familiar shake of the head and a chuckle. It was almost like she had her own little fan club.

But then came the hardest part. Elsie caught distemper. And unlike Marlene, she got it really bad. It's one of the worst things a dog can get. It's vicious. It attacks the nervous system and strips away their strength, piece by piece. It's painful, it's exhausting, and for most dogs, it's a death sentence. It happened so quickly. At first she just looked under the weather, a bit shaky, and not eating as she normally did. But within a week she was in such a heartbreaking state. She couldn't stand properly. Her legs would buckle. Her body was shaking so badly she could barely hold herself up. And she'd stopped eating completely—always the most worrying sign. Seemed that the life was draining out of her.

Even the kind guards, the ones who'd always defended the dogs, said it might be time to show some mercy. They didn't want her to suffer any more. They gently suggested we take her to the vet and let him put her to sleep, let her go peacefully. It wasn't out of coldness. It was love, in a way. They cared enough to not want her to be in pain anymore and both Ruth and I agreed that putting her down might be the most kindly act that we could do for her.

So, Ruth and I made that awful drive to the vet's. I can still remember the silence in the car. The sadness. Elsie was in the back, so weak, looking at us as if silently asking what was happening; the same lovely dog, Elsie, but shaking so much and watering from her mouth – The poor thing looked in a terrible state.

We pulled up outside the vet's door, but I just couldn't do it. I couldn't take her in. Neither of us could. Something, a feeling we had, a natural instinct, just told us not to do it and to give her a second chance. Why not? We had nothing to lose and everything to gain.

So instead of asking the vet to give her the injection that would end her life, we drove straight to a lady we knew—a wonderful woman who runs a small dog sanctuary and has a gift for nursing sick animals back to health. We handed Elsie over to her care, and I promised I'd bring her home-cooked food every single day. And I did.

Elsie was put into a cage and kept in isolation from all the other dogs, some healthy, most not, and for a few days it didn't look good. But then, little by little, she started to fight back. She was always a little fighter, wasn't she? Even when life knocked her down, she refused to give up.

When she was strong enough, we brought her home—this time to our new house. We also put her in isolation straight away, in the laundry room, to make sure none of our other dogs caught distemper from her; that was the last thing we wanted. Dr. Dan, the vet was brilliant. He gave us expert advice and treatment, and slowly, carefully, Elsie clawed her way back to health.

The twitches and shakes never fully went away. They're still part of her now. But she has no pain and no other symptoms. She's learned to live with the trembling shakes and twitches, but they are not so bad anymore, and that means that, thankfully, we don't need to give her medication for it anymore. She gets occasional skin problems—sore, itchy patches—but nothing that we or she can't handle.



She's strong now. Happy. She's fully part of the family. No more mall life. No more security guards chasing her out of the shops. Just home.

Elsie's story is one of those that sticks with you. When I watch her running around the garden these days, mouth wide open as if she is laughing, jumping up and then rolling in the grass, or just playing with the others, I sometimes think about that moment at the vet's. The moment we almost gave up.

I'm so grateful we didn't. Because Elsie didn't just survive—she *lived*.

And she still does. Our cheeky, stubborn, mall-loving little miracle. Our Elsie.

The second rescue for Elsie took place in March 2020.

Betty – Born into Love



Betty's story is a little bit different to the others. She wasn't a street dog we rescued from danger. She wasn't found injured or abandoned. Betty has been with us from the very beginning—quite literally. We've known her since the very first breath she took.

She was born in our old house, right there in our lounge. We weren't expecting it to happen quite like that, but as with most things in life when you're surrounded by dogs, you just roll with it. It was a rented house that held many memories for us. It was where some of the earliest pieces of our little dog family started to come together.

Betty's mum, Claire, was a street dog we'd been feeding for over a year. She was one of the regulars, part of the gang that would greet us every day, especially at meal times, but in fact, once she'd known us for a few weeks, she never strayed far from our place. Over time, we built up her

trust, and eventually, we took her in. Claire became part of the family properly—just a few weeks before she surprised us by giving birth.

There were three pups in that litter—Vardy, Kasper, and Betty. All of them were black and white, beautiful little bundles of fluff. Two boys and a girl. Of course, the boys were named after footballers from my home-town team back in England - something I just couldn't resist, however, since then we started naming the dogs, ours, and those in the street, after British TV soap opera stars. Betty, though—Betty was simply Betty. From the moment we saw her, we knew she would always be with us.

Those first few weeks were filled with joy. The pups were mischievous, playful, and full of life. They tumbled over each other, chased their own tails, gnawed at anything they could find, and generally brought absolute chaos to the house—but the best kind of chaos. Even Stinker, our original resident mama dog really warmed to them as if they were her own. She always welcomed new arrivals, especially little ones like these three.

Looking back, those were some of the happiest days. Watching Claire care for her pups, seeing Betty and her brothers grow stronger, their personalities beginning to show. Betty was cheeky from the start. Always first to the food bowl, always first to wriggle into someone's lap.

But life has a cruel habit of reminding you that joy and tragedy often walk side by side. After just one month, little Vardy became ill. It was the parva virus—It's a killer; a cruel, aggressive disease that sweeps through dogs, especially young pups like wildfire. We did everything we could, but he didn't make it. I still remember the weight of that day—the first time we had to dig a grave in the land we'd bought, the land where we would soon build our new house. It became the first resting place in what would sadly, over time, become a little graveyard for all of the dogs we've loved and lost.

Vardy's death hit us hard. It felt so unfair. He was just starting his life, full of energy one day, gone the next. I actually sat and cried at his grave.

But we still had Betty and Kasper. The two of them stuck together, growing closer in the way only siblings can. They played, they wrestled, they shared their food, and they filled the house with laughter and muddy pawprints. It felt like maybe we'd come through the worst of it.

Then came another blow. Kasper was about six months old, full of confidence and curiosity. He loved to play at the end of the road, always exploring, always on the lookout for new playmates. One day, he went out as usual. Just an ordinary day. But then two young boys came running to our house, shouting that a dog had been hit by a car. They knew that he belonged to us.

We dropped everything and sprinted down the road. I remember hoping, praying it wouldn't be Kasper. But deep down, I knew. When we got there, we found him lying at the side of the road. The car hadn't even stopped. A hit and run. No apology, no second thought.

We gently picked him up and carried him home, hoping—just hoping—there was something we could do. But within minutes, as we sat with him in the front of our house, he slowly slipped away

in our arms; fortunately, Claire and Betty were inside and didn't see him go. We buried him next to his brother the following day. Two tiny graves side by side. The start of our dog's resting place, currently holding nine dearly beloved, dearly missed bodies

Losing both of them, Vardy and Kasper, left a hole in our hearts. It also meant that Betty was now the only one left. Just her, her mum Claire, and Stinker.



Betty grew up quickly after that. It's as if she somehow understood that she had to stay close, had to be careful. She became a little shadow, following us from room to room, never straying far. And when the time finally came to move into our new house—the home we'd built on that very same land where we had started the cemetery—Obviously she came with us. Along with Claire, Stinker, and our latest addition, Tim. She was part of the core group. The ones who had been there from the start.

Claire, her mum, lived happily with us for many more years. She loved the freedom of the new house with its open balcony and large space to roam around peacefully without any fear of trouble or traffic. She passed away peacefully in 2024, from nothing more than old age. She'd earned her rest. And Betty? Betty has carried on.



She's never been sick, never had any serious problems, and has grown into the most lovely, gentle dog you could wish for. She loves nothing more than a ride in the car. The moment I rattle the car keys or put my shoes on, she's there on the balcony, or running to the gate, tail wagging, eyes sparkling, ready for an outing—even if it's just a trip to the shop. She doesn't care where we go, as long as she's coming with us.

And when the day is done, her favorite place to sleep is, of course, our bed. She's an expert at claiming her spot, usually right in the middle, forcing Ruth and me to shuffle to the edges just so she can stretch out in comfort. Sometimes, I wonder if she knows exactly what she's doing—after all, she's the only one we've known since birth, the only one who's had us wrapped around her little paw from day one.

Betty has a way of looking at you that melts your heart. She's got this soulful gaze, like she knows all the stories, all the losses, all the wins. She's lived through them. She's the link between the old house and the new, between the past and the present. And something else that grabs us, she is always coming close, pushing her face into ours, wanting a kiss. She's an angel.

What's so lovely about Betty is that despite everything—losing her brothers, losing her mum—she's so full of joy. She still plays, still loves her belly rubs, still jumps in the car with the excitement of a puppy. There's no sadness in her now. Just love.

She is a constant in our lives. We've watched her from the moment she entered this world, through every stage, every high and low, and she's never left our side. She's the only one we've had the privilege to know from the very beginning.



When I see her sleeping on our bed, sprawled out as if she owns the place (which she probably does), I sometimes think about her brothers—Vardy and Kasper—gone far too soon. I like to imagine they're still watching over her, proud of their sister, happy that she's had the life they didn't get to finish.

Betty's story isn't one of dramatic rescues or near-death recoveries. It's a quieter story. A story about family. About growing up. About the ones who stay and help to make our lives complete. She's a darling. She always has been. She always will be.

We love Betty to bits xxx.

There was no rescue for Betty. Born late 2019.

Raquel – The Escape Artist



It was during the time of Covid when, in my humble opinion, the world had gone a bit mad, especially here in Palawan. The streets were less busy, people stayed indoors, and the usual buzz of life had softened; it was like living in a ghost town. We were still at the old rented house back then, just about to finish building our new place, though of course at the time, the new house was just another project dragging along with all the delays and frustrations that came with lockdowns. I was upstairs that day, in what we had turned into a makeshift office. The room faced the road, a good spot to keep an eye on things, though I wasn't paying much attention to anything outside at the time. Rhea, our daughter, was with me, doing her schoolwork online, like most kids had to do back then because of school closures; Ruth was busy somewhere else. At that time, we had five dogs living with us; Stinker, the very first little darling we ever had, Claire and her three pups and Dickie who had recently wandered in and joined the clan. It was strange having the house so full all day, but nice in a way – made life interesting and kept me on my toes!

Rhea was the first to notice. "Hey, look," she said, peering out of the window, "the dogs are sniffing around under the car." I didn't think much of it. Dogs sniffing around wasn't exactly headline news in our house. I probably mumbled something like, "Yeah, they'll be ok, let them be," and got back to whatever I was doing.

But they didn't stop. In fact, they seemed to be getting more and more excited. A few minutes later, Rhea said it again, this time with a bit more urgency. "They're still at it. Look, they're really interested in something."

I sighed, put my things down and went downstairs. I wasn't expecting anything unusual. Probably just a scrap of food or a stray cat – the sort of thing that would have our dogs fascinated for no sensible reason.

When I stepped out into the road, I saw them – our pack gathered around the car. They weren't barking, which struck me as a bit odd, and they weren't chasing, weren't on alert – they were just gently shuffling, circling the car, especially Betty and Stinker, who seemed particularly curious. I crouched down and looked under the car, getting down on my knees for a better look, and that's when I saw her – a tiny little pup, huddled against the back wheel. She was thin, her ribs just about visible through her white fur, and there was something else that caught my eye straight away. Around her neck, tight and digging into her skin, was a piece of string – a makeshift collar, but not the kind anyone who cared would use.

She backed away when I reached for her, her small body pressed into the dirt, her eyes wide with uncertainty. She wasn't aggressive, not snarling or snapping, just scared, as if she'd already learnt that people didn't always mean good things.

I spoke softly to her, trying to coax her out. It took a little time, but I managed to gently ease her from under the car. She was light in my hands, barely more than skin and bone. I brought her inside and took her up to the office where Rhea was still working.

I put her down on the floor and watched her. She didn't move or struggle or try to run off, in fact she seemed ok now that she was in a cool room and out of the heat. The other dogs were all crowding at the door so I told Rhea to close the door and go and fetch a bowl of clean water. Then I tore up a piece of bread from my lunch, which I had been just about to start, to offer her. The little pup gobbled it down without hesitation, eating from my hand which is quite unusual for first time feeding, but there again, she was probably starving and maybe that was the first decent food she'd had in ages. Whilst she was eating, I managed to untie the string from around her neck, it must have been half choking her by the red mark it left in her skin. Why do these people do that? Tie their dogs up or put them in cages?

Rhea came back with the water and I told her that the little one had just finished my lunch for me and probably would have eaten more, if I'd had more, but better to play safe and take things slowly. I didn't want her to gobble down too much, too quickly and then be sick. She took one look at the water and quickly got stuck into that, licking and splashing water everywhere until the bowl was almost empty. She looked contented now after the feast, and lay down and started to stretch out and close her eyes, slowly crawling under my desk. She was safe now, curled up in the office like she'd belonged there all along. It hadn't taken long for her nerves to settle; just a matter of a few minutes. I'm always amazed at how some dogs can adapt and settle so quickly, whilst others always seem to be on guard. But, somehow, I guess that she seemed to sense that she'd stumbled into the right house. And to be honest, so did I. Rhea got down and started to stroke her, which seemed to ease her even more, and pretty soon her eyes were half closed and a silly smile played on her face.

I knew, or at least I strongly suspected, who she belonged to. There was a builder who lived out the back of us, one of the gang of four who lived, or should I say survived, in that makeshift tent

that they had mackled together with tarpaulin tied to some trees – we called him Grandad. He wasn't a bad guy, not mean or cruel in a deliberate way, but he wasn't much of a dog man either. He and his mates were usually more interested in booze than animals.

Later that evening, I saw Grandad walking past our house, so I called out to him. "Hey, is this your dog?" I asked.

He glanced at her, now happily sitting on our porch, surrounded by the others. "Yeah," he said, as if it was nothing, then added, "But how did you get her? I always keep her tied to a tree so she won't run off when I'm working all day. What have you done?"

That didn't sit well with me. I didn't like the idea of her being tied up all day, especially with a piece of string so thin and so tight that it was cutting into her neck. No dog should be put into that kind of life. And also I didn't care too much for his semi-accusation of how did I get her? But I ignored that for a second because before I could reply and tell him how the pup got here Grandad spoke again, telling me he'd soon be leaving – going back to wherever he'd come from and taking her with him.

Like heck, he'd take her, not if I could help it, I thought; no way. I saw my chance. The idea of him leaving and taking that little pup with him and having her tied to a tree for the rest of her life or worse, blew my mind. I knew I had to do something.

So, I went up close to him, in a friendly way, and we got into a bit of a negotiation. It wasn't exactly a battle, no stress or bad-mouthing, how these things can go sometimes, just a bit of friendly back and forth, a bit of subtle pressure, and a bit of bartering. In the end, I bought her off him. I can't even remember how much I paid now, it was cash, but not much; I gave him just a few notes that I had in my pocket, but whatever it was, it was worth it.



We decided to name her Raquel, after a character from *Only Fools and Horses*, one of my favorite TV shows. It just suited her – a sweet, funny little thing who quickly found her place among the others. And from that day on, she was ours and Grandad could take a running jump, as far as I was concerned.

Soon after, only a matter of weeks whilst the finishing touches were being carried out, we moved to the new house. It felt like a fresh start for all of us – and for Raquel, it was her first real home; a nice house with an open balcony to take a rest from the heat on, cool and shady, and a big open grassy space to run around in.

Raquel is, and always has been, a little beauty. She's one of the gentlest souls we've ever known. Every night, without fail, she's the first to head to bed. Not her own bed, mind you – our bed. Whatever we are doing, as soon as she has had her evening food, she will come to us, looking up at us, her little tail wagging, and literally beg to go to bed. She curls up in her usual spot and settles down like she's been doing it all her life.

And she's another one, like Betty, who absolutely loves going out in the car. She knows when it's time. The moment we pick up the car keys she's there on the balcony, jumping up and down, making those funny little squealing sounds that she often does, her eyes wide with excitement. It's not just any car trip she loves – she's got a particular soft spot for our regular trips to Baywalk. Baywalk is a lovely spot by the sea with cafes and restaurants, one of our favorite places to take the dogs. We usually take five at a time, a little convoy of excited wag-tails, and let them play and explore to their hearts' content. The open space, the fresh sea breeze, the chance to roam around in safety – to see them run and play surely means it's their version of doggy-paradise.

Raquel really shines on these trips. She runs with the others, but faster and further, only stopping to sniff at every corner, investigating every interesting smell, but always keeping half an eye on us, never wandering too far. There seems to be a kind of quiet gratitude in her, like in all the other rescued dogs that we house and feed, a sense that she knows that life could have turned out so very differently for her if Grandad had had his way.

She could have spent her days tied to a tree for the rest of her life, unfed and uncared for, forgotten and alone. But instead, she found her way to us – and I'm so glad and grateful that she did. She must have bitten her way through that string even though it would have taken her hours to do it with her puppy teeth, but she did it and she escaped. But anyway, as with each and every one of the other strays and street dogs, it feels like she was always *meant* to be part of our family.

Raquel's story is simple, but it's one of those that stays with you. She didn't arrive because of a dramatic rescue or being found left on the roadside with terrible injuries. She wasn't in the middle of a disaster. She just turned up one day under our car, hungry, scared, and quietly waiting for someone to notice her; and it was Betty and Stinker who sniffed her out, who came to the rescue! And I'm so glad they did.

She's not loud, not pushy. She doesn't demand attention the way some of the others do. But she's there, always there, with her sweet little face, her gentle ways, and her quiet loyalty. Sometimes, the smallest and most simple rescues have the biggest hearts.

Raquel is a reminder that not every story starts with a big crashing bang of dramatic energy. All rescues can come from different actions. Sometimes, like in this case, it's just a quiet shuffle coming from under our car, like it was with Winnie hiding under that tricycle, or a curious glance from the car window as we are driving along and seeing a limping dog struggling along like it was with Lunar, or driving down a different street than we normally use, like the time when we found those three abandoned pups dumped in the roadside bin. And from that very first moment, the moment a rescue starts, a whole new life begins.

The rescue for Raquel took place in January/February 2020

Titch – The Pup Who Came to Stay



Of all the dogs who have come into our lives, Titch was probably one of the easiest adoptions we've ever had. And I say adoption deliberately—because that's what it was. It wasn't a rescue in the usual sense. There was no danger, no injury, no dramatic backstory. It was simply a case of a little dog needing a home, and us having just enough space in our hearts to give him one more.

At the time, we'd only just moved into our newly built house. It wasn't even completely finished yet—there were still three or four workers milling around, putting the final touches together. But we were living there, settling in, and by then, we already had a growing crowd of dogs with us: Stinker, Claire, Tim, Marlene, Betty, and Boycie. It was starting to feel like home—a home filled with wag-tails, wet noses, and the constant background noise of happy, playful barking.

Then one day, one of the workers, Ricky, turned up for work as usual, looking troubled. Ricky's a good man, a familiar face in our stories. He was the same guy who'd helped us negotiate Marlene's escape from the man who was planning to kill, cook, and eat her. So, when Ricky turned up that day, holding something small and wriggling under his arm, I already knew what was coming.

He had this tiny black pup with him—barely bigger than his own hand—and he asked if we could take him. A silly question, really. Of course we'd take him. That's just how it works in our world. Ricky explained that his own dog had just given birth to six pups, but tragically, four of them had died apart from this one, and one more that they wanted to keep. He didn't know why—whether it was a virus, something in the environment, or just bad luck—but he didn't want to risk losing this surviving pup. He didn't offer us the two remaining pups, just this one. Probably wanted him to have a proper chance, somewhere safe.

And so, just like that, Titch joined our family.



From day one, he made us laugh. He was such a tiny little thing, all black fur and big feet, but it was his strange little habit that really caught our attention. Every time Titch went to the water bowl for a drink, instead of just leaning over like a normal dog, he would step into the bowl with his both front feet and stand there paddling as he drank. It was as if he thought he needed to physically get in there to enjoy it properly. Of course, by the time he'd finished, the water would be muddy, full of little paw prints, and the other dogs would just give him a look of pure disbelief. But that was Titch—quirky, funny, and completely unaware of how daft he looked. The number of times we had to change the water in a day was unbelievable!

He settled in immediately. No dramas, no slow introductions. It was as if he'd always belonged here. He bonded quickly with Marlene and Boycie, who were both young pups themselves at the time, and the three of them became inseparable—always running, always playing, always causing a bit of mischief wherever they went.

That was February 2020 when Titch arrived, and he's been with us ever since, part of the family, part of the story. Thankfully, as he's grown up, he's stopped paddling in the water bowl—though the memory of those soggy little feet still makes us smile.

But if you ask me what really defines Titch, it's not the paddling or the playfulness—it's his absolute loyalty. Wherever I go—whether it's out onto the land to fetch something or to do a job, or go inside the house, or even to the bathroom—he's there, shadowing me. He doesn't miss a step. If I stop, he stops. If I move, he moves. He's like my little black shadow, always close, always watching, always there.

And at night? Every single night, without fail, he sleeps under our bed. His own chosen spot, tucked away in the safety of the space beneath us. That's not just comfort—that's love, that's trust, that's gratitude.

But Titch isn't just sweet—he's got a bit of cheek about him too. His favorite trick, and one he still hasn't quite grown out of, is to chase pushbikes. Whenever someone cycles past our place, Titch charges out into the road at full speed, tail wagging, barking as if he's taking his job as Head of Security very seriously. Luckily, the local cyclists know him now. They laugh as he darts alongside them, never really threatening, just playing his own version of "catch me if you can."



It's funny how some dogs just slide into your life so easily. No fuss, no drama. Just a quiet, perfect fit. Titch didn't arrive with a grand rescue story. He didn't need saving from a disaster or a dangerous situation. He just needed a place to belong—and we were lucky enough to be the ones who could give it to him.

Looking back now, I can't imagine our home without him. He's woven into the rhythm of our days, part of the morning walks, the afternoon chaos, the evening quiet. He's there when I'm working outside, there when I sit to rest, there in every little gap of my day.

It's easy to think that big stories only come from big moments. But sometimes, the simplest ones—the ones that begin with a man showing up holding a tiny pup under his arm—are the ones that leave the deepest mark.

That's Titch. Small in size, massive in heart. And ours forever.

Titch was adopted in January/February 2020

Boycie: Now One of the Family.



It's not often that a dog adopts *you*—especially not when he already has a perfectly good home of his own. But that's exactly how we came to know Boycie. He wasn't rescued from the street or saved from danger. There was no dramatic moment of crisis. He simply arrived one day, decided he liked it, and never really left.

Back when we were still in the process of building our new house—tucked away on the edge of the city, with open space and quiet surroundings—we started to notice this cheeky little pup turning up outside our home whilst it was in the early stages of being built. Just a baby at the time, all energy and gangly legs, he was clearly well-fed, clean, and healthy. He wasn't a stray, wasn't injured and wasn't hungry. He belonged to a family who lived just down the dirt track road from us, barely 100 yards away.

At first, we thought he was just curious. Puppies are like that—nosey, eager, always poking around where they shouldn't. But it didn't take long to realize that this little fella was doing more than just passing through. He'd come sniffing around about mid-morning, then spend a bit of time playing with our dogs, especially with Marlene. The two of them hit it off instantly, like they'd known

each other all their lives. Two young pups, roughly the same age, and getting along like dear old pals.

He didn't bark or whine or cause any trouble. He just... joined in. One moment he was the neighbor's pup, the next he was part of the pack. It was as natural as anything.



We started calling him Boycie—not just because he looked like a proper little character, but because of his bond with Marlene. If you've ever watched *Only Fools and Horses*, on TV, you'll know exactly who I'm talking about. Marlene and Boycie, the classic married couple—him with the booming laugh and ridiculous sense of self-importance, her with the eye rolls and the patience of a saint. It was a perfect fit. Our Marlene already had that name, and this pup's arrival sealed the deal. Boycie he became, and Boycie he's stayed.

Over time, his visits became more frequent. He started joining the others for lunch. Then he began hanging around for dinner. Before long, we'd find him curled up on the balcony at night, snoozing peacefully, or squeezed into a spot under the table with the rest of them, tail gently thudding against the floor in a dream.

And the thing is—his original owners didn't seem to mind. Maybe they saw the way he was drawn to us, maybe they figured he had more fun at ours than they could give. We never had any complaints or awkward conversations. No shouting, no trying to drag him back home. In fact, even now—five years later—Boycie still trots down the road every now and then to visit his old place. He'll pop in, say hello, maybe sniff around the garden for a few minutes. Then, just as easily, he turns around and heads back down the road, always in time for his evening meal with us. It's as if he's made his own peace with it: one home for history, one for real life.

He chose us. And we were more than happy to be chosen.



Boycie settled in beautifully. He was—and still is—one of the fittest, healthiest dogs we’ve ever had; a little bit overweight these days, but thankfully no injuries, no illnesses, no drama. A real clean slate. But don’t let that fool you into thinking he’s boring. Boycie is sharp as a tack. He’s not one for mischief like some of the others, but he’s got this clever, calculating little mind. You can almost see the gears turning in his head. He watches everything—the comings and goings, the routines, the patterns. He knows when it’s mealtime. He knows when the gate’s about to open. He knows which cupboard the treats are kept in, and instinctively knows when it’s time to go to bed. Oh, and he *hates* the car. Always refusing to come out for a joyride, preferring to stay home and play with his toys, running around on the grassy area with the others, tugging at an old cloth or rubber toy with Peggy or Marlene, chasing a ball.

Every time the keys jingle, Boycie’s ears prick up. He’s first at the gate, pacing back and forth, eyes locked on me like he’s trying to speak to me the words “Don’t ask, as I ain’t going nowhere”, and before you know it, you see him toddling off to his old house. But it’s strange because he used to love rides in the car, especially going to one of our favorite spots called Baywalk.

When we used to take them to Baywalk, that lovely open stretch by the sea, Boycie came alive, charging down the path like a missile, legs pumping, tail streaming behind him like a banner. He was sleek, muscular, and fast back then. Sometimes, when the others were still bumbling along exploring and sniffing at bins and lampposts, Boycie was already halfway down the walkway, flying like he’d got rocket fuel in his paws. But as said, funny thing now is that he’s changed and quite happy to stay home, maybe old age creeping up on him – But he’s only five!

And then there’s Marlene. The bond between them has never wavered. They’re a proper little pair. Not in a soppy way—they don’t cuddle or lick each other constantly—but there’s a quiet loyalty there. They’re often seen lying near each other, chasing the same smells, or walking side by side around our land. If one barks, the other pricks up their ears. If one of them is missing from the group, the other notices.

We never forced that connection. It just happened. Maybe they saw something in each other that reminded them of themselves. Maybe it's the shared memories of being pups together. Whatever it is, it works really well.

Boycie is one of those dogs who seems to instinctively understand the rules of the house. He doesn't test boundaries like some of the others. He knows what's allowed and what isn't. But don't get me wrong—he's no angel. He can be stubborn. He's got this habit of standing dead still when he doesn't want to do something, planting all four paws like tree roots and just refusing to budge. Try to move him and he'll look at you with those wide, innocent eyes, as if to say, "Who, me? Move? Not likely, mate. You move!"

But that's just Boycie. Cheeky. Strong-willed. Unapologetically himself.

He's also incredibly affectionate—in his own way. He's not a lap dog, not one to jump all over you or lick your face for hours. But he'll sit close. He'll nudge your hand for a scratch. He'll rest his chin on your leg when he's had enough excitement for one day. And every once in a while, he'll let out this low, contented sigh—the kind of sound that makes you feel like everything's right with the world.

Sometimes I look at him and think about how easy it would've been for his life to turn out differently. Not worse, necessarily—his original family clearly weren't cruel or neglectful. But different. He might never have met Marlene. Might never have discovered Baywalk or the joys of having a home cooked meal consisting of chicken meat cooked in a blended sauce of natural herbs and vegetables, and topped up with rice. And....he might never have stretched out on our bed, fast asleep, paws twitching in some dream he has about chasing seagulls.

But instead, he found us. Or maybe we found each other. Doesn't really matter which way round it is. All I know is, when the sun starts to set and I hear the sound of scratching at the main gate, I smile. Because if he's not already here, I know who it'll be. Like clockwork. Right on time. Our Boycie—coming home for his dinner.

And he always does.

Boycie was also adopted in January/February 2020

Peggy: Born to Belong



Some dogs choose you before you even know they exist. That was Peggy.

It was an ordinary night, about a year and a half ago, during one of our regular feeding runs to the local council offices and yard, the Barangay as it is called here. There were always three dogs there—scruffy regulars who knew our routine as well as we did. They'd be waiting by the main gate, on the look-out, eyes lit up with that hungry hope. We'd feed them every night on the way back home, the last but one feeding stop, offer a bit of fuss, and check they were alright before heading home to feed our lot.

That night, while dishing out food under the dim light, a man I vaguely recognised from around the area passed by and paused.

“You feed them all the time, yeah?” he said.

“Try to,” I replied.

“Well. There’s a tiny pup over by the basketball court. Looks bad. Just sitting there by herself.”

That was all he said, and then he walked on into the dark. I remember the quiet moment that followed, the kind where you hear everything more clearly—wind in the trees, plastic wrappers skittering across the tarmac, the occasional bark from the far side of the yard.

I finished putting the food down for the usual three and headed for the court. And there she was. A tiny little bundle, almost hidden by the shadows. She wasn’t crying or moving, just sitting there motionless, like she didn’t know what to do, almost like she’d given up. Her skin was raw and patchy, red with irritation and covered in scabs. You could see the fleas crawling on her. A skeletal thing, barely clinging on. She must have been no more than eight weeks old.

I crouched nearby, not wanting to startle her, but she didn’t flinch. Didn’t move at all. That stillness, in a pup that young, said everything. She had no fight left.

I went back to the car, fetched a towel that we always kept for similar emergencies, and gently wrapped it around her. She didn't resist. Just nestled into the cloth, as if it was the first warm thing she'd known in days.

Ruth was waiting in the front seat. "Found her," I said, lifting the small shape and putting it carefully into Ruth's lap.

She looked down and sighed. "Oh, love... what have they done to you?" We didn't even discuss it. The decision had already been made. We took her home.

That first night, we placed her gently in the back room. She had to be put into isolation as whatever disease she'd got, we didn't want the rest of our dogs to come up close and catch it. We always keep the back room clean and empty for situations just like this. We added a bit of bedding, a bowl of clean water, and some soft food. She didn't eat much, but she drank. That was enough for now. We named her Peggy, another character's name from the British TV series called Eastenders, Peggy Mitchel.



The next morning we were at the vet's as soon as the doors opened. One look and he knew: mange. Even so he tested her just to make double sure. Dr. Dan, the vet, is a good friend of ours now, after so many visits over so many years, and he does an excellent job. In this case it was a bad case of mange, but treatable.

"Two baths a week, no more", with the special shampoo he always advises, "And use these twice a day, one tablet and one medicine," he said, handing over the medication. "Keep her isolated for at least a couple of weeks and then bring her back to test again. But right now don't let her mix in with your other dogs as she's contagious."

It sounded like the usual format for mange and skin problems, but we didn't worry too much. We'd done worse.

Back home, we started the treatment right away. The baths weren't easy—Peggy was so small and fragile we had to hold her gently like a baby. But here's the thing: she never struggled. Not once. Most dogs, especially rescues with trauma, will fight you when it's bath time or medicine time. But not Peggy. She just looked up at you with those big, trusting eyes and let you do what needed to be done. As if she knew we were trying to help. As if she'd already made the decision to trust us, completely.

Day after day, with every bath, every dose of medicine, every clean blanket—we watched her grow stronger. Little by little, her skin began to heal. The redness faded. The scabs dropped off. Fleas disappeared. Tiny patches of fur began to return. And then came the appetite. She started wolfing down her food like a dog possessed, wagging her tail furiously when we came near with the food bowls.



After about four weeks, the vet gave us the all-clear: safe to let her mix with the others. Great News! We opened the door to the back room and held our breath. She walked out slowly, unsure of what she'd find. A couple of the dogs sniffed her. A few curious tails wagged. But there was no fuss, no growls, no hostility. It was as if they'd been waiting for her to come out and join the gang. Within days, it was like she'd always been there. And, as I have said before, it always stuns me at how quickly these street dogs can settle into such a completely different environment.

Peggy quickly found her place in the pack, and oddly enough, it was right in the center. You'd think a dog with her history—weak, sick, and so nearly gone—might end up on the edges. But no. Peggy had spark. Not loud or bossy, but strong. She made friends easily, played gently, and learned fast.

Within eight weeks, she was not just healed—she was thriving. The mange was completely gone, the fur was back, and she had filled out into a healthy, happy little soul.

And, like so many before her, she ended up on the bed, daytimes when she wasn't out playing, and at nights too. Not just on the edge, mind you. No, Peggy claimed a spot right in the middle, pushing any other dog out of the way and squeezing herself in between the two of us; Ruth and me. And God help you if you tried to move her during the night.

She became a sort of shadow around the house. Always nearby, always watching. She developed a bark that didn't match her size—a deep, strong warning bark, especially when someone approached the gate. You'd think she was twice her size just by sound alone.

But the biggest surprise of all was how content she was to simply stay home. Most dogs we rescue are wanderers at heart, especially those who grew up on the streets. You open the gate, and they're off—sniffing, exploring, always curious. But Peggy? She never showed the slightest interest in going out.

Even if the gate was left open for deliveries or cleaning, she'd wander close, look out, and then turn around and trot right back into the yard. The house was her world. Her fortress. She'd seen what was out there—and she wanted no part of it. She chose peace.

And in her quiet way, Peggy became one of the best watchdogs we've got. No drama. No chasing things up and down the land surrounding our house. But the second someone appears near the gate, she lets us know. And once we've checked it's safe? She goes right back to her favorite spot on the balcony step, content.



There's a dignity about Peggy. Something calm and self-contained. She doesn't beg for attention like some of the others do. But if you sit down on the porch or the edge of the bed, you'll feel a soft nudge against your hand—and there she is, pressing her head in close, eyes half-closed, content just to be near you. Again, I know that I have said that before about our other dogs, but it's true! As soon as you sit down, you are immediately surrounded by happy looking, lovable dogs.

I used to love to sit and read but I'm afraid that's a distant memory these days, always a nose nudging your hand or a paw scratching at your leg. Oh well, no complaints!

Sometimes I look at her and try to remember that little pup sitting alone by the basketball court. That skeleton wrapped in skin and sadness. It's hard to believe it's the same dog. What would have happened if that guy hadn't told us about her?

But that's the thing about rescue work. Every once in a while, you meet a dog like Peggy—so broken, so still, that you wonder if you're too late - And then they bloom into something beautiful. God's Miracle at work.

Peggy was rescued in August 2023

Dixie: Waiting to Be Found



It was another one of those ordinary days where, somehow, something extraordinary happened. We weren't looking for more dogs, happy enough with the ones we already had at home, and the ones we fed in the streets; surely enough for anyone? But life, and the dogs it places in our path, seems to have a way of rewriting the script.

I was down at Baywalk with five of our regular crew — probably Lunar, Marlene, Winnie, Raquel and Betty. Just giving them some air, letting them feel the sea breeze and sniff everything that moved. Meanwhile, Ruth was off in town running errands, as she often does. I hadn't long been sitting there when she called me out of the blue.

There was urgency in her voice.

She'd spotted a dog in the middle of the road. Not by the side of the pavement or hiding behind a tricycle — no, right in the center of the chaos. A young female dog just standing there, tense, unsure, trying to cross. She wasn't darting, wasn't panicking — just waiting, as if hoping the traffic would somehow pause and make room for her.

But no one stopped. They never do, do they? People just drive on, oblivious or uncaring, missing the little souls who wait at the margins of life— or sometimes right in the middle of it.

Ruth didn't hesitate. She stepped into the road, raising her hand to slow the traffic. A few cars swerved, one even came far too close for comfort — a moment's breath away from taking out both her and the dog. But she managed to scoop her up in her arms, collar and all, and carried her back to the car.

By the time she reached Baywalk, I could see the look in her eyes even before she opened the door. "Can we keep her?" she asked straightaway, even before saying 'Hello'. Now, when Ruth says that, it's never really a question. Not between us. I already knew the answer. I took one look at the dog in her arms and said, "Of course."

She was a scruffy thing. Thin, frazzled fur, her red eyes drooping and watering. The collar told a story — or tried to. Someone had once claimed her, but obviously they hadn't cared much, not judging by the state she was in. A collar is a sign of ownership, but on a neglected dog is no badge of honor — it's a sign that someone failed. It's often more heartbreaking than a stray with no history at all.

So, we brought her home.



Standard procedure — a little time in isolation, a good bath, and a full belly. The vet checked her the next day. Nothing major — no parasites, no distemper, no broken bones. Just the eyes —

irritated and sore, needing daily drops. But otherwise, she was clean. A good sign. It meant she could join the others sooner than most of the other strays had.

But here's where the story takes a strange turn. The moment we let her into the main house and the land and garden; it was as if... she already knew it. It was as if she knew the place and knew it well!

There was no hesitation, no fear. She walked upstairs, then down again. Poked her nose into each room. Circled the kitchen, inspected the corners, checked the water bowls, then trotted onto the outside balcony like as if she was checking everything was still there; still where she'd left it. It was eerie, strange. Like she'd been here in this place before.

Now, I don't expect everyone to understand, or even agree, but I am Spiritual and I've always believed in reincarnation — especially when it comes to dogs. The soul of a dog is pure, loyal, loving. Why wouldn't such a soul be given another chance? And if they came back, why wouldn't they find their way home again?

Ruth and I looked at each other and both said the same thing without needing to say a word: *She's been here before. It was amazing how she just settled in.*

We don't know who she might have been — maybe one of our old gang who passed during the earlier years. Maybe the little one who never made it through her illness. Maybe the one who ran off and never came back. But Dixie — that's what we named her — had a presence that felt familiar. And not just familiar. *Comforting.*

From the very first night, she made herself part of the rhythm of the household. She didn't push herself forward or demand attention. She just fitted in. Like a missing piece finally snapped into place.



She followed the other dogs but never clashed with them. Found her own sleeping spot under the dining table at first — then slowly inched her way closer to the rest, choosing her moment to curl up next to whichever dog looked least likely to grumble. Smart girl.

Within a week, it was as if she'd always been there. And, maybe she had.

But Dixie wasn't just well-behaved. She was affectionate in a very special way — not loud or bouncy, but quietly devoted. She'd jump up and rest her chin on your leg and look up at you as if checking in. Just letting you know she was there. Grateful.

And she was energetic too — bursting with life, chasing butterflies that we have flying in the garden most days, charging around the land in great loops, teasing the younger ones into games of tag, then collapsing dramatically onto the grassy areas in the shade as if to say, *I'm done now, wake me for dinner.*

One of her favorite pastimes, funny enough, is sitting on the steps to the balcony and watching everything going on below her and around her. Like a little queen on her balcony. Eyes alert, tail moving slightly whenever she saw movement. If someone came to the gate, she was one of the first to announce it with her excited barking — but never aggressively. Just a polite heads-up, like, *Excuse me, we may have guests.*

Twelve months have passed now since that day Ruth stopped traffic to save her. Her eyes are clear now. No more redness. Her coat is thick and shiny. She's strong, quick, and just the right amount of cheekiness. Her trust in us is absolute — and our trust in her is the same. You know you've earned a dog's love when they look you in the eyes and lean in, just gently, as if to say, *Thank you.* But it's not just about being rescued. Like all the others before her, Dixie rescued us in her own quiet way, too. It's a sense of mutual benefit, for both sides, the dogs and us.

Sometimes it's easy, in this life, to feel overwhelmed by the sheer number of dogs in need. You look around and you see hunger, cruelty, ignorance, and start to wonder if anything you do makes a difference. But then along comes a little soul like Dixie — and reminds you that *yes, it does.* Because for her, it made all the difference.



And every now and then, late at night when the house is quiet, I catch a glimpse of her lying on the wooden floor of the balcony, or on the sofa, perfectly still, staring into the darkness as if she's remembering a past life. And I can't help but wonder... was this her home before? Did she come back to find us again? Did she wait, patiently, for the day when Ruth would bravely walk out into traffic and reach out her hand? Why was she so trusting in Ruth to pick her up in the middle of all that speeding traffic, if she hadn't known her before? Makes you think!

I don't know for sure. All I know is that she's home now. Where she belongs. With us. And we are better for it.

Dixie was rescued in September 2024

Audrey and Billy: Through the Fence to Safety



You get used to the strays after a while. Not in a cold way — never that — but you come to recognize the rhythm of their lives. The quiet ones who keep their distance. The scavengers who've learned not to trust anything or anyone. The hopeful ones who wait in the same spot every night. And then, every so often, you meet a dog who surprises you. Not with noise or drama, but with quiet persistence. Audrey was one of those.

She'd been living down the road at a warehouse — a big place, just a few minutes' walk from our house. There were four dogs that used to hang about there. We don't know if they belonged to the staff or were just tolerated, but they were there every day, curled up under the lorries, scavenging from the rubbish bins, hiding from the heat and hard rain.

Even back then, before we knew her properly, we always stopped to feed her and them all. As soon as our car pulled up, a quick honk of the horn, a whistle, and they'd trot over — cautious but hopeful. We never missed a day if we could help it.

Then the warehouse closed. Doors shuttered. Staff gone. And the dogs? They were just left behind. No one came back for them. Not even once. Just abandoned like old garbage, as seems to happen so often here. We kept feeding them, of course. Pulling over by the side of the road and leaving bowls near the fence for them. But slowly, one by one, the dogs disappeared. Maybe they wandered off looking for food. Maybe someone took them in. Or maybe... well, we try not to think too hard about the other possibilities.

But Audrey stayed.

She was a slim little thing, a Filipino Aspin with a brindle type of stripey coat, big eyes and an alertness that never left her face. She didn't beg, didn't bark, but always came up close; never shy like some. Always waiting. Always watching out for us as she heard the noise of the car engine as

we came along the road. She was always waiting and wanting — not just waiting for the food but also a bit of kindness now and again. Instantly you could tell her lovable nature.

We didn't know she was pregnant. She didn't look it. And she kept her secret so well that even if we'd suspected, there wasn't much we could've done. Weeks passed. Then, out of the blue, something changed.

We were sitting on the balcony at home one morning — just one of those quiet, slightly breezy mornings where the dogs lounge around and the air smells like coconuts and dust, thinking of all the stuff that you should be doing instead of having a coffee and daydreaming. And then we saw her.

Audrey. Walking calmly up the path.



She'd come in through that little hole in the bamboo fence at the far end of the land, trotting right up the slope and climbed one step at a time onto the balcony like she'd been invited. No fear. No hesitation. Just... *here I am*.

We looked at each other, a bit amused, a bit shocked and very surprised. But we didn't have to think twice, didn't even need to discuss it. She was welcome. Always had been. In fact, if she hadn't of made the move, we would have done; we'd already talked about it.

From that day on, Audrey became part of the household. But still, something was odd.



Every morning, without fail, she would leave. Back through the hole in the bamboo fence, down the slope, out of sight. Then sometime mid-morning or after lunch, she'd reappear. Not tired. Not frantic. Just quietly coming home.

And then one day — maybe two weeks or so later — she came back with a pup.

A tiny black pup. Couldn't have been more than a few weeks old. Wobbly legs, head too big for his body. Covered in fleas. And that's when everything made sense. All those little disappearances. All the time spent away. She'd had pups — at least two, we reckon. And she'd been hiding them somewhere close, keeping them safe. Maybe the others didn't make it. We'll never know. But this one — this one she brought home. Like she knew it was time for him to be cared for.

We named him Billy (ok, yes, you guessed it, after another TV soap opera character, this time from Coronation Street)



He was fragile, poor little thing. Flea-bitten and scratching himself constantly, and twitching in a nervous kind of way. I used diatomaceous earth on him straight away — brilliant stuff, does the job naturally; kills all ticks and blood suckers, but not so good with the tiny mites and fleas. And the next day we took him to the vet.

All clear, apart from some skin irritation. A bit of treatment, some baths, and he'd be fine. As soon as I could, I went back to the old warehouse and the overgrown scrub nearby, searching for signs of any other pups. I combed through the grass, called softly, even left food in a few hidden spots. But nothing. Not a sound. Not a sniff. Just silence.

So now it was the two of them. Audrey and Billy. Mother and son. And you could tell straight away how strong their bond was.

Audrey kept a close watch on him. Nudged him gently when he hesitated. Lay beside him at night, wrapped around him like a blanket. She was still milk-feeding him, but didn't smother him — she let him explore — but always with an eye on where he was.

And Billy? Well... he's one of the shyest little souls we've ever had. Nine months on, and he's still unsure of everything around him, preferring to be a bit of a loner, rather than join in with the fun. He doesn't come charging up for a cuddle like the others. Doesn't jump at the gate or bark at the wind. He watches from a distance. Observes. Takes everything in. And flinches if a stranger moves too fast.

It breaks your heart, really. Makes you wonder what happened in those early weeks before Audrey brought him to us. Sometimes kids can be so cruel with animals, thinking they are just a game to play with. So can adults. Maybe he was scared. Maybe he was hurt. Maybe he just learned to hide. But here's the thing — he's trying now. Every day, just a little better and a little bit less nervous.

He doesn't run from us anymore. Not always, anyway. He'll take food from the hand if you're gentle. He watches the other dogs play and sometimes takes a cautious step forward, testing the water.

But he definitely is a loner. And that is the very first time we have experienced it in all the years we have been involved with dogs; all dogs, young and old, happy and healthy or sick and diseased. We never push him. That's the key with dogs like Billy. You don't rush. You don't force them against their will. You just *be there*. Again, and again and again, until the fear starts to fade and the trust begins to grow.

As for Audrey — she's lovely and she's thriving.



Her coat is glossy, and it's a lovely brindle design of different colors, like a true Aspin. She is still calm and watchful, but there's a lightness to her these days. A kind of quiet happiness. As if she's finally learned how to let go and relax. She's not so old herself though, maybe two or a little bit older, and sometimes she plays like a pup herself — rolling in the grass, tossing a stick in the air, teasing the others with little nips and dashes; she loves to especially play and chase with Dixie and Emily, sometimes with Billy joining in now. It's a beautiful thing to sit and watch them like that, beats watching television every time!

You know, out of all the stories we've gathered over the years, this one might be the gentlest. No dramatic rescue. No broken bones or bloody trauma. Just a mother who refused to leave her responsibilities behind. A dog who held on. Who came looking for help when everyone she knew, her previous owners from the warehouse, had turned their backs, and who brought her last surviving pup to the only place she trusted.

And maybe that's what makes her story so powerful.

Because Audrey didn't *ask* us for help. She *told* us. Walking right up the path, her puppy held between her teeth, struggled through a hole in the fence, and almost said *Can we stay?*
And Billy... well, he's staying too. However long it takes. However slowly he learns. We'll be here.

Because sometimes it's not the loudest bark that needs hearing. Sometimes it's the quiet ones — the shy ones — the ones who've been through more than they can say. They need us most of all. And he will get better and better, louder and stronger, until he is as big a nuisance as the rest of them. Hahahaha!

Audrey and Billy arrived in mid-summer 2024

Bonus Story: Snatched, Saved, and Smuggled Away



It was crazy! During the short time it took to write this eBook, two more dogs joined us at home to make the gang numbers up to seventeen! Honestly! I'm not making this up.

We didn't think in our wildest dreams that we would be adding two more dogs to the home during the few days it took in writing this book, but again and again rescue work has a way of throwing surprises at you — and you've got to move when the moment comes. And sometimes move fast! No time to plan it. No time to think too hard about it. You just have to act.

It had started with a quiet word from one of the security guards at the shopping mall — one of the good ones; one of the few guards who liked dogs. He'd told us about the new management wanting changes, just like the previous 'new' management had been when they had taken over a few years

before, wanting a clean sweep and complaining about dogs and the mess they made. He'd tipped us off a week or two earlier, telling us to be careful because of the new boys in charge, but this time he told us something that stopped us in our tracks: this was serious! Very serious!

The reason? The new management team who had taken over the mall had now decided that they wanted all dogs out! They thought that shoppers might be put off by having a few dogs laying around. New guys in charge, new rules to be followed. That was it. Nothing personal. Just wanted all dogs out of sight, out of mind. That was their ruling and no argument about it.

We'd been feeding two regular dogs every single day for more than twelve months. Unlike other dogs who just passed through, staying at the mall for a few days before moving on, these two dogs had made the mall their home. They lived near the far side, tucked out of the way by a delivery bay where it was quiet. They were never any trouble. Just two strays trying to survive — sleeping side by side, moving around the car park quietly and causing no trouble to no one. We named them Denzil and Corinne, after the married couple from the TV comedy show *Only Fools and Horses*. It suited them. They were always together — walking, eating, sleeping, even stretching in sync sometimes like they'd rehearsed it.

They knew us well. They knew the sound of the car engine as we pulled up and then got the smell of the food in the back before we had even parked. As soon as they saw us they'd come running. Wagging their tails and jumping up to us. They'd eat, have a drink, get a bit of fuss and affection, and then wander back to their spot like it was just part of the daily routine.

Yes. Before the change of management things had been fairly ok for us and also for the dogs but as soon as the new guys were in charge that's when things started to change as they introduced new rules of theirs.

First, we were told not to leave food on the ground. Fair enough. So, we started using bowls. Then the bowls began to go missing. Sometimes we found them smashed and stamped on, or they were just missing. It wasn't subtle. Someone clearly didn't want them there.

And then came the warning from our friendly guard; he looked stressed and worried as he told us. This was the warning we couldn't ignore – The two dogs were going to be taken away in the morning. So, we acted fast; we had no choice. the two dogs who'd been living there for over a year were very soon to be taken away. Not to a shelter, not to a farm somewhere. To the dog pound. And the orders were clear — once they got there, they were to be put down. No questions. No second chances. It was a case of euthanasia and no escape! It was Ruth on feeding duty that night, not me, and she knew that there was no time to waste.

I wasn't there, still at home, and so it was him, the same guard who now helped Ruth catch them. He knew their habits and where they would be and helped her approach them calmly. No panic, no force. Ruth got them into the car gently, one by one, and drove straight home. I'd had the telephone call and was waiting when she arrived. We carried them into the back room, the same one we always use for new rescues to let them get used to their new surroundings and also to isolate them from our other dogs, in case of any problems. A quiet space. Safe. No pressure. Just food, water, and a soft spot to lay down.

We kept them in there for two days, for two reasons. First of all, we didn't want to risk them bolting back to the mall like Ken did when we first rescued him from the same place a while ago. He'd slipped away overnight and somehow made the long journey back — but we found him the next day and brought him home again. Lesson learned. This time, we waited. And the second reason, as mentioned, is that we wanted to keep them in isolation for a few days just to let them settle.

When we finally let Denzil and Corinne out, we held our breath. Would they panic? Would they try to run away? Would the others accept them? Would there be a fight?

But none of that happened.

Our dogs — bless them — were curious, sure, but calm. They sniffed around, a few gentle growls here and there just to set the pecking order, and then — nothing! That was it. They were in. It's been two weeks now, and you'd think they'd been here for years. They eat with the others, sleep where they like, and follow us around like shadows. Denzil's a bit of a cuddler — always looking for a pat or a scratch behind the ear. Corinne's even more open with her affection; one of the most loving dogs I've ever met; jumping up, wagging her tail, following us around, and watching everything we do so that she doesn't miss a trick. We've even seen her wag her tail in her sleep. That's a good sign.

They've settled in so well it's almost strange. Like they always knew they'd end up here. Like they were just waiting for the right time.

So that's seventeen dogs in the house now. Seventeen! And we started with one — Stinker, all those years ago, never thinking we'd end up like this, housing all these beautiful creatures. But that's life, right?

It sounds mad when you say it out loud. Seventeen. But every one of them has a story, a reason, a place. And we don't regret a single one.

Denzil and Corinne were nearly lost. Nearly gone without a chance. But now they're part of the gang — safe, fed, loved and cared for, for the rest of their lives.

Corrine and Denzil rescue date? Now! Two weeks ago at the time of writing!

The Dogs We Loved and Lost

Stinker- The One Who Chose Us.



Stinker was the very first dog we ever had in Puerto — and what a dog she was. A beautiful black-haired girl, full of quiet strength and gentle patience, she stayed with us for nine unforgettable years. She is the one who started everything; the one who gave us the idea to try and help these poor street dogs. She was amazing! I loved her so much!

When we first moved to Puerto, Palawan we rented a small house on a dirt road, just off the city centre. Right across from us was a home where a local family lived who had a son, aged about 25 or so. They were ok, but we'd been tipped off about the son from our Housing landlord, saying that he could be a bit of a *nuisance* when he felt like it — but as soon as we moved in what we saw first and didn't like was the small cage by the roadside, just outside their house, because locked inside the cage was their dog. Coming from England, I'd never had to see something as bad as that before and I hated it.

As we went out and came back we'd see her every day, sitting silently in that cramped little space, no barking, no fuss. She was calm, maybe too calm. Something didn't sit right. One day, we looked more closely and saw she was bleeding from her back end — from her vagina. She was sick, no doubt about it.

We asked the family if they were treating her. "No," they said, as if it didn't matter. That was all we needed to hear. We offered to take her to the vet ourselves, paid for the whole course of treatment — six weeks long, and week by week she made good progress until she recovered completely. No more bleeding, no more suffering. It was the first time we felt that urge to help, that protective bond that only dogs can spark in you.

After that, something changed. When we were there, at home, we would start to open her cage and let her out to walk about and, in no time at all she started choosing *us*, our place. Every time we let her out of the cage, she came into our house instead of theirs. It wasn't just a visit — it was like

she was saying, “This is my home now.” The son didn’t like that one bit. He kept locking her back up, but we just kept letting her out again. It became a quiet battle of wills, but she had already made her choice, despite what the son might have thought.

So, after a few weeks of the ‘battle of the wills’ we decided to buy her. I didn’t trust the situation to buy the dog on a hand shake and verbal agreement, especially with the son, so I had a proper legal agreement drawn up. The whole family signed it — except him. So we held off, waiting for that last signature. Then, about a week later, they were throwing a party and needed cash. Suddenly, the son changed his mind and signed the paper. That was it. She was officially ours.

But wow, did she stink. You couldn’t miss it. That’s where the name came from — *Stinker*. Whenever Ruth or me came back home, one of the first questions would be ‘Where’s Stinker?’ But on day one of her being officially ours we gave her a long, soapy bath, fed her properly, and let her stretch her legs for the first time in who knows how long. Her coat turned out to be stunning — deep black, glossy and soft. She looked like a completely different dog.

Back then, we had only her, so she went everywhere with us — the beach, the mall, anywhere we could take a dog, she was there. She sat with us at roadside cafes, ran along the sea shore when we went to the beach; jumping up and climbing into the car for every errand or trip we made. She was quiet and good-natured, never demanding. It felt like she’d been waiting her whole life just to be included, to be part of a loving family, instead of being an outcast, stuck in that horrible little cage in all weathers.

But one day, something awful happened. I had her riding with me in the back seat of our pickup truck — as usual — and somewhere along the road, maybe after a bump or a sharp turn, she must’ve leaned too far out the window and fell. I didn’t hear anything or notice until five or ten minutes later when I reached our land. I turned round to let her out and she wasn’t there. My heart sank – That doesn’t nearly describe how I felt! I was devastated. Panic stricken - I turned the truck around and drove back slowly, scanning every inch of the road. Nothing. I searched what seemed like for hours but still couldn’t see her. The next day we put up posters everywhere, offering a reward. Days went by, and it was torture; the guilt! Then, thank God, a group of guys found her and called us so we dropped everything and went to fetch her. We brought her back — safely, a bit shaken but fine. They’d kept her when they had seen the posters. We gave them the reward, no questions asked. Just pure relief. That day we realized how deep the bond had grown and how much we loved her.

We later moved to another rented house, away from that son and all his crazy actions, and that’s when we began taking in street dogs. At first just one or two, but then more started arriving. Through it all, Stinker never once growled, never got possessive or upset. She accepted them, one by one, without hesitation. She had every right to be the queen bee, but she wasn’t like that. She was too kind. She just seemed to understand that they needed help too.

Eventually, our own home was built — a place surrounded by land, with space for dogs to run and live freely. Stinker moved with us, along with newcomers Claire, Betty, Tim, and Raquel — the early core of our now-big dog family. More street dogs joined us over the years. The place came alive with barks, tails wagging, and bowls being filled and emptied, and filled again. And Stinker?

She remained the quiet heart of it all. She had the calm dignity of an old soul, never demanding attention, never causing problems, just always there.

In March 2024, she passed away. It was old age — her body just started slowing down and eventually, she let go. We think she was around 10 or 11. It was peaceful, but still heartbreaking. We buried her at the end of our land, in the little dog cemetery we have created, with nice plants and crosses that we made — a quiet and serene place surrounded by trees, where the breeze carries the sounds of the dogs she helped welcome.

Stinker was more than our first dog — she was the beginning of a new way of life. She showed us what it meant to rescue, to care, to listen. Every dog we've taken in since her, owes something to her. She taught us the rhythm of this life. She turned us into *dog-loving people*.

And not a day goes by that we don't think of her. I love that beautiful dog more than anything....

Afterword: Stinker's Final Gift

Stinker was with us for nine beautiful years. She was never just "one of the dogs." She was the reason we started helping street dogs in the first place. She had that special 'thing' about her, something very special that made her stand out. From the moment we started saving new street dogs, she made it so easy for every new one that came after her. No fuss, no jealousy. She simply accepted each one, like she knew what we were trying to do long before we knew.

In early 2024, she passed away peacefully of old age. She didn't suffer. She left us quietly, with grace — like she had always lived. And though we were heartbroken, we knew she had lived a full, happy life with us. She gave more than we could ever repay.

But something happened a week after she left. Something I still think about often and treasure deeply. I was lying on my bed one night, alone and resting. The room was dark, quiet. And then, suddenly, I felt her next to me. Not in my imagination — but truly, unmistakably her. Her presence was as real as it had ever been. I didn't move or speak. I just let the moment happen.

She lay beside me for what must have been ten minutes. I could feel her, feel her coat. No words. No fear. Just a lovely warm inner glow and a feeling of deep peace, that quiet, deep peace she always carried with her; it was almost like we were talking to each other, mind to mind, not verbally - I am very Spiritual and believe in the afterlife, the next dimension, and that, as Betty Shine, the World's Greatest Healer, Clairvoyant and Medium told us "We never die; we just move on to the next life". And Stinker came back to endorse that for me.

Since that night, she's come back two more times. I believe — truly — that she was letting me know that she's okay. That she made it safely to the next place, the next dimension, wherever that may be, and that she's still around, still keeping watch over me, and the dogs, and all we're trying to do. I know in my heart that one day we will meet again.

Some may not understand this. And that's alright, I understand completely. But I know what I felt. Stinker was never just the beginning of our journey — she still walks with us, just from a little further away.

Dickie - A Gentle Soul, Gone Too Soon



Dickie was one of those dogs who never really belonged to anyone, but quietly became part of everything.

Back when we were still living in our old rented house, before moving into the home we built, Dickie used to hang around a few doors down. He sort of lived with a group of church workers who were staying there, but it was clear that no one was really taking responsibility for him. He was always out on the street, wandering between the nearby houses, sleeping in corners, and scavenging for food.

There wasn't much traffic on our little road, so it was safe enough for him to roam. He got by on scraps — raiding bins, and sometimes getting a bite of discarded food from the construction workers who lived across the street. The church staff didn't pay much attention to him, and the priest who visited every now and then probably didn't even know Dickie existed.

So, we stepped in. We started by placing a water bowl on the pavement. Then, in the early evenings, we began putting out a bit of food — and soon enough, he was soon joining Stinker at mealtimes like it was the most natural thing in the world. On hot days, or when the rain came hammering down, Dickie would quietly come inside the house, never pushy, just grateful. We welcomed him! He was sweet-natured, playful, and affectionate — the kind of dog who just wanted a bit of company and kindness. Don't all dogs?

Eventually, the church workers moved out — and like so many others do, they left Dickie behind. No farewell, no handover, just gone. And so, without a word, he became ours.

We noticed he had an issue with his private parts — swollen and clearly uncomfortable. The vet thought it was related to a sexually transmitted disease, possibly from his time as a stray. We did everything we could — treatment, medication, care — but it never fully healed. He still had swelling, though it didn't seem to stop him from living his life or being his usual happy, tail-wagging self.

Then, only about three months before we moved to our new home, tragedy struck. Dickie caught parvo — that horrible, fast-moving virus that's taken too many dogs far too soon. One day he was fine, the next he was weak, and within three days, he was gone.

He died quietly in our kitchen while we were out. Coming home to find his still, lifeless body stretched out on the tiled floor was heartbreaking. There are moments as a dog parent you never forget — and that was one of them.

We took him to our doggy graveyard at the end of our land, where we live now, and buried him next to the others. We laid him to rest with the same care and love we'd given him in life.

He may have only been with us a short time, but Dickie was a gentle, playful soul — and he knew, at least for a little while, what it meant to be safe, fed, and loved.

Claire – The Calm in the Chaos



Claire was one of those dogs who didn't need to bark or jump to demand your attention — she simply *was her*. Gentle, quiet, and graceful, she became part of our lives before we even realized it.

Back when we were still living in our old rented house — the same one where we met Stinker and Dickie — Claire used to sleep in a little makeshift builder's shed across the road. The workers there would sometimes feed her, but not regularly. Most days, she had to fend for herself. Soon enough, she started crossing over to our side of the road — drawn by the fresh bowl of water we always left out and, of course, the food we put down for our growing family of street dogs. That's how it was in the beginning: first Stinker, then Dickie, and now Claire. One by one, they found their way to us.

Claire actually moved in with us before Dickie did. She was cautious at first, keeping her distance, always watching. I'll never forget when we first saw her — she had a deep knife wound running across the top of her head, fresh and bleeding. We don't know who did it or why, but it was a horrible thing to see. And yet, even then, even with all that pain, she wasn't angry. Just wary. She wouldn't let us touch her for a long time, though. Trust takes time — and she taught us that.

But when she finally decided we were safe, she made herself right at home. She'd nap on the staircase or curl up on the settee — the one she clearly claimed as hers. She didn't need permission; it seemed it was hers by rights! She just had that quiet dignity about her, like she'd been through enough and now deserved some peace.

She was beautiful too — soft brown fur and big, soulful eyes. And incredibly calm. In a house slowly filling up with stray dogs and chaos, Claire was the still point. She never barked unnecessarily, never fought for food or space. She had a calming effect on the others — even on us.

A little while after moving in, she became pregnant. Like many street dogs, she'd gone off during heat and found her own way. We didn't mind. She actually gave birth *under* the coffee table in the front room, and still we didn't mind! She gave us three gorgeous pups: Vardy, Kasper, and Betty. We had her sterilized afterward to make sure she stayed healthy and could give us no more little mouths to feed. More about her pups later — but they were just as sweet as she was.

When we finally moved into our new home, of course Claire came with us. She lived here with us for another four years. As time passed, her face grew greyer, but she stayed beautiful, calm, and always so affectionate right to the very end of her life.

Eventually, she became ill — the vet tried everything, but couldn't save her. She passed gently, overnight whilst she slept, just like she lived. She now rests in our dog cemetery, surrounded by flowers and marked with a wooden cross.

She brought a quiet kind of love into our lives — and, like all the others that we have loved and lost, we will never forget her.

Vardy – The First Little Star



Vardy was one of the first pups born into our home, the son of our sweet Claire. He came into the world born under the coffee table in our front room, alongside his brother Kasper and sister Betty — three tiny bundles of life that brought joy, noise and mayhem into every corner of the house. From the very beginning, Vardy stood out as the playful one. He was full of energy and mischief, always wrestling with his siblings or chasing shadows across the floor. The three of them were never far from each other — playing, tumbling, fighting gently like puppies do. They even bounced around on our little trampoline when they had the chance, a memory that still makes us smile. Though his life was short, those few months were filled with love. Vardy knew nothing of the hard streets or hunger that his mother had survived. Instead, he knew comfort, food, warmth, and the kind of affection every dog should have from the start.

Sadly, like too many young dogs in this part of the world, Vardy caught parvo — that cruel disease that often takes them so quickly. We noticed the signs and did everything we could. We watched him, stayed close, and hoped for a turnaround. But in the quiet hours of the night, he passed away peacefully.

He was just two or three months old.

Vardy was the first dog we buried in our cemetery at the end of our land. It felt right to give him a place of rest, even though his time with us had only just begun. He may not have had long in this world, but he was loved deeply — and in those short weeks, he gave us memories that still warm our hearts.

He was our first little star — the first light we lost.

Kasper – The Brave Little King



Kasper was second of Claire's three pups — born right in our front room, under the coffee table, alongside his brother Vardy and sister Betty. While Vardy was the playful one, and Betty had her quiet charm, Kasper was all fire and spirit. Even as a tiny pup, you could tell he thought he was in charge.

He would charge out of the house like he owned the street, barking at dogs twice his size, tail up like a flag, as if to say, *this is my kingdom now*. There was no fear in him — just pure confidence and bold energy. It didn't matter how many dogs passed by — Kasper was always ready to chase them off, head held high.

He didn't get along with Tim at first — the dog we later adopted from the construction guy who stayed round the corner. Tim was bigger, older, and a bit shy, but Kasper didn't like having to share attention or territory. It was never violent, just typical doggie politics. Eventually, they worked things out, but in those early days, Kasper made it clear: he wasn't going to be pushed around.

We were just about to take him to the vet be sterilized. He was about six months old — old enough, healthy, full of life, and ready enough for the operation, but before we could book him in with Dr. Dan, Kasper had developed one habit we always worried about: he roamed too far. He'd head up to the end of our quiet street and venture out onto the main road. We tried keeping him in, calling him back, but he was quick and fearless.

That road was dangerous — cars and motorbikes flying up and down like they were on a racetrack. We'd seen it too many times — dogs running for their lives while drivers didn't even blink. One day, we were working inside the house when two young lads came shouting at our gate. They knew Kasper and told us what had happened — he'd been hit by a car. A hit-and-run. The driver never stopped.

We ran up the road and found him lying at the edge of the road, in the grass. He was still alive; but hardly. We carried him back to the house, gently, trying not to move him too much. We sat with him in our front room, talking to him softly, trying to keep him calm.

And then, just like that, he was gone. He died in my arms, only a few minutes after we had brought him home. Ruth was devastated — she cried for days. We both did. It was such a senseless loss. Kasper now rests beside his brother Vardy in our dog cemetery, under the trees at the back of the land. A small cross marks his grave, surrounded by flowers and memories of a brave little pup who thought the whole street was his.

And in a way — it was.

Rita – The Brightest Smile



Rita was one of those dogs who made you smile just by being near her. She had a pure white coat and a cheerful personality to match — playful, energetic, and full of mischief. Even from the start, she stood out.

We first met her at the local shopping mall, the same time when we were feeding Ken — a quiet, older dog who's now been with us for over three years. Back then, we were feeding a handful of dogs around the mall every day, but Rita and Ken were the regulars. They never left. While the others came and went, those two held their ground, always waiting patiently for the sound of our car as we pulled up into the car park, chasing the car, waiting for us to stop so they could have their evening meal.

Rita was still young, maybe a year or so old, and full of bounce. Ken was older, calm and wise; Rita was pure fun. She'd chase your feet while you were walking, nip at your laces while you tried to tie your shoes up, roll around in the dust, or just grin that big doggy smile of hers that made all your troubles fly away.

But like so many times before, management at the mall decided the dogs had to go. No real reason, just pressure to move them along — even though most of the customers liked them, and the dogs never caused trouble. So, we brought Ken and Rita home with us; the others always moved on anyway, not needing to be told, and they settled in straight away, as if they'd been waiting for the invitation.

Then came the night when tragedy struck and everything changed.

We were busy with things around the house when, in a flash of chaos, Rita bit down on a live electric cable. It was plugged in — a terrible mistake — and the shock hit her hard. She started shaking, confused, restless. You could see the pain in her eyes. She vomited, paced around, and drank water like mad. I made a bed for her in the laundry room and stayed with her, trying to keep her calm and away from the other dogs.

She couldn't settle at first, kept moving, whimpering softly, trying to drink more water. Eventually, she lay down beside me. I stayed there with her. After a while, we must have both drifted off to sleep.

When I woke up in the early morning, Rita was gone. She had passed away

It was devastating. She was still so young — only around 18 months old — and had barely begun her life with us. As soon as it was light we carried her gently to the dog cemetery at the back of our land, where she now rests alongside the others we've loved and lost.

Rita was a light in the house. She made us laugh. She brought joy into every corner. Her playful spirit, her beautiful white coat, and her silly habit of biting our shoelaces are things we'll never forget.

She was only with us a short time — but she left a mark that will last forever. She was a darling.

Rodney – A Short Life, Still Loved



Rodney came to us from a local family living not far from where we were building our new house. In fact, Ricky, one of the sons in that family had been helping us out with some of the work and already knew we were caring for street dogs. One day, he just asked if we could take in one more. He had already blessed us with one dog, Titch, so I guess he thought we would take one more. And we did.

Their dog had given birth to a litter of six pups, and they simply couldn't cope — worse, most of the pups were already dying. Only two had survived, Titch and Rodney. We didn't hesitate. When someone asks for help like that, you help.

So, the new pup, who we called Rodney came to live with us — a tiny little thing, but full of energy and warmth. He took to the older dogs straight away, never causing trouble. He played with them, ate beside them, followed them around the garden, especially with Titch, like a little brother just happy to be part of something.

Rodney settled in beautifully. He had a softness about him, even as he grew. You could tell he was happy — finally safe, finally loved. But after four or five months, the parvo virus struck again. It always seems to come out of nowhere — carried on the wind, passed along by something unseen. It doesn't care how much love a dog has — it finds the weak, the young, and the unlucky.

Rodney became sick fast. But worse than that, he suddenly turned wild with panic. One moment he was resting, and the next, he would be running in circles, biting at everything, snapping at the air. It was terrifying to watch — not aggression, but fear, confusion, pain. He didn't know what was happening to him.

We rushed him to the vet, hoping for a miracle cure but there was no hesitation in the vet's voice — Rodney was in deep distress, and there was no way back. He told us the kindest thing we could

do was let him go, and we agreed. It was the hardest choice, but it was the right one. Right then and there the vet gave Rodney the injection to put him out of pain and in rest.

Rodney now rests with the others, in peace, in our little dog cemetery at the end of the land. He may not have had a long life — but he had one filled with love.

And he'll always be remembered.

Alfie – Dumped in a Car Park



It was one of those times when we were in the right place at the right time.

We were parked up in one of the local mall's car parks and had just about finished feeding a regular group of street dogs when a young guy came by on his motorbike, slowed down, and told us that he'd just seen a little puppy being thrown out of a passing car. Thrown out? We asked. *'Yeah, the driver pushed him out the door and then drove off. It's over there.'*

We stopped what we were doing and got over to where the guy thought the pup would be and there he was! A tiny little bundle of creamy white fur just padding about between the parked cars; completely alone, completely lost.

It goes without saying that we weren't going to walk away and leave him there, so we picked him up, wrapped a towel around him and put him on the back seat in the car, then tended to the other dogs who were almost finished feeding and drifting away, bellies full, and finding their ways back to their favorite shady place. So, then we headed for home, Ruth cuddling the little pup, me driving. Two more feeding stops on the way, and then home to feed our own gang of hungry mouths who were all waiting inside the gates for us to open up, drive the car inside, and play with them before meal time.

We put the little one in the usual place, in isolation, in the laundry room at the back. We fed him there, made a bed for him, left water, switched the lights off and let him sleep. The next day we had a good look at him and he seemed perfectly fine, good skin, no mites or fleas, so we brought him out and introduced him to our gang of curious dogs, all pushing to get close to the latest arrival.

From the start 'Alfie' as we named him, mixed in well, feeding and sleeping with the others, playing with them, and having a good look around the house and grounds, especially having great fun rolling around in the fallen leaves where our Mahogany trees group like a small forest; he loved that area.

We did the usual process with him, taking him to the vet to get his injections and preventative medications, and he was great, growing bigger by the day. Then came the time when we thought it wise to get him neutered in order to stop him wandering off like Kasper used to; he had already started going into the street through the hole in the fence and was spending longer and longer outside. We didn't want any more heartbreak like we'd suffered with Kasper with any possible road accident so we thought it best to stop him before he started. Only Ken, due to his old age, and Lunar, due to his damaged body and having suffered enough, have not been spayed, all the other males have been neutered and seem quite happy.

So, we booked him in with our usual vet, Dr. Dan, who we have great faith in, having seen him work so tirelessly and carefully on all the dogs we have taken to him. Alfie was there from early morning until we picked him up late afternoon, took him home straightaway and on the vet's advice shut him in the laundry room, on his own, to rest and recover. Just imagine; a dog being neutered is no joke, it's a serious operation and needs plenty of rest and aftercare.

The vet told us to keep him there for around two weeks, but after around three, maybe four days, he was crying to come out so, being soft and stupid, we let him out. He was okay the first night, taking his food and medication, but the next day when I looked for him, he had gone. We expected him to come back after an hour or so, but when he didn't we went looking for him, all around the area, which is basically countryside with a few scattered houses around. No sign!

Even later at night he never came back for his evening food, which, before, he never missed. So, with a torch I went out to try and find him, thinking that he might have just lost his way. Still no sign!

Then two days later, I was driving home early evening after doing the street dogs meals on wheels rounds, when I saw him just down the road from our place. Wow! I jumped out, picked him up, hugged him and kissed him, and drove him home! He was so hungry!

Then, the next morning he was gone again. This time, no matter how hard we looked, where we looked, there was no sign of him anywhere. And since then he has never come back home.

What happened? God only knows. We just pray that he found a good, caring home, that a kind heart found him and took him in, but we don't know for sure. We can only pray. Even now, just over twelve months of absence, we still put a bowl of food down for him, hoping and praying.....

Life with 17 Dogs

Snapshot 1:



Most of our dogs love to scramble through the hole we made in our fence so that they can have a walk, a good sniff around, and play with any other dogs who may be walking around – We don't mind at all, as where we live is mainly countryside with hardly any traffic coming up and down the dirt road that runs outside our house. And, also, when we used to fix the hole in the fence, Ken in particular, would only make another hole right beside it, so after weeks of fixing and repairing we gave up! Ken won!

So, one of the drawbacks of our dogs going out on their scouting missions is that they love to bring back their 'trophy', to the house, something that they have found outside in the hedge or on the roadside. These days, Emily is the worst for that, bringing back everything from discarded plastic water bottles to lost slippers!

But, whilst here, Alfie found the item that must get the *Golden Globe* award for searching, finding, and bringing back to the house – Oh yes, they love to bring all their finds back and proudly display them! One day Alfie came back with a look of joy on his face and a small plastic case in his mouth. He dropped it on the balcony floor and looked up at me to see if I was as happy as he was. But No!

When I looked closely it was a box of needles! Good job the case was firmly closed. I read the case notes, and it really was a box of needles, short tattoo needles!

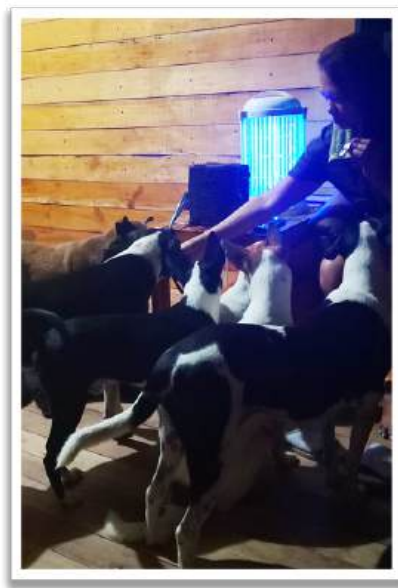
They were grabbed and dumped safely in our waste bin in second's flat!

Snapshot 2:



Living with seventeen lively dogs in the house brings its rewards and also its times of chaos! The simplest of jobs now gets almost impossible, and if not impossible, takes so much longer to achieve. Like walking across the kitchen, carrying something hot or fragile in your hands with normally seven or eight dogs in front of you, three of them (Corinne, Dixie and Emily) jumping up and drop kicking you in your private parts, and the others moving the same way as you do. Go to the left, they go to the left, drop your shoulder and body swerve to the right, and they drop their shoulders and body swerve to the right..... By the time you manage to get across the room, you've forgotten what it was you wanted!

Snapshot 3:



After a night's sleep, the bed shared with normally 4 or 5 dogs, I usually get up about 7, then dodging the dogs to try and go to the bathroom quickly before it's too late, my work usually starts around 7.30am. I collect all the food bowls from the previous night's meals, wash and clean them, change all the water bowls with clean water, brush down the balcony floor, put all the cushions back on the sofa and chairs where they have been kicked off during the night by a sleeping dog - they either sleep on our bed or the chairs and sofa in the house and on the balcony - and then start to cook the daily food for our dogs and the street dogs. This normally consists of chicken heads boiled in a blended sauce of fresh and bottled herbs, a fresh mix of greens and vegetables, sweet potatoes, some fruit, and when ready for the evening meals, served with rice. In the mornings we always put down piles of biscuits for them if needed. After that it's time for a coffee!

Ruth makes the coffee; I make the toast. We sit outside on the balcony as the weather here is always warm even if its cloudy or rainy. A cup of coffee and toast and marmite is our usual breakfast!

But.... Here it comes. At least 7 of the dogs join us, eating the toast and marmite and ignoring their own biscuits that we've put down for them. Emily, Dixie, Titch, Boycie, Elsie, Tim and now Corinne and Denzil; all marmite freaks! As they say on the advert, 'you either love it or hate it' and by the way these gronff it down, they obviously love it!

Snapshot 4:



Bedtime. Every day normally pans out the same, and always centers around the dogs, ours at home and the ones in the street. By 9ish at night, after a full day, I'm always well and truly ready to get my head down, rest and sleep. Ruth sleeps later as she is younger and much more fitter. Here's where it can get tricky. How do you open the bedroom door when there's a gang of tired dogs all standing behind you and all wanting to charge by you and grab their place on the bed? Not easy!

Some nights we can get by with just having 3 on the bed, other nights we get crowded out. I think 7 is the record, thankfully 7 of the smallest. But to be honest, we like the dogs coming and sleeping with us, it's magical, gives you a nice warm feeling inside; it's like having your babies sleep with you.

Snapshot 5:



Life with 17 dogs living with you as a family, inside the house with free roam of all the rooms, not locked up in some distant caged-off area, is a life-changer! I think that goes without saying, doesn't it? But would we change it? No! We would not!

We often talk about things that happen with or because of the dogs; the ups and downs, the problems and solutions, and even though it can be extremely hard, stressful, and depressing at times, we still would never change it. Well.....maybe slightly hahaha; like the time that Alfie chewed the head off our favorite wooden figurine, or when Emily chewed through a whole sofa seat one night and scattered all the foam and linings on the floor, or the times when Winnie preferred to use the hallway as her personal toilet rather than going out in the land to do her toilet duties over there. Some little things might have made life a bit easier if changed or modified, oh yes!

But let's look on the other side of the coin. What about the love, the gratitude, the just 'being there' for you when you need it? Think of the many blessings that they give you. Nothing can be more important than that. Their love is unconditional; it comes from a genuine feeling they have, without a hidden 'want' or a 'return'. They just give!

There have been times when Ruth or me, have been down, worried and stressed over something and the dogs have sensed it, have sympathized and come up close to sit with us, even climbing up on our knee, and just giving us their love – Nothing will ever compare to that.

Our biggest wish is that every dog born into this world would have a happy, loving lifestyle with owners who will return all the love that is given to them and really care!

Where the Pawprints Never Fade



At the end of our land, shaded by trees and gifted with silence, there's a small patch of land that means more to us than words can say. It's not fancy. No marble headstones, no fence, no signs. Just a few simple crosses made with stones, and potted aloe vera plants that we placed on every grave. This is where our dogs go to rest.

It started with one. Then two. And over time, as the years passed and goodbyes came, we made sure each one had a place. A peaceful spot. A thank-you. A final hug we couldn't quite give.

We sit with them sometimes, telling them what the others are up to, what's happening in the house. How things are without their presence. We miss them, and we always tell them so.

They were all street dogs once. Unwanted. Unloved. But they left this world as family. They died with a name, a full belly, and someone who kissed them goodbye.

That grave is not a place of sadness. It's a place of peace. And pride. And promise. Because as long as we're here, no dog will *ever* be forgotten. And love, once given, doesn't end.

Final Thoughts

Thank you for joining us on this journey through the lives of these incredible dogs. Their stories are not just about rescue — they are about family, healing, and the power of love to change lives.

As I said in the introduction, we live on the beautiful island of Palawan, Philippines, and have done since 2012; Ruth is a Filipina from Bicol, and I am English. But there seems to be a dark side to all the beauty. There is no fixed sterilization program here, and that means there is an abundance of strays and street dogs; every street you go down you can't help but see dogs, in groups and singles, hanging around street vendors food shops, looking for a scrap to eat.

Many street dogs wait every day for someone to give them a glimmer of hope, a second chance. It really can be a hopeless life for them; hungry, injured and neglected— and this is where your kind thoughts and moral support truly makes a difference.

Every penny earned from this book and all related projects goes directly to helping street dogs here in Palawan.

By reading these stories, you're not just learning about rescue — you're becoming part of a loving, growing pack.

From the bottom of our heart, thank you for your support, your kindness, and for believing in the power of second chances. Let's keep the pack growing.

Thank you for reading. Thank you for your support and thank you for caring.

God Bless, Steve and Ruth

P.S. Please forgive any typos or rough edges. I'm just an ordinary man doing his best to tell true stories the way they happened without glamorizing them. Thank you.

-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 story.

 [Click here to support us on Ko-fi](#)

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

Our Recommended Product for Your Dog:

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!

 [Click here to visit NHV Natural Dog Products](#)

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.