A STREET DOG NAMED Pup

www.davidficklingbooks.com

Also by Gill Lewis

The Closest Thing to Flying
Eagle Warrior
Gorilla Dawn
Moon Bear
Run Wild
Scarlet Ibis
Sky Dancer
Sky Hawk
A Story Like the Wind
Swan Song
White Dolphin

For younger readers:

Puppy Academy – Scout and the Sausage Thief
Puppy Academy – Star on Stormy Mountain
Puppy Academy – Pip and the Paw of Friendship
Puppy Academy – Murphy and the Great Surf Rescue
Willow Wildthing and the Swamp Monster
Willow Wildthing and the Dragon's Egg
Willow Wildthing and the Shooting Star

A STREET DOG NAMED Pup

GILL LEWIS

FICKLING
d b
David Fickling Books
31 Beaumont Street
Oxford OX1 2NP, UK

A Street Dog Named Pup
is a
DAVID FICKLING BOOK

First published in Great Britain in 2021 by
David Fickling Books,
31 Beaumont Street,
Oxford, OX1 2NP

Text and illustrations © Gill Lewis, 2021

Cover art by Levi Pinfold

978-1-78845-218-2

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

The right of Gill Lewis to be identified as the author and
illustrator of this work has been asserted in accordance
with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced,
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by
any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or
otherwise, without the prior permission of the publishers.

Papers used by David Fickling Books are from
well-managed forests and other responsible sources.



DAVID FICKLING BOOKS Reg. No. 8340307

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Typeset in 11/16pt Sabon by Falcon Oast Graphic Art Ltd.

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Clays Ltd, Elcograf S.p.A.

For
Roger, for his kindness and compassion
to all the animals in his care
and for
Georgie, Beth and Jemma, who are my world,
and for
Liz Cross, who met Pup first

In memory of Murphy
'Starlake Sirius'



When a dog gives you its love, it is a gift.
A gift to be treasured with all your heart and soul.



PUP

BREED: GERMAN SHEPHERD /BELGIAN MALINOIS CROSS

A dog with a big heart. He will follow you to the ends of the earth.

Will howl when lonely.



FRENCHI

BREED: FRENCH BULLDOG

A true friend. Will help anyone in need.

Being a short-nosed breed, he can find it hard to breathe.



REX

BREED: PIT BULL TERRIER CROSS

Soft and gentle soul. However, he will fiercely defend those he loves.

Very mistrustful of strangers.



SAFFY

BREED: LABRADOR

Kind and gentle. Always ready to give hugs.

Sometimes others will take advantage of her trusting nature.



LADY FIFI

BREED: JACK RUSSELL/
SHIH TZU CROSS

A small dog with a
big attitude.

Will bite unless regularly
pampered.



CLOWN

BREED: BOXER

Full of life and fun.

Mischief and mayhem
follow him wherever
he goes.



REYNARD

BREED: FOXHOUND

A gentle, sensitive soul. He will happily sit for cuddles all day.

Scared of loud noises, he often seeks quiet and dark places for comfort.

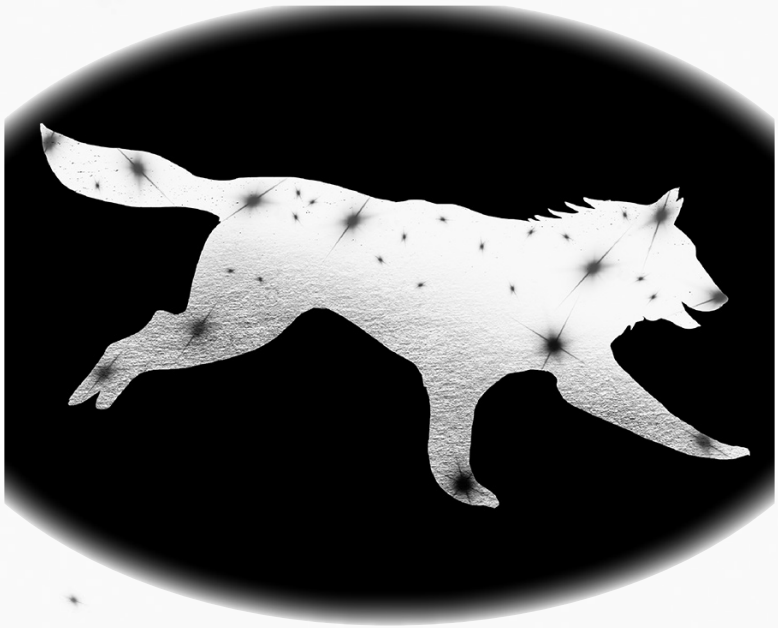


MERLE

BREED: BORDER COLLIE

Highly intelligent and active.

She can become bored and anxious if unable to work.



Prologue
THE GREAT SKY WOLF

There is a story that every mother dog will pass to her newborn pups. She will tell it to them before their eyes have opened, when they are still blind and squirming at her belly, searching for her milk. She will tell it to them when their warm plump bodies are snuggled together in sleep. She will tell it, even though her heart breaks and breaks by telling it, for she has only a short precious time when she can truly call them her own. For it is every mother's grief that she will lose her pups to man.

She will curl her body around her pups and lick each of them in turn. 'Hush now,' she'll say, 'for the stars are bright tonight and the Great Sky Wolf is running fleet-footed across the night. We must run with him, back to the time when dogs formed their bond with man. You must know this story, my little children, and hold it deep inside. For this bond was forged in the stars, when ice and fire shaped this world. In your lifetime, man may falter and forget this bond between you, and so it will be up to you to remember, and let it for ever be your guide.'

The pups will whimper, squirm closer to each other and then settle as she begins the story.

'In the time before time,' she'll say, 'there were great forests and fast rivers that roared down from the mountains. It was a time when man and wolf were equal and when the gods Orion – the great hunter – and Lupus – the great wolf – roamed the skies. Man and wolf spoke with the same tongue. They lived the same lifespan, a year for a year. But they were wary of each other for they shared the same landscape and hunted the same game. For many years, there was plenty for all and so wolf and man would bow their heads in greeting to each other but keep their distance. Wolf and man had different skills. Wolf was fast-footed, fierce and brave. Man was an inventor, and he learned to be the master of fire.

'But a great creeping cold came over the land. Ice formed where rivers had once flowed. And as the deer moved south, the wolves and men moved south with them. But the cold followed, freezing the ground as hard as rock, and soon there

was little left to hunt. Both wolf and man grew hungry and began to fight each other for what was left. The sky gods, Orion and Lupus, called a truce and said that their people could share their skills to survive. And so wolves and man came to live with each other. They hunted together. They shared their lives together. They grew old together. And in return for a place by the fire, the wolves protected men from the wild creatures of the night.

'Now it came to pass that the great ice rivers retreated to the mountains and the deer returned to the valleys. Many of the wolves slipped away into the forests to live as packs once more. But one wolf, Sirius, and his family chose to stay with man. And on a cold crystal night, beneath a winter moon, Lupus came down to Earth to speak with him.

'"Sirius," said the Great Sky Wolf. "It is time to return to the mountains and end your partnership with man."

'"I cannot," said Sirius, "for I love his children as I love my own."

'Lupus growled thunder across the land. "This is not the way of the wolf. If you do not leave him, I shall take away your language, so you can neither speak words with man, nor howl with wolves. You shall be known as Dog, a servant of man."

'Sirius closed his eyes. "I cannot leave him, for he needs me more than he will ever know."

'Lupus cast his words and Sirius could now only speak in yelps and barks. Yet it made no difference, because man and dog still understood each other without the need for words.

‘“You are a dumb animal in the eyes of man,” said Lupus. “I will give you one more chance to become wolf again.”

‘Sirius bowed his head to Lupus. “It is my wish to protect man and his family. We love each other as equals. We live together and grow old together.”

‘Lupus was greatly angered. “You betray wolfkind. I will not allow it. If you do not leave man, I will cut short your life, and you shall age seven years to his one. You shall grow old, while your human does not.”

‘Sirius bent his head in grief, because he knew what was to come. “I cannot leave man, for I love him more than life itself.”

‘“Then so be it,” thundered Lupus, and in his rage his words shot like lightning from his mouth.

‘Man woke to find Sirius old, grey-muzzled and dead at his feet, and man grieved for his lost brother and the years they could never have. He held Sirius in his arms and wept. “I will protect your family, now and for always,” he vowed, “for you truly are the greatest friend to man.”

‘When Lupus saw what he had done, he howled for all the world to hear, because it was only then he understood the great bond of love and trust between man and dog. He gathered the soul of Sirius between his paws. “My friend,” he said to Sirius. “Your children may give their heart to man in their lifetime. But I ask them not to turn away from their wolf-brothers, for they share the same wild soul. I ask that when their time on Earth has ended, they give their soul back to me.”

‘“We will,” said Sirius. “Now and for always.”

‘The Great Wolf lifted Sirius up into the skies and set him next to Orion as a sign of loyalty for all to see. And now the brightest star in the sky shines from the great dog’s heart. It is a reminder of that bond between man and dog. It is a bond of faith that must never be broken.’

And the mother dog will finish her story and gently pull her puppies closer, knowing she can only protect them for this short time. She will tell them that even if man forgets the vow he made, they must always keep their faith. In times of trouble, when they are lost or frightened, they must look to the brightest star and remember this story, because the sacred bond made between man and dog is the only thing that will keep them safe.

Then her heart will break and break and break again. For she cannot know if it will be kind and gentle hands that first hold her beloved pups.

She cannot know what lies ahead for each of them, when they are taken from her, into the world of man.

Chapter 1
DEAD DOG ALLEY



Pup curled up in the footwell of the car. He tucked his nose into his fur and shivered. Nothing felt right. Freezing air blasted from a vent beside him, bringing the smells of cars, burger bars and wet tarmac. Street lights flashed by as the big man steered through the city. The windscreen wipers clunked from side to side against the heavy rain. Pup shivered again, but it wasn't from the cold. Worry chewed at him. Something was different. The car was the same. Pup usually sat on the boy's lap in the back seat. *His* boy, who smelled deliciously of football socks and cheese puffs. *His* boy, who held him tight and told him that one day he would grow into his big puppy paws and be the *biggest dog ever*. *His* boy, who he tumbled with across the park in warm sunshine, pushing the football with his nose, while his boy ran after him laughing and shouting.

But his boy wasn't here this time.

It was dark and cold.

'Good dog,' said the big man.

Pup wagged the tip of his tail, but this didn't feel right. Other dogs were easy to understand, but the language of the humans was confusing. What they said with their body was often different from the words they used. Nothing else about the big man said *good dog*. The big man was silent and closed. His hands were on the steering wheel, staring ahead. Pup couldn't read him at all.

Pup wanted to whine and yip, but he worried the big man

would shout at him and slap him across the nose. He always did when Pup made a noise.

If his boy had been in the car, Pup would have crawled up into his lap and tucked his head onto his chest and listened to the thump, thump, thump of his boy's heart. His boy would have scratched just behind his ears and held him safe.

But his boy wasn't here this time.

His boy was still at home, in bed where Pup should be with him now. In his mind he could still see his boy in bed and himself curled up beside him. The boy always wrapped his arm around Pup, holding Pup's paw in his warm human hand. They would lie curled up beneath the fleecy blanket, while the boy fell asleep, breathing warm breath into Pup's soft fur. But this night had been different too. The boy's mother had come in. She had lifted Pup up, placing a teddy beside the boy where Pup had been.

Good dog, she'd said, while she placed the sleeping boy's arm over the teddy instead.

We're going for a walk, she'd whispered to Pup. But there had been no lead, or ball. Only the big man waiting at the door to put Pup inside the car.

Pup tucked his nose deeper into his fur as the car lurched and swung along the roads. He could still smell his boy in his fur, and there felt some safety in that.

Pup fell into an uncomfortable sleep, jolting and sliding on the rubber mat.

When he woke, the car had stopped in a dark street. The big man got out and lit a cigarette.

Pup climbed onto the seat and peered out. This wasn't

the park. It didn't smell like the park. It didn't smell like anywhere he'd been before. The road was lit by a single lamppost at the far end. A halo of rain-fizzled light circled the lamp. There were no houses, just an old garage, boarded-up shops and an empty car park. Pup felt himself lifted up from the car seat and taken outside.

The big man slipped off Pup's collar.

Pup felt strange without his collar, naked and unowned.

'Be quick,' the big man said.

This was the command to go to the toilet. The big man would praise him if he went outside. Pup wanted to please him, so he trotted to a wall and lifted his leg. There were the scents of other dogs on the wall, and Pup wondered who they were. A shiver ran through him.

The car door slammed.

Pup spun around to look, but the man was already inside the car. 'Uff!' called Pup.

Had the big man forgotten him?

'Uff!' Pup ran towards the car, but it started up in a belch of exhaust smoke and sped away, spraying dirty water in Pup's face. Pup ran after it. He ran and ran, but his big puppy paws tripped over each other and he tumbled and slid face first into an oily puddle.

'Uff!' barked Pup. He scrambled to his feet and began running again but couldn't keep up. 'Uff, uff, uff! Wait for me. Wait for me. Wait for me.'

Pup's heart thumped inside his chest. The big man had forgotten him. Surely he'd realize Pup wasn't in the car and come back for him?

The car turned the corner, leaving Pup in the darkness. He stopped and stared at the place where the car had once been.

A cold wind funnelled down the street, blowing loose paper into the sky. Rain soaked deep into his fur.

Pup looked up and down the empty street.

There was no one.

Nothing looked or smelled familiar.

Dark alleyways led off from the road.

He tucked his tail between his legs.

The wind whistled through the telephone wires and rattled the tin roof of the garage.

Further down the street, a metal bin lid clanged to the floor and rolled out from an alleyway.

There was a cough too. Someone was there. Pup wondered if it might be someone who could help him. He kept close to the wall and edged down the street until he stopped at the alleyway.

Something was in there. Pup could hear a snorting and snuffling in the shadows. It was coming closer and closer and smelled of another dog. It might be one of the scary big dogs at the park – his boy used to lift him up into his arms and protect him from them.

But his boy wasn't here.

Pup whined, tucked his tail further between his legs and backed away.

A deep rasping voice spoke out from the darkness.

'Welcome,' it said, 'to Dead Dog Alley.'