

Charlie Gold

Lisa M Billingham

Illustrated by David Wilcox

Lisa M Billingham is an author, inspirational speaker and workshop facilitator. She discovered her passion for writing in 2020 and wrote her first novel, *Katie, A New Chapter*, based on her life experiences. The book ended up saving someone's life.

Lisa has continued writing ever since, both for adults and younger audiences. Her first children's book, *Sedrick's Adventures in Hopeland*, was published in 2024.

She lives in the West Midlands and looks to bring love, light and inspiration to those around her.

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Warning: May cause fun, laughter and kindness.

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To book lovers and readers the world over

At the Rescue Centre

11th June 1989

Hi, everyone! I'm Charlie. I'm a cute brown Mongrel with big black puppy dog eyes, or so my owner Tom says. I don't think he's being unkind when he says I'm a Mongrel, that's just my breeding. I'm not sure how old I am, but I think I'm five in human years. I love going on adventures with Tom. It's so funny how he gets himself into all sorts of scrapes. But this isn't his story. This is mine.

Tom and his grandfather Maurice eventually rescued me. I don't think Tom remembers because he wasn't well when I met him. He was withdrawn and agitated. That's why I chose him: because he needed me. He even went missing for a while. I'm not sure where he went, but I was so excited when he came back. Anyway, enough about Tom. I want to tell you about my adventures.

When I met Tom, I had scruffy matted fur, a swollen eye and a sore paw. I'd just been brought here, to the rescue centre. They hadn't even booked me in when I saw Tom and Maurice in the car park. I ran over to them (as quickly as one can with a poorly paw) and instantly

fell in love. I knew Tom needed me as much as I needed him. Don't ask me how I knew, I just did. I nuzzled his leg a few times and he petted me. He's so loving.

Tom had tears in his eyes. I'm not sure whether that was because his grandfather had upset him or because I looked a bit of a mess. I wasn't with him for long. The nice people at the centre took me inside and bandaged me up. I caught a glimpse of myself in the mirror and it scared me — I was very bony. They gave me a haircut and put some foul-smelling stuff on my paw. It made it better after a couple of days, though, so I think it was a magic potion. Once my paw healed, I was put in a locked room, but I was still scared. I could feel my legs shaking, and not because I was cold.

I'd been locked in a room at my last house, sometimes for days at a time, with no food or water. It wasn't a very nice place, and I was always scared of what my owner would do next.

I didn't sleep very well the first few nights at the rescue centre. I kept barking because I was frightened. I need not have been, though. I'm allowed out early every morning for a run around the garden (and to do my business, of course). It's lovely here. The kennels are all kept clean and tidy, the grounds are *huuuuge* and I

love running around them. The centre is surrounded by trees and woodland. There's a fence around the edges, of course, to stop any escapees. I've never tried to escape. Why would I when I'm treated so much better here?

That said, I can't stop thinking about Tom. I so desperately want him to come back for me. I miss him, even though I've only met him once. It's taken me a few weeks to gain weight and get my fur just how I like it. Not too short and not too long. I love my new life. Now that my paw's fully healed, I'm allowed out to run around the garden more often. There's always plenty of food and a bowl of fresh water in my kennel. My bed is comfortable too, not like the cold, hard floor I had before. I sigh. All that's behind me now, though. I'm ready for some new adventures.

A few people have been to see me in my new kennel, but I haven't acknowledged them. I only want Tom to take me home.

I'm out playing today, running the staff ragged as usual. They can't keep up with me, which makes me laugh. We have loads of fun. They're slow, but they're very good at ball throwing, I'll give them that. I'm racing around the field when I hear a voice I recognise.

It stops me in my tracks, and I make a paw-shaped skid in the slightly damp grass.

“Tom! Tom!” I cry. “Tom, over here!” I’m behind a fence, but I can hear Tom talking to his grandfather as they walk up the long drive towards reception. I bark and bark, calling his name. He must hear me, as he meanders over and pets me through the fence.

“I guess you want to come home with me?” Tom asks.

“Yes,” I bark. “I do.”

The nice lady who has been looking after me since I arrived is talking to Tom and Maurice. I can’t hear what they’re saying, but shortly afterwards I’m taken to reception and handed to Tom. My tail wags for ages, and I never want the cuddles to stop.

“Come on, Charlie boy, let's get you home,” Tom says as he puts a brand-new collar around my neck and attaches it to a shiny new lead.

We leave the centre to begin our adventures, and I couldn’t be happier.



For children, by the same author

Sedrick's Adventures in Hopeland

A magical story about Sedrick, a bored seven-year-old who unexpectedly gets swallowed up by his mug of hot chocolate and transported to a faraway land where he embarks on an adventure to find the end of the rainbow.

What will Sedrick learn that he can take home to help him, his family and his friends?

An enchanting fantasy full of fun and learning.

The Adventures of Wiggle and Waggle

A heartwarming book of short stories about the life cycle of a caterpillar.

Join the mischievous Wiggle and Waggle on their series of fireplace adventures.

Acknowledgements & Contacts

Thank you for reading Charlie's first chapter! I'd love to hear from you. Feel free to share your thoughts with me .

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