

Other titles by Holly Webb

The Snow Bear

The Reindeer Girl

The Winter Wolf

Holly Webb's Treasury of Animal Stories

Animal Stories:

Lost in the Snow

Alfie all Alone

Lost in the Storm

Sam the Stolen Puppy

Max the Missing Puppy

Sky the Unwanted Kitten

Timmy in Trouble

Ginger the Stray Kitten

Harry the Homeless Puppy

Buttons the Runaway Puppy

Alone in the Night

Ellie the Homesick Puppy

Jess the Lonely Puppy

Misty the Abandoned Kitten

Oscar's Lonely Christmas

Lucy the Poorly Puppy

Smudge the Stolen Kitten

The Rescued Puppy

The Kitten Nobody Wanted

The Lost Puppy

The Frightened Kitten

The Secret Puppy

The Abandoned Puppy

The Missing Kitten

The Puppy Who Was Left Behind

The Kidnapped Kitten

The Scruffy Puppy

The Brave Kitten

My Naughty Little Puppy:

A Home for Rascal

New Tricks for Rascal

Playtime for Rascal

Rascal's Sleepover Fun

Rascal's Seaside Adventure

Rascal's Festive Fun

Rascal the Star

Rascal and the Wedding

The Forgotten Puppy



Holly Webb

Illustrated by Sophy Williams

The logo for the publisher 'Stripes' features a small, stylized animal head icon above the word 'stripes' in a bold, lowercase, sans-serif font.

For Faith

www.hollywebbanimalstories.com

STRIPES PUBLISHING

An imprint of Little Tiger Press
1 The Coda Centre, 189 Munster Road,
London SW6 6AW

A paperback original
First published in Great Britain in 2015

Text copyright © Holly Webb, 2015
Illustrations copyright © Sophy Williams, 2015
Author photograph copyright © Nigel Bird
My Naughty Little Puppy illustration copyright © Kate Pankhurst

ISBN: 978-1-84715-508-5

The right of Holly Webb and Sophy Williams to be identified as the author and illustrator of this work respectively has been asserted by them in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988.

All rights reserved.

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, resold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed upon the subsequent purchaser.

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

Printed and bound in the UK.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

Chapter One



“It looks weird,” Emi said, staring anxiously around the empty room.

“Only because there’s nothing in it, silly,” her older brother Ben told her. He had a special older-brother voice he used for saying things like that, and Emi glared at him. Just because he was fourteen, it didn’t mean he knew everything.

“I know that! It just still looks ... weird. It doesn't look like our house.”

“It will when all our things are in it, Emi, don't worry.” Mum was standing in the doorway holding a box. “In a week it'll feel like we've always lived here, I promise. Now, can you two come and help me unload the car? The removal van will be here with the rest of our stuff soon and I want to get these bits into the kitchen first.”



After a last worried look around their new living room, Emi followed them out to the car. There was one good thing about this house, she realized and her eyes brightened a little. Through the window, she could see out into a garden. That had been one of the things that made them all love the place. The garden wasn't huge and it was a bit messy – Mum said all those straggly bushes needed a proper haircut – but at least it was there. The rented flat they'd been living in since Mum and Dad had decided to split up hadn't had a garden at all, just a little concrete yard for the bins.

Emi hurried after Mum and Ben, smiling to herself. She couldn't wait to unpack – getting out her clothes and

books would make the bedroom feel like it was properly hers. For the last couple of weeks everything had been in boxes. She wasn't actually sure where anything was, but discovering things again would be part of the fun. She hadn't seen her favourite purple cardigan or her slippers for ages.

And once they were all properly unpacked – settled, Mum called it – then they could start to think about the most important part of the move. It was the most important part for Emi, anyway.

Now they had a garden, Mum had said that at last, after years of *maybe* and *one day* and *when you're older*, they could get a dog.



“Mum...”

“Mm-hm?”

“Mum, are you actually listening? You look like you're thinking about whether that picture's in the wrong place. Again.”

It had been five weeks since they'd moved in, and Emi's mum was still worrying about whether everything was in the right spot or not. She blinked and looked at Emi guiltily.

“You're right, I was. Sorry. It just doesn't seem to fit there and it's getting to me. I really am listening now.”

“Except for that picture and not liking the shape of the bath taps and

the way that cupboard door squeaks in the kitchen –” Emi was counting on her fingers – “do you think we’re almost settled in?”

Her mum smiled at her. “I suppose so. Do you feel like we are?”

“Yes!” Emi looked at her pleadingly. “Do you remember – you said that when we were settled, we could think about getting a dog. I don’t mean we should actually get one right this minute, but we could at least think about it, couldn’t we? What sort of dog we’d like and where we’d get it from? Please?”

Her mum nodded. “I hadn’t forgotten, Emi. I’ve been thinking about it, too. Go and see if Ben’s finished that homework he was doing

and ask him to come down here for a minute.”

Emi raced up the stairs. She was pretty sure that Ben wasn’t doing his homework at all – she could hear him talking to one of his mates about the computer game they were playing, but by the time she got upstairs and banged on his door, he had his English essay up on the screen and was looking all innocent.

“What, Emi? I’m working.”

It was tempting to point out that he’d only written about three lines, but the last thing Emi wanted was to get into an argument with her big brother. That would be an absolutely perfect way to make Mum forget about getting a dog.

“Mum wants to talk to us. About the dog! Can you come down, please?”

Ben yanked off his headphones and jumped up. He was almost as keen on having a dog as Emi was, especially as he was old enough to remember Alfie, the dog Mum and Dad had owned years ago. Alfie had died when Emi was really little and she couldn't remember him at all.

Emi hurried back down to the living room, with Ben jumping down the stairs after her. When she got there, the little table in front of the sofa was covered in old photograph albums. She glared at her mum. “You said we could talk about dogs!” she cried out. “You're not supposed to be unpacking more stuff!”



Her mum laughed. “I'm not. I was trying to find some photos that I wanted to show you. Look – do you see who that is?”

Emi and Ben stared down at the photo – a little girl with a very serious face and dark hair cut in a fringe. Emi thought the girl looked quite like her,

but she didn't remember ever wearing dungarees like that...

"It's you, Mum, isn't it?" Ben said.

"Was that in Japan, then?"

"Yes." Mum nodded. "I must have been about six there, I think."

Emi looked at the photo curiously. Mum didn't talk that much about her life in Japan. She'd come to England as a student, and then she'd met Dad, and she hadn't been back all that often. Their Japanese grandparents – Emi and Ben called them *Sobo* and *Sofu*, which meant Gran and Grandpa in Japanese – sent them presents on their birthdays and at Christmas and they called every few weeks, but Emi had only met them once, when they'd come over to visit a couple of years before.

"This is the one I wanted you to see, look." Mum flicked over the page and showed them the same little girl – she even had the same dungarees on – but this time she was sitting next to a dog, with her arm around its neck. Both of them looked so happy that Emi couldn't help going, "Awwww..."

Ben rolled his eyes at her. "You never told us you had a dog when you were little, Mum!"

"So cute... What sort of dog is that?" Emi asked, frowning. She was usually excellent at spotting dog breeds. She had a poster on her wall that had come with one of Dad's newspapers, showing lots of different dogs. But she wasn't sure about this one at all.



“Actually, are you sure that isn’t a fox?” Ben asked, peering at the little photo. “It’s got a real fox face with those pointy ears! And a bushy tail.”

“No, it’s fatter than a fox,” Emi said thoughtfully. “I know what you mean, though, and it’s even foxy-coloured – sort of golden-red.”

Mum laughed. “He wasn’t a fox. He was a Shiba Inu. They’re a Japanese breed. And he was called Kin – that

means gold.” She smiled down at the picture. “He was lovely. The friendliest dog ever. He used to follow me around when I was little, almost like a babysitter. He’d bark at *Sobo* to tell her if I was crawling too far away and she’d come and pick me up.”

“He’s beautiful. He looks like he’s smiling. What does Shiba Inu mean in Japanese, Mum?” Emi only knew a few words of her mum’s language, like her name and Ben’s. Her brother was actually called Benjiro, which meant peaceful (Emi thought Mum and Dad had picked pretty badly with that one). But he was always just Ben and most people didn’t know he had a Japanese name. With Emi it was the other way round. Her proper name was Emily,

but Mum always called her Emi. She'd explained that it meant "beautiful gift". She and Dad had wanted their children to have names that worked in both languages. Emi liked it – it felt special to have two names.

"Inu just means dog," Mum said. "The Shiba bit isn't so clear, though. There's a kind of tree with the same name that goes reddish-gold in the autumn, so that could be it. Or some people think it means small. In one of the old Japanese languages, Shiba means small and they're quite small dogs." She laughed. "Kin only looks big because I was so little..."

"Can you get them in this country?" Emi asked thoughtfully. It would be really cool to have a Japanese dog. And she quite liked the idea of taking a dog

like that for walks in the park, where people asked each other what breed their dogs were. She always asked the owners if she didn't know – most people loved talking about their dogs.

"People are just starting to breed them over here." Mum looked at Emi and Ben. "You know I called Mariko at the weekend?" Mariko had been a friend of Mum's since they were students together. She was Japanese, too, and came to stay with them sometimes. "Another friend of hers – Kaii – is breeding Shiba Inus. She was telling me that Kaii doesn't live very far from here. In fact, he's got a litter of puppies right now..."

Ben grinned. "Mum! Do you mean we could have one?"

Emi was far too excited to say anything – she just gave Mum the most enormous hug.

Chapter Two



“A Shiba Inu?” Emi’s best friend Jess shook her head as they walked through the school playground. “I don’t think I’ve ever heard of them! What do they look like?”

“Really, really gorgeous...” Emi sighed happily. “They’re not very big, but they’re sort of solid-looking, if you know what I mean? Chunky, I suppose.