

LEAH MOHAMMED

LUMIA and the PET DRAGON

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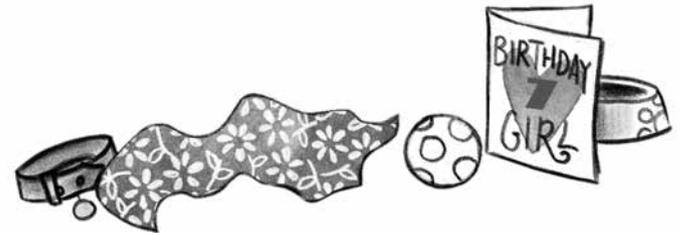
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*For my beautiful daughter
and her constant love of dragons.*



The Birthday Surprise



Chapter One



Luma Dewan woke up on the morning of her seventh birthday.

‘Today is the day!’ she squealed, springing off her bed and doing two and a half jumps. (It would have been three jumps but one foot got accidentally left behind during the last jump.)

‘TODAY IS THE DAY!’

And today *was* the day, but not just because it was Luma’s birthday.

Today was special for a completely different reason. Today was the day Luma would be getting a puppy of her very own.

Except . . . not just any puppy, as it turned out.

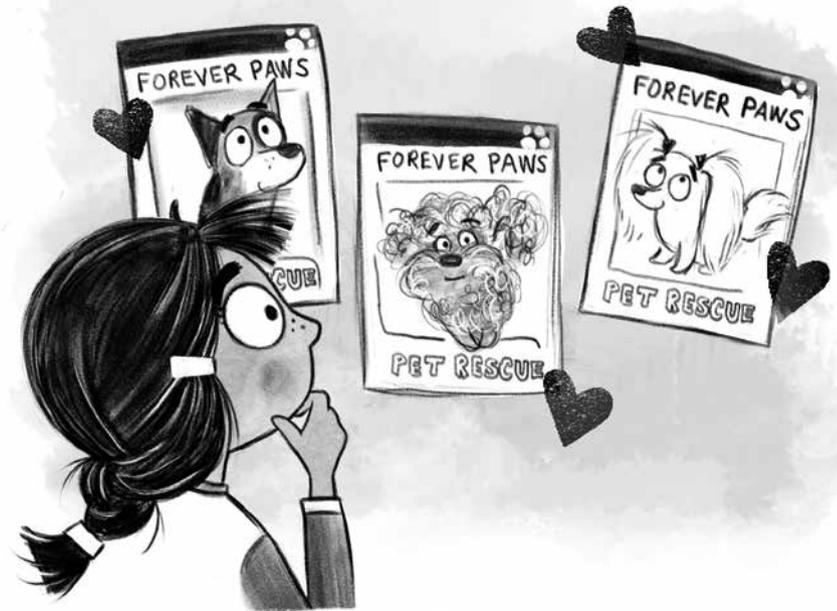
Actually, not even a puppy at all.

But Luma didn't know that yet.

If she had known, it would have saved her quite a bit of deciding, because even though she had been waiting and waiting and *waiting* for today, she still was not entirely sure which puppy she was going to pick.

Luma grinned at the posters Mum had stuck to her wall.

Three fluffy puppies wearing bright blue Pet Rescue collars stared back at her.



At first, Luma was sure she was going to choose the brown one with dark blobs on its back. It had the kindest eyes and definitely looked like it would suit Luma's favourite name, Chloe.

But then Luma had caught sight of the grey puppy with curly fur. *It* had the cutest nose and also looked very much like a Chloe.

Chapter Two

And then Luma completely changed her mind and decided the white puppy with the big floppy ears would be the one. (She looked even *more* like a Chloe.)

In fact, Luma had changed her mind every day since the rescue centre had sent the photo.

She had even tried her best to convince her mum that maybe they should bring all *three* home.

Luma reached up and stroked the nose of each puppy in turn.

There was only one thing Luma knew for certain.

By the time she went to sleep that night, Chloe would be with her and her heart would be full.



‘Today is the day!’

Luma ran into her mum’s bedroom and pounced.

Mum made a strange noise, a bit like the armbands Luma wore for swimming when she squashed out all the air.

Luma huffed.

She was going to have to do something she hadn’t done in a long time, something she knew Mum really did not like.

‘Mum! Mum! Mum!’ Luma said, poking Mum’s tummy.

One eye flicked open and glared.

Luma held her breath.

And then Mum's other eye popped open and . . .

'Happy birthday, seven-year-old Luma!' Mum smiled.

They went downstairs and right there on the little table in the living room was a tower of glittering silver presents.

'Yay!' Luma grinned. 'Can I open them?'

'You better had. Today is the day,' Mum said.

After that it was a whirl of torn silver paper.

One fluffy puppy bed!

A beautiful sparkling harness and lead!

Three puppy toys!

A matching food and water bowl!

And best of all, the pillow and blanket Mum had told Luma the puppy would not need and Luma had begged for.



‘Thank you, thank you, thank you!’ Luma said, hugging Mum tight. ‘Can we go and get Chloe now?’

Mum looked at the clock and shook her head. ‘It’s still too early.’

‘When will it *not* be too early?’

‘Nine o’clock.’

‘What time is it now?’

‘Six thirty.’

‘Oh.’

The hours took for ever.

Luma had already arranged Chloe’s bed in her room, found the perfect spot for Chloe’s pillow and blanket on the sofa in the living room, filled Chloe’s bowls to bursting with puppy biscuits and water, and gone back to her room to rearrange Chloe’s bed (it definitely looked much cosier next to hers) when finally,

the little hand on the clock landed on the number nine.

‘To Pet Rescue!’ Luma and Mum cheered as they got in their car and then they were there, walking through the squeaky sliding doors.

‘Slow down, Luma!’ Mum called out, as Luma raced ahead.

‘I can’t!’ she shouted back, and she really could not.

‘Luma Dewan?’ the lady behind the welcome desk asked as Luma skidded to a stop. ‘What perfect timing! The four puppies are in the play room.’

‘Four?’ Luma said.

A man wearing a bright blue Pet Rescue shirt led Luma and Mum all the



way down a long blue corridor to a large blue door at the end.

He opened the door and . . .

‘Puppies!’ Luma zoomed inside.

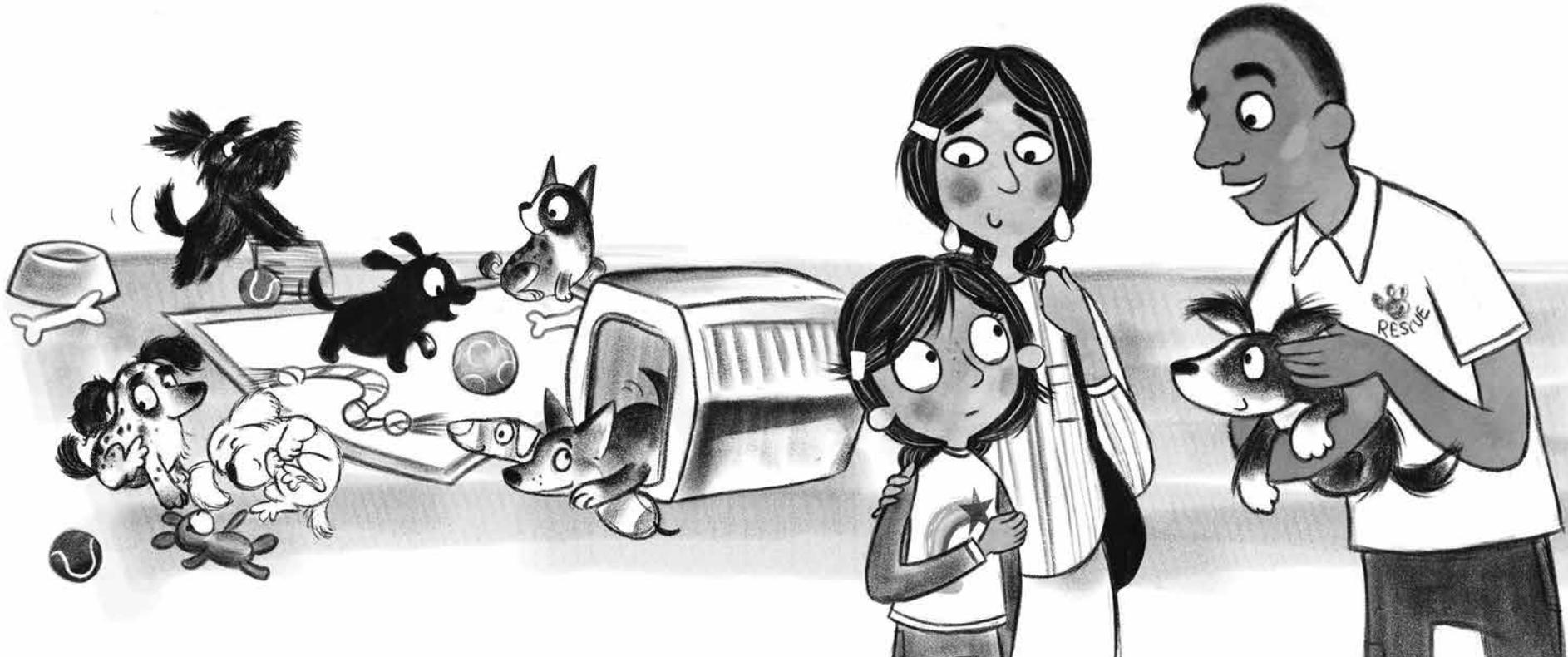
Her eyes raced from one puppy to another. There was one with scruffy fur, a black puppy with a white mark on its paw, a brown spotty puppy and a completely yellow one, but . . .

‘Where are *my* puppies?’ Luma asked.

And then Mum, peering at one of the puppies rolling about on its back, said, ‘I think, oh dear, that’s a boy! They’re all boys!’

‘But Chloe is a girl,’ Luma said.

‘A girl?’ the Pet Rescue man said. ‘All the girl puppies went yesterday.’



Chapter Three

‘They can’t have,’ Luma said, feeling her bottom lip begin to tremble. ‘I have a photo. I was supposed to pick!’

‘I think there must have been a mix-up somewhere,’ the Pet Rescue man said. ‘Not to worry though, we’ll have more puppies ready to leave in three weeks!’

Luma burst into tears. ‘*Today* . . . is . . . the . . . day!’



Luma and Mum returned home.

Luma couldn’t bear to go into her room where the fluffy bed was waiting, or into the living room with the perfectly placed blanket and pillow, or even into the kitchen where she’d put the bowls of puppy biscuits and water.

‘Why don’t you go and see Nani?’ Mum suggested. ‘Yesterday she said she had a special present for you.’

Normally, Luma would have grinned at the thought of seeing her grandmother, *especially* today on her birthday, but right then there was nothing in the world that could have made her smile.

Luma pulled on her coat, stuck her feet in her garden wellies and opened the back door. Nani lived in the house next to theirs and there was a small gate in the fence between their gardens, for Luma to visit whenever she wanted.

Luma set off down the garden path, her eyes staring at her shuffling feet, her nose snuffling and the odd tear sliding down her cheek.

And then she felt the strangest feeling, a feeling like she wasn't alone, a feeling like she was being watched.

Luma stopped and looked around.

She couldn't see anything but she

heard a sound, a bit like a tweet or a tooting peep.

Luma stepped on to the wet, muddy grass and went to investigate. Maybe it was a bird fallen from its nest? Or even a baby fox, lost and needing someone to guide it home?

Luma peered around the plants and shrubs and bushes, all the way to the fence . . . there was nothing there.

'Oh.' Luma's shoulders slumped.

Of course there was nothing there.

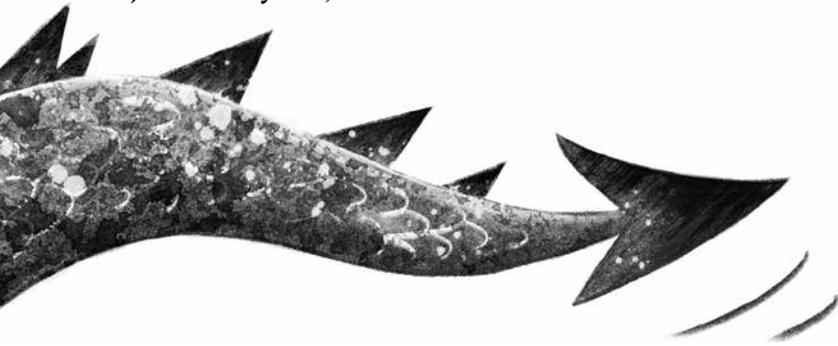
She walked back to the path and had taken six steps this time when she heard another rustle and a small



whispery whine, a whine so like a puppy that for a second Luma *did* smile.

She ran to where the noise had come from and there, right there! A flash of a long, grey tail!

‘Chloe?’ Luma said, because even though she knew it couldn’t be, maybe, just maybe, Chloe had found her instead!



And then the plants, shrubs and bushes began moving as if something small was running through them.

‘Chloe!’

Luma raced after it all the way to the tall, tall trees at the back of the garden.

Luma looked up and down and left and right, but she couldn’t see a thing and worse, there were no more sounds, no bushes or plants moving and no feeling of something there, of being watched.

‘No!’ Luma cried. She ran to the gate and was through it in a shot, sprinting up Nani’s garden until she was knocking on her back door.

