

'Adoption' is the new badge of honour; Adoption is the new 'Black'.

This book is an anthology of modern, real-life fairy tales of doggie salvation. It features some of the most incredible comeback stories and tales of resilience, forgiveness, trust, love, human cruelty, greed and miracle rebounds, dogs on the brink of death and the owners who never gave up on them.

Most of the dogs in this book have been through their own personal Hell, every single one at the hands of a species called Humans. And they have all bounced back and remain as trusting and loving as ever.

The stories are accompanied by stunning editorial fashion spreads. No one would ever guess that these beautiful canine models were once abused, neglected, crippled or abandoned.

DANIEL BOEY

WE ADOPTED! A COLLECTION OF DOG RESCUE TALES

Marshall Cavendish
Editions 

WE ADOPTED!

A COLLECTION OF DOG RESCUE TALES



DANIEL BOEY

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 **Marshall Cavendish**
Editions

PETS

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For Review only

WE ADOPTED!

A COLLECTION OF DOG RESCUE TALES

DANIEL **BOEY**

For Review only



TO HOCK

*"I miss you more today than yesterday
but not as much as tomorrow"*



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“It’s so easy to say ‘I love dogs’ if you’re talking about fluffy perfect dogs. When you’re able to love a dog that isn’t necessarily beautiful, then you love a dog. Ignorance perpetuates rejection, abandonment, overpopulation.”

“
IYA BATTLE
FOUNDER, TERRITORIO DE ZAGUATES
(TERRITORY OF THE STRAYS)
COSTA RICA

AUTHOR'S MESSAGE

#DoingItDoggieStyle

Not many people know of my intense love for dogs. I have never publically spoken about it, even to close friends, although my late dog Ah Hock was featured posthumously in both my earlier books as well as in *8 Days* and numerous articles. So imagine my surprise when dog-loving creatives starting emerging from the woodwork after I adopted Leia. Real, genuine dog lovers, not dog snobs who profess publicly to love all dogs when they actually mean pedigrees, who turn their sophisticated designer noses up at mongrels and rescues.

Hock passed in 1991, and it’s taken me the better part of twenty-six years before I could bring myself to embrace another canine in my life. I welcomed Leia into my life during a particularly turbulent period. When I asked for a hand, God gave me a paw. And how that paw has changed me.

Many think they are helping dogs that they adopt but more often than not, in reality, it is really us humans that have been rescued by our four-legged children.

The idea for this book was sparked when I worked on the SPCA Tux For Tails fundraiser with creative director Brandon Barker. We conceptualised a fashion shoot starring fourteen beautiful rescue dogs and five dog-loving Singaporean models for the souvenir magazine and the runway show.

We chose to tell these modern, real life fairy tales of doggie adoption through the medium of photography, and produced a series of stunning editorial spreads. Looking at the pictures, no one would have guessed the canine models were once abused, neglected, crippled or abandoned. These are some of the most incredible comeback stories, tales of resilience, forgiveness, trust, love, human cruelty, greed and miracle rebounds, with a life or two saved along the way

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This book was spawned from that labour of love.

Most of the dogs featured in this book have been through their own personal Hell. Every single one at the hands of a species called Humans. And they have all bounced back and remain as trusting and as compassionate and loving as ever.

The empathy in animals is something we can all learn from.

When I was in Secondary 2, Satini Flame Hawk Forrell became the latest addition to join the Boey clan. He was purchased from 'a responsible breeder' and came from a line of championship dogs. He arrived unceremoniously in a covered plastic basket so shallow he could not even stand up.

Hock was not allowed indoors, which the family believed was fine because we had a huge back room which ran the breadth of the house. This was converted into his living quarters. He would sit dismally outside watching the family as we dined or watched television.

We moved our lives outside to accommodate him. We lazed on the garden furniture at the patio so that we could spend more time with him. I remember sneaking out the back door and sleeping in his kennel at night because it broke my heart to hear him cry himself to sleep.

We were first-time dog owners, and none the wiser. In a time when the internet did not exist, everything was done through trial and error or in consultation with more knowledgeable friends. Hock had an attack of ticks and fleas, and the family spent countless hours pulling them off his body. Our hapless mother shopped for his food from the local market, bathed him, nursed him and kept him company whilst everyone was out at school.

We engaged a trainer for Hock. He was someone who believed in exerting dominance over his charges, and used the choke chain – which, I guess, was the norm in the early 80s. He was the type of trainer who thought nothing of jerking and pulling or kicking the dogs. Sadly, even with so much information available on the net, such trainers still exist today and there are owners who continue to believe in such methods.

There is a very clear, thick line between disciplining and hurting your dog.

There are many schools of thought with regards to doggie care. I will forever be haunted by the memory of how we had failed Hock, and have chosen to bring Leia up the humane way.

This book contains the stories of owners who never gave up on their dogs. I have been regaled with tales of senior dogs on the brink of death, dogs with several broken legs, blind dogs, crippled canines... all of whom have been heartlessly thrown out, yet rescued and nursed back to health by their saviours.

These heroes have proven that 'adoption' is the new badge of honour. The adoption, not purchase, of dogs, is definitely the new Black.

Every single time I encounter an abandoned, neglected or abused dog; every moment I hear of irresponsible, unethical, unprofessional pet boarders; whenever I hear of human ego getting in the way of dog welfare; when my paths cross with cruel, nasty dog owners, it makes me want to hug my dog a little tighter and not let go.

Pets are forever. And forever doesn't mean "as long as it's convenient for you".

This book celebrates the wonderful people that have opened their hearts and their homes to these unfortunate canines, and the lives that have been enriched, both two- and four-legged. All their stories are different but the one thing that binds them all together is the love and empathy that all of them have extended to the less fortunate.

Every single one of these dogs is an inspiration to me. For their strength, their resilience, their unwavering and unconditional love. Every single one of the doggie owners has touched me with their selfless generosity, their big hearts and their patience and love.

I wish I had half the courage, dedication and drive that these fellow dog owners have. They are all inspirational in their own way, and motivate me each and every single day and spur me on to do better for my canine companion and to be a more responsible dog owner.

All of them have taught me lessons which has enabled me to be a better pawrent to Leia. I am still learning every day.

“
**There is something about a dog that you rescue from a shelter...
there's an appreciation you'll never see from any other dog
that understands that you rescued them, and it's the best feeling
when you see those dogs come to life and change and
all of a sudden blossom into what they're supposed to be.
It's the best feeling so go rescue a dog if you can.**
”

ELLEN DEGENERES

FOREWORD

#DoingBetterForMan'sBestFriend

"Mister, my house is not a Zoo. I cannot have animals running all over the place!"

This was the response I received when I asked someone why she kept her three dogs in cages in her home. The property was a large landed house, with a sizeable garden, and would have appeared to have been a great home for man's best friend. But all three Cavalier King Charles Spaniels were caged up for most of the day, only let out for very short durations. Each dog was bought for one of her three young children.

The practice of caging or chaining a dog is not uncommon in Singapore. There are many dogs out there who spend most, if not all, of their day confined and barely able to move. The reasons provided by these dogs owners have similar themes.

One of the most common is that someone in the household had bought the animal, very possibly without considering the significant commitment that comes with pet keeping, and then was unable or unwilling to appropriately manage the dog. To address the problem of the dog running out the gate, digging up the garden, destroying furniture and soiling the home, the animal is kept neatly tucked away in a cage or on a chain in a corner of the house. Problem solved.

Other common reasons provided are that someone in the home is allergic to or afraid of the animal or that a new baby is in the home. Confining the dog, which is simple and easy to do, is then seen as the most convenient way to deal with the situation.

And then there are the reasons associated with attitudes towards pet keeping. There were many a time when I, a young SPCA inspector, who turned up at someone's home to speak with them about their confined dog, was faced with absolute bewilderment by the dog's owner. I remember the countless faces looking at me in amusement, wondering why someone, in an official looking shirt and pants no less, would take the trouble to travel all the way to their home to speak about their caged or chained dog. I was soon faced with replies such as, "if dogs are not allowed in cages, why do pet shops sell them", "it's a dog, its meant to be chained up!" and "show me the law that says a dog cannot be caged".



Animals need to be able to perform natural behaviours and require sufficient space to do so. They also strongly prefer their toileting area be kept separate from the rest of their environment. A confined dog clearly cannot meet these needs. Keeping a dog confined for long periods can also be psychologically distressing for the animal. Social isolation, which is usually a consequence of long duration caging and chaining, compounds the problem. All things considered, this is a serious welfare issue.

As the reasons this unacceptable practice is carried out are varied, the solutions must be equally multi-pronged. Education and awareness is required for those who do not realise their actions are causing harm while strong enforcement action is required for the dog owners who refuse to provide their pets with a basic standard of living.

The team at SPCA and other kind spirited individuals have rescued many dogs from endless confinement, either by working with the dog owners to improve conditions for the animal or by taking the dog out of the situation and finding them better homes.

The issue of confinement is just one of many, that affects dogs in Singapore. Abuse, neglect and abandonment are some of the other miseries that a dog may suffer. But it is certainly not all doom and gloom. This book, and the beautiful stories within, gives much hope for the dogs out there waiting to be rescued.

Jaipal Singh Gill (Dr)

Executive Director

Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, (SPCA)

Singapore



PROLOGUE

#WhatIsThePerfectDog

What is the perfect dog?

Is it measured by their long glossy coats or by their show dog worthy aesthetics?

Some search for the purest breed; others for a common household name; some end up paying thousands of dollars for their perfect dog.

I paid 100 RMB for my perfect dog, a tri-colored female mongrel from a small clothing store along a roadside in Suzhou, China, 12 years ago. The storekeeper had a dog who just gave birth to a litter of puppies. She only accepted money for the puppy because she wanted to ensure that it would instill a sense of awareness and responsibility towards the dog. Dolly is not just my perfect dog, she is my world.

Dolly has brought so much joy to my family and I, joy that no amount of money can buy. I have fond memories of her sleeping by my bedside when I'm sick, kissing my face whenever I cry, and doing silly little things to make me laugh. She has given birth to two amazing little boys that are just as perfect as she is, and all three have helped me care for all the strays that I've brought home over the years.

My family and I have brought home puppies who were abandoned, mistreated, neglected or given up by their former owners. We have cared for dogs with canine parvovirus, nursed them back to health and given them a second shot at life with a brand new family.

Dolly, and her two boys Dally and Junior, have taught me that the genetic makeup and physical appearance of a dog does not define their perfection. I've seen puppies and grown dogs being cast aside because they don't come from a purebred family, that they have the "wrong" coat colour, or that they are too slow, too sick, or even old, to be a part of someone's family.

A dog is perfect to you because it loves and understands you, all of which it gives to you unconditionally. I learned that the only thing that matters when having a dog is to give it love and companionship, and that taught me how to love unconditionally as well. Having my own dogs also made me a better dog lover, because I was able to open my heart up to all the other dogs that I have been so fortunate to care for and to have found families that are willing to do the same for them as well.

There are so many dogs out there that need a family, dogs that can't be found in pet stores, dogs that have been through rough times. They are all perfect in their own little ways. And we are perfect to them. We are their everything, and that's all that really matters.

Cheryl Chou

Miss Universe Singapore 2016
Actress/Host



some fab YouTube sites with educational training tips and devoured them with a vengeance.

The two months zipped by like quicksilver and it was soon the night before I was due to pick her up. The house was all prepped to welcome its newest member. I had her bed positioned in the perfect corner of the house, strategically placed between the two Walter Van Beirendonck rugs in perfect shades of tangerine and scarlet – the best colours to compliment the colour of her fur! I had her colour-coordinated toys all laid out, her array of matching leashes and martingale collars hanging in on a wall, her mini-fridge filled with treats. I started an instagram account to document her journey with me and couldn't wait to fill it with her pictures.



Before I met Elia, I could not play with another dog without feeling like I was cheating on Hock. I felt so guilty each time I socialised with them. When I was living in Europe, I used to go on long evening walks with fashion designer Lezley George's adopted retired racing Greyhound, Lola, in London, and hung out with a male model's Goldie, Pascal, in Amsterdam. I wondered each time if Hock was looking down at us from the rainbow bridge and if he would approve.

I was so nervous and restless that Friday night. What would Hock think? Would I make a good pawrent? Would she love me? What if? What if?

That night, Hock appeared in my dreams. It was almost as if he was giving his approval, telling me to "love her like you loved me, and much much more".

I showed up at Sunny Heights the next day, a tad sleepy but emotionally settled, knowing I had Hock's approval. I think she was as nervous as I, resting her head tentatively on my lap throughout the ride home. I enlisted the help of Fred, a rewards-based trainer to help her assimilate into the household. He was waiting at my home as part of her welcome party to ensure her first impression of the house was as stress-free as possible. She commemorated the occasion with a welcome poo in the garden, which we celebrated with much gusto and treats! She soon caught on and realised grass is for peeing and pooing! Toilet training after was a breeze.



I renamed her Leia, after the princess in *Star Wars*, and, like royalty, she swept through the house, claiming her spots and ignoring all the spaces I had painstakingly chosen for her. She completely disregarded the fluffy bed and lay down instead on the orange 'tiger' rug. She did not know what to make of the toys and avoided them. She seemed to prefer the hard concrete floor of the back porch to the comfort of her bed. Hard cold floors are probably all she's known her whole life. "Be patient," I told myself.

I never heard a sound from her. She communicated through her large expressive eyes. I was beginning to wonder if she had been debarked.

I brought her to the vet a couple of days later for a full medical checkup. I was more concerned about her pronounced limp, which I wanted to address immediately. In my research on ex-breeding dogs, I realised that many of them come with hip and hind limb issues, due to the trauma they were subjected to in the mill. I could tell she was in pain, both mentally and physically. It was absolutely heart-rending. Her vet informed me that her ligaments were stressed, the result (I'm assuming) of imprisonment in cages too small for her.

This piece of news hit me like a ton of bricks. She was in urgent need of surgery. Dr Nic ran through all the options with me and gave me his recommendations. The most effective was TPLO, or tibial-plateau-leveling osteotomy, a surgery performed on dogs to stabilize the stifle joint after ruptures of the cranial cruciate ligament. It was also the most expensive procedure but the best one for Leia if I wanted to give her some semblance of a good life. I needed to find the money somehow but I only had one ass to sell. I gave the green light nonetheless, and she went under the knife barely three weeks after her adoption.

I was worried, distressed and upset. Worried that our bond might be irrevocably damaged because she might now associate her new home with pain, inconvenience and the Elizabethan collar; distressed because I wasn't sure if I was doing enough for her,

or proficient enough to take on the role as her caregiver and nurse her back to health.

I also got spectacularly trolled immediately after the surgery – ironically, by the same person who introduced me to the idea of adoption. I was chastised for being a bad dog owner, lambasted for causing her pain and reproached for her confusion and distress. I was accused on her Facebook page of adopting for my own publicity. 'A dog is for life', she stated the obvious, giving me a lecture on caring for shelter dogs whilst cradling her own pet-shop-bought designer canine in her delicate, manicured arms.

One of the most educational things I took away from being on *Asia's Next Top Model* is how to deal with trolls, so I promptly ignored her, and plunged headlong into giving my dog the best life I can possibly accord.

Leia has metal rods inserted in her left and right hind legs. The surgeries were done ten months apart from each other. She is also undergoing hydrotherapy to strengthen the muscles in her legs. I have to monitor her movements and limit her activities for a year whilst her leg heals.

Leia is small for her breed. I guess proper nutrition isn't priority at a mill that is driven by profit. She was skin and bones when I first saw her, and I had to fight the temptation to overcompensate on her meals. I need to maintain her weight to avoid placing undue stress on her injured legs. It saddens me to have to stop her from enthusiastically running around with wild abandon or initiating play with other dogs, but I need to let her heal completely or risk further injury.

When I decided to adopt her, I started to research unethical breeders and puppy mills extensively but had to stop as it was too horrifying. Scenes of the terrible conditions of her past life kept replaying in my head over and over again. Female dogs have it worst. They are impregnated by the male dogs the minute they have their first heat cycle, and subsequently at every successive cycle. All the owners care about is to milk as many puppies as possible from the mothers. It's almost like

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doggie rape. When the puppies are born, they are taken away from their mothers before they are properly weaned. It must have been absolutely traumatic for her and the other breeding dogs.

Leia is an intelligent and highly sensitive dog. She is shy but curious, wary but inquisitive. She is quietly pensive, always deep in thought. I sometimes wonder what she is thinking, and the idea of approaching an animal communicator has crossed my mind several times. After I adopted her, I realised that we are alike in so many ways. We both have ligament issues – her first operation was on her left hind leg and I have a torn PCL on my same leg! We suffer from skin allergies and break out in the occasional rash. We are even prescribed almost the same meds from our respective docs! Like me, she has sinus. We both snore, and always inadvertently end up with a dripping nose and sneezing fits each time we sleep in air conditioned comfort. Its amazing how we both mirror each other's health issues.

We share the same dramatic streak too. She welcomed Chinese New Year 2018 spectacularly with the onset of her heat cycle. I woke that morning to puddles of red blood all over the house. She looked up and grinned as I ran around the house screaming, almost as if to say "Welcome to the Year of the Dog!"

After more than a year, she has settled very well into the house. She loves sleeping on her beds and gets an immense thrill out of a boisterous game of tug of war with her squeaky toys. Her personality has started to shine through. She has finally found her voice, and would not hesitate to sound

a warning bark to defend her home. She has also become more physically fit and muscular, thanks to her therapy and daily exercise.

I have had to make several changes to my life now that I have a dog. I walk her religiously every morning and night so that she would get her exercise. No more sleeping in or putting the alarm on perpetual snooze! When I have early call times, I wake even earlier so I can spend quality time with her – 6am call times mean 4am walks and 5am meals. Late night schedules result in 1am walks. There are not many dog-friendly establishments so I don't dine out as often as I used to. Instead, I order in, and have occasional picnics with her in the garden instead. She enjoys her car rides, and we constantly break out into carpool karaoke every time *Bohemian Rhapsody* or any Abba song comes on! I sing to her in the shower and talk to her constantly. I have also grown a thick skin and grown oblivious to the incredulous stares from people who think I've gone off my rockers for carrying on a conversation with my dog!

That thick skin has also help me deal with the critics. I've been accused of spending too much money on her, and also for not spending enough money. For spending too much time with her, and for not spending enough time. For loving her too much or not loving her enough. I am guilty of all of the above crimes. I spend a shitload of money on her, yet it doesn't seem to be enough. I spend a lot of time with her but feel guilty each time I leave the house, even if it's for a grocery run.

I try to give her as good a life as I can possible afford, but wonder if that is more that I can do. Part of it stems from the guilt I carry for not having done all I could for Hock when he was alive.

I've been criticised for wasting so much money on her operation, on hydrotherapy and even on training! Guilty! Guilty! Guilty! Yes, they're really expensive but absolutely necessary. I've had to make adjustments to my own life, and cut back on my own expenditure in order to afford it. I've become more selective when buying clothes. I am more strategic when purchasing accessories. And do I really need new bags and shoes every season?

I am just so blown away by how close knit and how incredibly supportive the international doggie community is. When I posted pictures of Leia's surgical procedures on Instagram and Facebook, I was inundated with not just get-well wishes but links and websites sent by vets and owners the world over whose dogs had undergone the same procedure. We have become a global support system: sharing advice, exchanging notes and bolstering spirits. Through this

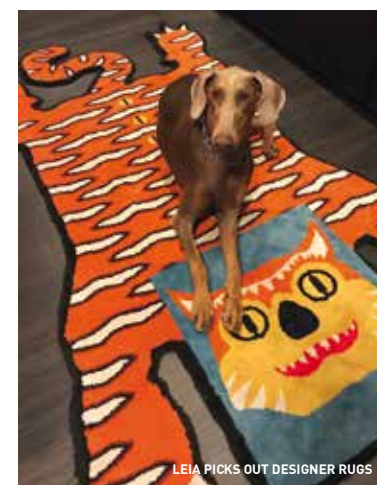
network, I learnt about Harrasburg Horns and Grafmar's Caps, which gave me a clue to the origins of my dog's ancestry.

Leia has brought so much joy into my life, and I have such a strong reason to live. Before her, I had a *laissez-faire* attitude to life. If I'm meant to go, then I'll go quietly into the night. Today, I have a life that is depending on me for her survival, so I keep myself fighting fit so that I can stay alive to care for her. My life is her life and vice versa. As much as I want her to live forever, I hope she will go before I do. I've read too many horror stories of dogs who end up in limbo, surrendered to the authorities to be put down or abandoned and left to their own devices when their owners pass that I dread to think of where she might end up or the kind of life she might be subjected to should I depart before her.

Makeup artiste Dollei Seah commented that I smile a lot more these days, and I now walk with a bounce in my step. I've become less angsty and more selective with my time and the people I hang out with. Whenever I'm faced with a situation, I ask myself WWLD (What Would Leia Do?). And it helps me tackle the problem head-on with a lot more patience, honesty and understanding. I also roll my eyes a lot less often! My dog is the role model by which I set the standard for the values and types of people I want in my circle. I now prefer to surround myself with happy, positive people who build each other up.

I am committed to giving Leia the best life that I can possible accord her. Every day with her is a joy; every single waking moment spent in her company is time to be treasured. We do our best as pawrents to help them adapt to life in our world. I have an added responsibility – to help her forget as much of her past as possible.

I know that we are both not alone in this journey. I can still feel Hock's presence and I know he is guiding and protecting Leia as she learns how to be a dog again.





#ARainbow InTheDark

When humans are in conflict with each other, their pets are often collateral damage. People who use their pets as pawns are aplenty. Thankfully, there are also angels amongst us who step in to save the day. Dogs have that innate sixth sense to identify these angels, and recognize that turning point in their lives.

Here is the amazing story of two goldies who found their savior in their darkest hours.

Leia is best buds with Cesar and Chelsea, whom she stays with occasionally when her papa's work keeps him away from home. The two dogs reside as king and queen, and Leia enjoys her playtime with them. Cesar and Chelsea are the most adorable dogs who love nothing more than to flop next to you, head on thigh, waiting for massages and belly rubs.

Their happy and healthy demeanour belies their sad origin stories, which, thankfully, came with silver linings for each of them. For, emerging from the dark clouds surrounding their respective ex-owner's palavas came their lovely angel.

"When I moved to a landed home in 2010, I decided it was time to get another dog. Volunteer stints with the SPCA and other dog shelters in my younger days steered me towards adopting instead of purchasing from a pet shop. I searched the net endlessly for a dog that would be a good fit. I visited many adoption drives and went through many homestay trials. There were many dogs I liked but we did not have that special affinity. I had a particular affinity for Golden Retrievers and kept a lookout for them. I chanced upon a picture of a sweet goldie peeking from under a table and my heart skipped a beat. I contacted the owner immediately and arranged a viewing. There were several enquiries already but I cajoled them into giving me an appointment.

I got terribly lost in the maze of flats in Woodlands on the day I was supposed to meet him. I got a call from the owner asking if I was still interested and I

screamed 'Yes!' down the phone. I was so anxious and afraid I would loose him to someone else. After driving around for an hour, I finally located the block and ran towards the meeting place in the void deck. I saw a guy holding on to a golden boy in the distance. When I was about 15 metres away, he dropped the leash and the dog sprinted towards me with a funny bunny hop. After that initial greeting, he circled me, sniffed till he was satisfied and sat down by my side, as if to claim me. Something just connected between the two of us at that moment. He chose me. It was a special sign.

CESAR
CHELSEA

I found out he had severe hip dysplasia, which accounted for his funny gait, but it did not deter me. I was ready to take on the challenge and asked for a trial visit.

Cookie's owners brought him over on a Sunday afternoon. I was told that Cookie was an extremely picky eater, so I cooked some chicken and potatoes as a welcome snack. Cookie was quite calm when he entered the house and proceeded to check out the surroundings. He walked around the front porch and the garden to the side garden and the backyard. He christened his visit with a pee and a poo. I saw that as a sign that he was marking his turf as his home, and praised him profusely. My husband John took an instant liking to his calmness and obedience. Cookie chomped down the chicken and potatoes and settled comfortably on the front porch as the humans began the discussion to sort out his adoption.

The owners were initially not confident that we could accord Cookie the love and care but we managed to convince them of our suitability and sincerity after a lengthy discussion. Cookie was officially adopted on the 26th August 2011, just two weeks shy of his first birthday. It was a very exciting day as I prepared for his arrival. He arrived with his soon-to-be-ex-owners in the late evening, and we allowed them to spend time alone with the dog before leaving. I took Cookie for a walk soon after, so that the owners could take their leave. I did not want the dog to see his owners driving away, in case he felt abandoned.

We re-named him Cesar and promised him a better life.

I consulted a couple of specialist vets on his hip issue and started a search for his medical history. I called the clinic he visited as a puppy and gathered as much information as I could. I decided to put off surgery till he absolutely needed it and opted instead for a rehabilitation programme of therapeutic and targeted exercises, nutrition and supplements.

Cesar was still very much a puppy, with extreme puppy behaviour when we adopted him at 11 months. I engaged a one-on-one trainer for Cesar three days after he was adopted. We worked together on Cesar's obedience and discipline as well as the rehab of Cesar's hips. Cesar was easy to train and very obedient.

In the course of training and disciplining Cesar, we suspected that he could have been beaten or slapped before. He was very scared and retreated when we raised our hands towards him, even if it was just to pat him on the head. We helped him get over that through positive actions and words and lots of patience.

One of the conditions of the adoption was to allow a visit from his ex-owners three months later. The owners had initially requested for more periodic visits but I advised against it, as it may confuse the dog.

The meeting was arranged at a neutral place. We decided on Bishan dog run. When his ex-owners entered the enclosure, Cesar ran to greet them in the same manner he does with all humans. His ex-mom was emotional but Cesar ran off to play after the initial greeting. The difference in the new Cesar was very clear and they knew it. He was more confident and his hind legs were stronger. I observed Cesar closely for any reactions but he was oblivious to his former pawrents. From that moment, I knew that Cesar was totally ours.

After spending half an hour in the enclosure observing Cesar as he played with his doggie friends, they left, accompanied by my husband. I stayed with Cesar. They never requested to visit again.

Cesar was not a healthy pup, growing up, the result of irresponsible breeding by a puppy mill in the eastern part of the island. He was always ill and had symptoms of parvo-virus. He was hospitalized and they almost lost him. But Nurse AJ never gave up on him. She carried the puppy whenever she could, encouraged him to fight on and nursed him back to health. Four years after we adopted Cesar, we bumped into AJ at a community pet event. She was overjoyed to reconnect with the dog and shared all the stories of his early days with us.

Cesar today is well and healthy as can be. He will be nine soon, but shows no sign of slowing down. Because of Cesar, I delved into learning all I can about canine nutrition, health, targeted supplementing and dog wellness. I became more health conscious and transformed my own life so that I can enjoy more of life with him. We went on short and long walks. During the first three years of Cesar's rehab, John and I made time to bring him swimming almost every weekend. I hate the sun but for Cesar, I braved it all. I said goodbye to my moon-kissed fair skin forever.

From a very nervous and fearful puppy who could not even cross a small drain, Cesar has grown into a calm and confident dog. Papa would patiently coax and show him the way to leap across drains. Cesar used to be afraid even of a stationary motorbike. Through patience and exposure, we slowly built his trust. Through building up his health and muscles, Cesar became more confident in his movements.

Lots of my precious lunch breaks were given up just so I could rush home to keep him company especially if a thunderstorm was brewing. Cesar is afraid of thunder. I built a cosy corner in the house for him to hide in, but I always tried to be around whenever there is an impending storm.

No matter how late I work, I will always make time for our special bonding night walk and car rides. My hubs always says that our dog leads a better life than us – he eats better and gets more attention than the humans!

Since I left corporate employment to start my own franchisee business, Cesar has become my ambassador and partner. I take him on some of my appointments and he enjoys the car rides tremendously. I cherish our time together. Our bond has grown even stronger during the last four years of



our special partnership. One year, when we were planning for Cesar's birthday party, we heard that his ex-mom was in town and invited her. There were lots of changes in her life and she was no longer living in Singapore. She saw how happy and healthy her former dog had become, and the love we had for each other, and left feeling emotional. Cesar treated her like a stranger, and we could see how she wished he was still her Cookie.

With all the checks in place and all that emotion from the ex-owners, why then was Cesar given up? It stemmed from a soured relationship. Mr A had bought the dog for his girlfriend, Ms K, but her mother never took to him. Mummy had her own dog and favoured that, ignoring Cookie. He grew up a sickly, nervous and under-socialised puppy. His genetic hip dysplasia was diagnosed at seven months. When the couple broke up, the girl and her family decided they did not want to keep Cookie, and neither did the guy. They decided to rehome him.

Their loss is my big gain!"

When Cesar turned six, Lisa and John discussed the possibility of adopting another dog. As she was a volunteer with several dog shelters and rescue associations, and was active with helping to foster and rehome them, she saw many potential dogs, but none of them "made my heart flutter the way Cesar did many years ago."

On 1 April 2017, I got a call from a friend who heads the pedigree rehoming department of a dog rescue shelter. A female Golden Retriever was being surrendered to the shelter on April Fools Day!. He asked if I could help foster, rehome or adopt her, so I brought Cesar along.

We met this beautiful girl at her home, a beautiful apartment in the Holland district. There was an air of chill when we walked in and it wasn't from the cold. Her owners were going through a separation as well as a relocation to another country, and she did not factor in either one of their plans.



CESAR WITH NURSE AJ



CHELSEA'S FIRST DAY IN HER FOREVER HOME

Ria the goldie was a happy, carefree girl with a beautiful top coat of long fur. On closer examination, her back and belly were covered with hotspots and rash from a skin allergy. I was immediately taken by her but I had to get Cesar's approval.

It was important that Cesar accept Ria. My worries were unnecessary. The initial introduction went smoothly and the two dogs settled comfortably with each other. According to Ria's papa, she is extremely selective with the dogs she allows into her space. When I saw how comfortable both dogs were with each other, I agreed on a home trial.

I was handed a cardboard box which contained Ria's belongings – some leftover kibbles, old toys, medicated shampoo, an odd harness and other little necessities. It was almost like 'good bye, good riddance'. Ria's mama then came out from her room briefly to say hello and disappeared almost immediately. There were no goodbye hugs or any sign of love for Ria. I felt very sad. Ria was being given up like a piece of old junk, but I knew that she deserved better than this cold, unloving home.

We gathered the stuff and brought Ria and Cesar for a short walk. I was handed Ria's vet records and told that she was sterilised and had a long history of hotspots and skin issues. Her papa tried to self-medicate with a dose or two of vitamin C, which obviously did not work. Ria was fed a diet of kibbles. Apart from a morning and an evening walk with papa, she was left by her lonesome self for most part of the day. Papa said goodbye to her and promised to visit after she was settled. Mama watched. I never heard from either of them after that day.

Five days later, I signed the papers, formally adopting Ria. I celebrated her fresh start by renaming her Chelsea.

Chelsea settled into our home very quickly without too much fuss. I found out that she was administered several doses of

steroids and antibiotics in the past. Her immunity was extremely low. She seemed to be allergic to many food items and had behavioural and anxiety issues. She would chew on her paws and bite herself, which resulted in the frequent hotspots. We carried out food allergy tests on her so that we could determine what she could and could not eat. The kibbles she had been fed were totally disagreeable with her, so we switched her to home cooked food and placed her on a strict diet.

Her rehab journey was fraught with much stress as we decided to steer clear of unnecessary medications. Chelsea broke out frequently in hotspots, suffered from yeast infection and had constant ear problems. We had to wipe her down her several times daily to get rid of the yeast, disinfect her hotspots and clean her ears, all of which she allowed us to do, and endured patiently. There were many frustrating moments. Just when we thought she is cleared, another wave of attack comes around. Thankfully I persevered.

Despite her health setbacks, Chelsea is a feisty, fun-loving, carefree gal. She runs around like a bull in a china shop; she swims like a dolphin and plays with gay abandon. She has bonded very well with Cesar and always knows her boundaries with her elder brother. Through Chelsea, Cesar got his groove back. The two dogs wrestle daily. Walks are not complete without each other.

Chelsea's health and immunity has improved greatly. She still gets the occasional hotspot but they heal very quickly. Her yeasty discoloured skin has cleared and fur has sprouted on the previously baldy infected patches.

My two dogs have become so much a part of my life and taught me lots of life lessons. I tear even at the very thought that I will lose them one day. For now I just want them to be in the best of health and for us to enjoy our lives together."



Review only

#UptownGirl

Meredith is a beautiful long haired ex-breeding Weimaraner that was rescued from an illegal breeder and bailed out from the pound on Valentines Day of 2017. She's statuesque, chic and regal with a strong Patrician profile, juxtaposed against a quirky, madcap personality.

Glenda and her husband Justin were at a pet café within the grounds of the doggie day care, having tea with the founder of an AWG one Sunday afternoon. The conversation at the table segued to cute puppies, and Glenda mentioned that Weimaraner pups were adorable because of their blue eyes. The founder asked if they would like to see Meredith.

They both nodded enthusiastically in unison.

The girl was brought out and she headed straight for Justin. It was almost as if she knew whose heartstrings to tug at.

"Up to that point I'm pretty sure he was skeptical but after going on a little jaunt with her around the compound and playing some ball, I knew his heart was stolen. Maybe vice-versa too!"

I was still hesitant about adopting another dog as I had lost my best friend, Pinto, a Wire Fox Terrier, just a year ago. He died of old age and I still miss my companion terribly. He was my dog and I had him 14 years ago, long before I married Justin. Pinto was my darling."

Meredith was friendly but shy. But it was obvious she liked Justin and Glenda.

"Justin was giving me the look, something I've learnt to interpret as 'I want'. I looked at Meredith, gave her a treat and realised she has the gentlest mouth. She doesn't snatch food from your hands. I knew that Justin was smitten and we decided to adopt Meredith as our dog. You see, Pinto was my dog and not really our dog so Meredith would be ours."

Glenda and Justin decided to pick Meredith up the next day, as they had to prepare the home for her arrival.

"Luckily, Terry Peh from Good Dog People was also present when we first met Meredith and he arranged for everything to be sent to our place. You can say we were there at the right time, right place and it was just meant to be."

Meredith was brought home on a Sunday. She was, as expected, apprehensive but curious of her new surroundings, as all dogs would be.

“

The hubs and I have very different work schedules. Meredith fills in the gaps when we are apart and sweetens the times when we are together.

”

GLENDAL CHONG



"The first thing we did when we got home was take her for a little walk around the compound. The hubs (who completely hates taking pictures) said 'Wait! I need to get a photo of my two models.' Where I've failed in getting him to take pictures, Meredith succeeded without even trying!!!"

Meredith settled in really quickly. They took about two weeks to toilet train her, and put her through one obedience class. It was pretty much smooth sailing for the three of them.

The couple also discovered Meredith's taste for the finer things in life!

"One day, we found that she had managed to help herself to some imported salami from the kitchen counter. We didn't realize how tall she was as our previous dog was tiny."

She has also developed a taste for (the French designer shoe label) Louboutins! Of all the shoes in my shoe rack, she knew which was the most expensive! I've since taken to hiding all my shoes."

Glenda and Justin got a doggy gate and tried to confine her in the kitchen when they were out, but *"she started making noises like she was being tortured. So we decided to gave her free reign to the entire house. Except the bedrooms. That was off-limits. I was also adamant that she not be allowed on our bed."*

I came home one day to find my husband sound asleep on the bed with Meredith next to him. He was using the dog as a bolster. We bought a doggie bed for her but she now prefers to sleep with us in our bed."

So much for off-limits!

Our nights have, however, now become much cozier."

Meredith soon became a big hit amongst all of Glenda's and Justin's friends. As most of Glenda's colleagues were investigative journalists, they soon dug up the story of Meredith's past.

"Some of our google gifted friends did some snooping and there she was on our CNA website!"

According to a CNA report dated 17 May 2017, a 39-year old woman, Lin Xiaoqun, a Singapore permanent resident, had been charged in court in May 2017 with keeping a dog farm illegally and breeding dogs without a license. Her nine adult dogs and four puppies, were voluntarily surrendered to the authorities. The adult dogs, including Meredith, were used for breeding and they were unlicensed.

"She was little then but there was no mistaking that face staring back at us from the article was our gorgeous little rescue."

Meredith was one of the very lucky ones to have been rescued from a horrific life at a young age. Many breeding dogs are not so lucky.

"Meredith has brought so much love to us. She completes our home."

Meredith is affectionate, endearing, clumsy but most of all vocal. It's almost like having a talking dog. She enjoys grumbling the most and we've since nicknamed her Grumbilina. She especially reserves her grumbles for the hubs. She is the only person who can get away with nagging him!

Both the hubs and I grew up with dogs and they were all loved but this is the first dog that we own together. We try to be the best pawrents we can be - patient, loving and not overly attached to our shoes."



For Review only



about the author

Daniel Boey is a creative director and television personality who has designed experiences for fashion events worldwide. His extensive portfolio includes work in the world's fashion capitals, for high-profile clients like Vivienne Westwood, Christian Dior and Louis Vuitton. He is a Governor on the Board of the Asian Couture Federation and his television credits include being a fashion director in three seasons of Asia's Next Top Model. In 2015, he wrote *The Book of Daniel: Adventures of a Fashion Insider*, followed by *Behind Every *itch Is a Back Story: The Struggles of Growing Up with Rash* in 2017.