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ISBN 978-3-9816162-7-9

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Shooting Starlight
Tales of a Street Dog

Published in Germany as *Sternschnuppenlicht* by
Verlag Begegnungen, Schmittgen, 2013

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Printed in Germany by SDL Digitaler Buchdruck, Berlin
Printed on recycling paper

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Shooting Starlight

The tale of a dog, searching for home.

Translated from the German
by Chrissie Butler



Dedicated to the street dogs of Cluj/Romania and to other
street dogs throughout the world ...



Forward

This is the tale of Lobo – a perfectly normal Romanian dog.

His story takes place in Romania but might be told from all corners of the world; from any country where there are dogs without a home and living on the streets.

It is an exceptional story with many twists and turns. By and large however it depicts the everyday lives led by many stray dogs – hardly noticed, unwanted or even abused, helpless and unprotected, for the most part running away, constantly hungry and always fending for themselves. In spite of everything though they are fond of humans and grateful for human contact and affection.

May Lobo's story raise awareness that these dogs are living creatures who can experience joy and pain, who never harm anyone and who in return have a right to a sorrow-free life.

Maybe children who read this story or have it read to them would like to colour the illustrations and so make Lobo's world a brighter place?

And if whilst doing so you think of all of those – whether people or animals – whose lives are not colourful and happy, then these positive thoughts and prayers will surely make the world a little brighter.



Lobo dashed through the familiar streets of his territory that day, the same as every day since coming here to this place. His original home was the wide, picturesque, undulating landscape at the foot of a majestic mountain range far away from the gates of this town. Often he thought longingly of the wonderful countryside that he knew so intimately. He had been born there and there he had spent the first years of his life, joyful and carefree. He lived on a small farm surrounded by pure, unspoiled nature. The smallholding belonged to an old man who had a close connection with the land he occupied and to all living things, whether human or animal. He was kind and loving to the animals that lived with him, empathising and acknowledging that they were God's creatures who could feel hurt and pain as well as happiness and joy, just like him.

Even though they communicated in different languages they nonetheless understood one another, because they spoke from heart to heart and soul to soul.

The little that he had, he shared with his animals. He found joy in sharing because what the animals gave him in return, namely loyalty and unconditional love, made him richer than all the money in the world.

However Lobo's happiness could not last – hard times came. When Lobo was two years old the man became very ill and died. Lobo was lying at his feet when his beloved master closed his eyes forever. And as the dog sensed that the old man's soul was making its way to heaven, he raised his eyes to the night sky and caught sight of a fantastic meteorite, weaving its way through millions of stars. He watched it go and felt a reassuring light, like a comforting glow, in his body. The shooting star seemed to him a sign of hope, it seemed

to be showing the old man which way to go. Like most animals Lobo was able to accept death and had the deep inner knowledge that no soul gets lost but simply journeys away, out into a different place.



Everything changed with the death of the person who had cared for Lobo since birth, always being there for him. Events were in the offing which would drastically change his life.

The old man's children who lived far away in a big town, arrived in order to view their inheritance. However they were not interested in the simple homestead nor the land with which the old man had had such a strong connection. They planned to sell the house, the stalls, the fields and the meadows as soon as possible; noisily they chased away the animals that lived there, including Lobo.

Lobo did not understand the world any more. Frightened, he ran away. At a distance though he stopped. He could not grasp what was happening to him. Several times he tried to return to the place that was his home. But the strange people only kicked and threw stones at him. He sought protection in a nearby grove. From a small elevation he could see the farmyard, the dwelling and familiar outbuildings that had provided protection and refuge for him all his life.

He spent several days and nights up there, sad and alone.

One morning he decided to try to return home one last time. Lobo crept onto the plot very carefully and full of fear. But no-one was there to harm him. The strange people were no longer around, the house was locked up, the doors and windows barricaded with boards. He ranged over the familiar yard. It was empty and abandoned, abandoned just like the adjoining stalls and barns.

Loneliness and worry, desolation and fear grew within him. What was to become of him now? Winter was approaching and it seemed that life here was no longer possible for him. Sadly he left the property. He did not return to the adjoining hillock which had been his refuge over the last few days, but went towards the dusty, small street that led away from the yard. Having arrived there he stood, undecided. He had never been so far from the yard in this direction, he did not know whence this street led. The wide, unspoiled land that stretched out on the other side of the yard he knew only too well. How often had he been there, alone on his forays or together with the old man? The land had given them sustenance and a sense of earthiness, it made him very sad having to leave this place. However he had no choice, winter stood at the door; without protection and all alone he would not be able to survive.

Lobo decided to follow the road. He simply went on walking, further and further away. It hurt him greatly to leave his trusted home. But at some stage, after he could no longer make out the buildings behind him, he knew that he must not look back any longer. It was important to keep looking ahead. He was now all alone but he wanted to live and perhaps somewhere in the world there was a place for him, somewhere he could be happy again.

The landscape through which he was now wandering hardly changed. To the right and left of the path the mighty mountains arose, a view Lobo had known so well since his puppyhood. On the horizon he recognised even higher mountains and now and again he crossed becks and small rivers by way of rotten wooden bridges.

After several days marching along the narrow country lane his surroundings changed. The mountains on the horizon did not look so tall any more. Certainly the landscape was still hilly, but it was less craggy and majestic, instead it appeared softer and more graceful. The stony fields of scree gave over to grassy countryside. Other than some wild animals no-one else was about. No human nor any other dog.

On the evening of the fifth day of his journey, when it was already dark, Lobo reached a crossroads.

Here the small dusty road merged into a bigger one and it did not take long before the first cars raced past him. In the meantime he had become quite exhausted. Certainly it had been possible for him to feed himself in the wilderness and he had not lacked water, but he was tired and his paws were hurting. He did not see the accident coming. The car closed in from behind at high speed. The sight of a dog trotting at the roadside, easily visible because of his white fur despite the approaching darkness, did not cause the driver to brake. In that moment Lobo stumbled through tiredness, the car caught him and flung him into the air. Neither the driver nor the people in other passing cars were interested in the dog lying at the edge of the road, thrown into the adjoining ditch. No-one stopped or even thought about Lobo, in pain and seriously injured.

Many cars drove by ...

Maybe in one or another people sat who would have had sympathy with the suffering dog, but those who had not witnessed the accident could not see Lobo lying there, the high grass of the ditch covered him up.



Lobo recovered consciousness only hours later. Helpless, with broken legs, unable to move, he lay in the ditch – days and nights. He froze, was hungry and thirsty, tortured by pain; loneliness and desolation enveloped him. With the last of his energy one evening he crept out of the cover of the ditch. Many, many cars drove past, often so near that he could feel the air move. In the meantime he had become so weak that he could no longer open his eyes.

As he felt approaching death his memories grew, memories of his short protected life; of the green meadows of his home, the warm fire in the cozy hut and the friendly manner of the old man. Suddenly he thought that he saw a meteorite in the night sky, which seemed to surround him in comforting warm light – and then he lost consciousness.