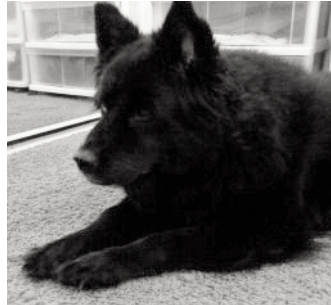


There's an art to being a lost dog...

Author Shyly D. Lightful knows more than anyone about being a dog – since she is one.



Get to know her in all her fuzzy, loving warmth, along with her three eccentric pack-mates:

- Odysseus – Shyly's supportive if distractible lead dog
- Desdemona – Her sullen and professorial frenemy
- Ophelia – Her perpetually puppyish kid sister

Starting from a fundamental ignorance, Shyly learns so much about the art of getting lost that she ends up writing a self-help book – *for dogs*.

But she learns so much about learning that ***“The scientific art of getting lost, for dogs”*** will be fulfilling for the puppies in your pack, too.

And here's the best news: It's funny for readers of all ages – just in case you have to read it many times.

*Indiegogo preview:
<http://igg.me/at/ShylyLost>
Feel free to share Shyly's
adventures with your friends.*



***The scientific art of
getting lost, for dogs.***

by Shyly D. Lightful

Foreword

A very strange thing happens when a dog ventures out into the world without her people.

My brother Odysseus swears you find adventure – but he finds adventure everywhere.

My sister Desdemona insists you find only trouble – but trouble is all she ever finds.

My other sister Ophelia is certain you find fun – but fun for her is never farther away than the end of her own tail, ever sought but never caught.

Here's the real truth of the matter, which I discovered by my own first-hand experience:

When you go out of the house without your people, you get lost.

Yes, yes, I know all the things dumb dogs say. “You're always somewhere” they bark. Or: “No matter where you go, there you are.”

And I know I'm not the smartest puppy in the pack – not even this pack.

But home is where the heart is. And everywhere else – isn't.

Chapter 1

“We're lost.” I said that.

“Nonsense, Shyly!” Odysseus scoffed. He was enchanted by the sights and sounds – and scents – of everything. “We just barely got out of the house. How could we be lost?”

We were standing at the corner of Somewhere and Somewhere Else, a sleepy intersection in a charming neighborhood I like to think of as Nowhere Familiar. We really hadn't been out for very long – but apparently we didn't have to be.

“Shyly's right,” said Desdemona. “I get out all the time, and I've never seen this before.”

“You get out all the time, so you *must* have seen this before,” Odysseus insisted. “Sniff around and you'll probably find your own pee.”

Ophelia giggled at that. “Desi pees on everything.”

“Laugh if you want, but I'm never lost.”

“Except for now,” I said.

“Except for now,” Desi agreed.

“We’re not lost,” Odysseus declared. “We just haven’t found what we’re looking for yet.”

Desdemona looked doubtful. She’s good at that. “What are we looking for?”

Odysseus shrugged. “I’ll let you know when we find it.”

Chapter 2

Here’s what we were looking for:

A big, dumb elephant who – depending on which dog you talk to – needed either liberation or rescue.

Chapter 3

People probably shouldn't leave their dogs alone at home all day. You never know what we'll get into. When we're alone without our people, we like to clamber onto forbidden furniture – so we can surf the internet.

I like to look at pictures of me, to tell you the truth. On the internet, no one knows you're a dog – but for the longest time, I couldn't even *see* myself in photos on the net. I'm a mixed-breed, inside and out. I *feel* like a Labrador, a perpetual puppy, but I *look* like a Chow, a fuzzy ball of poofy black fur. Unless you see my teeth or my eyes in a picture, you might not see me at all. I never could.

But then one day Desdemona found an animated picture of our whole family. Frame-by-frame, I was still just a big black cottonball. But I could see myself in the motion from one picture to the next – and guess what? I'm a lively girl.

I could look at that image all day. Sometimes I do. We're all in it – all the dogs, all the cats, all the

people – and it's fun for me to see the whole family playing together in a herky-jerky silent movie.

It was Ophelia who got all slobbery about the elephant. You've probably seen the picture: A huge gray elephant is tied up to a tiny chair. Ophelia thought that elephant looked like the cutest playmate, and she would stare at the photo for hours at a time.

Until Desdemona ruined it for her – maybe ruining everything for everybody – by pointing out the obvious:

“You know,” Desi said, in that low, slow drawl she reserves for tormenting Ophelia, “what matters in that picture is the chair, not the elephant.”

“How can you say that? A chair is just a chair, but look at that elephant!” That's Ophelia, a Redbone Coon Hound, a lanky, tawny creature of vast enthusiasms. “I'll bet she could pick me up and hold me over her head with her trunk!”

Desdemona is an English Coon Hound, white with black spots, and she can be smug about her pedigree. She intimidates no one but Ophelia, but she has that hound thoroughly hounded. “What could that elephant do to the chair, if she wanted to?”

“Are you kidding? She could crush it with one foot, just like that!”

“So in what way is she tied up?”

Ophelia had no answer for that. She kept looking at the photo, staring at the chair as if seeing it for the first time.

“She could crush the chair, as you note,” Desi pontificated. “Or she could just drag it along behind her, with the rope as a bramble-snagger. Why is she standing still like that? By what, precisely, is she captivated?”

I could practically hear the gears grinding in Ophelia’s skull, so I took it upon myself to bring up the *real* elephant in the room:

“You sneak out a lot, don’t you, Des?”

Desdemona smirked. “Every chance I get.”

“How does that work out for you?”

Desi scowled but she didn’t quite growl. The last time she got out, she came back with fleas, ticks – and stitches in three places. And Peritas, the dog who wriggled out behind her, hasn’t made it home at all so far.

“But what about the elephant?!” Ophelia demanded. “Someone has to tell her she’s really not tied up.”

There are two ways to interpret that sentiment. One, she doesn’t know she’s really free. That’s what Desi heard. Or two, she doesn’t know she’s not really safe. That’s what Ophelia meant. I heard it

both ways, and I know Desdemona did, too. I’m sure Ophelia did not.

I said, “It’s just a picture on the internet, O.”

She thought about that for a little while. She’s not quick, but she always tries to be kind. Finally she said, “But so is that picture of you...”

“Boom!” said Desdemona. “Shyly, if we saw a picture of you in trouble, you’d want us to rescue you, wouldn’t you?”

That argument wasn’t quite right, but I didn’t spot the error – not then.

Ophelia sat there looking at me, waiting me out. She nodded with certainty. “You know you would.”

My rebuttal? “But, but, but...”

“But nothing!” That was Desdemona’s dismissal of my concerns. “When there’s constabulary work to be done, the constable’s lot is a terrible one.”

I considered a number of responses, but in the end all I said was, “Good grief!”

But I said it loud. And as I hoped, Odysseus stirred. He’s not much of a fan of the internet, but he *loves* to watch cooking shows on TV. He looked up from the pool of drool that collects beneath his floppy jowls, thus to make this sagacious observation: “Dinnertime?”

Chapter 4

And now you know what matters most to Big-O. He's a giant of a dog, a full-blood Bloodhound, russet red with a tiny patch of white on his breast. I'm a mutt, so I'm the runt in our pack, barely 60 pounds. The two Coon Hounds come in at around 80. But Odysseus is big even for a male Blood. He's easily 110 pounds – before dinnertime. He's big and game and goofy and naturally dominant, the uncontested leader of our little family – when our people aren't around.

He went through the long, slow process of getting to his feet, engaging each muscle and bone separately. Don't kid yourself; he can be up in a shot when he needs to be – like when someone drops a slice of ham in the kitchen. But normally he likes to express his regal indomitability by taking his time when there is time to be taken. Rank has its privileges.

He sauntered over to us, the question of the hour still burning in his big, droopy brown eyes: “Dinnertime?”

You'd think he wouldn't have to ask, but Desi always knows to the minute when it's time for us to be fed. Don't ask me how; the girl matches patterns incessantly. But you don't have to know time to the minute to know that the sun was too high in the sky for dinner, so I said, “Not for a long time. You know that.”

He gave me a sheepish look, but I know he didn't mean it. There is something in every dog that believes that campaigning for dinner causes dinner. Even though Desdemona has worked out the exact sequence of events leading to dinner – such that she knows precisely when it's going to happen every day – even so Odysseus never quite gives up on his favorite moral lodestone: You never can tell.

“We're going to save the elephant!” Ophelia said that, of course.

“Going? Going where? Going for a ride?” If you want to push Odysseus off the subject of food, promise him a ride in the car.

“Not going for a *ride*, you big oaf. Going *outside*.” Everyone loves Desdemona, no matter how hard she makes it.

Ophelia was scampering and yipping, and, despite myself, I started to bark joyously, too. I thought going out without our people sounded like a terrible idea, but still... *Outside...*

Odysseus barked once, briefly, but with every bit of his authority – such that little wisps of dust wafted down through the air from the ceiling-fan blades overhead. We all settled down and shut up, just like that. He said, “If we’re going anywhere, we should go through that cold hallway in the kitchen.”

“Hallway?” said Ophelia. “In the kitchen?”

“He means the refrigerator,” Desi drawled.

“The refrigerator?”

“Silver doors. Overlit. Cold air.”

“Oh, yeah! That. Smells wonderful...”

“Smells *wonderful!*” Odysseus agreed. “And that’s why we should go *that way.*”

I shook my head. And if I’m the voice of reason, reason is whispering. “It’s not a hallway. I think it’s just a box.”

The way Desdemona shivered made me think she knows what she’s talking about: “It’s just a box.”

“Oh, well,” Odysseus said with a shrug. “We don’t know how to open it, anyway.” He turned to lumber

back toward the television, back to his cooking shows.

“But what about the elephant?”

Big-O gave Little-O a look of loving indulgence. “An elephant would *never* fit in there. Besides, Shyly says it’s just a box.”

Chapter 5

“No! We have to go *save* the elephant!” Ophelia was running from me to Desdemona to Odysseus, dog-caucusing with her boundless enthusiasm.

Odysseus shot me a questioning look, but before I could say anything, Ophelia challenged him with this: “I know you love elephants.”

Odysseus smiled. “I love the way they smell...”

“So we have to go rescue the elephant!”

The big Blood said nothing to that, he just turned to look at me. I don’t know if I’m his second-in-command, his under-sized sergeant-at-arms or just his dog-robber – dog-robber to a dog! – but everything Odysseus pushes off his desk lands on mine.

I said, “You know that elephant picture Ophelia likes to look at?”

“The one where the elephant doesn’t know she’s tied up to nothing? Funny shot.”

“You knew, too?!” Ophelia was outraged at her own embarrassment.

“Every picture tells a story, dear.” I said that. “If you look at everything, sometimes you can see it.”

“So says the dog who can’t even see *herself* in photos,” Desdemona grumbled.

Odysseus said nothing to all of this, he just cleared his throat – which is boss-talk for “Get on with it.”

I shrugged. “Desdemona has Ophelia convinced that, if we go out – all of us together? I’m not even sure if there’s a plan – if we go out, we can rescue that elephant.”

“Rescue her how?”

Desdemona said, “By leading her to freedom!” at the exact same time Ophelia said, “By leading her to safety!”

And Shyly – that’s me – said, “And *now* all the cards are on the table.”

Not that it mattered. Odysseus hears what he wants to hear. To Desdemona he said, “You can get us out?”

“With your strong back I can.”

“All the way out? Outside the dog run, too?”

“Outside the house, outside the dog run, outside the block wall – out to the street, Bloodpuppy, out where the wild dogs run.”

I was excited and full of dread at the same time. Everyone else was just excited. Nothing draws a crowd like a crowd and nothing feeds a frenzy like a frenzy. A solitary dog barking is just pathetic, a canine tragedy. But two or more dogs barking is a feedback loop of infinite amplification. In other words: It got loud.

Odysseus cut the clatter with another sturdy bark. His warble carries for miles, low and sweet and mournful, but his roar could blow down a barn. To Desdemona he said, “Show me what you have planned.”

We snuck out into the garage. That part was easy. Odysseus can get out there whenever he wants. The food bins are stowed out there, and Big-O likes to go out and smell them. He hasn’t figured out how to get into them yet, but for him the scent of food is almost as good as the taste.

Desi led us to the side door, which I had never even noticed before. To me she said, “I’ve been watching how good you’ve gotten with your paws, Shyly. Pushing that computer mouse around all day has made you dextrous.” I knew that was oily flattery, but I was flattered anyway. “Do you see that dimple in the

middle of the door-knob? I need you to push it until it pops out at you.”

If you have hands, I envy you. I have little bats for appendages, with clumsy claws at the end. If you need someone to dig a messy hole in the back yard, I’m your girl. But for precision work – meaning a job any three-year-old child with a working thumb could do – I’m a hit-or-miss proposition. Mostly miss. But if at first you don’t succeed... After about twenty paw-hammers, the little button in the middle of the knob popped out at me.

We all did a little happy dance over that small victory, but then Desdemona said, “Now for the hard part. Odysseus, I need for you to turn that knob and push the door open at the same time.”

That sounded impossible to me, but Odysseus was game. He gripped the door-knob with his floppy lips and tried to turn it. But it was instantly drool-slickened, so it kept slipping away on him. He tried and tried, but the knob wouldn’t turn.

Desdemona was game, too, in her weird, methodical way. She draped a shop towel over the knob as a sort of drool barrier. No joy. She tried the same trick with a little square of rubberized cloth. Odysseus was able to get a better grip with that, but

it still wasn't good enough. Finally she sat back on her rump to try to think of a better idea, but Big-O just kept noodling at the door-knob.

"Hey look!" he said. His voice was constrained, because his face was jammed in on the knob. He was pushing on it laterally with his whole snout – and it was turning! Without removing that enormous proboscis, he set his shoulder into the door and it budged a little. Just a little bit, but it really moved. There was the scraping sound of door on concrete and a little shaft of sunlight leaked into the gloomy garage.

Desi jumped up to push on the door, and Ophelia did, too. Inch-by-inch, creak-by-creak, they pushed the door open. I helped, too – by yipping and scampering and jumping for joy.

That door did not want to open, but it sure did want to close. It took all three big dogs to hold it open. One-by-one – me first – we trundled out into the day. Odysseus was last, and he barely made it out without the door slamming on his tail.

It was blindingly bright outside at first, and for a moment I just stared stupidly at everything. Then I looked at that closed door and said, "We're locked out."

Desdemona smirked, and if I had decent hands I might have flicked her on the nose for that.

Odysseus just shrugged. He said, "Yeah, but at least no other dogs can get in and steal our food."

Chapter 6

I wanted to object, but there was so much sky... I'm outside – in the dog run or the back yard – at least five times a day, but the sky always takes me by surprise. There's just so *much* of it.

And a house – or a kennel or a crate – can feel a lot like a Christmas sweater: What you're aware of, mostly, is the constraint. It's only when you get shed of it that you feel the cold.

So mostly I was just stupid for the first few moments of our adventure. I was overwhelmed by the unlimited outsideness of everything – and don't even get me started on the smells! – but I was scared, too, and even more scared that I have so little experience at being scared.

And by the very nature of our act of misbehavior, we didn't have our people to turn to for guidance. People might stuff you in a Christmas sweater now and then, but they always know how to keep a dog out of the cold.

So what could I do instead? I could take Big-O's lead and press on regardless. Or I could traipse behind Desi as she quarries for even more poor choices to lament. Or I could just wander along like Ophelia, trusting in the good will of others – and in my own ability to overlook or forget any bad will I might find.

Or I could keep my own counsel. Think for myself. Be my own dog.

So I took a couple of steps backwards and took everything in. Our house is brown, like the color of gravy. I never noticed that before. But every other house on our street is brown, too. Not all the same brown, but all pretty much gravy. But the roof on our house is slate gray, where the other roofs are a brownish red or a dusky blue or an even darker brown – the color of food. So that's a difference.

And the house next to ours has black fixtures of some kind mounted at either side of its garage door. And the one on the other side has a big white box like a rabbit hutch stuck on a post out front. And just like that I had a way of finding my way home – if I ever get lost next door.

Odysseus was oblivious to my distress, of course. He was enraptured, his nose high in the

sky, sweeping the air from left to right and back again, ‘seeing’ the world as only a Bloodhound can see it, in 3D Smellovision. He caught the scent of something, he didn’t say what, and he sauntered off to investigate – the two Coon Hounds trailing behind him.

I scurried up to walk beside him, my head at his shoulder. I said, “Leadership is more than just going first, you know.”

He took his time responding, and that’s good. When he answers too quickly, it usually means he’s not really listening at all. Finally he said, “I’m pretty sure that’s wrong. I’m always in the lead, and I show that by going first. That’s how you know I’m the leader.”

Chapter 7

Odysseus walks slowly – for him. That’s good, because I still have to hustle to keep up with him. “You’re the leader,” I agreed. “But toward what?”

To this he answered nothing. He’s not rude, just distractible. I am, too, for what that’s worth. I wanted to talk about the problem of our being lost dogs, but I was too busy trying to remember the distinguishing details of every house we passed – and even then I kept getting distracted by all the dogs in the neighborhood.

To me, Desdemona said, “Forget the houses. Remember the dogs.”

I said: “Urf?”

“You’re trying to remember niggling little details, right? I can see it in the way your head is jerking around. But you’re not good at details. You’re good at relationships. Remember the dogs and you’ll remember everything important.”

And she was right. I could remember every dog we had met so far, and all I had to do was think about the dog to see his whole house and yard. Not just blue

window trimming or a red brick box on the roof – I could remember everything, all at once, just by remembering the dog.

And being lost was a lot more fun that way. Not hoarding precious details to serve as indistinguishable markers on an imaginary map, but making new friends – each one of whom could lead us back home just by standing still, just by being there.

But we weren't headed home. We were following Big-O's big nose into the unknown.

And that's how we got to where we started this yarn, lost at the corner of Somewhere and Somewhere Else. And, yes, even with all the dogs and all the details, I was pretty sure we were lost.

Ophelia has gotten lost inside our house. If I haven't seen her for a while, I take a sweep of all the rooms to hunt her down.

Odysseus can find anything he can smell, plus he never even thinks to doubt himself. Sure, he's always been right about everything so far – or right *enough* – but Lost Dog is a game you don't get to lose twice.

And Desdemona? She has her good points. She teaches us what she's figured out, for instance – when it's to her advantage. But, in the end, Desi pees on everything.

End of Part I – Join in on the Indiegogo campaign to find out what happens next!

Why Indiegogo for a kid's book?

We need the dough, for one thing – to pay for the books and the free shipping and to keep the dogfood bins full – but we're being puppyish with the sacred rules of book merchandising, too: A kid's book is a life-event, not just a passtime.

Accordingly, while most of the promotions are built around books, four have the communion of souls we learn from our dogs packaged in to the perk:

- **Get two copies of the bound book.** Share the fun with someone you love – or keep the second copy at your grandpa's house for sleepovers.

- **Give the gift of Shyly – while keeping her for yourself, too.** A gift set for the puppy in YOUR pack: A printed copy of the book with a huggable plush Shyly, PLUS a second copy of the book for you to keep at your place for visits.

- **Pitch in for the kibble bills** and Shyly will acknowledge you on a special Patrons of the Pups page.

- **See your own dog immortalized...** In Part III of our story, the puppies meet up with a few neighbor dogs – and *your* pooch could be one of them!



"I didn't know what the boy was getting out of our discussion. His arms were wrapped around me by now, and he was absorbing my boundless warmth. I'm not bragging. Our people call me Shyly D. Lightful, and I'm sure that's because I capture almost all the light that hits me, reflecting almost none of it back. That's why I'm so hard to see in pictures – but it's also why I'm so easy to hug in person." –Shyly D. Lightful, *The scientific art of getting lost, for dogs.*

Kids of all ages will learn about life, love and leadership – about family – by remembering the style of love our dogs never forget.

Go to Indiegogo to get your kids their copy of "***The scientific art of getting lost, for dogs***" today: <http://igg.me/at/ShylyLost>