

Survivors #2: A Hidden Enemy

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DEDICATION *For Jamie Philip* **SPECIAL THANKS** *With special thanks to Gillian Philip*

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LUCKY; gold-and-white thick-furred male

OLD HUNTER; big and stocky male with a blunt muzzle **LEASHED DOGS**

BELLA; gold-and-white thick-furred female, Lucky's littermate (sheltie-retriever mix)

DAISY; small white-furred female with a brown tail (Westie/Jack Russell mix)

MICKEY; sleek black-and-white Farm Dog (Border Collie)

MARTHA; giant thick-furred black female with a broad head (Newfoundland)

BRUNO; large thick-furred brown male Fight Dog with a hard face (German Shepherd/Chow mix)

SUNSHINE; small female with long white fur (Maltese)

ALFIE; small and stocky blunt-faced dog with mottled brown-and-white fur **WILD PACK (IN ORDER OF RANK)** **ALPHA:**

huge half wolf with gray-and-white fur and yellow eyes **BETA:**

small swift-dog with short gray fur (also known as Sweet) **HUNTERS:**

FIERY; massive brown male with long ears and shaggy fur

SNAP; small female with tan-and-white fur

MULCH; black long-haired male with long ears

SPRING; tan female hunt-dog with black patches **PATROLDOGS:**

MOON; black-and-white female Farm Dog (mother to Squirm, a male black-and-white pup; Nose, a female black pup; and Fuzz, a male black-and-white pup)

DART; lean brown-and-white female chase-dog

TWITCH; tan chase-dog with black patches and a lame foot **OMEGA:**

small, black, oddly-shaped dog with tiny ears and a wrinkled face (also known as Whine)

PROLOGUE *Yap pawed excitedly after a shiny green beetle. You won't defeat me, bug!* he thought. There was nowhere for his prey to hide now. He was Yap the Hunter, Yap the Swift, Yap the Brave! Fierce warrior of Lightning and the Sky-Dogs! *I'm coming for you. . . .* He was pawing at the wriggling critter, using his best scary barks to let the bug know it was doomed, when he heard an eerie howl. Fur prickled on the back of Yap's neck, and he cocked his head, a shiver running through him. *A dog? Is it another dog?* The beetle had vanished under the white fence, but Yap no longer cared. Getting away from the yard-boundary had suddenly become much more important than hunting. Tumbling back clumsily, he bounded across the grass and into the shed, where the warmth and smells were comforting and familiar. His littermates greeted his

return with a wild chorus of yipping, and he squeezed in among them beneath his mother's belly. At last their nuzzling and licking calmed his thumping heart, and he felt his courage creeping back. "What was that noise?" he whimpered. "Did you hear it? Did you?" "Yes! Yes!" "We heard it!" "A scary dog!" "Now, now, little ones." Mother-Dog licked their faces fondly. "That wasn't a dog. That was a wolf, and he won't come here." *Wolf*. The word sent a new tremor of fear through Yap's body, and he felt the same nervous prickling in the skin of his brothers and sisters. It did not sound like a nice word. It sounded like a word to be afraid of. . . . There was amusement in Mother-Dog's soft voice as she continued. "There's no need to worry. Wolves are not so very different from us, you know. They have four legs, and fur, and teeth. They're fast and strong and fierce, but they're wild and cunning and crafty too." "I bet I could outsmart a wolf!" announced Squeak. "I certainly hope not!" said Mother-Dog. "That's not how dogs should behave. Dogs are clever, but we're not devious. We are noble and honorable. You pups must always remember that." "When it howled," said Snip timidly, "it sounded a bit like a dog." "Wolves and dogs are connected, Snip, and that connection goes back a long, long time. But that does not mean they are to be trusted. If you ever see a wolf, keep your distance. Run away if you have to." "Why?" asked Yap, his head cocked in confusion. "Because a wolf will sink his teeth into your flesh the moment your back is turned. Never get close to a wolf. Nuzzle did, and she regretted it. Don't you remember the story? Nuzzle was always much too curious for her own good. She followed the wolves when she heard them howling, because she was brave as well as inquisitive." "I'm brave too!" interrupted Squeak. "There's brave and there's foolish, Squeak! The Wild Wolf-Pack caught and trapped Nuzzle beneath the First Pine, and their leader, Greatfang, would have killed her for spying on them. But Nuzzle was Lightning's grandpup, and even though Lightning had gone to live with the Sky-Dogs by then, he still watched over his kin. When he saw Nuzzle in danger, he leaped to earth and set fire to the First Pine and Greatfang both! The Wild Wolf-Pack fled in terror, and that's the only reason Nuzzle grew up to be the fierce Warrior-Dog Wildfire. The rest of us cannot rely on Lightning to come and save us, so we must learn from Nuzzle's mistakes." Distantly the howling echoed again, and the pups cuddled even closer together as their Mother-Dog pricked her ears to listen. Yap felt himself relax. Mother-Dog's flank was so warm, and her heart beat a comforting *thump-thump* against his ear. She would protect them all. Yap squirmed closer beneath her foreleg. "Even if the wolf came, we'd be all right, wouldn't we?" Squeak gave a scornful yip. "Don't be silly, Yap!" she said. "You heard what Mother said; the wolf can't get us here!" "You're right." Amusement rumbled in the Mother-Dog's throat. "The wolf would never come here. You're all safe, so it's time you went to sleep." Yap tucked his nose under his paw, cozy and comforted, but he couldn't help twitching an ear at the chilling wail of the wolf as it faded into the distance. *I'm going to be smart*, he thought. *Not like Nuzzle.*

I'm going to stay away from wolves. Safe and warm, nestled in the Pup Pack: This was how life should be. Far from the Wild, and far from wolves, in the protective huddle of his family. . . .

CHAPTER ONE "Our territory! Ours!" Birds took off with an alarmed clatter and screech from the treetops, and disturbed leaves fluttered down around Lucky's paws. He stood stiff and trembling, gazing back the way he'd come. That was his Pack in the valley; no, not his Pack, but his *friends*. And those ferocious barks told him one thing: They were in terrible danger. Terrible danger he was not there to help them fight. Lucky glanced around, torn. Since just after sunup, when he'd left his friends to fend for themselves, he had traveled a long way. He could make out the misty silhouette of the far hills in the distance, and now that he was a good way from the valley he was able to look down on almost the entire forest. Indeed, he'd nearly climbed clear of the trees, and close in front of him was the ridge he'd been heading for. The sight of it had been spurring him on, making his legs run faster

and faster; but now he stood as still as a tree. His friends needed him. Heart pounding, Lucky bolted back the way he'd come. *Forest-Dog! Don't let them come to any harm! Let me get there in time.* . . . He raced toward the valley, leaping over fallen branches and scattering leaves. He should have trusted his instincts. Deep down he'd known that he was not supposed to leave the Pack. But he had trotted away like a Lone Dog, and now his friends were vulnerable. *Who will protect them if I don't?* He could still hear the howls of anger, dog voices that he didn't recognize mingled with the barks of his litter-sister and the rest of the Leashed Dogs. *Our land, our water! Get out! Everyone together! Stay with me!* Lucky's powerful hind legs brought him quickly to the crest of a small hill and he scabbled to a halt before his momentum could take him plunging down. *Wait, Lucky . . . find out the lay of the land before you dash into trouble.* Lucky's keen gaze searched the valley below. It opened out into broad and lush meadows beyond the thick woods. It had seemed ideal for the Leashed Dogs. There were places for Mickey to hunt and for Martha to swim, plenty of shelter for Sunshine and Alfie and Daisy, wide ranges for Bruno and Bella to explore. He should have known that other dogs would have had the same idea. Of course another Pack had gotten to the valley before them, and now those dogs were defending their territory. In the distance, silver light glinted on a smooth expanse of water; farther off and next to the forest's edge ran the river where he'd last seen the Leashed Dogs. Lucky bounded down the hill, heading toward it. The hostile Pack's growls and barks made Lucky's fur prickle with anger and fear. But he knew if he burst out from the forest in broad daylight he'd be seen at once, so he made himself go carefully. Something had changed about the river since he'd left his friends there. *A strangeness*, Lucky thought. And then he remembered the streams and pools close to the destroyed city. They had the same scent of danger that Lucky was picking up now. Horrified, Lucky stopped and stared. There was a nasty green slick on the surface of the water. This was supposed to be a safe haven! The river was supposed to be clean, *pure*; and it had been, or they'd thought so when they found it yesterday. But now, Lucky could see the deadly stain spreading downriver. *I led my friends to poisoned water!* Was there no getting away from the taint of death that the Big Growl had brought? At this end of the river, even the trees and bushes at the water's edge looked half-dead, shriveled and broken as if a giant dog had chewed on them. As he ran across the hillside parallel to the stream, Lucky's heart felt heavy in his chest. If the Big Growl's sickness could infect even this place, there might be nowhere else for the dogs to go. Nowhere they could be safe. *Get out!* A vicious howl split the air, and Lucky heard the panicked yelping of confused dogs and a sharp yip of pain. He raced along and down the hillside, claws skidding on stone. When he broke out of a line of thick scrub, he caught sight of them at last. His friends looked small and vulnerable against the attacking Pack: a wild-looking band of large dogs, stiff-legged and snarling. Now and again, one would spring forward to give a brutal volley of barks. *You've got it coming, Leashed Dogs!* He could hear Bella's voice, too; quieter, more frightened, but still brave: *It's all right, everyone. Stay together. Sunshine, get behind Bruno. Martha, help Daisy.* Skulking low to the ground, crouching in the shadow of a huge boulder, Lucky counted seven dogs in the enemy Pack. Blood surged through his body and he felt a powerful impulse to race right into the battle, but his instincts, learned on the city streets, held him back. He realized with a rush of relief that the fighting had stopped for the moment. The other Pack was just taunting and insulting Bella's Pack; if Lucky raced in now, the situation could become deadly again. The hostile Pack might decide to finish the smaller dogs quickly so they could concentrate on him. Right now a couple of huge dogs were lunging and snapping at little Sunshine and Daisy, not biting to kill but making them flinch away in terror. *Keep them off-balance,* some dog said in a low growl. *Spring, watch your side!* One of the Wild Dogs leaped to her right, heading Sunshine off from escape as the small dog scuttled from behind Bruno toward the shelter of some underbrush. Lucky looked around for the dog that had given the orders, but couldn't see him. Lucky knew that if any of the bigger Leashed Dogs dashed to Sunshine's and Daisy's defense, the rest of the hostile Pack would dart in at their flanks, biting and worrying till the defenders were harried and worn. When it came

to the real fight, to claws and teeth and torn skin, Bella and the others would already be exhausted. He'd seen it before, sneaky but efficient, in the brutal bands of dogs he'd tried to avoid in his city days. He would have to surprise these Wild Dogs, using tactics as cunning and dirty as their own. *Don't just jump in, he told himself. Be as wily as the Forest Dog.* In the shadows, Lucky could get much closer before he pounced, so long as he kept downwind. He dodged through the trees, and as he crept from behind a ridge he caught his first sight of the hostile Pack's leader. Their Alpha dog. Huge and gray-furred, he looked lithe and graceful, yet powerful, too. He wasn't joining the battle, but kept giving his Pack sharp orders. "Keep at their heels! Teach them nobody invades our territory!" He threw his head back and let out a long, snarling howl. Lucky felt prickles of fear in his fur, his stomach clenching with foreboding as he crept forward. *That's no dog. . . .* No wonder the strange Pack's tactics were as cunning as a wolf's. Lucky had never seen one of those distant dog-cousins close up, but from vague glimpses and half-remembered tales he recognized the pale eyes, savage teeth, and shaggy fur. And there was no mistaking that vicious howl; Lucky had heard something like it once, a long time ago. A memory rippled through his body; a memory not of something seen, but something *heard*.

From Erin Hunter, #1 nationally bestselling author of *Warriors*, comes the *New York Times* bestselling second book in the *Survivors* series. Praised by *Kirkus Reviews* as "perfectly crafted"; in a starred review, *A Hidden Enemy* is an action-packed adventure that will thrill fans of *Spirit Animals* and *Wings of Fire*.

After discovering a forest filled with prey and fresh water, Lucky and the Leashed Dogs are sure that they have found their new home. But a fierce pack of Wild Dogs has laid claim to the land and their menacing Alpha won't allow other dogs to settle there. Now Lucky finds himself forced to go behind enemy lines; and to decide which dogs will ultimately be his true allies.

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