

Emma Lewis-Galić ('08): The Dogs of London – a journey



After a decade working at the EBRD, Emma Lewis- Galić, formerly part of Agribusiness and Loan Syndications teams, now focuses on her passions: writing and dogs. Her first novel, Dogs of London, was published in November 2021 and her second will be coming out later this year. Lori Coretchi talked to her to find out more.

Why did you choose this particular subject and what prompted you to write the book?

It was a no-brainer, to be honest. I adore dogs and could write about them all day! I was going through a difficult period trying to rehabilitate our rescued Serbian dog into "normal life" – he was dog-reactive and had crippling separation anxiety - and the process of writing the book seemed to help somehow. It was simultaneously a nostalgic look back at my carefree dog-walking days before him in both Kensington Gardens and Belgrade and a homage to his unapologetically "wild" personality – a celebration of his stubborn, intractable force of character.

What message are you aiming to put across in Dogs of London?

That dogs are characters in their own right, who have their own, very particular, inherent personalities, natures and characters, and that, just like people, they are profoundly and sometimes irreversibly affected by their past experiences and their treatment by others.

Tell us about the charities you are supporting with the proceeds from the book and why this is important to you.

I wanted to support charities that do more than just rescue and rehome dogs and to help dogs globally. All of the proceeds from Dogs of London go to the following charities:

Serbia's Forgotten Paws (Serbia) (<https://www.serbias-forgotten-paws.com>) works with pounds to improve shelter conditions, runs shelters and neutering campaigns, and implements catch/neuter/release programmes for street dogs.

Galgos del Sol (Spain) (<https://www.galgosdelsol.org/about-gds>) works with local schools to educate people on caring for dogs, conducts neutering programmes and raises awareness about the plight of the Galgos.

The Wild at Heart Foundation (London based, but runs projects globally) runs neutering programmes and educational work, as well as awareness-building on many fronts (www.wildatheartfoundation.org).

Your writing seems to be a departure from your days at the EBRD. Could you tell us when you started working at the EBRD and which team you joined?

I got my first temp job in the HR department of the EBRD in 1999 when I first moved to London – so long ago that it coincided with getting my first mobile phone!

Even though Headquarters was an enormous building, it quickly felt familiar. I was happy, so I stayed – for almost 10 years. After the temping job, I soon took up a permanent position as a secretary in Agribusiness, which was a lovely, friendly department, one of the largest in the Bank at the time. It was there that I met my now husband, who was a banker on the same team. It must have been fate!

I later moved to Syndications - a smaller team, but also with some lovely people - and was lucky enough to be given the chance to make the transition from support staff to professional. With this move came my first Blackberry, which my mentor Anna insisted was a fundamental and absolutely necessary tool. She was clearly way more progressive than me, as I just remember thinking, "Why on earth would I need to look at my emails out of hours?!" That seems really strange to say in 2022, doesn't it? But the culture of being relentlessly glued to a phone and in constant contact hadn't fully taken off at that point.

It was exciting and energising to be working in the City of London, which was full of smart and dynamic people and oozed energy, but I felt lucky to have landed at the EBRD, in particular, as it was such an interesting, multinational environment.

What are the most memorable moments from your time at the EBRD?

Well, the most obvious one was meeting and falling for my now husband, Saša (Galić)! What I remember most fondly is the camaraderie of working in Agribusiness with such an interesting, eclectic, varied group of individuals. It was a really fun time. Breakfasts in the canteen, catching up with colleagues from other departments in the coffee bar, long lunches with the 'Agrisecs' girls ... We shared in each other's everyday lives, made strong friendships and learned life lessons. Work for me was pretty much just a backdrop to life back then, to be honest. Dear me, that makes it sound like I didn't work hard; I don't mean it like that!

Receiving the Freedom of the City of London was another highlight. My father was given the award in the 1960s when he worked as a civil engineer in the City of London and, as his daughter, I was able to apply for it too. It's mainly a ceremonial honour these days, though it used to be an essential requirement for all who wished to trade or do business within the Square Mile. Honorary Freedom of the City of London is typically awarded to people who have accomplished outstanding things in their field. Nelson Mandela and Stephen Hawking are honorary Freemen of the City, for example.



Is there one person that sticks in your mind from that period?

Victoria Zinchuk! She was ambitious, smart, hard-working and striking. I used to be in awe of her dress sense – she wore killer heels with the swishiest, smartest trousers! And she had a charming accent. Even when she was under pressure, she was unfailingly lovely and genuinely warm. Still is. She's now head of EBRD's Zagreb Resident Office and we still see her socially. Despite being incredibly high achieving, she always remains down to earth, kind and approachable. Also, Noreen Doyle (First Vice President at the time). When she got into the lift, the atmosphere changed – you certainly stood a little straighter! She was extremely well respected. The Bank is full of formidable, strong, intelligent women of all types and that's a great, great environment to work in.

So, could you tell us how you made the transition from corporate life to becoming a writer?

I stopped commuting from West London to the City every day and started travelling more with Saša, who is originally from Sarajevo. I have lived on and off in Zagreb, Belgrade and Istria (in Croatia) since then and am pretty fluent in Bosnian/Serbian/Croatian. I stopped working a regular job and explored my creative side, dabbling in streetstyle photography and blogging about style.

My photographs - taken at events like London Fashion Week and Glastonbury - have appeared in publications such as Grazia, Elle Serbia and the New York Times online.

No longer working regular hours meant that we could finally get a dog, Stevie, which made us so happy, as we are both enormous dog lovers!

About a year after, we took in Jackson, a former kill-shelter street dog from Serbia. His arrival and wayward behaviour was what really kicked off my passion for learning about dog behaviour and training.



At some point, I started writing in earnest. I took some creative writing courses - I can highly recommend The Guardian's masterclasses. I'd written off and on for years and was enjoying the blogging, but there seemed little purpose to it, really; it felt a bit frivolous. Styling, clothes, photography will always be interests for me, but I wouldn't call them passions. So I decided it was time to finally finish writing a proper book. It's actually incredibly hard to get a book over the line, with the multiple (very necessary) edits, proofreading, cover design, typesetting and so on. To be honest, if you're going to self-publish and you don't want to end up with a product of dubious quality, you have to be both disciplined and meticulous. Like everything else, it's 5% inspiration and 95% hard graft and persistence!

Are you going to stick with writing only about dogs?

No! I'm well along into my second book. It's again set in London, but this time it only has one (and a very minor) dog character in it.

Thinking about it, I ought to use the EBRD as the inspiration for a book one day! It was packed full of so many different, colourful characters – I am sure it's the same now - a microcosm of humanity. Working with such a wide range of personalities, observing their various motivations and moral compasses taught me a great deal about human nature, as much as reading any Shakespearean play.

Where can we find you online?

I set up my Nomad Thief (www.nomadthief.com) (streetstyle photographer and stylist) website several years ago when I was blogging, but that's all archived. It's now Nomad Thief Dog Trainer, ready for when I start working as a trainer/behaviourist. For that I need more qualifications and a lot more experience, though. I'm in no particular rush. I'm doing a three-year canine science behaviourist course that covers things like genetics, evolution, neurobiology, endocrinology, sociology, cognition and emotion, which I'm really enjoying. Anything related to dogs fascinates me, to be fair.

How would you sum up your life now and your previous life at the EBRD?

I'm fortunate in that my time is pretty much my own these days and I spend it mostly hanging out with my dogs and husband, as well as studying, writing, meditating and dreaming up creative projects. We live between Istria in Croatia, London and Aix-en-Provence, where we have just bought a house on the edge of a beautiful national park. With time, we intend to have a whole pack of rescue dogs and probably other animals too, like chickens and goats.

I should have realised from the age of 10 that I was destined to become a dog trainer/behaviourist and a writer. I wasted a long time getting to this point, but that's life, I'll crack it before I'm 50! And I loved my time at the EBRD – it was a school of life and, of course, I met my brilliant, lovely, charismatic and inimitable husband there. Where else, after all, would a girl from Wales and boy from Bosnia get to meet?



More details:

Buy the book on Amazon here: Dogs of London (https://www.amazon.co.uk/Dogs-London-Emma-Lewis-Galic/dp/1399912534/ref=sr_1_1?

[crid=4WUH9AHXSEKN&keywords=dogs+of+london&qid=1654076640&prefix=dogs+of+london%2Caps%2C139&sr=8-1](https://www.amazon.co.uk/Dogs-London-Emma-Lewis-Galic/dp/1399912534/ref=sr_1_1?crid=4WUH9AHXSEKN&keywords=dogs+of+london&qid=1654076640&prefix=dogs+of+london%2Caps%2C139&sr=8-1))

Website: Nomad Thief (www.nomadthief.com)

Instagram: @nomadthiefdogtrainer and @dogsoflondonbook

Dogs of London is a fictional novel for adults intertwining loosely the various stories of a group of urban-living dogs and their Londoner humans. The book is an uplifting, heartfelt, insightful, apolitical romp around London and a soothing respite from the fraught, conflict-ridden world we live in. It is set in a time pre Covid and the lockdown surge in dog-owning and is an ode to dogs everywhere - their resilience, their optimism and their ability to build bridges between people of all ages and demographics.

Grey, desperate to leave his heartless owner, runs away, only to end up in a worse predicament. Rhett, haunted by his past, defies convention by living a life aloof from humans. Anxious, traumatised Beagle slowly gains in confidence thanks to his new friendship pack. Rolf, Piper, Kip and Leo breeze through life. Nero's fate hangs in the balance. Sarah is dying. And their humans are a whole other story.

'An adorable book, beautifully drawn and with real psychological depth, full of great characters both two and four-legged.'
Neil Norman, playwright and critic

'A capital adventure through doggy eyes. Touching and thought provoking.'
Kate Spicer, journalist and writer

'A truly heart-warming read.'
Damian Dibben, author of *Tomorrow* and *The Colour Storm*

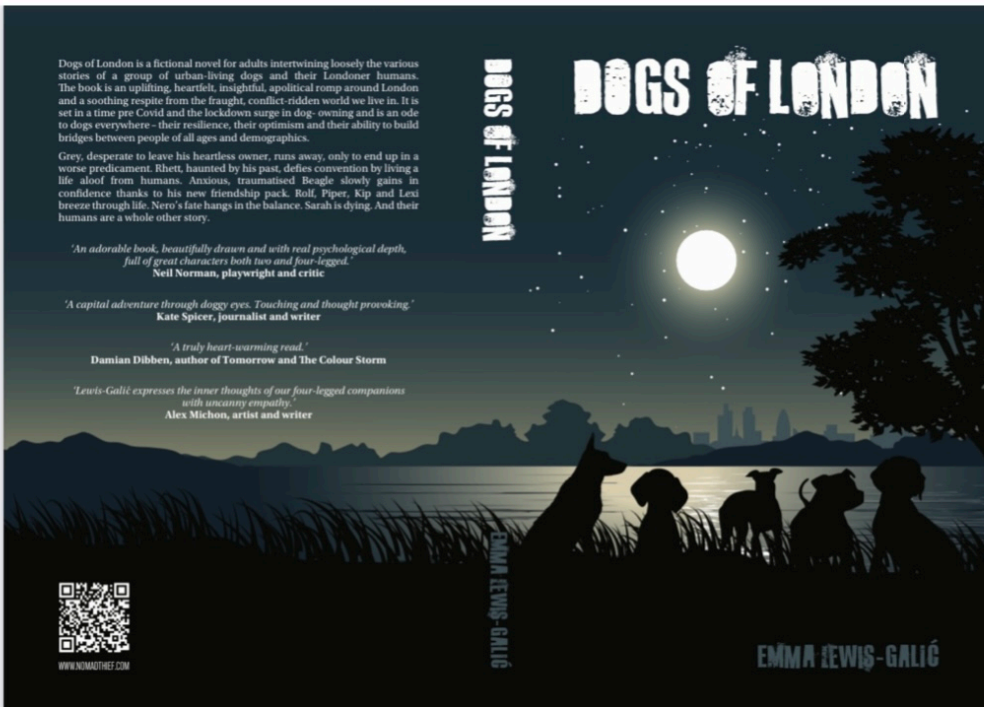
'Lewis-Gallie expresses the inner thoughts of our four-legged companions with uncanny empathy.'
Alex Michon, artist and writer



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