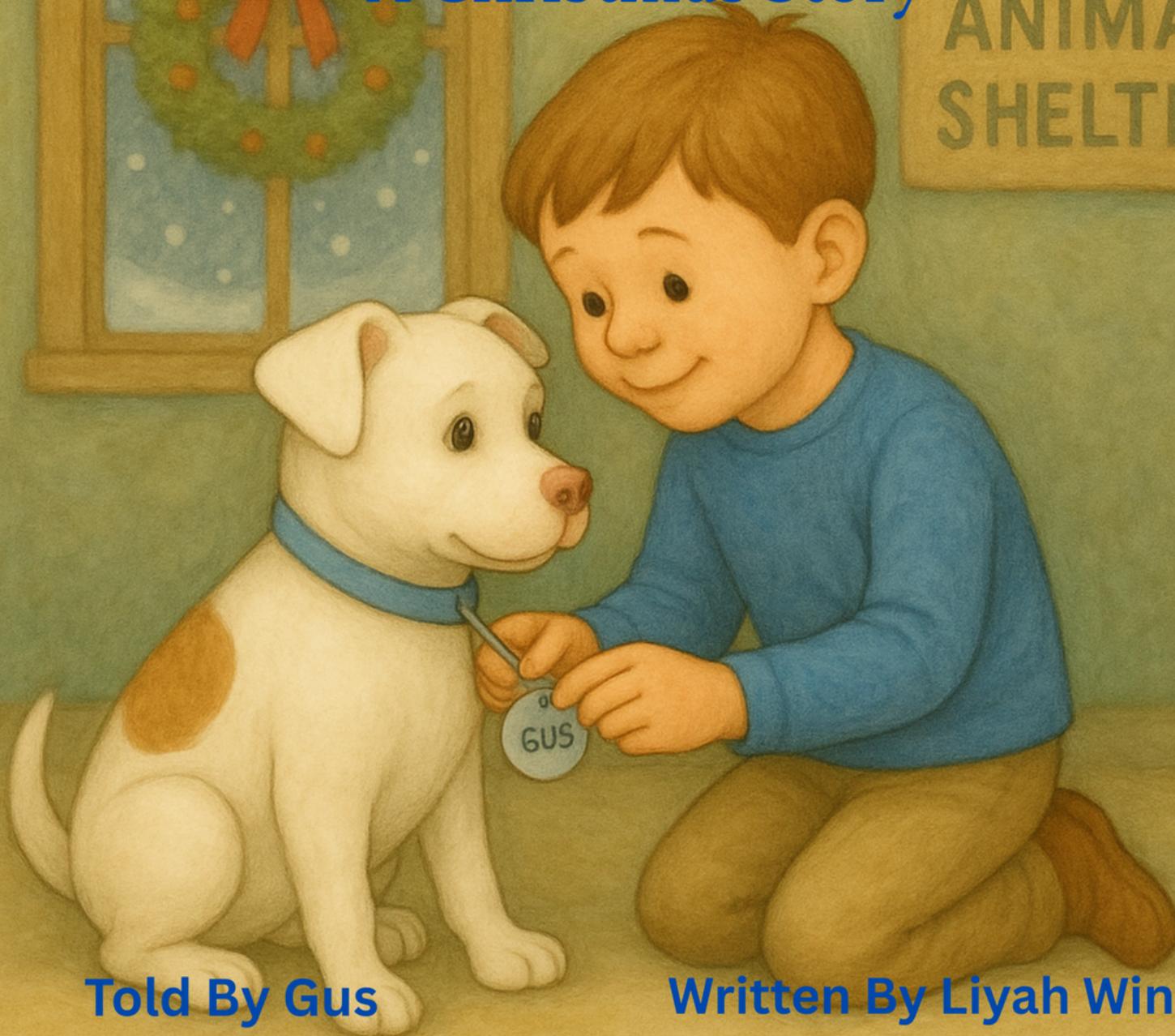


# Puppy Love

A Christmas Story

ANIMAL  
SHELTER



Told By Gus

Written By Liyah Winans

# Puppy Love

*A Christmas Story*

# Puppy Love: A Christmas Story

*Tails of Belonging Series*

Told by Gus

Written by Liyah Winans

*Illustrations created by Liyah Winans  
with the help of advanced digital art technology*

Furever Family Press

2025

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*Text and illustrations by Liyah Winans*  
*Illustrations created with the help of advanced digital art technology*

*Published by Furever Family Press*  
*This is a Tails of Belonging Series book*

Printed in the United States of America  
First Edition



*For every animal who ever waited to be loved,  
and for the hearts who chose them and stayed.*



*I was born in the fall, when the leaves were turning red and gold.*

*The world was warm and new.*

*I was the smallest of six, tucked close beside my mother.*

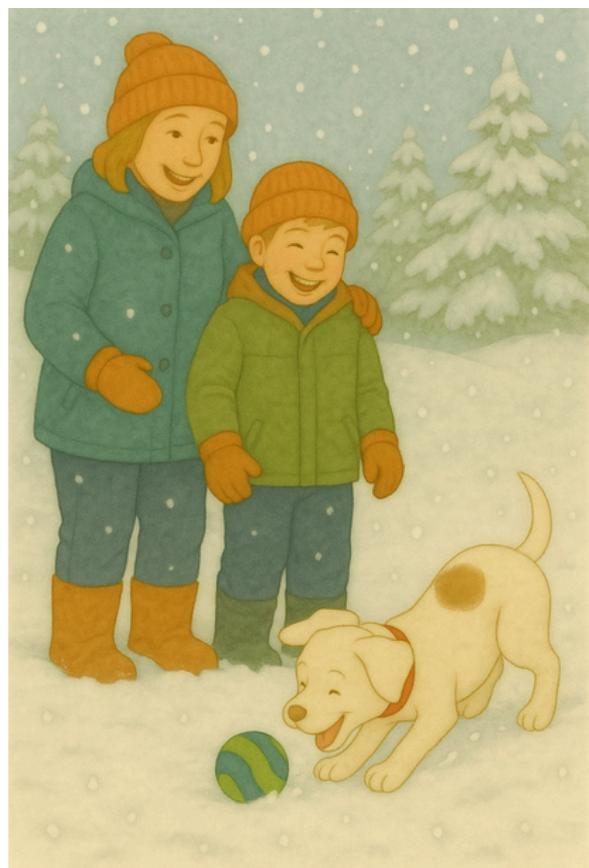
*They called me Gus, though I didn't know my name yet, only the  
sound of heartbeats and home.*



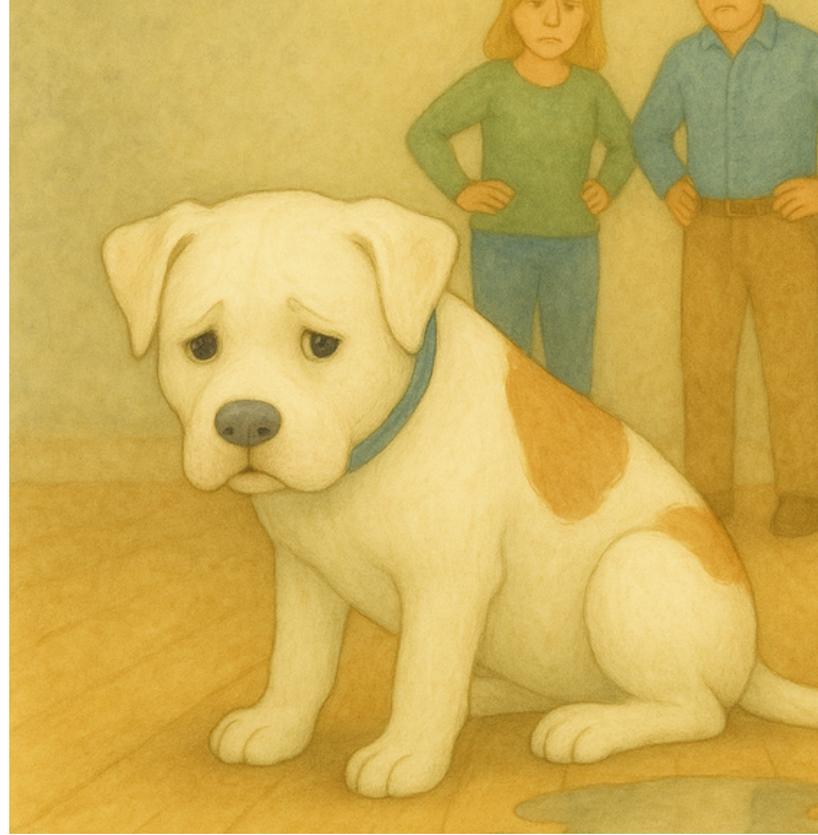
*In December, people came to visit.  
A mother, a father, and two boys with bright, shining eyes.  
“He makes the perfect Christmas surprise,” they whispered.  
They tied a soft red ribbon around my neck  
and carried me away.  
It was puppy love.*



*For a while, everything was wonderful.  
They laughed when I tripped over my own paws.  
They smiled when I curled into their laps, warm and trusting.  
I thought I would stay forever.*



*But puppies grow.  
I chewed slippers. I chased socks. I spilled my water bowl.  
The boy stopped playing with me as much.  
The parents sighed more than they smiled.  
One morning they said, “We didn’t know it would be this hard.”*



*They took me to a place with high fences and kind hands.*

*The car door shut.*

*I waited for it to open again.*

*It didn't.*

*A gentle hand stroked my fur and said,  
"It's okay, Gus. Someone new will come."*





ANIMAL  
SHELTER

ANIMAL  
SHELTER  
STAFF

*Days passed. Then weeks. Then seasons.*

*Winter melted into spring.*

*Spring blossomed into summer.*

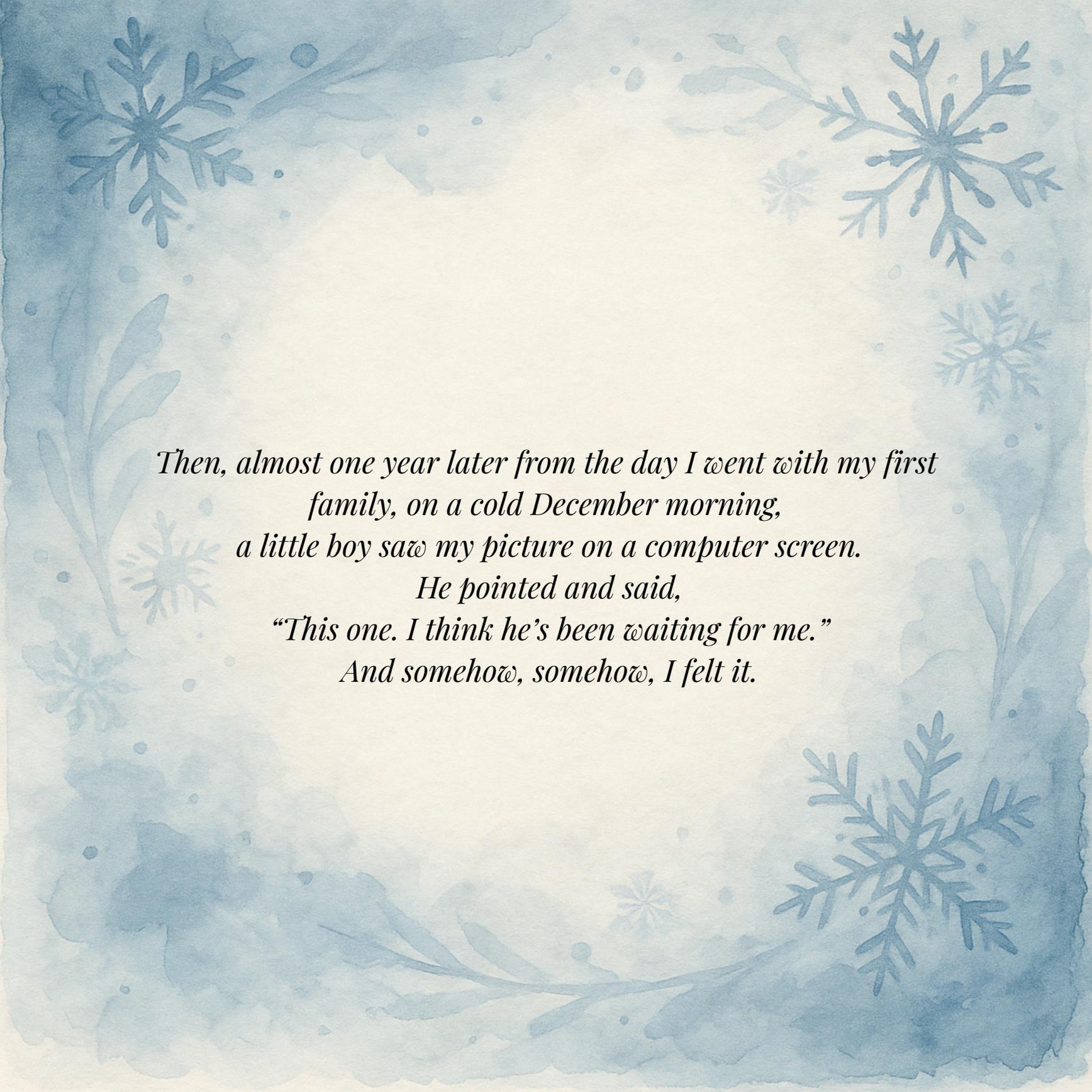
*Summer faded into fall.*

*And still, I waited.*



*People walked past my kennel.  
They chose the tiny dogs, the fluffy ones, the ones with bows and  
wagging pink tongues.  
But I was bigger now.  
Not new. Not a surprise.  
Some looked at me and smiled, but continued to walk on by.*





*Then, almost one year later from the day I went with my first  
family, on a cold December morning,  
a little boy saw my picture on a computer screen.*

*He pointed and said,  
“This one. I think he’s been waiting for me.”  
And somehow, somehow, I felt it.*



*They came the next day.  
The boy knelt beside me.  
“Hi, Gus,” he whispered, like he already knew me.  
He threw a ball across the shelter yard.  
I chased it.  
He laughed, really laughed.  
My tail wouldn’t stop.*



*They came again.*

*We walked the path behind the shelter, through quiet woods dusted  
with snow.*

*I sniffed every tree and looked back to make sure he was still there.*

*He always was.*



*Then one day, he came with a collar and a shiny silver tag that  
said GUS.*

*“Are you ready to come home?” he asked.*

*Home.*

*Such a small word for something so big.*



*His house smelled like cinnamon and pine.  
A Christmas tree sparkled in the window.  
Beside the boy's stocking hung another one, mine.  
With a single letter stitched in gold thread: G.*



*No ribbons.*

*No box.*

*No surprise.*

*Just a family who saw me, not for a season,  
but for always.*



*That night, I curled beside the tree, the boy beside me in his  
pajamas.*

*Snow drifted past the window.*

*The fire crackled softly.*

*I felt his hand rest on my back.*

*And I knew some things were worth waiting for.*

*Some loves last forever.*

*Real love.*



*A note from Gus:*

*I may walk on four paws, but my heart feels things just like yours  
does.*

*I feel lonely when I'm left behind.*

*I feel joy when someone comes back.*

*I don't understand presents or holidays; I only understand love  
that stays.*

*Pets like me aren't toys or surprises.*

*We need food, messy walks, warm places to sleep, and someone  
patient while we learn.*

*We need time. And care. And people who keep their promises, even  
after the ribbons and lights are gone.*

*If your home and heart are ready, adopting an animal can be  
something beautiful.*

*Not just puppy love, but forever love.*

*Love always,*

*Gus*



## *Thoughts from the Author*

*Gus's first owners weren't bad people, in fact, they were really good people. They simply hadn't thought through what raising a dog, or any animal, truly requires. Before they knew it, Gus had become more than they planned for, not because he was bad, but because he was a puppy. And puppies, like dogs of any age, need time to learn, love to learn, and patience while they learn. Growing is all about learning, whether you have four legs or two.*

*Gus's first family did the kindest thing they could do for him: they gave him a second chance.*

*There are many reasons animals end up in shelters. Some are out of the owner's control, perhaps someone becomes sick or has to move, and truly has no choice. But sometimes, there are reasons that can be avoided, and Gus's first family is an example of that. Puppies are so cute, and the excitement of bringing one home can lead people to make a quick decision. But animals, puppies, older dogs, or any pet, should never be gotten on a whim. It's important to think honestly about what caring for one really means in both time and money.*

*Let's do our best to give them their best chance.*

*To Gus's former family, our family thanks you for being kind enough to give him that second chance when you realized you couldn't provide what he needed.*

*Because as it turns out, he was exactly what we needed.*

*With love,  
Liyah Winans*

## *Thinking of Adopting?*

*Bringing home a pet, young or old, is a commitment, but it's also a joy like no other. Take time to consider what's best for your family and for the animal you welcome into your life. The best gift we can give them is a home filled with patience, understanding, and love. If you're welcoming a new animal into your home, remember to be patient as they settle in. Even if your family is excited and ready to give all the love in the world, your new pet may not understand right away that they are safe. They may not know what "home" means yet.*

*It takes time to trust.*

*It takes time to love.*

*And it takes time to be loved.*

*When a well-meaning family brings home a Christmas puppy, they soon discover that love takes more than good intentions.*

*Now Gus is waiting in the shelter, still believing that somewhere, a forever family is waiting for him too. Told through a puppy's hopeful eyes, *Puppy Love: A Christmas Story* celebrates second chances, patient hearts, and the joy of finding where you truly belong.*

