

The Song of Lewis Carmichael



SOFIE LAGUNA

illustrated by MARC MCBRIDE

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Lewis
Carmichael



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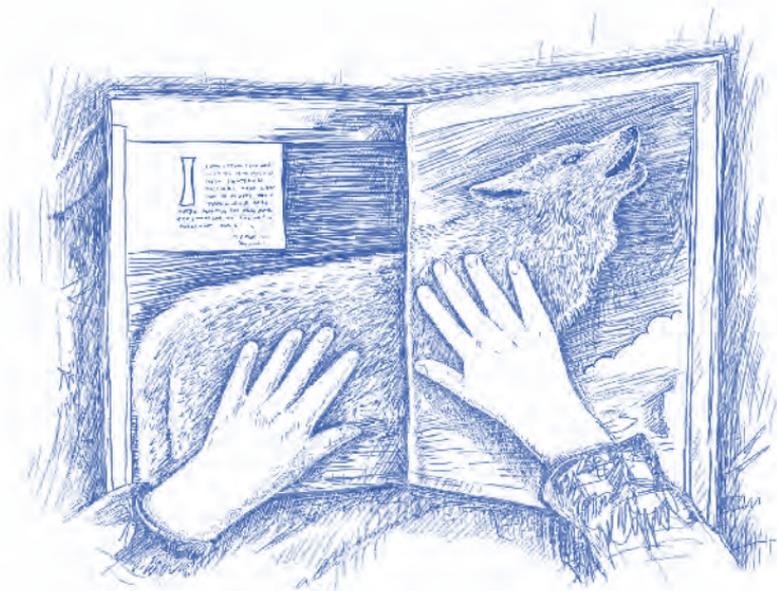
For Sonny and Milo



Chapter One



MATTHEW ZAJAC lay in his bed in his room at the top of the stairs. He was surrounded by library books: *Magnetic North*, *Into the Ice*, *Journey to the Farthest North*, and *Animals of the Arctic*. He opened *Animals of the Arctic* at a double-page spread of the Arctic wolf. The white wolf was cut in half by the crease between the pages. Matthew smoothed his hands down over the animal's golden eyes, its rough



fur. *The Arctic wolf lives in the boreal forests, Matthew read. As the frozen ground prevents the Arctic wolf from digging a den, it typically makes its home in a cave.*

He glanced up through the window above his bed, at the starless sky outside. The moon was full, and he could see rows of triangular rooftops belonging to the many other houses just like his. In the night skies of the Arctic, you could see

the northern lights – clouds of pink and green and purple light that had come all the way from the sun, spiralling like the patterns on a shell. Matthew rolled onto his side and opened *Magnetic North*. When he read about the Arctic, he entered another world.

He turned to a picture of wide grassy plains at the foot of a range of snow-capped mountains. The picture was labelled *Arctic tundra in the summertime*. Matthew ran his fingers over the words. *Arctic winters are long and cold, while summers are short and cool. The average Arctic winter is minus thirty-four degrees.*

He lay back on his pillow. The northernmost point on the Earth was the North Pole – a place separate from the grassy plains, the mountains and the forests of the Arctic. The North Pole was a land made only of ice, which floated on the Arctic sea. Water that you could walk on! A land that never stopped moving!

Matthew put down his books and switched off his reading lamp. Downstairs, he could hear his parents talking about him.

It's because you let Matthew... You don't make him...

But I have tried to make him... If there was some way, don't you think I'd find it?

Their anxious voices rose and fell in waves. How many nights had he fallen asleep to the sound?

Matthew squeezed his eyes shut tight and saw the Arctic tundra filled with poppies and cotton grass and bearberries. He watched as the summer skies darkened and the snows began to fall, covering the trees of the boreal forests, the tall and jagged mountains.

When winter was at its coldest, minus forty degrees in the North Pole, he would sleep.



He was woken that night by tapping at the window. Matthew rubbed his eyes and sat up in his bed. *Tap*



tap tap. He wiped the foggy glass with his hand and saw a bird on the ledge outside. A black bird. A crow.

What was a bird doing here in the middle of the night? *Tap tap tap.* The bird was tapping at the glass with its beak. Did it want to come inside? Was it cold? Matthew opened the window.

'At last!' the bird said.

Matthew shook his head. Was he dreaming?

The bird said, 'I didn't think you were ever going to open the window.'

Matthew couldn't speak. What was happening?

'Matthew?'

'Wh, wh...' Was he really trying to talk to a bird?

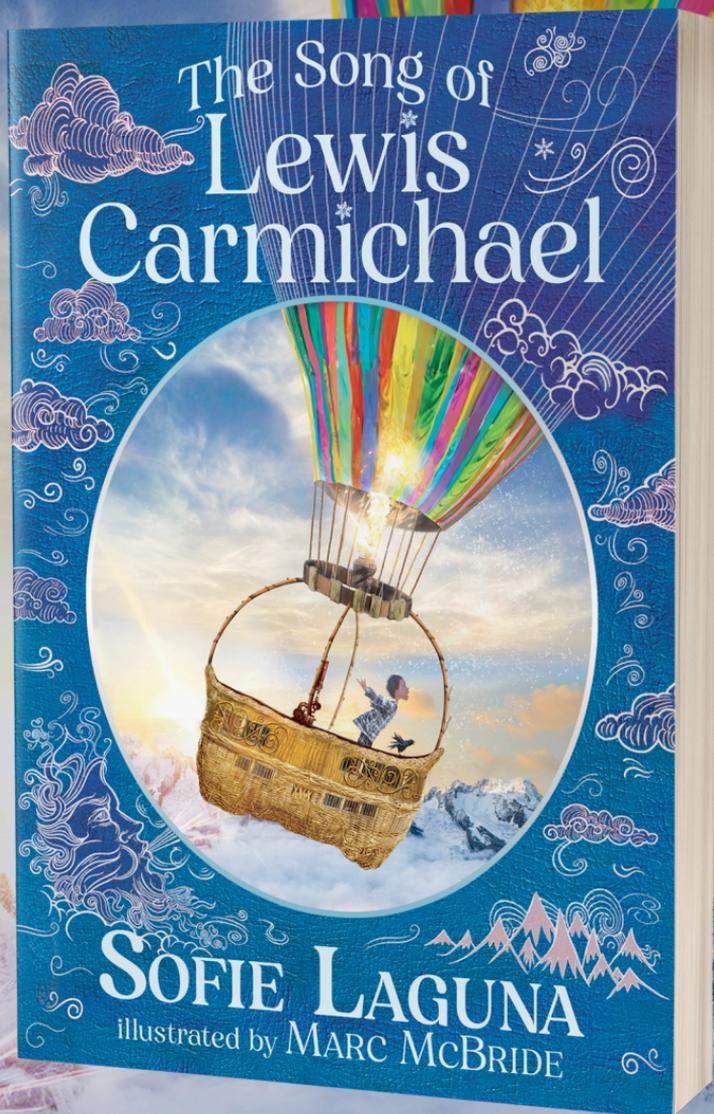
'I am Lewis. Lewis Carmichael,' said the bird.

'L...Lewis?'

'We met today. You shared your cake with me. You remember me, don't you?'

Matthew did remember. The bird from the park. The bird with the broken wing.

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