

Mitzvah, the Mutt

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Summary: A mutt comes to live with a Jewish family and learns, from a dog's perspective, what it means to celebrate Shabbat, Hanukkah, and Passover.

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For all my friends and family who love dogs,
especially to my grandchildren, Hayden
and Derek, who have four dogs, Cleo, Zoey,
Emmy, and Ruby, and finally to Gretchen,
the little rescue dog who inspired me to
create the stories of Mitzvah, the Mut.

—S.R.

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At the Pet Store

I was sitting in a cage outside Ruben's Pet Shop. The sign on the cage said, *Free to a good home*. I enjoyed watching all the activity on the noisy street: car horns honking, children laughing, people passing by on their way to work. Some stopped to look at me in the cage and chuckled. I've always been able to make people laugh or smile. I like to see them happy.

Last night Mr. Ruben told me, "Mutt," that's what he calls me, "the new apartment

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I'm moving to doesn't allow animals so I have to find you a new home." I tried to assure him that I wasn't an animal. Animals are creatures in the zoo. I'm a dog. He didn't seem to understand me. That's the problem with people. They don't always understand us dogs because we communicate through our actions and an occasional bark. Dogs, on the other hand, understand most human words but there are a few I still can't figure out. Sometimes people look at me and say, "Woof-woof" or "Bow-wow" or "Ruf-ruf." I have no idea what they're talking about.

I like living with Mr. Ruben, who owns the pet shop. I spend most days at home while he goes to work. At night, he prepares my favorite food, hamburgers. He calls them burgers. He often talks to me about his day at the pet shop. He told me he sells "fancy-schmantsy"

At the Pet Store

dogs. Those dogs have special papers that prove what kind of dog they are. Me, I don't need papers. Everyone seems to know I'm a mutt. That's because mutts are a special breed of dog. Each one of us is unique. There are no two mutts alike.

I'm a little dog with short brown hair. My ears are small and floppy. One hangs down a little while the other stands up. I have large brown eyes, a long nose, a crooked mouth and a tail that never stops wagging. I must have a good sense of humor because when Mr. Ruben takes me for a walk I always hear people say, "Look at that dog! He's so funny!" Then they roar with laughter.

This morning I went to work with Mr. Ruben. He scratched me behind my ears, then gently picked me up and put me inside the cage. He carefully wrote the sign and hung it

At the Pet Store

on the door of the cage. I guess he didn't want to sell me because, unlike the fancy-schmantsy dogs, I must be priceless. As some people passed by, they looked at me. A few said that silly word, "Woof-woof." I twisted my mouth into a lopsided grin. That made some of them smile and remark, "What a goofy dog!" I was actually enjoying myself, even though no one offered to take me home. I guess there are many people who feel they cannot provide the good home a dog like me deserves.