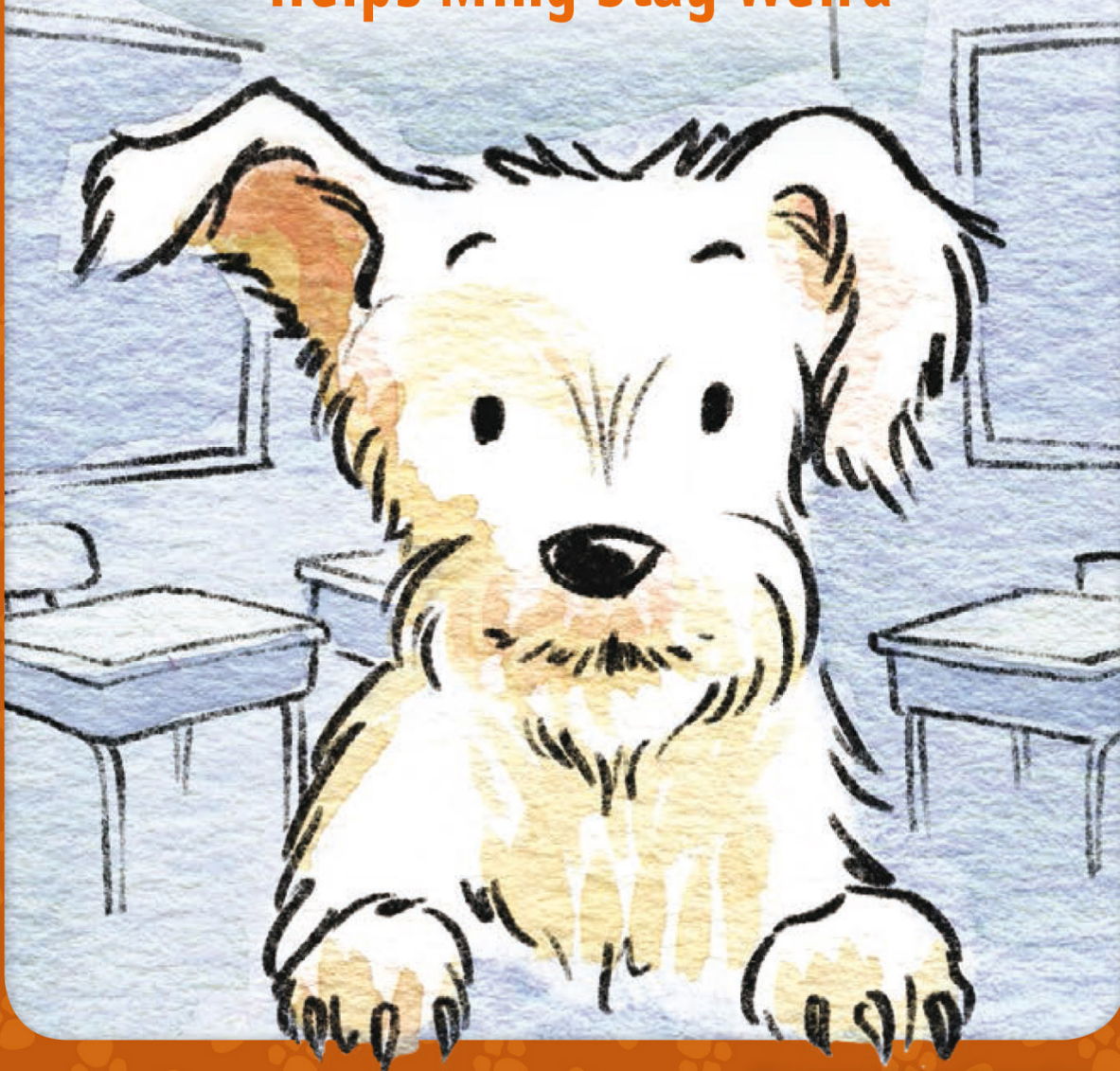


**HELPER HOUNDS™**

# King Tut

**Helps Ming Stay Weird**



Caryn Rivadeneira



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## **CHAPTER 1**

All around us, people cheered.

Above us, flags swayed, and the bright sun streamed through the skylights. It felt like we were in a parade. But we weren't. We were just walking—well, trotting really—through the airport terminal. The same as we do every time we get back from a Helper Hounds trip.

But this time, things felt different. The mood of the crowd was different. People were always happy to see us—in our bright red Helper Hounds vests—trotting in single file. But today's cheers were a mix of happiness and sadness. Which made sense. Most of the work the

Helper Hounds do is a mix of happiness and sadness too.

The cheers had started when a man ran past us. He was late for his flight. But when he caught a glimpse of Sparky's bouncing fur, swishing tail, and Helper Hounds vest, the man stopped, nodded, and began to clap.

The cheers grew louder as Robot, Penny, Noodle, Oscar, and I followed Sparky's lead into the bright terminal hallway. The crowd split to make room for us. People wiped tears and said, "Thank you, Helper Hounds!" or they whistled.

A few little kids and their parents asked if they could pet us.

So we stopped for a moment and let ourselves get a good petting. Eloise knelt down and picked me up. I am the littlest Helper Hound. It's easy for me to get lost in the mix—even though I am the weirdest looking. At least, that's what everyone tells me.



Anyway, while I was getting a terrific ear scratch from a tiny boy with a huge backpack, Mr. Tuttle, the leader of the Helper Hounds, said we needed to go.

“The Helper Hounds need to find the potty!” he said. Everyone laughed and moved back to let us through. But as we started our march through the terminal, another woman walked up.

“I know you have to go,” the woman said. “But my brother was there... He was at the dance hall. He told me you visited...”

The woman wiped her eyes. Robot leaned against her legs. Sparky smiled up at her face—and wagged his tail in our faces.

“I haven’t been able to get down to visit him until now,” she said. “Thank you for being there.”

Mr. Tuttle told her we were happy to go. And we were!

As soon as our Helper Humans heard about the terrible shooting at the dance hall, we knew we could help. The Helper Hounds couldn't save the lives of people who had died, but we could help the people who lived.

And so, we spent our time doing what we do best: sitting, listening, and snuggling. Some days, we visited hospitals and heard stories of what happened. We lay on hospital beds and snuggled as people cried or vented their fear or pain. Other days, we visited the dance hall and sat with families who had lost loved ones. We stood with people who held candles and led prayers. We marched with people sad and angry about gun violence. We visited schools to hang out with kids who felt afraid and helped them talk about it.

Eloise, my person—or Helper Human—reached out to touch the woman's arm.

“Is your brother okay?” Eloise said.

“He lost a good friend,” she said. “And he’s shaken up. But the visit from the dogs made his day. He hasn’t talked much about what happened, but he told me all about the visit. Is one of you King Tut?”

My tail wagged at the sound of my name.



*"This* is King Tut," Eloise said.

The woman scratched my head and smiled.

"You look more like a Muppet than King Tut," she said. "My brother never liked dogs much. More of a cat guy. But I can see why he liked you. You're a silly little thing."

"She is," Eloise said. I licked the woman's hand.

*"She?"* the woman said. "The girl who would be king. The dogs who would be heroes. What a world..."

The woman took a selfie with us and then rushed off to her flight.

Penny's Helper Human, Miguel, spied the "Pet Relief Room" down the terminal and suggested we head off. You might think it was weird to be cheered on in the relief room. But it turned out to be kind of fun. It wasn't even scary. It reminded me of my potty-training days.

The cheering continued for us all the way



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