

Level 4 *Heirloom Antics* Sample

In this sample you will find:

- Chapter 8: “The Spy Guy and the Case of the Stolen Soup”*Heirloom Antics* pages 116-133
Chapter 12: “Puppy Project”*Heirloom Antics* pages 184-197





The Spy Guy and the Case of the Stolen Soup



Printed on my door in big, bold letters are three words: “The Spy Guy.” I like the way that sounds: *The Spy Guy*. It’s the perfect name for a crime-fighting toucan like me. On this brisk fall morning, I grab a bite to eat and study my *Crime-Stopping Guidebook*.

A frail-faced guinea hen peeks around my door. “Mr. Spy Guy? May I speak with you for a moment?”



I never turn down someone in need, so I motion for her to come in and sit down. My guest is clearly distressed.

“My soup has been *stolen!*”

Tears fill her little bird eyes and I feel sorry for her. I whip out a pad and a pencil to take notes.



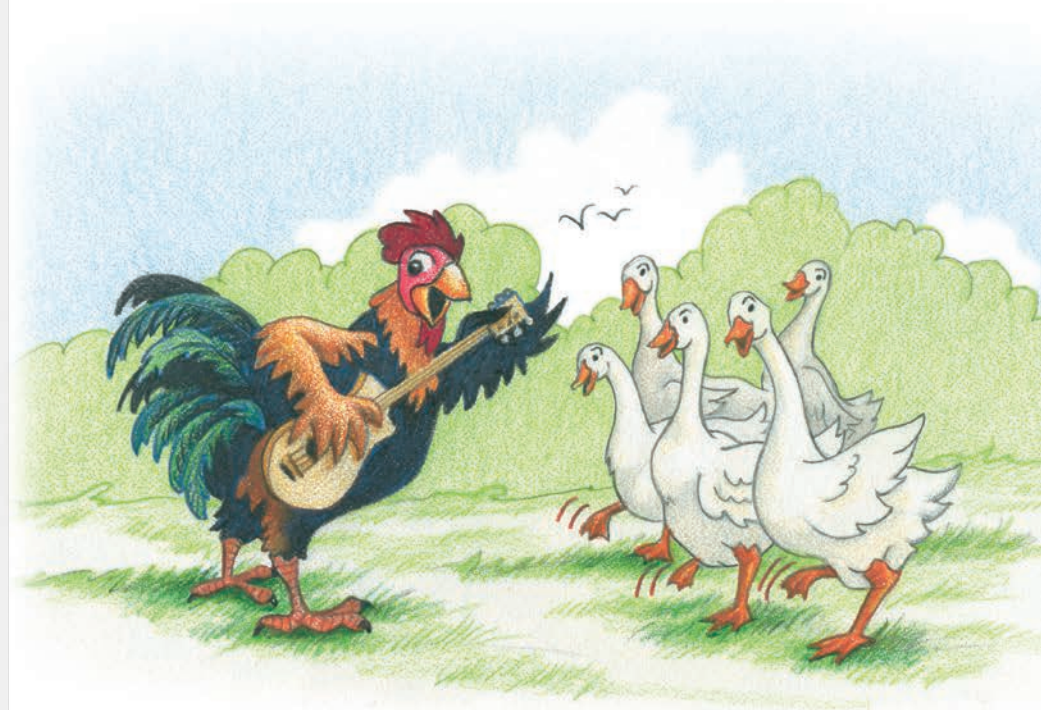
“What makes you think it’s been stolen?”
I demand. “Any suspects? Clues?”

Mrs. Guinea wipes her eyes. “The whole pot of soup just vanished! I have no idea what happened to it!” She leans closer. “I made my best soup recipe for my husband. *Now* what will he eat for supper tonight?”

I instantly know I am the right guy to handle this case. “I’ll get right on it,” I vow. I must find that soup, and the sooner the better. In just six short hours it will be suppertime, and no one should have to go hungry!

A small town seems like an unlikely place for a crime of this magnitude, but I stroll the streets, keeping my eyes peeled for anything that could prove to be a clue.

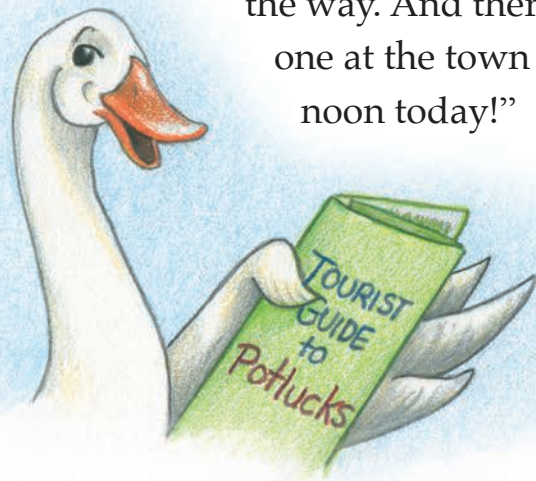
In the park, I come upon a group of tourists. Suspects! I sidle up to them. They are watching—or *pretending* to watch—a rooster play the guitar. I decide to question this gaggle of geese.



“So,” I say. “Does anybody know where I could get a good meal in this town? Like maybe some *soup*?”

The tourists smile at me. They appear to be a nice group of geese. I feel guilty for suspecting them just because they are strangers.

“As a matter of fact, we’re on our way to a potluck,” says one goose. “See?” She holds up a booklet: *Tourist Guide to Potlucks*. “As we travel south, we stop at potlucks along the way. And there’s one at the town hall at noon today!”



A potluck! My *Crime-Stopping Guidebook* says that suspects like to hide at large gatherings. I’m on my way.

When I arrive at the potluck, I scan the crowd for the culprit, wishing I’d remembered to wear a disguise. Right away, I spot a turkey with bushy tail feathers. He looks like he could be a soup snatcher.

I amble up to the table and lean against it.



“So,” I say to the turkey. “How’s that lunch of yours?”

The turkey slurps and swallows. “Superb. How’s yours?”

My *Crime-Stopping Guidebook* doesn’t cover conversations. I don’t know how to respond, so I clear my throat and say, “Nice day for a potluck, isn’t it?”

Then I notice the cow. I don’t know how I missed her. She is a spotted, big-eyed Guernsey cow.

I mosey on over to her side of the table. “Mind if I sit here?” I ask, motioning to the bench beside her.

She lifts her head out of her bowl. “Be my guest,” she replies with a pleasant Southern accent. “You must taste this! It’s heavenly!”



But I’m not interested in what she’s eating. I’m here to find the soup snatcher.

“I’m sure it’s really good,” I say. “But you wouldn’t happen to know where a guy can get a nice, warm bowl of *soup* around here, would you?”

Before the cow can respond, a spiffy-looking bird stops next to me, a serving towel over one arm and a big pot in the other.



“Will you be joining us?” he asks. “Let me serve you some lunch. But there isn’t much left in this pot. A whole gaggle of geese just about finished it off.”

I don’t want to draw attention to myself, so I accept. He sets a steaming bowl in front of me.

“Do you like it?” he inquires as I taste a spoonful.

I nod. The creamy goodness renders me speechless. I have never tasted anything so good.

“I’m glad!” he says as I go for another mouthful. “Doesn’t my wife make the most amazing soup?”

SPLAT! I spit soup all over the picnic table.



“Wait a minute ... are you Mr. Guinea? Is this Mrs. Guinea’s stolen soup?” *No wonder the soup was stolen, I think to myself. It’s really good!*

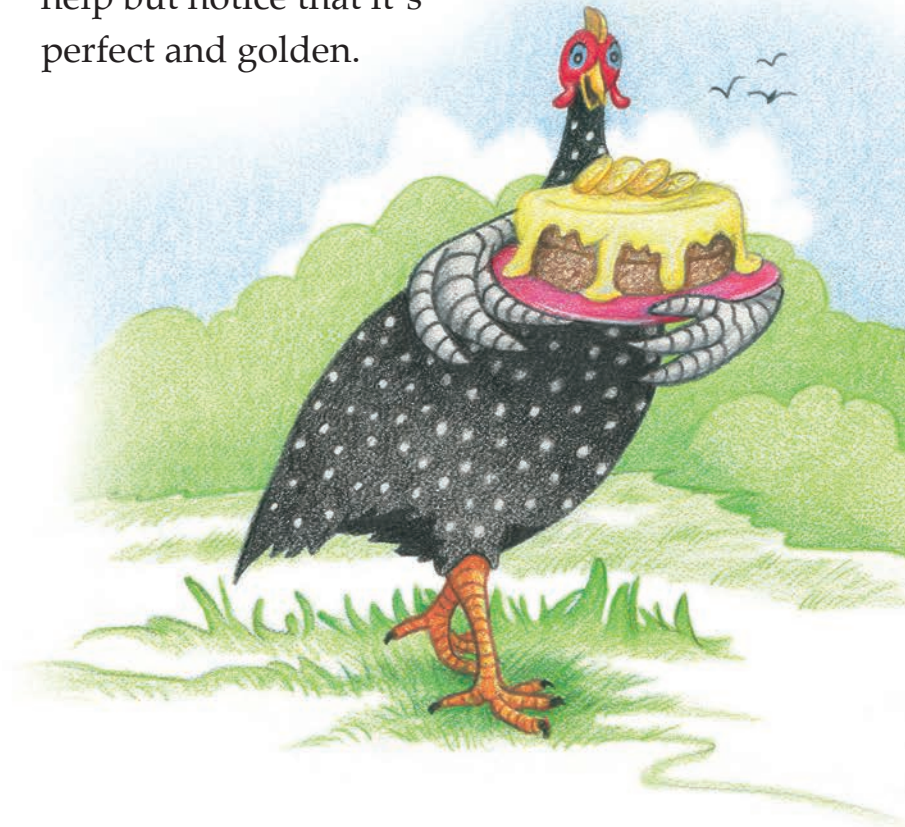
“What? Stolen soup?” Mr. Guinea says loudly. “Somebody stole my wife’s soup?”



Everyone at the potluck turns and stares at us. I start to explain, but Mr. Guinea is still confused.

Could Mr. Guinea be the culprit? I ask myself. But I can't accuse him without more proof.

As I try to sort it out, Mrs. Guinea herself flutters over, unaware of the commotion. She's carrying a lovely lemon cake and I can't help but notice that it's perfect and golden.



“Honey, you forgot to bring the lemon cake to the potluck lunch!” Mrs. Guinea says to her husband.

“*Lemon cake?*” Mr. Guinea looks at the soup pot in his arms. “But didn’t you make this *soup* for the potluck? I found it on the stove this morning.”

Mrs. Guinea gasps at the sight of the empty pot. “Oh, no! My soup! That was going to be our supper tonight!”



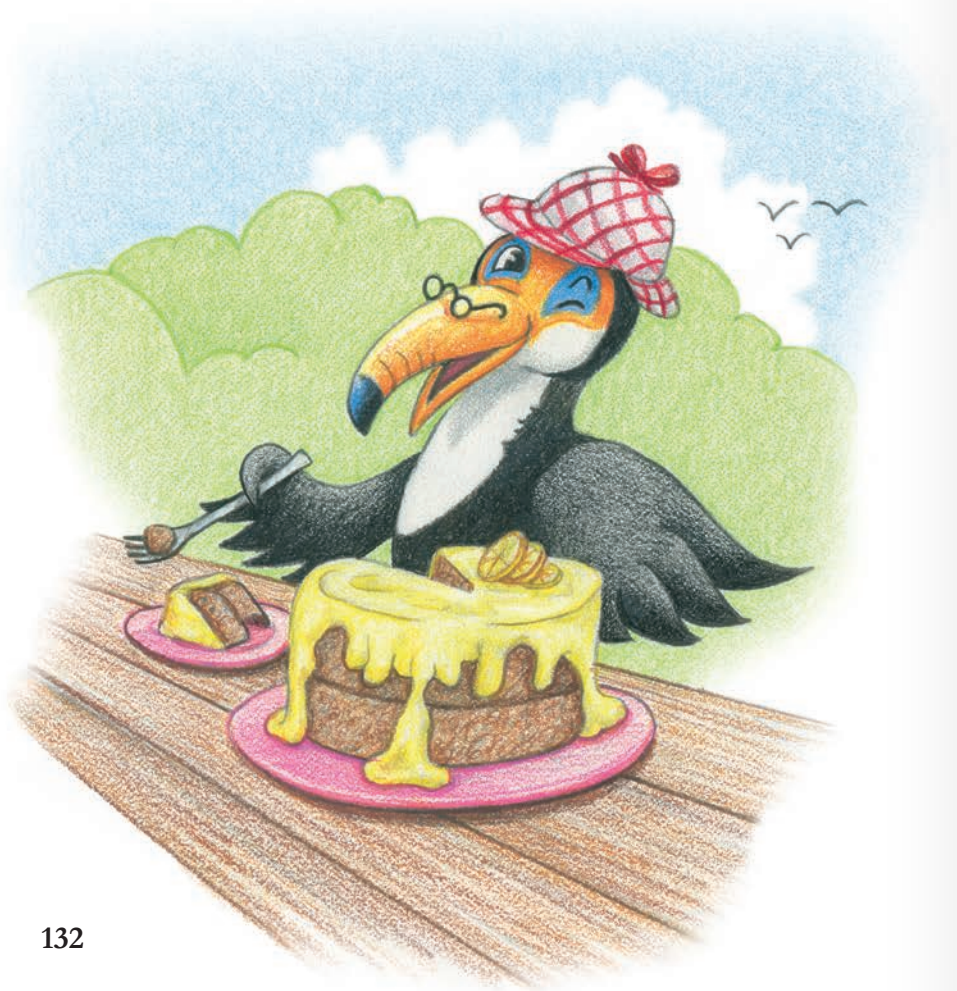
I try to turn the conversation back to happier things so I can finish my bowl of yummy goodness. “Now, now, look on the bright side, Mrs. Guinea! It was just an accident. Your soup is clearly the star of the potluck. Everybody thinks so—right, guys?” Cheers come up from the turkey, the Guernsey, the geese, the rooster, and me.



Mrs. Guinea smiles. “I guess I should be flattered that my soup is such a success. But next time, I’m going to stand guard and make sure nothing happens to it!”

Then Mrs. Guinea says something that is music to my ears. “Well, we can’t let this cake go to waste. Mr. Spy Guy, thanks for solving the case so quickly. Would you accept the first slice of cake?”

I dig my fork into that delightful lemon cake and savor my accomplishment. Being the Spy Guy is a hard job, but someone has to do it.



The End



Puppy Project





Hi, I'm Elinor! You can call me Elly for short.
I'm a yellow Lab.

I'm part of a program called Seeing Eye Dogs
of America (SEDA). If all goes well, I will
become a guide dog for a blind person!

I've spent the past year living with a boy named Trevor and his family. Trevor is a volunteer puppy raiser with SEDA, and his job has been to help me grow into a happy dog who loves people and loves to learn new things.

I'll never forget the day I met Trevor. I was eight weeks old and just a wiggly bundle of fur with floppy ears. Trevor rubbed my belly and I knew right away that we would become great friends.



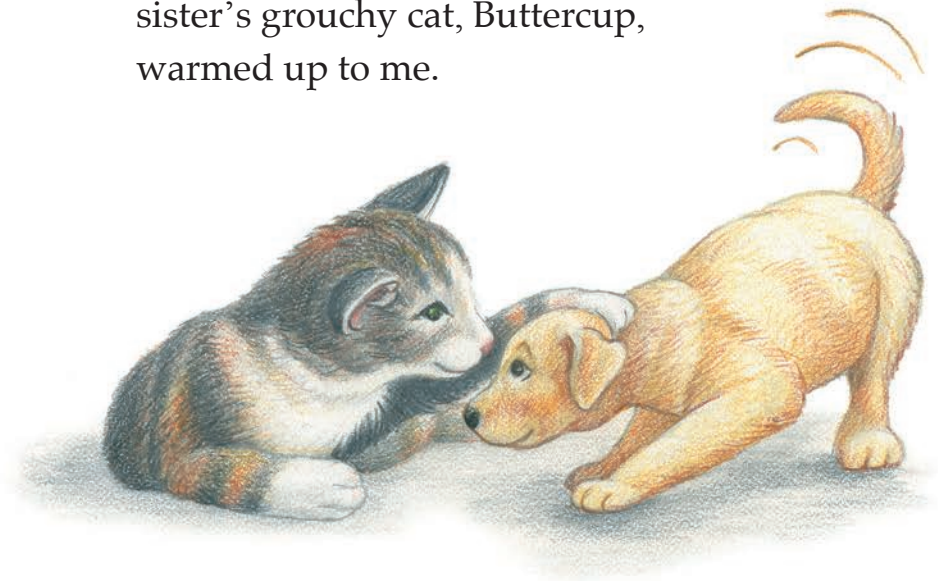
Today is an important day in my life. Now that I'm sixteen months old, I've come to the SEDA training site for testing. If the trainers think that I have the right temperament, I'll be accepted into the next stage of their training program. Right now, Trevor and I are waiting for my turn to take the test. I'm on pins and needles. I can't wait!

Training to be a guide dog hasn't always been easy. My first challenge was housebreaking. On the first day—to my horror—I made a mess on the floor. I think Trevor used about 2,143 paper towels to clean up after me that first week!



He quickly learned to keep a good stock of paper towels and cleaning spray on hand. It's a good thing he has a sense of humor.

I may have had a few housebreaking accidents at the beginning, but I had no problem fitting into Trevor's family. Even his sister's grouchy cat, Buttercup, warmed up to me.



It's important for guide dogs to have good people skills. If I pass today's test and become a guide dog, I'll meet a lot of new people on the job. I'll have to be able to get along with everyone.

For the past year, I've been taking weekly training classes and I've really enjoyed them. The teacher always praises me for being a good student. I quickly learned simple commands like "come," "sit," and "go to your place."

Did I mention that I'm a baseball fan? A homerun ball flew over Trevor's backyard fence one afternoon and I was completely delighted. I shot off after that ball like a rocket!



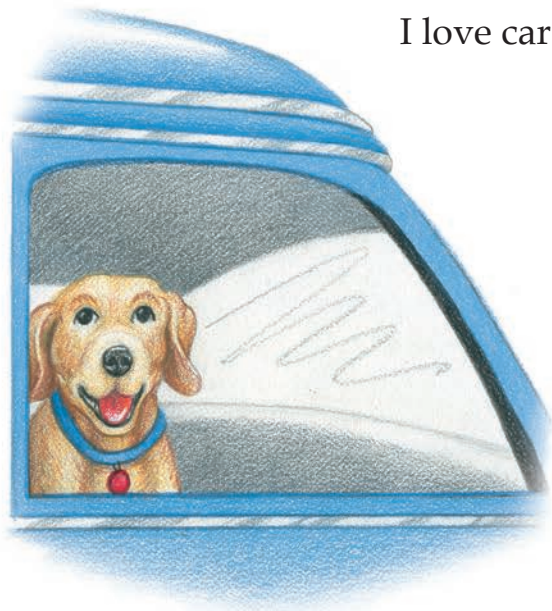
But I found out that I wasn't supposed to do things like that when I'm working. Guide dogs have to stay focused. Since I will have to be able to lead my new owner anywhere, I can't be distracted.

Over the past few months, I've gone everywhere with Trevor. We've gone to the library to use the computer. We've taken the bus together to the market.



I even went with him to the doctor when he had a sore throat. (Don't worry—he was okay!)

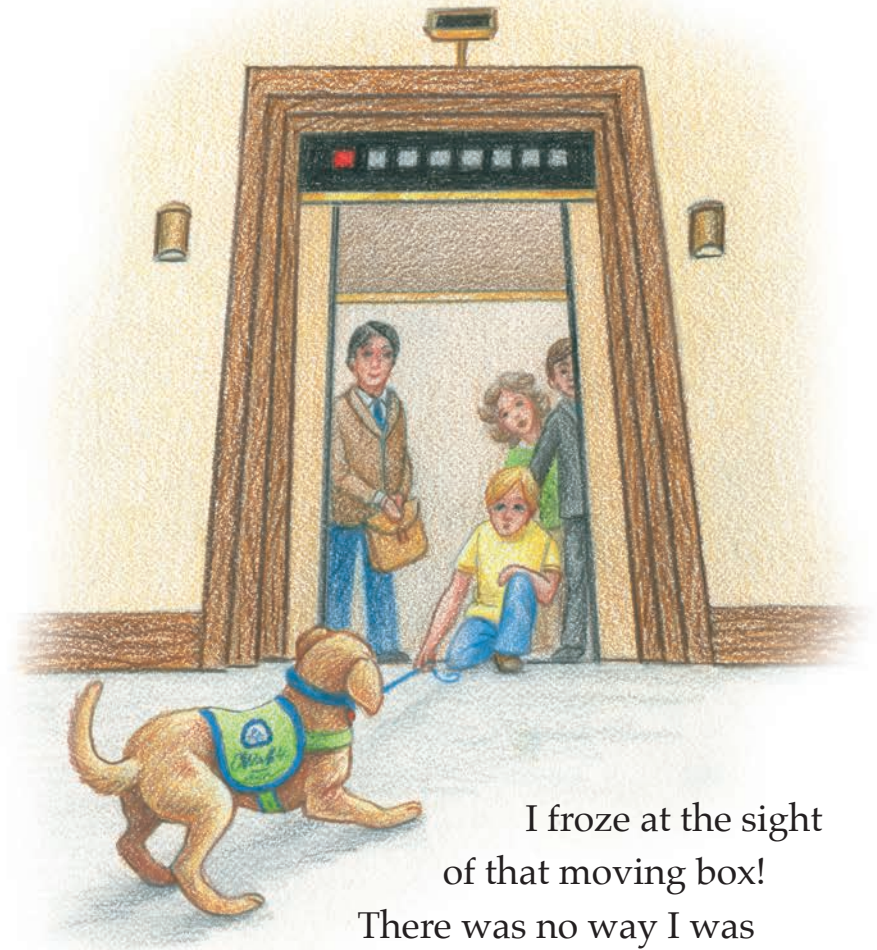
We visited the cows and goats on his Uncle Victor's farm and got to look at the big, red tractor. We've taken afternoon strolls in the neighborhood. We toured the headquarters of the company where Trevor's dad works. We even went on vacation to Canada together.



I love car rides!

Because of all this, I am well traveled. That's another important trait for a guide dog to have.

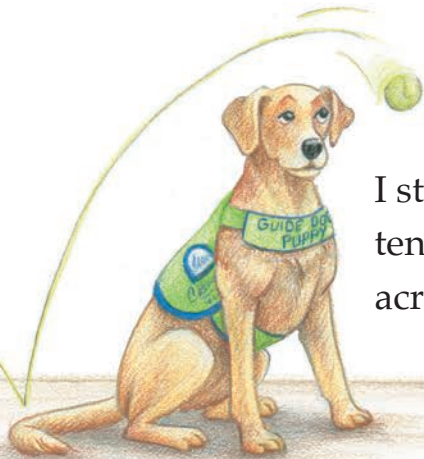
My biggest challenge came on the day that Trevor asked me to step into an elevator at the mall.



I froze at the sight of that moving box!

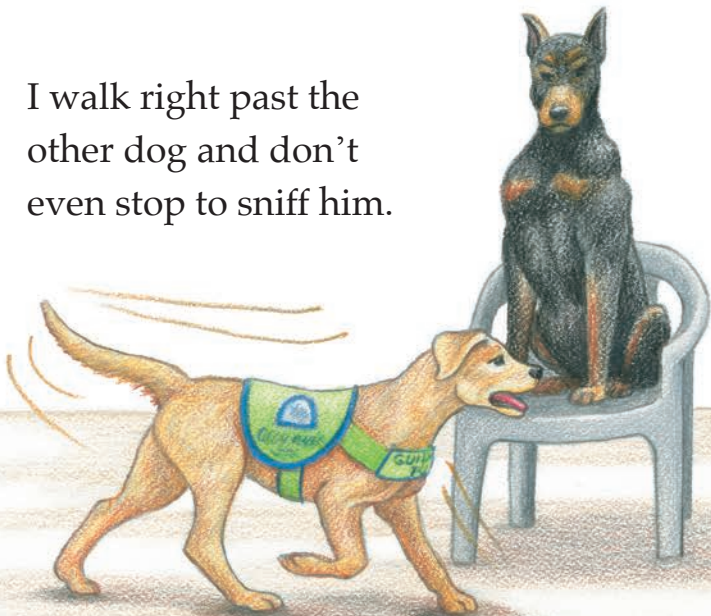
There was no way I was going to get into that thing! After a bunch of tries and lots of treats, I decided to follow Trevor. I found out that elevators aren't so bad and there's really nothing to be afraid of. The ride was even kind of fun!

Oh! They just called my name for my test.
It's the moment of truth! I hope all my hard
work pays off. Here I go!

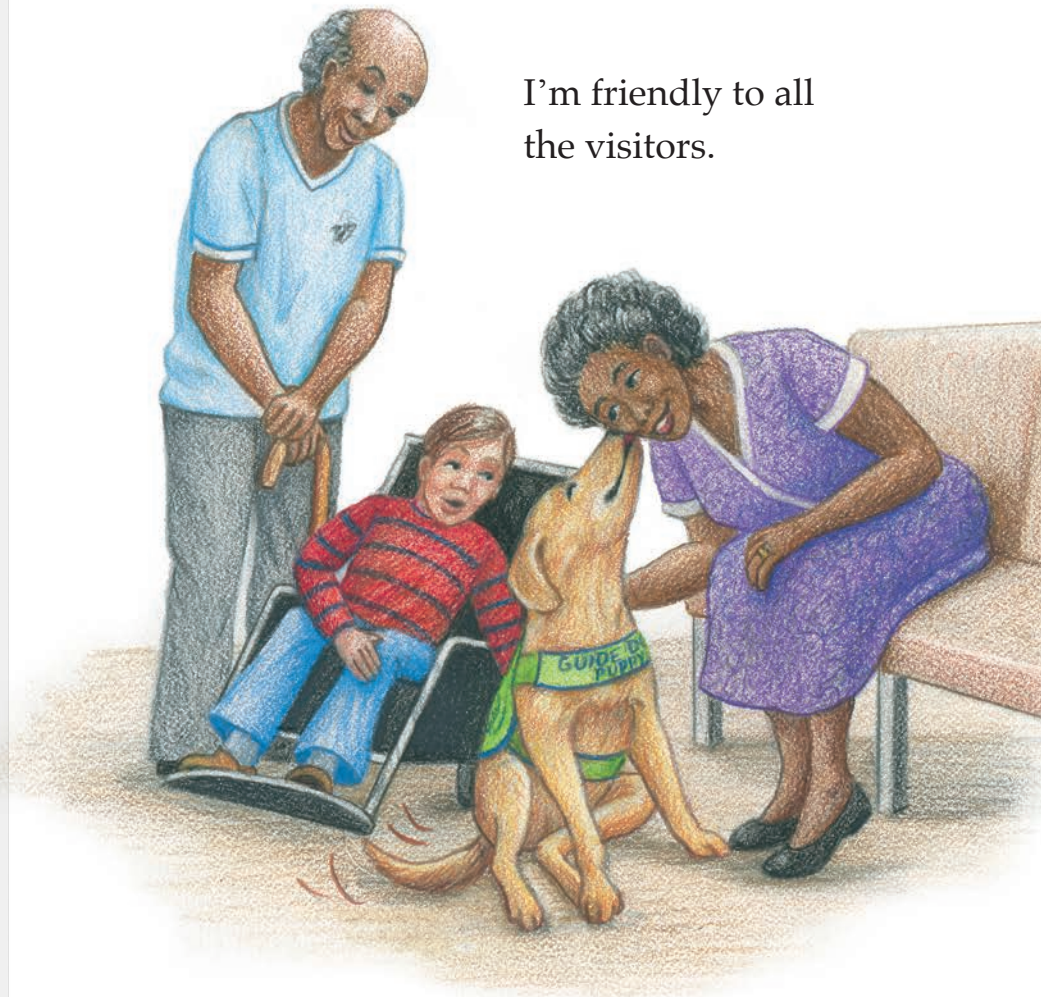


I stay still when the
tennis ball bounces
across the room.

I walk right past the
other dog and don't
even stop to sniff him.



I'm friendly to all
the visitors.



I do a great job and pass with flying colors.
Trevor is so proud of me. And *I'm* proud of me!

Everyone has such nice things to say about me and all my efforts. It will be bittersweet to say goodbye to Trevor, but I'm excited that I'll be able to help someone who needs me. That's a great feeling!

And as for Trevor, he will be starting a new puppy project next week. An eight-week-old Lab named Honor will go live with him and begin training. I think he'd better stock up on paper towels and puppy treats before she arrives!



The End





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