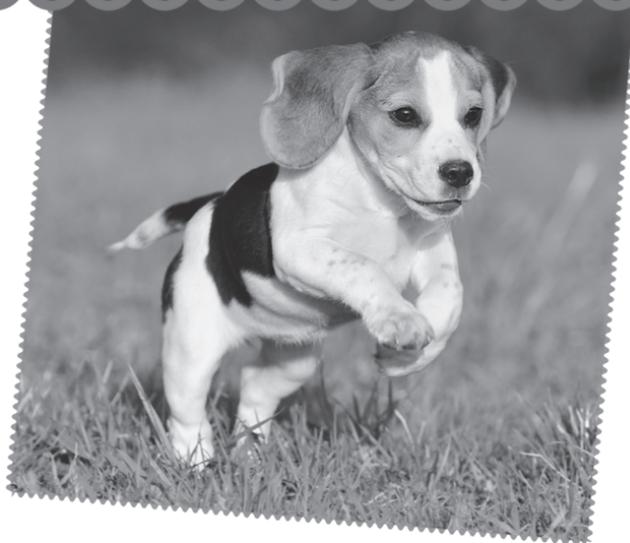




The Puppy Collection

Houdini's Escape



Susan Hughes

Illustrated by
Leanne Franson

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Kat looked around the waiting room. There was a small couch and three chairs. There was a scale and shelves lined with dog food. Two women sat together on the couch. They were each reading a section of the same newspaper. A Great Dane lay across both their feet. His head extended beyond one end of the couch. His tail stretched out beyond the other end.

A young man sat in one of the chairs. He was texting on his phone. Kat saw he was holding a leash, but where was his dog? She followed the leash with her eyes. It led behind the couch. Kat shifted to one side and peeked behind the couch. A golden doodle had squeezed itself between the couch and the wall. The dog's sad eyes said to Kat, "Don't tell anyone where I am and maybe I won't have to be clipped!"

An older man sat in another chair. He had short curly hair and a long curly beard, both a golden colour. He wore a tan-coloured leather

coat with fringe. His boots were fringed, too.

Maya gestured toward the man. “Your aunt must be grooming his dog. What do you think?”



Kat studied the man for a moment. “Wheaten terrier. For sure.”

Maya nodded. “Agreed.”

Just then, the door to the grooming studio opened. A dog came bounding out. He was covered in curly fur that was the colour of yellow wheat — from his ears to his tummy to his tail.

“Yes!” Maya whispered to Kat. “A wheatie! We guessed it!”

Aunt Jenn appeared holding the end of the leash. She wore her pink grooming coat. Her brown hair was pulled back in a ponytail.

“Here’s Prince for you, Mr. Renzo,” said Aunt Jenn.

The man with the curly hair jumped up. “Oh, you’ve done a wonderful job!” Mr. Renzo said. He bent down to greet his dog. “Prince looks as handsome as a . . . prince!”

“Thank you,” Aunt Jenn said. “But grooming him was a challenge, Mr. Renzo. Lots of hair! Too much hair!” She gave Prince a quick pat on the head. She handed Mr. Renzo the leash. “I know you want your wheaten terrier to look good. This means Prince needs his hair cut more often.”

Mr. Renzo blushed. He tugged at the curled ends of his beard.

“His coat was quite shaggy. And it was touching the floor, Mr. Renzo,” said Aunt Jenn gently.

“Yes, you’re quite right,” Mr. Renzo agreed. He stroked Prince’s head. “I’ll come more often. I will. Thank you again.”

Mr. Renzo went to the counter to pay his bill.



Aunt Jenn turned to the girls. “Hello, my Kitty-Kat!” she said. This was her special name for Kat. “And hello, Maya and Grace.”

The girls smiled.

“We can’t wait to meet the new puppy, Aunt Jenn,” Kat said.

Aunt Jenn turned to the clients who were waiting. “I’ll just be a moment,” she told them. “My puppy helpers and I have special puppy business to attend to!”

With a toss of her ponytail, Aunt Jenn briskly led the girls to the doggy-daycare room. She

was about to open the door but then paused. Her eyes twinkled. “When we go in, be very quiet,” she said.

She opened the door. She and the girls quietly stepped into the room. Then Aunt Jenn signalled them to stop. She tapped her ear to tell them to listen.

Kat listened closely. All of a sudden she could hear it — a gentle snoring sound. She giggled. Quickly she scanned the room. The doggy-daycare room was large. It had shelves and a fenced-in area, like a playpen. There was a back door that led to a large yard. A stairway led up to a big room where Aunt Jenn could do dog training. Her apartment was also upstairs.

Most importantly, it had four dog kennels in a row under the window along one wall. Although today Kat saw that there were five dog kennels there. There were four regular kennels and a

new blue one. The snoring sound was coming from the blue kennel.

Inside the kennel, a puppy was curled up, lying in the sunshine.

“Presenting...Houdini!” Aunt Jenn announced.

The little puppy woke up as Kat, Grace and Maya hurried over to greet him. Houdini jumped to his feet. He gave a big yawn. He put his hind end in the air and gave a little wiggle stretch.

