

**Matzah balls** were never meant for a game of fetch, but try telling that to Mitzvah the mutt when he is rescued by a Jewish family. Mitzvah's silly antics manage to charm his family and his humorous misinterpretations of the Jewish holidays will leave you laughing and begging for more.

Get ready for a howling good time as you celebrate Shabbat, Hanukkah and Passover with *Mitzvah the Mutt*.

"In *Mitzvah the Mutt*, Sylvia Rouss makes Jewish family life accessible to all readers, regardless of background, through the humorous tales of a dog settling into his new family. Great read-aloud story for families with young children."

—**Lauren Marcus Johnson**, Director  
Temple Israel Libraries & Media Center  
West Bloomfield, MI

"In a dog-eat-dog world, Mitzvah, a loveable dog with a floppy-ear, is the perfect guide for teaching children. If you think there is a better way to learn about Jewish holidays and traditions, you're barking up the wrong tree."

—**Avi A. Lewinson**, Executive Director  
Kaplen JCC on the Palisades

Photo by Jordan Rouss



**Sylvia Rouss** is the author of the popular *Sammy Spider* and *The Littlest* books. She has won the National Jewish Book Award, the Sydney Taylor Honor Award for Younger Readers, and the Storytelling World Award.

Photo by Steve Weverka



**Martha Rast** holds a BFA in painting and drawing and a professional certificate in art education. She has taught in the Midwest and exhibits her work around the Midwest and Southwest.

R.L. grades 2-4; I.L. ages 5-9

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# 1

## 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

## **Mitzvah the Mutt**

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"

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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





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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.