

It's Molly's Fault

Hank the Rescue Dog - Book Three

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To Maggie—my living representative of Hank. You're always ready to: greet strangers exuberantly, eat anything off my plate and nothing labeled Dog Food, walk even when the thermometer drops below zero, chase anything that runs, test your teeth on any misplaced item, and love us unconditionally. You are a blessing.

THE ARRIVAL



“We’re here!”

The shriek shattered the quiet Sunday afternoon and ended my nap in the sun puddle. I leaped up, thinking danger lurked, but the voice had come from a pint-sized human. She wore orange tights with a fluffy pink skirt, a green Packers T-shirt, and cowboy boots. She carried a bag like my boy, Kaden, used for basketball, but it was smaller and bright yellow. Behind her stood a very large man with a familiar scent, but I couldn’t remember his name.

Mom swooped down the hall. “Welcome, Molly and Hank.”

Uncle Hank. He had my name. He visited us a long time ago, but I didn’t remember the Shrieking Kid. I gave a little woof to let everyone know I wasn’t shirking my duties.

“We didn’t expect you so soon. Have you had dinner?” Mom gathered Shrieking Kid into a hug, but the child squirmed out of her arms.

“We stopped at McDonald’s. Why is that dog barking?”

Does he live here? Daddy says we're going to live here. Where will I sleep? Do you have toys?"

Kibbles and bits! Does the girl ever stop talking?

Hank the Man put his hand on Shrieking Kid's head. "Slow down, Molly." He looked at Mom. "This isn't easy for any of us. It won't be long-term, but I appreciate you taking us in until we get settled in Thomasville." He nodded toward Shrieking Kid. "She's taking it pretty hard."

Shrieking Kid dropped her bag and scurried across the family room to me. She gave me a whack on the head, then grabbed my ear and yanked it.

I couldn't help it—I yelped like a puppy.

Mom removed my ear from her fist. "This is Hank. We need to be gentle with him."

"Why does he have my dad's name?" She gave me a couple strokes down my back.

"The shelter gave him that name before we adopted him."

I waved my tail at Mom and headed downstairs to Kaden's room.

As I passed Hank the Man, he looked at me with sad eyes. "Sorry. Molly's always been boisterous, but now it's worse."

Mom's voice floated down the steps. "Come on. I'll show you what we fixed up for you. It's not the Ritz, but it will be your own space."

Their feet clomped downstairs. I lay on Kaden's bed, hoping the mess of blankets, clothes, and pillows would hide me.

I listened to their footsteps head into what the family referred to as "the storage room."

Mom's voice continued. "This will be yours. Actually, you will have most of the downstairs. Kaden is rarely around, and when he is home, he's usually in his room."

Shrieking Kid and her dad were going to live here? And

sleep in Kaden's and my downstairs space? This was unacceptable.

"Thanks again, Tess," Hank the Man said. "I don't know what I would have done if James hadn't reached out to me when Elise left us. My company offered me the opportunity to work here, and it seemed like an answer to everything. Molly needs help for sure."

"Because I'm boistus. That's why I need help," Molly's voice piped up. She raced around the perimeter of the downstairs family room, hopping on and off the furniture.

Mom peered into Kaden's room, her eyes finding me. "Well, we know all about that. Kaden tends to be boisterous too. And Hank the Dog. Kaden was convinced he had Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder when he first lived with us."

But Kaden and I had learned to channel our ADHD in good ways. Like playing basketball. And we'd learned patience and self-control.

Hank the Man stepped into the game room. "That's another thing. Let's cut the confusion. At work, they call me Henry. If you use Henry, I won't come when you call the dog."

"Great idea. Why don't you grab the rest of your things? James should be home in a few minutes. He and Kaden went to the gym, and Sloane's with a friend. We'll have supper later."

When she said "supper," my ears perked up, and I followed her upstairs.

Shrieking Kid preceded us and stood on the couch with the remote, randomly pushing buttons. "Where's the movies?"

Mom pried the remote from her grasp and took her hand. "Henry, I'll show Molly around while you get your things."

"Thanks. That will be a big help. Molly, be good for Aunt Tess." Henry stepped out the front door.

Mom and Molly walked out the back door and down the stairs, the girl chattering all the way.

I trotted down the hall to The Girl's room (I know now, her name is Sloane, but I still refer to her as The Girl), where I knew I would find Princess sleeping on her pillow. Princess was okay for a cat, but she'd never learned to speak Bark, and I was only able to interpret a few words of Meow.

If ever we needed to communicate, it was now. After Princess and I had become acquainted, our family functioned smoothly. Kaden and The Girl got along well—when they both stayed in their own rooms. And Mom and Dad? They were too busy with all of us to have much time for arguing.

But we had no room in our family for Henry and Shrieking Kid. Princess and I needed to make a plan.