

HOW I 
NICKY
FLYNN
FINALLY GET A
LIFE (AND A DOG)



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**NICKY
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A NOVEL BY
ART CORRIVEAU 



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PUBLISHER'S NOTE: This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, business establishments, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

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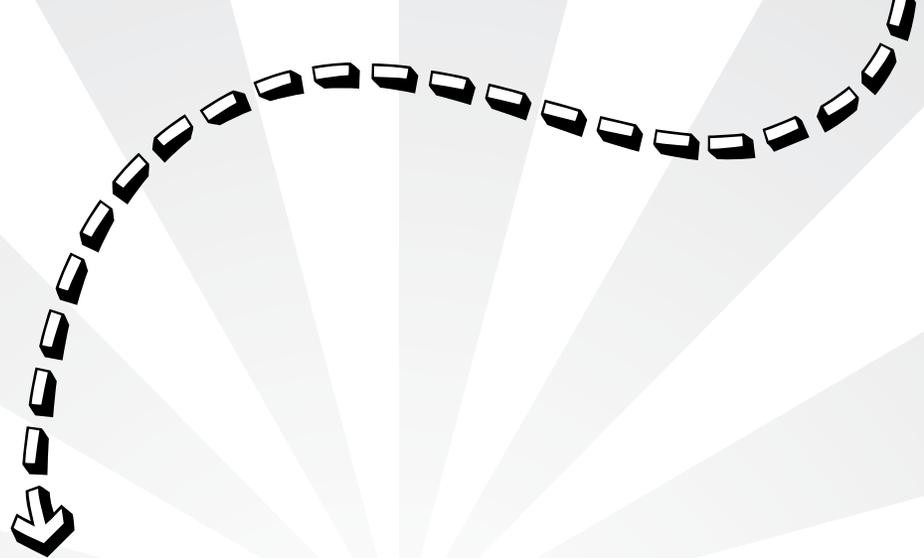
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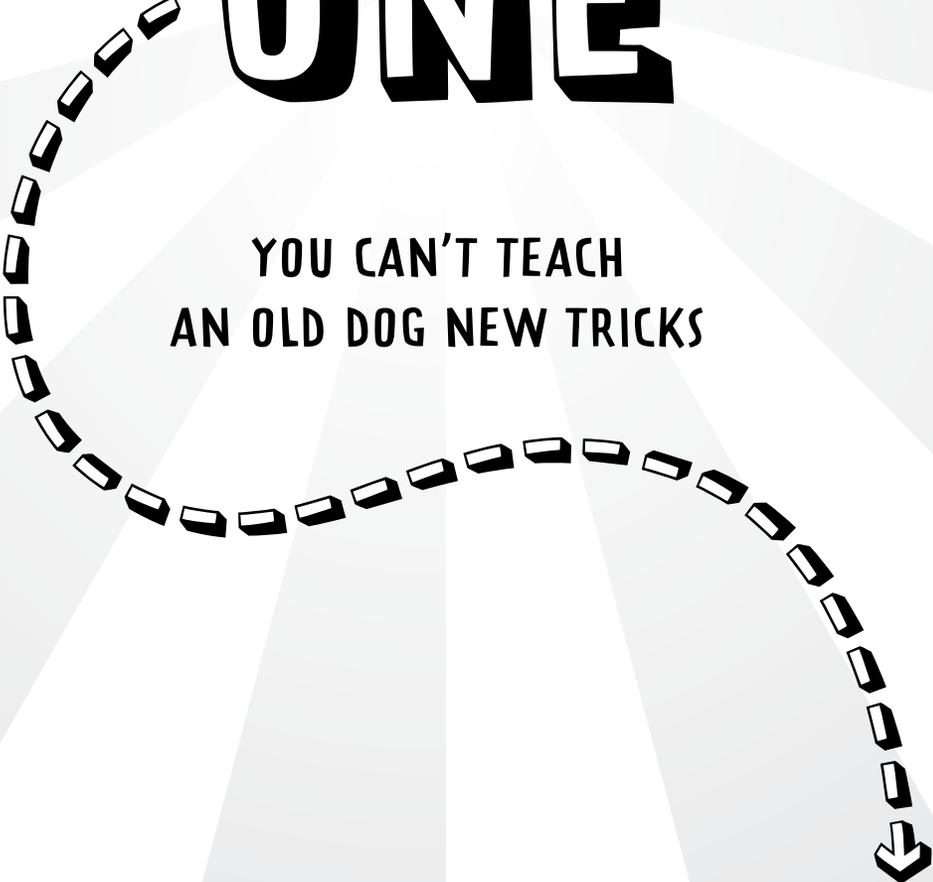


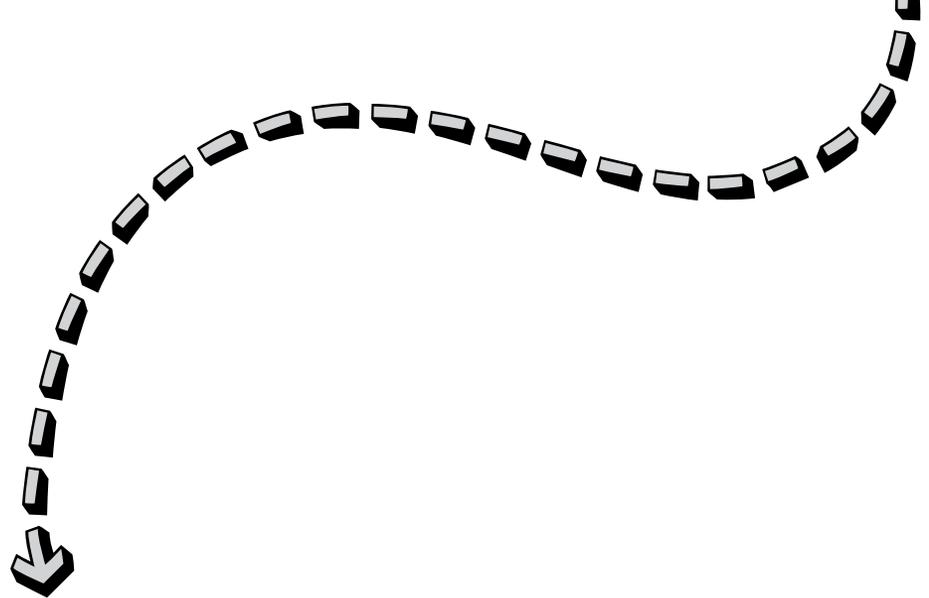
FOR TIM (AND CHIMA)



PART ONE

**YOU CAN'T TEACH
AN OLD DOG NEW TRICKS**





FRIDAY NIGHT. THE NEW APARTMENT.

We have this dog now.
His name is Reggie.

Don't look at me, I didn't name him. My mom got him at the pound yesterday. That's the way pound dogs come: already named. Supposedly, it's too late to change this one's name from Reggie to something more doglike, like, say, Trooper or Flash or Blitzkrieg, because it would confuse him. Or, at least, that's what Mom says the pound told *her*.

Then again, she lies.

"Take him back," I told her.

Mom was *supposed* to be bringing stuff home from the Supa-Sava to make tacos with. But she wasn't holding a bag of groceries—just a leash, with Reggie hooked to the other end. "This apartment is way too small for a dog," I

told her. And it's totally true. I'm sleeping on a foldout sofa in the living room. There's barely enough room for the two of us without adding a big, drooly pound dog into the mix, especially one that looks all sad and sort of embarrassed about his name.

"Guess what, Nicky?" Mom said.

(That's me, Nicky Flynn, though technically speaking, my name is Nicholas. But nobody ever calls me that except her—and only when she's mad.)

"I hate guessing," I said.

"Reggie used to be a seeing-eye dog," she said. "Isn't that great?"

"So why isn't he working for some blind guy?" I said.

Seeing-eye dog my foot. I'm nobody's fool. In fact, you wouldn't believe what I've been through. Mom says I'm way too serious for a kid my age. She says I'm like this forty-year-old man trapped in an eleven-year-old body. Yeah, well, believe me, if I were a real forty-year-old, there'd be a few changes around here. P.S., I'm eleven and three-quarters.

"I guess it didn't work out," Mom said.

"What did he do?" I said.

She didn't have the details. The pound doesn't give those out. All they would tell her was that Reggie was a full-blooded German shepherd, which is supposedly one of the smartest breeds out there. I gave him the once-over. He didn't look all that smart to me. Just sad. He did look like a German shepherd, though; I'll give him that much.

"Take him back," I said.

"But you've always wanted a dog," she said.

"I've always wanted a pool table. But the landlord's not going to allow *that* up here either," I said. Our landlord lives right below us. He's always telling me to pick up my feet and turn down the TV. I never even thought about my feet where we used to live. We had a big house of our own and we could say or do whatever we wanted.

"I already asked," Mom said. "The landlord told me a dog was OK, as long as it wasn't too big and didn't make a mess of the new carpet."

We both looked over at Reggie. He must go eighty pounds, easy.

"Let's just give it a few days," Mom said.

And that was that. She led Reggie into the living room—*my* room—and told him to make himself at home. He sniffed around a little, then whined. "What's the matter, boy?" Mom said. "Are you hungry?"

That's when she remembered about the groceries.

We ended up going to Taco Mucho over in the strip mall. We drove-thru and ate in the parking lot, with the public radio station on so we could catch the rest of the news. Reggie just sat there in the backseat, panting. Maybe he guessed we would stop off at the Supa-Sava on the way home to buy him a can of dog food. Or maybe he just knew better than to beg any tacos off of *me*.

