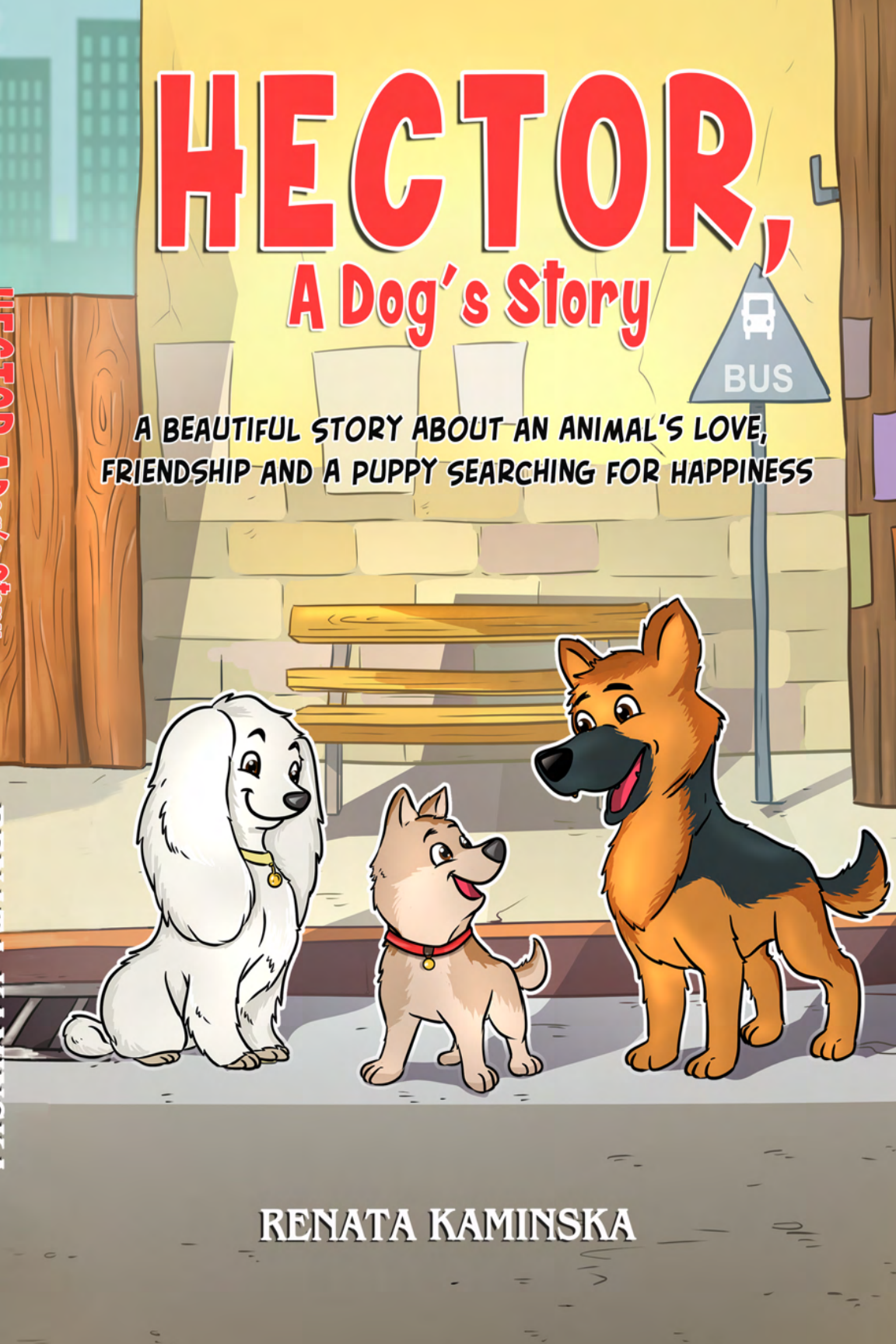
HECTOR,

A Dog's Story

A BEAUTIFUL STORY ABOUT AN ANIMAL'S LOVE, FRIENDSHIP AND A PUPPY SEARCHING FOR HAPPINESS



RENATA KAMINSKA

Hector, A Dog's Story is a wonderfully weaved emotional rollercoaster. Renata masterfully makes you alternate between states of sadness and happiness as she takes you through the heart warming tale of a dog whose life is torn between love and loss, hope and despair, in as much the same manner as we undergo the myriad ever-changing emotions in the course of our lives. The book also examines such profound aspects as death, soul, existence, God – apparently, even dogs are riddled by these timeless inquiries. Hector, A Dog's Story is a rare opportunity to experience and see life from a dog's perspective. Yes, life is love. Life is fun. It can be unpredictable, may take unexpected turns – but if you see through it, and make peace with the present moment, you will find yourself surrounded by love in the end.

Souvik Chowdhury,
father of 12 year old daughter & dog lover

This book was very exciting with sad and happy times. I never knew what would come next. I really liked the ending and was glad for Hector, Mini and Oscar that they could be together. I would recommend this book to any other child who is as dog mad as me!

Georgia Craddock,
age 9

I regret my daughter is already too big to read her fairy tales, because I have no doubt that Hector's story would be our favourite! The world seen through the eyes of a dog is simple, like the world seen through the eyes of a child, feelings and truth count. Many of us could learn love and devotion from our four-legged friends. I have already seen and read many stories about pooches, this one is special because it deals with difficult topics in an accessible and understandable way for a child. Hector's story draws in, moves, entertains and teaches, stays forever in the hearts of small and large readers, giving hope that love always wins.

Anna Samusionek,
actress, mother & dog lover

A touching story of friendship, love and devotion. Every adult and child should read this book to realize that every animal needs our love. Thanks to this book, when I look at my dog I know that we will always love him and never leave him.

Gregory & Paulina Bednarscy,
parents & dog owners

Very nice book about adventures and so much time with the family ☺. Although the book deals with sad topics, it has a happy ending.

Wojtek,
age 8

I like animals, all of them, although I prefer cats, I always appreciate dogs' wisdom. And now, if I were to choose a pet for my son, it would be a dog. The story of Hector and his friends is read in one breath. I am fascinated by the way this dog is shown, the world of his imagination as if it is so simple and obvious, yet it forces you to reflect. I really like the reference to the war in such a veiled way, God, ordinary and simple good or an attempt to explain why we sometimes encounter bad things. When reading this book, the title of a childhood book came to my mind - "Adventures of Filonka Bezogonka" (as I experienced the dramas of this kitty). Hector's story reminded me of that story. Thank you to the author for realizing her dream in such a wonderful way. I will definitely read it to my child to reflect on many difficult matters.

Aneta Marczewska,
teacher & mother of 2 year old Jeremi

I found this book both powerful and beautiful. It raises thought-provoking questions – often quite challenging – that children can ask themselves as they join Hector on his journey. Through a dog's eyes, they discover that life has both its ups and downs, but through determination and love, everything will be fine.

Amy Smith,
dog lover

This is a beautiful, educational story about a dog named Hector, whose history after the first chapter of the book shows that the dog world is not so different from ours. Twists and turns as the main character finally finds his safe haven, home and people who love him very much. The sentiment for me is the fact that as a child, I had a dog, Hector, with my brother, and reading this book to my eight-year-old daughter, I had a moment to remember him and even talk about him to my little listener. I hope that people after reading the book will look differently at a dog wandering in the street and treat them like a family member ;)

Barbara Burczy,
mother & dog lover

I like the book very much, I like Hector and his adventures. He has gone through a lot but in the end he finds happiness and a real home. I wonder what's going on at Hector's now?

Aleksandra Burczy,
age 8

I read the story together with my daughter. I expected a simple story about the animals and their life. But we were involved in a dramatic and touching flow of events. It was hard to stop reading, as the author gave the fantastic feeling of being a part of the main character's life and emotions. We both really enjoyed the book and are waiting for continuation.

Mother Eugenia Orlova &
daughter Kristina Orlova, age 6

"Hector, A Dog's Story" by Renata Kaminska is a unique proposition. This is a book about universal values – love and friendship, but at the same time an excellent lesson in humanitarianism, communicated in a comprehensible language understood by children. This way of instilling in young people a respect for animals, our smaller brothers, is the best of all possible.This is a good start, so that later an adult has respect for his natural environment and Mother Earth. I would definitely recommend.

Katarzyna Sliwa-Lobacz,
Mondo CANE Foundation for the Protection of Animal Rights

The story of Hector and his friends shows what is most important in life. What if you could see the world through the eyes of dogs and cats and find out what they need or want? And what if it turns out that the history of Hector shows that we are not so different from each other? The book breaks taboos in children's literature on difficult topics such as loss, loneliness or illness, showing us that these are the natural elements that make up our lives, at the same time giving faith and showing how important hope, serenity, and seeing beauty and happiness is in difficult moments. This is not only the story of one dog, Hector, but also many other animals. Our imagination is aided by beautiful illustrations that were made with the utmost care. The author confronts us with strong emotions, while at the same time telling and showing how important it is to talk about emotions and feelings. And all this served in an interesting and exciting way.

Monika Sokolowska,
dog psychologist, owner of Dog Walk

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RENATA KAMINSKA

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Renata Kaminska

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND DEDICATIONS

Ever since I was a child, I was a dreamer. As I was an only child, I often felt lonely and misunderstood by other children, but I was great at creating my own worlds and having fun alone. I loved to build my own toys and funny constructions for imaginative places.

On the other hand, I enjoyed spending time with adults. One of the most important people in my life was my dear grandmother. She was for me like a second mother and my biggest motivation. She was the kind of grandma with a big heart and a great deal of wisdom. She always believed in me and my ideas. She was the person who pushed me forward in life and encouraged me to make my dreams come true for thirty years. There are no words to explain how much I appreciate all she was in my life. That's why I dedicate this novel to her. She was special for me like no one else.

Also, I wouldn't be the person I am today without my parents. They taught me the most important thing—which is to be a good and ambitious person. I am lucky

that my mum is still with me, because only a mother can offer you pure and unconditional love. This book is a thank you to both my parents for always being there for me.

Last but not least, I'd like to thank all my friends and the people who believe in me and encouraged me to publish this novel. You made me believe that I shouldn't give up on my dreams, even those from childhood.

"A dog is the only thing on earth that loves you more than he loves himself."
—Josh Billings *(a.k.a. Henry Wheeler Shaw, humorist and lecturer)*

INTRODUCTION

I truly believe that dogs, like people, have personalities and feelings. They express them through their eyes, their barks and by the wagging of their tails. What if they could only talk? Not without reason, they are commonly referred to as "man's best friend." There are plenty of examples of amazing friendships between man and dog. It might be curious to think how the world and our lives look from a dog's perspective; Is it really black and white? Is their perception so different from ours? Do they have to face the same existing problems and difficulties? What if, yes, they do? And can they really suffer and experience the same feelings as we do ourselves?

Growing up, I often dreamt about having a puppy. When it finally became a reality, he made my life whole. In this creature, I found a true best friend who actually accompanied me through my teenage years and into adulthood. He offered me unconditional and pure love until the last days of his life.

When I was twelve, the idea came to me that I would write a story about a puppy. My intention was to create a

story that might be man's story as well. This novel is the story of a dog named Hector who, like each of us, comes into this world and wishes to find happiness. Through his story, we learn that dogs don't simply see the outside of a human, they see the inside.

This is a story about growing, true love, friendship, searching for a real home, safety in life and passing different levels of life—all set against the backdrop of fighting the grey reality of the Second World War. This is a story that proves that hope never dies and that, for everyone, there is happiness waiting. It explores what is most important in life and is a lesson about which values should direct our lives. This is a story about us—people—seen from another perspective. Maybe we are not as different from our furry friends as we think.

CHAPTER I

FREEDOM

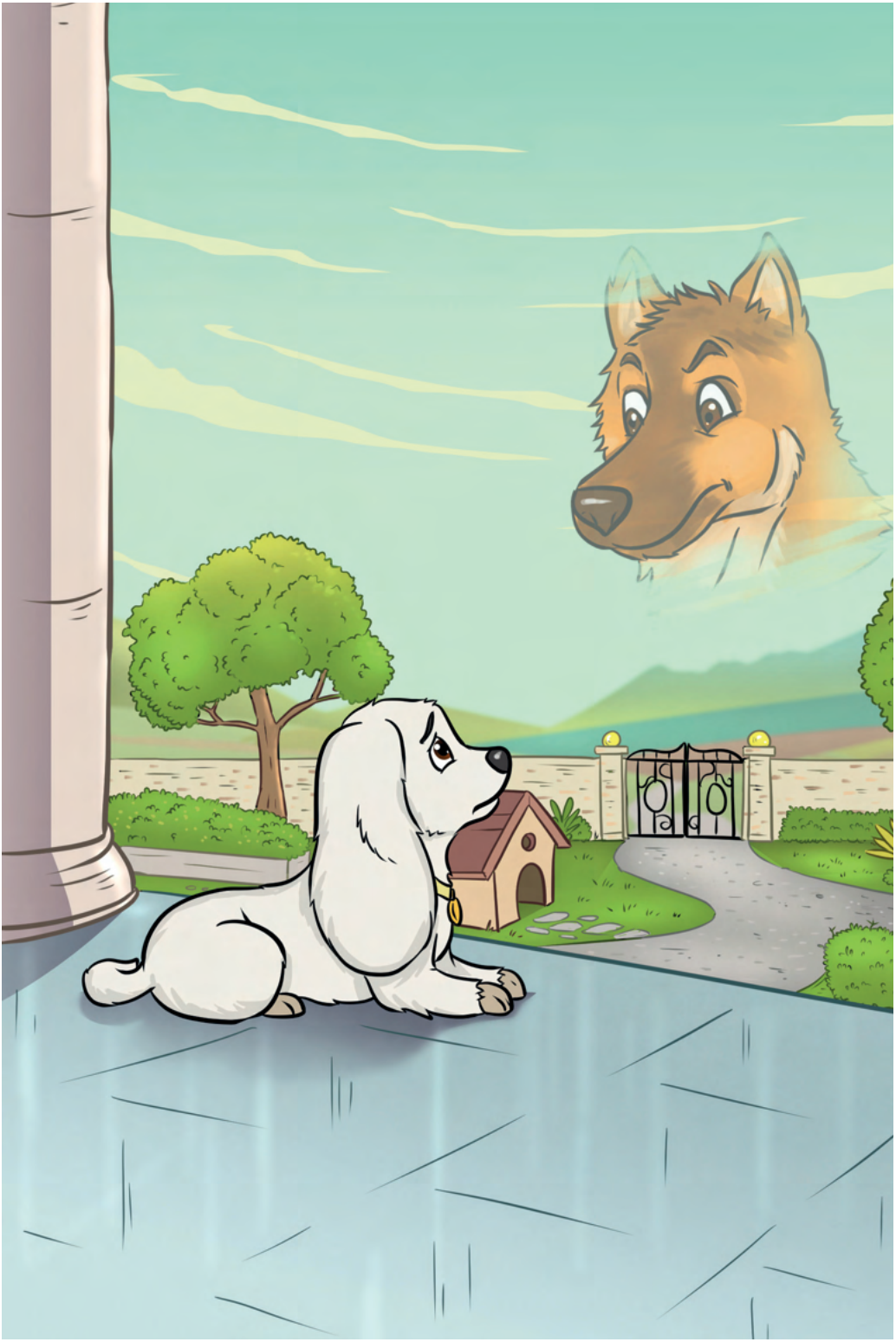
My name is Hector, and I was born on 28 November 1939 in a small cottage on the outskirts of Vienna. My mother was the most beautiful dog around—a white-haired, lean Havanese named Marquise. Unlike me, my mama was a purebred. She grew up in a beautiful white villa with a vast garden full of green plants and flowers. Besides ten rooms being at the disposal of only one family of four, there were five more guest rooms, each of them equipped with their own bathroom and a dressing room. The house owners were well known and respected in the area and often organized receptions for up to one hundred people. The house was surrounded by a high brick wall, behind which only the highest trees stuck out.

My mama used to eat from silver bowls, and her doghouse could house at least three more dogs. Despite that, she felt very lonely and isolated from the rest of the world. She used to spend her days lazing around or

playing with children who treated her as no more than a toy. However, living in the house of the wealthiest family in the area also had its advantages. Not only did Mama have several bowls, but even her own cook, who prepared her meals as carefully as he did for the other members of the house. All the products were of top quality and made up to the owners' special order. Mama was brushed every day and looked after so well that her white hair always shone in the sun, like a knight's armour. In a word, she was lucky, and she probably would have continued to live this wonderful life if one day she hadn't met Rex, my father.

Rex, unlike my mama, was an ordinary mongrel. His origin was not fully known. On the one hand, his posture slightly resembled a German shepherd. He was tall and well-built. However, his brown and sun-faded hair revealed his low status and the lack of proper care. It was clear that he was washed very rarely. His fur was lackluster, thin and brittle and, what was more, full of bite marks from fleas and ticks. Despite that, his posture revealed pride and belligerence, which would have been attractive to many. He had neither certificates nor trophies, but he was an exceptionally cheerful and lively dog who spent his time chasing sheep. Yes, my dad was a farmer's dog.

Despite their differences, chemistry developed between my parents. The fact that Rex fell in love with my mama at first sight does not surprise me at all, but what did my



mama see in Rex? I asked her about it once. She explained that he was a free dog. I admit, at the time I did not exactly understand what she meant. Now, I realize what freedom was to her. As a purebred dog, she spent her time mostly at home or in the company of other dogs as distinguished as her. Her owners made it explicitly clear what she was allowed to do and what she was not. Rex, on the other hand, was free to do whatever he pleased. He could leave the house at night, roll in grass and lead a busy social life. He was carefree to such an extent that when my mama got pregnant, he simply ran away from the farm. To this day, I still wonder whether he did that out of fear of fatherhood or of his master. No matter what his reason, I am still angry with him for leaving my mama alone to her fate.

Because of this, I lack memories of playing together with my father. I sometimes wonder how it would have been if he hadn't left us. Would he have been a super-daddy? Will I ever have a chance to meet him? Sometimes, in my dreams, I imagined that my dad returned to us. His idealized figure was somehow different—more mature and understanding how much he had hurt us. We'd spend each day together, running in the fields, where my dad would teach me different tricks. He would spend all his evenings together with me and Mama in the garden, watching sunsets and listening to the night concerts that nature could offer. That is how my life could have looked

like if my dad had returned. Who knows, I may wake up one day and see him standing over me and smiling. It is still hard for me to accept that he has completely forgotten about us.

When my mama's owners discovered that she was pregnant, they could not accept this. They knew that the puppy would not have come from any pedigreed dog. They were afraid of their friends' reactions, rumours and, most of all, they did not want to bear the costs of raising a mongrel. That is why my mama was sent to a dog shelter, where she was soon adopted by a married couple—the Traps—who, luckily for her, surrounded her with the proper care and attention.

Everything happened so quickly that I do not remember much from that day. The only picture I still have in my mind is the white house with a high wall becoming more and more remote and big tears from my mama's eyes. I have no recollection of how the shelter looked or how we got there. I do not remember whether we were treated well there or whether we had any friends. For some reason, I have a gap in my memory.

I found myself lucky to live in the Traps' home. They were an elderly people who did not have their own children. They loved me and cared for me as if I were their own son. They were not very wealthy, but despite this, they tried to provide us with the best conditions. I could always count on a clean bed and a warm meal. In winter,

they allowed us to sleep in the house so that we could not get cold in our outdoor wooden doghouse. They were both very cheerful as well, and I liked spending time with them.

Ted Trap, despite his old age, was full of energy and, even after a hard day's work in the field, found time to play with me. Our favourite game was searching for a ball. Mr Trap used to take a red leather ball in his hand and then throw it away. My job was to find it, which I always managed to do without any problems. With my tail sticking up in pride, I used to grab it with my teeth and release it right in front of Mr Trap's feet. He would clap, then tenderly stroke me on my neck. There were days when Mr Trap was especially fit, and the ball flew very far. Searching for it used to last a bit longer, but then it was even more fun. I felt like a real detective. We used to come back home when it got dark. There, in the open doorway, stood Margaret Trap, waiting for us with a smile on her face. She used to kiss her husband's red cheek with affection and then tickle me around my neck. It was clear that these two loved each other very much, and even dining together was a great pleasure for them. I felt so lucky to live in their house. Mrs Trap was a wonderful cook, who also cared that my mama and I were always well fed. My mama also seemed to be happy, although she now lived in less lavish conditions than she was used to. From time to time, she found it hard without her conveniences. She tried to be brave and not to

reveal that she was not fine. Her former owners were far from tender and affectionate, but they provided her with a high standard of life. We could not expect the same from the elderly Traps, who had to count each penny. However, my mama respected them and loved them very much. She appreciated everything they had done for us and enjoyed the love they gave us. It helped her tolerate everyday inconveniences.