



He sits. He speaks. He casts spells.

"A magical story full of humor and heart."

—KATHERINE APPLGATE, author of
Newbery Medal winner *The One and Only Ivan*

THE WIZARD'S DOG

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Stupid Door

ALL DOGS HATE DOORS. THEY KEEP YOU INSIDE WHEN YOU WANT to go outside and outside when everyone else is inside. The front door blocks the garden, the kitchen door blocks the water bowl, and the pantry door blocks all the food a dog could ever eat.

But in my house, the worst was the study door.

Bangs, fizzles, pops, and whizzes sounded through the study door, perking my ears. My pack stayed behind the study door all day and kept me locked out. There was a small gap between the door and the floor, where I liked to stick my nose. I smelled burning grass, boiled bones, and sweet nectar.

What are they doing in there? I would wonder.

One hot summer day, I couldn't stand it anymore. I stood outside the study door and barked my loudest bark. "Woof!"

“Stop that, Nosewise!” I heard Merlin say on the other side.

I didn’t like disobeying Merlin, but I was *bored*!

My claws slashed at the study door, tearing away splinters. I barked directly into the gap.

Stupid door.



The handle above me jiggled and turned. The door swung open, sucking air past my ears. The towering figure of my master, Merlin, stood before me. Long flowing robes rose up from his feet, passed knobby knees and a rounded belly, and finally disappeared under his bushy beard. His eyebrows arched and his long nose bent down at me.

Is he angry? I wondered.

“Nosewise,” he said in a kind voice. He knelt and offered his hand. “Are you feeling abandoned?”

I pressed my forehead into his palm and wagged my tail shamelessly. A warm smile crossed his face.

“Master Merlin, now why’d you open the door?” a voice asked behind him. I looked up and saw my pack mate, Morgana, dangling a glowing stone from a chain. Her little face crinkled and she glanced at me.

When Merlin first brought me to his house in the woods, I found Morgana already living there. She was a little bit bigger than me, and definitely the favored pet. She knew all sorts of tricks like opening doors and getting food down from the pantry. She ate from a plate at the table like Merlin, never from a bowl on the floor. But why was she allowed behind the study door while I was stuck in the den?

“He’s never gotten used to being separated from us,” Merlin said, sighing.

“You’re the one who wanted a dog,” said Morgana. She

lowered the glowing stone and slipped it in her front pocket. "This is what a dog is like!"

"I've had dogs before, my dear girl. But never one quite as attentive as this."

"Well, maybe you should let him sit with us," Morgana said.

"Sit with us? While we *work*?"

"What harm could he do?"

I looked up at Merlin and wagged my tail.

"Oh ho ho! He knows that puppy face gets him things," Merlin said, laughing. "Come in before I realize what I'm doing."

I bounded into the study, the door swinging shut behind me. The air inside was rich with scents: fatty, acidic, moldy, ripe, metallic, sweet, and sour. Rows of tall wooden shelves lined the walls—they were stacked with hundreds of plants, dried animals, soils, and mysteries! My nose went wild with all I was smelling.

"Careful with the potion ingredients!" Morgana said as I scurried about. She tried to grab me with her tiny hands, but I dodged her.

"The ones on the bottom shelves are safe to sniff," Merlin said, smiling.

I found pollen, tree roots, fish scales, and oils I couldn't identify. A dish of pickled slugs caught my nose. I'd sampled some live ones I'd found in the garden, but nothing as tangy

and sharp-smelling as these. I buried my snout in the pile and slurped them up.

“Nosewise, drop it!” Morgana grabbed me and stuck her fingers in my mouth. She tried to pry open my jaws. “This is disgusting!”

I swallowed the slugs, triumphant.

Morgana sighed and wiped her hands on her tunic. *If she wanted the slugs, she should’ve eaten them first!*

“Nosewise, come!” Merlin said firmly. I tensed and walked to him.

“Sit,” Merlin said, pointing at the floor. I did as commanded, and he rubbed my head. “If you want to stay with us, you’ll have to behave.” He gave me a stern look, and I wagged my tail guiltily.

“Good boy,” Merlin said, and looked up at Morgana. “Why don’t you start where we last left off? You were channeling light from the stone.”

Morgana took a short breath and pulled the silver chain out of her pocket. At the end was the little glowing rock. My ears perked up. I’d never seen anything like it before.

“I know it’s silly,” Morgana said, glancing at me, “but it makes me a little nervous to have Nosewise watch.”

“Oh, you could have a worse audience than Nosewise.” Merlin smiled and rubbed my head. “What if instead he was a knife-wielding bandit? Or worse, a grumpy old wizard like me?”

Morgana smiled and dangled the silver chain before her face. The stone on the end glimmered.

“Fix what you want in your Mind’s Eye,” Merlin said, pointing his finger in the air.

“A strong beam of light,” Morgana answered.

“And do you have your Certainty?” Merlin asked.

“I do.”

Morgana’s eyebrows knitted together. She gnashed her teeth, and the glowing rock on the chain grew brighter.

Merlin gestured forcefully and gave her words of encouragement. It reminded me of the previous week, when Merlin had taught me how to Sit! He would point at the floor and repeat “Sit! Sit! Sit!” It was confusing at first. *Why is he pointing? And what’s this word?*

But after some time it dawned on me: *butt down, nose up—that’s Sit!* Merlin clapped and scratched my ears and gave me little chunks of cheese (my favorite) every time I would Sit! It felt so good to know a trick!

“Take the image and sit it down deep in the seat of your Mind’s Eye,” Merlin commanded.

Ah! There’s the word! I thought.

Was he teaching her to Sit! as well? I’d seen her do it before but not on command. She looked nervous and a little bit frightened, just the way I felt when Merlin was teaching me! Oh, I hoped she would get it soon. She and I were pack mates, after all—once she’d learned, we could Sit! together.

“Strengthen it with your Certainty,” Merlin growled.
“Then send it out powerfully through your Asteria!”

“I—I will,” Morgana stuttered back.

Sit! I thought. *Morgana, you can do it!*

“Go!” Merlin shouted. “Now! Release your Certainty!”

Morgana grunted, and the stone on the chain flashed brightly. A beam of light emerged from the center and sailed across the room like a firefly, then landed on a small writing desk.

Poof! It caught fire! Big flames fluttered up from the wooden desk and jumped to the shelves on the wall. Flowers and herbs blackened into oily smoke. I yipped and scrambled behind Merlin.

“A bit more control!” Merlin shouted, grabbing his staff off the wall. He pointed the handle at the flames, and I saw that a glowing stone was set there too, one I hadn’t noticed before.

Pffff!

Freezing wind blew from it like a miniature blizzard.

The flaming desk and shelves instantly went out, extinguished by icicles that encased them.

My fear subsided. Excitement spread from my nose to my tail, wagging me from side to side.

Sit! was all right and all.

But I wanted to learn *that* trick.



The Other Apprentice

I FOLLOWED MERLIN AND MORGANA INTO THE STUDY EVERY morning after that and tried to understand all the strange things they said.

“I’m ready for Winter magic now, Master Merlin. Summer spells are behind me.”

“An illusion spell can render a wizard invisible, or call forth the image of a monstrous beast!”

“I feel my Certainty faltering. How can I make it more powerful?”

I didn’t have a clue what they were talking about, but I *knew* he was teaching her more tricks. Morgana brought fire and light out of the glowing stones. She made a small silver fox appear at the table. I barked at it, and it dissolved into a wisp of smoke. She mixed the things from the shelves together in pots and made smells I’d never sensed before.

Whenever she did something new, Merlin praised her.

He clapped his hands and did little dances with her across the floor.

All the amazing things Merlin taught Morgana to do were making me jealous. Sure, Merlin eventually taught me to Shake! and Lie down!, and I got treats and praise when I did them. But Merlin was only impressed for so long.

I'd follow him around the house, Sit!ting on my back-side, raising my paw to Shake!, and Lie down!ing again and again. But Merlin stopped being impressed. "Very good, Nosewise," he'd say, giving me a quick pat on the head before heading to the study to teach Morgana something amazing. And how *could* I impress him? She made fire and ghostly animals, disappeared objects, and, most of all, opened doors!

At night I'd try the tricks I'd seen Merlin teach Morgana. Once, I tried to shoot lightning from my paws. How different was that from Shake!?

"Is something wrong?" Morgana said, watching me raise my paw again and again. I turned to her and grumbled; she was spoiling my concentration. "Maybe you want a treat," she said, fetching a bone from the mantel.

You're not supposed to get a treat until you do the trick! I thought. But I was never going to turn down a bone. *I'll definitely earn this next time!*

I tried to make leaves float, turn my food dish invisible, and open the front door with my nose. Nothing worked. It made me bark and whine.

Why could Morgana do those tricks while I couldn't? We both spent all day watching Merlin. We both were loyal pets. Morgana had hands for picking things up, which helped, but I was nearly as good with my mouth.

"May I see your Asteria?" Merlin said one day as he tutored Morgana. She opened her palm and offered him the glowing stone. It shone brighter when she dropped it into Merlin's hand.

"You shouldn't make direct contact," Merlin said. "I know it makes it easier to access the power, but it's harder to focus. That's why I keep mine in the handle of a staff."

"Your Asteria is more powerful," Morgana answered. "I need to hold it close to do what you do."

"The power does not reside in the stone," Merlin answered. He held the silver chain and let the stone dangle. It pulsed with light, like a heartbeat. "It merely brings into the world what lives inside you." Merlin pointed at the space between Morgana's eyebrows. "Cultivate what lives in your mind and the Asteria will bring it out."

The Asteria? I thought. *Is that what lets Morgana do the tricks I can't?* I hadn't paid much attention to the glowing stones, but there was something strange about them. In the first place, they glowed, which I didn't think stones normally did. But they also had a very special scent—one that made

me feel all tingly on the back of my neck. Something special was happening there.

I jumped up onto a wooden chair and vaulted to the table in front of Morgana. She raised her eyebrows at me. “Hello, Nosewise,” she said.

“Get him down from there,” Merlin said over his shoulder as he walked to the shelves on the far side of the room. “I have a salve somewhere that should help you concentrate.”

He turned away from us and went about his business. I padded to the edge of the table, my nails clicking on the wood, and reached my nose toward Morgana’s closed hands. I sniffed and noticed (besides the scents of her skin and remnants of lunch) that *tingly* scent again. *What is that?* I wondered. It smelled like nothing I’d ever known.

“I don’t understand this thing either,” Morgana said to me quietly. She opened her hands and revealed the glimmering stone. As I sniffed, I felt a strange lightness in the corners of my mind. Something like a thought—but one I didn’t recognize.

“Fancy it, do you?” Morgana asked. My ears perked up, and I glanced at her, whiskers twitching. Something odd was coming over me. *Am I hungry? Do I need to go outside?*

There was a yearning I couldn’t explain. I sniffed the Asteria stone deeper, trying to understand what I felt.

“Think it would make a pretty collar?” Morgana said, chuckling to herself. “I wonder if you could make it work.”

“What’s that?” Merlin mumbled softly at the other end of the room.

My nostrils flared, and I whined. I wanted *something* very badly.

Morgana raised the silver chain and spread it between her hands. She let the glowing stone hang low beneath, and I felt my nostrils widen. Hairs stood up all over my body. She passed the chain over my snout, and sparks of light buzzed between my ears.



My mane glowed bright as the stone slid beneath my chin. “Very pretty,” Morgana cooed, and her words were clear to me in a way I’d never felt before. The sounds were the same, the tone of voice not out of place, but something else came with them.

“This makes me feel strange,” I said. My tongue felt tight, and air moved through my throat in an unfamiliar way.

Morgana’s eyes bulged.

“Something’s off about this stone, I think,” I said in an odd voice. “Does the room seem brighter to you? Or no, not brighter. But something about it makes more sense!”

“Master Merlin!” Morgana cried, backing away from me—her hands outstretched.

“What is it?”

“I feel funny!” I said to Merlin, wagging my tail from side to side.

“Oh no!” he shouted, dropping a bottle of bubbling oil. My master ran toward me like my mane was on fire. He crashed into me, and I nearly fell off the table. His bony hands grasped around my neck.

“Be careful!” I said, but then my tongue thickened in my jaws. “Woof! Woof!”

The Asteria was off my neck.

“Master Merlin, he spoke!” Morgana said, her hands shaking and her face pale white.

“What were you thinking?” Merlin turned to her, clasp-
ing the chain.

“He spoke!” she said, her hands against her cheeks.
“How did that happen?”

“I’ve heard stories,” Merlin said, out of breath. “Animals
finding them in the wild.” He blinked hard and pressed a
hand to his brow.

“It made him speak, Master,” Morgana jabbered wildly.
“He spoke to me just like a person.”

Both stared at me, wide-eyed and amazed.

I glanced between them, racking my brain. *Speak!* I
thought. *I’ve heard that word before.* Merlin had been saying
it recently. It was some trick he wanted me to perform. He’d
close his fingers and thumb and then . . . “Speak!” he’d say,
and open his hand.

I hadn’t known what he wanted before, but now I under-
stood. And by the looks on their faces, I’d wowed them!

I readied myself to *Speak!* again. But all I could manage
was “Woof!” Something wasn’t quite the same. Still, Merlin
and Morgana stared at me in silent awe.

Speak! was fun!



A Trick That's Not a Trick

THE FLUFFY BUNNY WAS TEARING ACROSS THE HILL AND I WAS nipping at the back of its heels. *I'm gonna get you, fluffy bunny!*

"Nosewise! Nosewise!" A loud whispering voice broke through the bright sky of my dream, and I found myself in a dark room surrounded by wrinkled blankets. My lips were wet with drool, and I licked them off, blinking and yawning.

"Nosewise!" The whispering came again. My eyes were bleary, and fuzzy shapes were hovering in the dark door frame. The shadows sorted themselves into a Morgana.

"Come, boy! Come here!" She was talking quietly and waving. I looked over my shoulder and saw Merlin fast asleep at the head of the bed. His stocking cap was pulled over his eyes, but his long eyebrow hairs poked out by his nose. His mouth was wide open, and he was snoring something awful.

"Nosewise, come!" Morgana's voice was getting higher-

pitched, and she was flicking her fingers toward her like little paddles. My tail wagged wildly. I was happy Morgana had come to visit me.

I pushed off the bed and down to the floor. Then I shook my whole body and made a “woof!”

“Mmmm, Nosewise . . . be quiet,” Merlin murmured, pulling his stocking cap farther over his face. Morgana tensed and put a finger to her lips. She ushered me out of the room by my behind, and I scurried into the den.

“Let’s go outside,” she whispered, opening the front door and waving for me to go through. I took a quick measurement of my bladder and realized I didn’t have any business worth doing, but I walked outside anyway. I could always sniff around the garden.

As soon as I was out of the house, Morgana closed the door behind us and grabbed me by the scruff of my neck. I struggled against her for a moment—there were some very interesting chipmunk droppings by the cabbages—but she was stronger.

We marched out to the grassy field that surrounded Merlin’s house in the woods. She told me to Sit! and I did so, being the sort of dog who likes performing the tricks that he knows. She sat down too.

“Nosewise,” she said, settling to her knees, “I’ve brought this for you.”

From out of her cloak she pulled the silver chain and

glowing stone. *The Asteria!* I thought, remembering the events of the day.

I'd finally mastered Speak!, and Morgana and Merlin had been very impressed. But instead of praising me, Merlin had ordered me out of the study at once. They hadn't let me back in, no matter how much I whined and begged. Then, at dinner, they'd spent the whole meal whispering in voices too low for me to hear. Very frustrating.

Morgana took a deep breath and spread the silver chain open with her fingers. She passed the loop over my snout until it rested in my mane. I felt my fur stand up again, and that wonderful buzz of light returned between my ears.

"I love this thing you've got," I said to Morgana. Her eyes grew wide, and her jaw went slack. "It makes me feel so happy, like I can do anything!"

"Nosewise, you're speaking," Morgana said in wonder.

"I know!" I said. "Now I've got a bunch! Sit! Shake! Lie down! And Speak!" My tail wagged so wildly that I had to stand up and let my whole backside waggle with it. "Merlin said something about Roll over! but I couldn't understand. Is it like this?" I tucked my head between my front legs and jumped.

"Nosewise, it's not a trick!" Morgana said, pulling my head up by my ears. "You're really talking to me!"

"It is too a trick," I said angrily. "Don't get jealous. You know tricks too."

“Nosewise, listen to me,” Morgana said, putting her hands under my chin. “This is *magic*! Incredible magic! Something I’ve never seen or heard about. Merlin acts like he knows what’s going on, but he doesn’t have a clue. He’s scared of it! No one’s ever heard of a talking dog!”

I cocked my head at that one.

“So . . . ,” I said, puzzling it out. “It’s a trick no dog’s ever learned? That should make Merlin happy!”

Morgana laughed, then covered her hand with her mouth. “Your mind,” she said, giggling. “It’s fantastic. The Asteria’s brought what’s in your head out into the world, just like it’s supposed to do.”

I didn’t understand what she meant, but my tail wagged anyway. It *sounded* impressive.

A light filled the living room window. Morgana and I glanced through the smudgy glass and spotted Merlin in his nightcap. He was wandering the house with a lit candle.

“Oh, he’s looking for us,” I said, turning toward him excitedly. Just as quick, Morgana grabbed the silver chain and whipped it off my head. The buzzing light dimmed between my ears but didn’t go completely out. “Woof! Woof!” I barked, trying to call Merlin over, but it was different. I’d forgotten how to Speak!

“Nosewise,” Morgana said, whispering in my ear, “you can’t tell Merlin about any of this. Well, of course you can’t—not without the Asteria. But if you understand me

now, just act normal. Merlin's forbidden me, but this is too important not to explore."

"Morgana? Nosewise?" Merlin croaked as he opened the door. His candle dripped hot wax onto his fingers, and he fiddled with it, cursing a bit. I found that he was much easier to understand than before.

"Nosewise was barking at the door," Morgana said. "I let him out to do his business, but now he's done. Come, Nosewise." Morgana flicked her head toward the house, and her black hair bounced against her shoulders. An all-around good feeling warmed me. My master, my pack mate, and a nice warm house to go to. All this and the promise of even greater tricks loomed, like fluffy bunnies, on the horizon.

I couldn't wait to catch them.