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OTIS

Memoir of a
Privileged King Charles Spaniel

Also by Babette Williams

Dancing in High Cotton

OTIS

Memoir of a
Privileged King
Charles Spaniel

Translated into People-Speak
by
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“Otis: Memoir of a Privileged King Charles Spaniel ,” by Babette Williams.
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TO MY ADOPTIVE PARENTS

ELLEN AND STEVE SUSMAN

Who recognize quality when they see it —

I love you,

Otis





Chapter One

My name is Otis, I'm a dog, and I love to fly.

Actually, Otis isn't my real name, but that's what everybody calls me. My given name — the one on my impeccable pedigree — is Sonesta's Putting on the Ritz, yet I like Otis better. I wonder: When I was a puppy, how could anyone have known that I'd frequently stay at the Ritz?

I know that spaniels don't fly, but I'm different. As a matter of record, I've had my own private jet as long as I can remember. Not only that: I have my own two pilots, Jim and Gerald. They love me and let me steer the plane. The last time we landed at JFK Airport I was sitting in Jim's lap as we taxied to the hangar.

Suddenly an excited voice screamed through the mike, “Come look at this! A dog is landing that jet.”

I love making history.



From the day I was born, I knew I was destined for high places. Something deep in my heart kept assuring me that I was meant to lead an exciting, adventurous life.

Now here I am, an ordinary Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, fulfilling my destiny. That is, if you can say any King Charles Spaniel is ordinary.

Everyone says I'm handsome. Even if it sounds a bit conceited, I think so too. I'm a tri-color—my silky coat is black and white, tinged with brown highlights. Like all Cavaliers, I have a plumed tail that I wave constantly. My father is a great champion. His name is Ralph Lauren. The famous clothing line is probably named after him.

My first clear memories are of playing with my sister, Classy, in a square pen lodged against one wall of an airy, sunlit room. My mother (or dam, as they say in dog language) is a warm and ever-present body. I love the feel of her silky coat, especially when I nuzzle against her side for a big drink of milk. Her large, round, dark brown eyes watch me tenderly—boy, do I feel loved and comfortable.

A gray-haired lady with sparkling blue eyes is always there catering to our needs.

I don't know it yet, but we live on a farm just outside Houston, Texas.

One day our mom has a heart-to-heart talk with Classy and me.

“Now that you're two months old, the time has come for you to be ‘adopted’ by a human. I have my very own human—the lady that takes care of us every day—but you each will find your special human.”

Classy and I act a bit puzzled, so our mom explains more clearly.

“You see, I’m going to stay right here with my special human, but soon you’ll both be leaving. You must promise me never to forget your heritage and to be proud of the fact that the late Queen Mother of England loved Cavalier King Charles Spaniels. You have royalty in your blood. Cavaliers have been bred for centuries as companion dogs for the aristocracy. Sometimes humans even refer to us as ‘The Ultimate Snob Dog.’”

I don’t know who the Queen Mother is, though I try to understand. Maybe I’ll get it later on. Meanwhile, I don’t like the idea of leaving my own mother.

“We’re going to have lots of visitors during the next few weeks,” she continues, “people wanting to adopt a puppy. When you are chosen, you’ll leave here and go to a new home. Remember, when things get rough and

confusing, that change is necessary and inevitable.”

Now I truly don't know what she's talking about. What kind of changes? What will life be like without my mom and Classy? This is getting scary! Now my mom has more to say.

“Pay close attention, for this is the most important part. Each of you can be anything you choose to be. Of course environment is important to good development, but I know my human will choose a good home for you. Oh—just one more thing: Try to be your most charming self when the people visit. It's vital to be adorable.”

It was only much later, when I came back to visit my mother, that I understood how far I had climbed. To be precise, I now reside on the twenty-third floor of The Huntingdon, Houston's most prestigious residence. That's about as high as you can climb in Texas.

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